

# RAO BULLETIN

## 1 February 2021

PDF Edition



THIS RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE BULLETIN CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

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1. The page number on which an article can be found is provided to the left of each article's title
2. Numbers contained within brackets [ ] indicate the number of articles written on the subject. To obtain previous articles send a request to [raoemo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:raoemo@sbcglobal.net) 'or' [raoemo77@gmail.com](mailto:raoemo77@gmail.com)
3. Recipients of the Bulletin are authorized and encouraged to forward the Bulletin to other vets or veteran organizations

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- Attachment – Wisconsin Veteran Benefits
- Attachment – Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 14 FEB (Updated)

**\* DoD \***



## SECDEF

### Update 23: Lloyd Austin Confirmed As New Defense Secretary in Historic Vote



Former U.S. Central Command leader Lloyd Austin was confirmed 22 JAN as the next Defense Secretary, a historic vote that makes him the nation's first Black chief of the Pentagon. Austin, a four-star Army general who spent more than 40 years in the ranks, was approved by an overwhelming 93-2 vote in the Senate. A day earlier, the House and Senate also approved waiver language to allow Austin, who retired in 2016, to serve in the post despite a law mandating a seven-year gap between military service and the top civilian defense job.

The vote, which came two days after President Joe Biden was sworn in as commander-in-chief, erased fears of a possible lengthy wait for the new administration's national security team to be put in place. Biden has said that Austin, 67, has "intimate knowledge of the Department of Defense" that will be crucial as his team rewrites four years of military and defense policy under former President Donald Trump, and faces ongoing threats from overseas adversaries.

"[Austin] and I share a commitment to empowering our diplomats and development experts to lead our foreign policy, using force only as our last resort," Biden wrote in an essay for *The Atlantic* in December explaining his decision. "We must build a foreign policy that leads with diplomacy and revitalizes our alliances, putting American leadership back at the table and rallying the world to meet global threats to our security — from pandemics to climate change, from nuclear proliferation to the refugee crisis."

During his confirmation hearing on 19 JAN, Austin vowed to prioritize making the military "a working environment free of discrimination, hate and harassment" for all troops and civilians. "If confirmed, I will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault, to rid our ranks of racists and extremists, and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with dignity," he said. "The job of the Department of Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies. But we can't do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks." Austin, who served on the board of defense contractor Raytheon Technologies, agreed at his confirmation hearing this week to recuse himself from decisions involving the company for four years.

He takes over a Pentagon that is likely to see tighter defense budgets than in recent years and continued questions about how to balance traditional threats like China and Russia with overseas terrorist and extremist groups. "Globally I understand that Asia must be the focus of our effort, and I see China in particular as a pacing challenge for the department," he told lawmakers. He'll also have to handle Biden's call to end the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan after 20 years, something that none of the past three presidential administrations have been able to do. At his confirmation hearing, he expressed openness to leaving a counter-terrorism force in Afghanistan.

In recent days, multiple lawmakers hailed Austin not only as a capable leader for the military but also as an important figure to emphasize the need for diversity in the armed forces. In a Washington Post editorial published 21 JAN, Iraq War veteran Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD) called Austin a potentially transformational leader for the military at a time of racial strife throughout the country. “The rise in white nationalism is disturbing by itself, and is accompanied by two concerning trends regarding people of color within the department,” Brown wrote. “A lack of diversity in senior military and civilian ranks, as well as in coveted careers such as special forces, pilots and submariners, has led to Defense Department leadership that doesn’t reflect America.” Just before Friday’s vote, incoming Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed (D-RI) called Austin’s confirmation “an extraordinary, historic moment.” “A significant portion of our forces are African-American, Latino or Latina, and now they can see themselves at the very top of the Department of Defense,” he told reporters.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-Wash) argued on 21 JAN that lawmakers needed to move quickly on Austin’s confirmation to help counter leadership turmoil in the department under Trump. Over his four year term, the department had six different permanent and acting secretaries. “The disruption at the Pentagon has been enormous,” he said. “They need a fully confirmed secretary of defense immediately to begin to thoroughly clean up that mess and get the Pentagon back to being as effective as it needs to be ... There is an urgency to this.” Austin was expected to take his oath of office as early as this afternoon of 22 JAN, and begin overseeing Pentagon operations right away. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III and Joe Gould | January 22, 2021 ++]

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## UCMJ

### Update 07: Jurisdiction over Retired Servicemembers

Retired Air Force Reserve Lieutenant Colonel Larry Brock was arrested 10 JAN in Texas after being identified as one of several who illegally entered the U.S. Senate Chamber on 6 January. When his military status became known, many in and out of the military probably wondered, “When will he be court-martialed?” The answer is never. Indeed, an Air Force spokesperson told the media that Brock will not be court-martialed because he is not subject to military jurisdiction under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

The Air Force spokesperson is correct, but only because Brock is a military reserve retiree. Congress did not extend court-martial jurisdiction to reserve retirees unless they are “receiving hospitalization from an armed force.” However, under the 1954 Hiss Act, Brock’s status as a military retiree could be affected following a federal conviction. He would forfeit his retired pay in the event he is “convicted of certain designated federal crimes relating to disloyalty or involving national security or national defense-related offenses against the United States.” At this point, Brock has only been charged with knowingly entering a restricted building without lawful authority and violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds, but he may be eventually charged with more serious crimes, including insurrection (18 U.S.C. Section 2383) or a seditious conspiracy (18 U.S.C. Section 2384).

Brock’s situation could be different if he were retired from the regular component, because Congress did extend court-martial jurisdiction to “retired members of the regular component of the armed forces who are entitled to pay.” However, recalling retired retirees to active duty for the purpose of a court-martial

is done only in rare instances, usually when the civilian justice system is inadequate. In the case of any regular component retirees who took part in events at the Capitol, we may assume they will be prosecuted in the federal district court. The Fifth Amendment double jeopardy clause would bar court-martial on any charges of which he was to be convicted. However, the Fifth Amendment double jeopardy clause would not bar a court-martial for other offenses not charged in the federal proceeding, say, an Article 133, UCMJ (conduct unbecoming) offense. It is a discretionary decision of the service secretary to recall a retiree for court-martial prosecution.

If a regular component retiree were not prosecuted and convicted in federal district court, then recall to active duty on a variety of charges would appear appropriate for consideration. Under UCMJ Article 134, it is permitted to use the general article to incorporate federal “crimes and offenses not capital,” of which there seem several. For example, 18 U.S.C., Section 1361 prohibits willful injury or depredation against U.S. property and 18 U.S.C., Section 1752, prohibits the unlawful entries, the disruption of business, and physical violence.

Military lawyers divide retirees into two groups: those who have committed crimes while on active duty and those who have committed crimes after retirement. The first are far more likely to be prosecuted at a court-martial than the second. At least 30 active-duty retirees have been prosecuted under the UCMJ since its enactment in 1950. (There also is a history of retirees being court-martialed prior to enactment of the UCMJ.) The 30 UCMJ prosecutions noted are cases in which the person convicted was adjudged a punitive discharge and/or more than one-year of confinement. That sentence entitled them to an appeal to a service Court of Criminal Appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. In 1960, the Court of Military Appeals affirmed Retired Rear Admiral Selden G. Hooper’s conviction at court-martial for crimes he committed after his retirement in 1950 (Hooper remains the only U.S. Navy flag officer ever convicted at court-martial), and his various appeals in the federal civilian courts challenging court-martial jurisdiction failed.

Military jurisdiction over regular component retirees for crimes they commit after retirement has been affirmed in many other cases, such as when Retired Chief Petty Officer Andrew L. Gagnon was convicted of conspiracy to wrongfully dispose of government property while a civilian employee. His conviction was reversed on appeal for reasons unrelated to any question of jurisdiction. There are other cases where prosecution was initiated but then, for some reason, aborted. A recent notorious case is that of a retired Army major general recalled for prosecution on serious sex offenses. His case was dismissed before trial because the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces (CAAF) had recently decided the case of *United States v. Mangahas*, a case in which the court held the statute of limitations prohibited a prosecution more than five years after the offense. Thus, the major general was given the benefit of *Mangahas*. The major general did not escape prosecution, however, because he later plead guilty to the charges in a Commonwealth of Virginia court, there being no double jeopardy concerns. Of interest, the U.S. Supreme Court decided *United States v. Briggs* and *United States v. Collins* in December 2020, holding that the CAAF reasoning behind *Mangahas* was wrong and that there was no statute of limitations for the offense of rape.

Nevertheless, retiree court-martial jurisdiction is not a settled legal issue and is currently undergoing various court challenges as well congressional scrutiny. This week, the Supreme Court denied a petition to review the conviction of Army Master Sergeant Timothy Hennis, who had challenged court-martial jurisdiction over him as a retiree. While on active duty in 1986, he was convicted in civilian court in North Carolina for murder, but that conviction was overturned in 1988 on appeal and he was acquitted in 1989.

He then remained on active duty until retirement. In 2006, DNA developments provided new evidence that led the Army to recall him for court-martial, at which he was convicted and sentenced to death. The Supreme Court action terminates his military appeals and he may now seek habeas corpus relief in the federal courts.

The Navy and the Marine Corps also have an interesting issue percolating of UCMJ jurisdiction over persons transferred into the Fleet Reserve and Fleet Marine Corps Reserve. Chief Petty Officer Stephen Begani retired from active duty and was transferred into the Fleet Reserve. He then took a contractor job on base at Iwakuni, Japan. Unfortunately for him he got caught in an NCIS “to-catch-a-predator” sting. After being convicted at court-martial, he challenged his status as a person subject to court-martial jurisdiction. The Navy–Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals decided that he was subject to jurisdiction and his case is now pending appeal before the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

In another case, Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Steven M. Larrabee had transferred from active duty into the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve, at which point he began managing two local bars in Iwakuni, Japan. Alleged to have sexually assaulted a bartender, he was prosecuted and convicted at court-martial. On appeal he raised an issue similar to that of Begani (and several others) that a person transferred to the Fleet Reserve of Fleet Marine Corps Reserve was not subject to court-martial jurisdiction. The military appellate courts held there was jurisdiction and so affirmed his conviction and sentence. Not satisfied, Larrabee took his case to federal court where on 20 November 2020 the district court judge found the jurisdictional statute unconstitutional. We can anticipate that the Government will appeal Larrabee v. Braithwaite to the federal circuit court of appeals.

Advocates for continued retiree jurisdiction claim it is necessary to address retiree misconduct overseas and to maintain good order and discipline. Others suggest any such prosecutions should be limited to those with a direct impact on the military. Others argue that once a retiree reaches Category-III status (over the age of 60), they should no longer be subject to court-martial jurisdiction.

Finally, beyond the question of jurisdiction, other matters, such as discharge status, are still being challenged as well. Recently, the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces reversed long-standing precedent and decided a retiree can be sentenced to either a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge at court-martial. Prior to the case of retired U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Derrick Dinger, it was generally accepted that no punitive discharge (and loss of retirement benefits) could be imposed. Dinger’s petition for an appeal at the Supreme Court was denied in 2018. [Source: U.S. Naval Institute | Cdr. Philip D. Cave, U.S. Navy JAG (Retired) | January 12, 2021 ++]

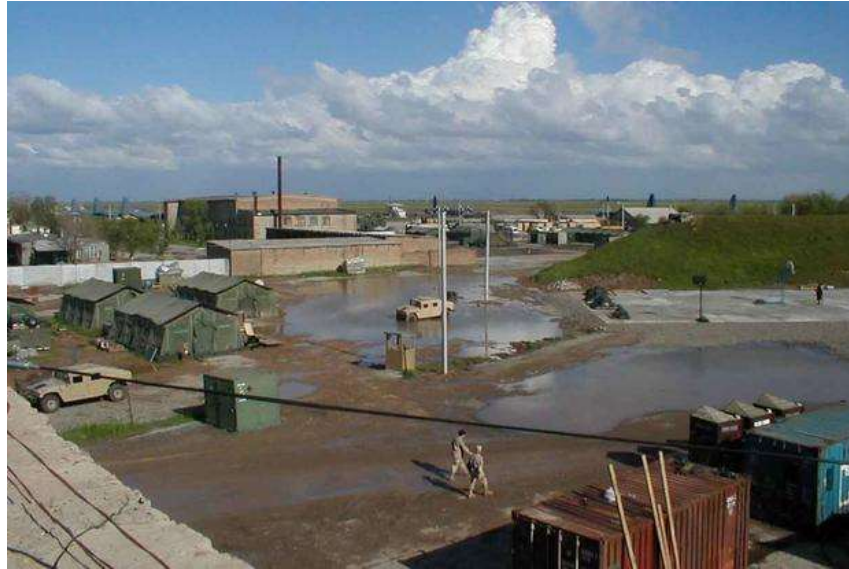
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## **Vet Toxic Exposure | Karshi-Khanabad**

### **Update 05: DoD Directed to Study the Environmental Exposures at K2**

On his final full day in office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Defense Department to study the environmental exposures of U.S. troops who served in Uzbekistan in the early 2000s, a step that could pave the way for ill veterans to receive benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Trump's penultimate executive order requires the DoD to assess pollutants at Karshi-Khanabad

Air Base, or K2, from Oct. 1, 2001, to Dec. 31, 2005 -- the period when American personnel served at the former Soviet and Uzbek base in support of the Afghanistan War.



According to veterans assigned there, the base was a toxic cesspool where a thick black liquid seeped through the soil, and a runoff pond and the ground glowed the same shade of green as a glow stick. "One of my favorite running trails was a one-mile loop that wound its way through a radiation field. There was a sign that said 'Radiation, stay out,' and you ran around," said Mark Jackson, a former Army staff sergeant. "The clues were there [of contamination]," he added. "One of our jokes was there were signs -- there were actual signs."

A number of veterans who served at the base have developed cancer or other serious illnesses, including Jackson, 43, who takes medication to compensate for a destroyed thyroid gland and has anemia, likely caused by radiation exposure. A poll of members who belong to a Facebook group devoted to K2 veterans found that, among 1,200 who completed a survey, the cancer rate was 14%. Across the U.S., the probability that men will develop an invasive cancer before age 49 is one in 29; for women, it's one in 17. The contamination and suffering was first reported in December 2019 by the McClatchy news organization. Documents obtained by the news organization showed that the base was contaminated with missile propellant, solvents, fuel, lubricants, trace amounts of chemical weapons and depleted uranium.

The executive order requires the Pentagon to identify the pollutants and their exact locations, the time frame for exposure, and the names of service members who likely were exposed. The DoD also is required to conduct an epidemiological study of the health conditions diagnosed in K2 veterans to determine whether any illnesses should be added to a list that would automatically qualify an affected veteran for VA benefits. The order stops short, however, of declaring any illness found in K2 veterans as being presumed to be related to service at the base -- a designation that would have accelerated the VA benefits application process for affected veterans.

Instead, the order is a "first step" on a path to medical care and compensation for veterans or their surviving families, said Kim Brooks, whose husband Tim died of cancer in 2004 after serving at K2. "Essentially, the executive order is a starting point from which we can continue to get our veterans recognition," Brooks said. "We've crossed that finish line, but we have more work to do." Jackson, who



served at K2 from July 2003 to April 2004, played a pivotal role in developing the executive order and helped attract the attention of former Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller, a K2 veteran himself. "There's never one person who does things like this, and so many other people were involved," said Jackson, the legislative director for the nonprofit Stronghold Freedom Foundation, which was established to advocate for K2 veterans. "It's a spider web of connections."

According to the order, the DoD has a year to begin its study and must submit a report to the president through the VA. Meanwhile, according to Brooks and Jackson, veterans and families will continue to fight for a presumptive service connection. "We're not going to stop ... because there's no presumption. We know. We know we are sick, and the VA is not going to be allowed to do this piecemeal, case by case like we are doing now. And they know. I'm reading their classified documents. They knew it in 2002."

Despite his health problems, Jackson said he understands why the U.S. used the well-placed base and said he would deploy there all over again to execute the mission. He simply believes that veterans sickened by their assignment at K2 deserve care. "When you volunteer for the military, you volunteer to possibly die. As it turns out, I got shot; it's just a real slow bullet," Jackson said. [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime Beynon | January 22, 2021 ++]

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## **Commissary Savings**

### **How Much You're Saving in Military Grocery Stores**

After a couple of years of increases, commissary savings slipped in U.S. stores in 2020, according to results from the most recent commissary savings report. Savings in U.S. commissaries decreased by 1.2 points — down to 21.1 percent in 2020 from the 22.3 percent savings calculated in 2019. Commissary officials compare prices in each geographic area to determine how much, on average, a commissary shopper could expect to save on grocery purchases compared with local commercial grocers in that area outside the gate. Factoring in the overseas savings which increased by 0.4 points – to 42.6 percent — average worldwide savings declined by 0.6 point from savings in 2019, to 25 percent savings worldwide, officials stated.

“Natural variations in pricing are expected, given free market dynamics where suppliers and retailers compete,” said Defense Commissary Agency spokesman Kevin Robinson when asked about the decrease. He noted that DeCA’s calculation for savings includes both internal pricing data and external data from commercial grocers. “Despite these variations, our goal is always to provide the commissary benefit as consistently as possible,” he said, in an email response to questions.

The 2020 savings percentage is still above the savings level required by law. Commissaries have to maintain savings consistent with the global 23.7 percent savings baseline set in the fall of 2016 before these military grocery stores went to a new pricing system. “The commissary still represents a huge value to military families,” said Nicole Russell, government relations deputy director for the National Military Family Association. “The uptick in commissary sales during the pandemic illustrates it’s a vital resource to families, particularly those struggling financially.”

The commissary agency has been required to track customer savings since fiscal 2016, in order to help defense officials and Congress monitor the commissary benefit. Congress requires the commissary agency to maintain savings levels that are reasonably consistent with the 2016 baseline, since the agency can now

use variable pricing — lowering or raising prices on items, rather than selling commissary items at cost from the vendor, as they did for decades previously. The stores also require a 5 percent surcharge on the purchases, added at the cash register, which helps pay for new or renovated commissaries.

Commissary officials have had the authority to change prices since 2017, as a means of being competitive with local stores, and to allow commissaries to use some of the profit made to reduce the amount of taxpayer dollars — over \$1 billion a year — that’s used to operate the stores. The taxpayer dollars going to the provide the commissary benefit have been a target of a number of people in DoD in efforts to save money. The Senate Armed Services Committee has directed the Government Accountability Office to report on the extent the commissary agency has implemented reforms, and to report on the effect these reforms have had on customer savings and satisfaction, among other things. Lawmakers note that commissary sales fell from \$5.5 billion globally in fiscal 2015 to \$4.5 billion in fiscal 2019.

The commissary agency also received more than \$34 million in COVID relief funds in 2020 for personal protective equipment, cleaning and disinfecting supplies, increased store hours for part-time employees to help with store cleanup and shelf stocking, and to pay for additional air shipments to Europe and Pacific and truck deliveries to meet surge demands for products for overseas customers. The 1.2 point decrease in savings in the U.S. “isn’t significant, given everything that’s happened. I think they’re holding steady, given the circumstances,” said Steve Rossetti, president of the American Logistics Association.

The commissary agency compares prices with commercial grocers, including at least one supercenter, in the local area of each commissary in the U.S. The savings comparison measures about 38,000 specific items at a regional level, and local prices of about 1,000 products that are representative of a shopper’s typical market basket, officials said. Each quarter, the agency does comparisons of one-fourth of the stores, with all the stores undergoing market basket comparison over the course of a year. But in 2020, COVID caused the agency to cancel comparisons scheduled from April through June, because of considerations about physical visits to stores. Officials said that loss of one quarter of the store surveys “did not have a statistically significant impact on the savings levels.

The situation with COVID-19 has caused a variety of problems for the Defense Commissary Agency. Although defense officials declared the stores to be essential and they were kept open, there have been rampant restrictions on entry at a number of bases, which affected any customers, including retirees. Commissary officials have also had problems with shortages of products, and have raised concerns that they weren’t getting their fair share of products from vendors, in comparison to civilian stores. Civilian stores’ volume has been increasing.

The volume has dropped off significantly, which pushes up the cost per unit being shipped. In the 12 months ending in December, grocery prices increased overall by 3.9 percent, according to the Consumer Price Index. The Defense Commissary Agency doesn’t release information about the overall price increases specifically in commissaries, as it considers pricing data to be proprietary. The commissary agency’s savings report compares prices with civilian stores to determine the level of savings the benefit offers. Here’s how much you’re saving, based on where you live:

<b>Region</b>	<b>2016- savings</b>	<b>2020 savings</b>
New England (25 stores)	21.4%	21.8%
South Atlantic (22 stores)	19.9%	18.7%

<b>Region</b>	<b>2016- savings</b>	<b>2020 savings</b>
North Central (13 stores)	20.2%	21.4%
South Central (26 stores)	18.1%	18.9%
Mountain (15 stores)	17.6%	20.0%
Pacific (22 stores)	20.9%	22.6%
Alaska and Hawaii (7 stores)	32.6%	33.2%
Total U.S. (130 stores surveyed over 3 quarters due to COVID)	20.2%	21.1%

[Source: Military Times | Karen Jowers | January 25, 2020 ++]

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## **Transgender Troops**

### **Update 28: Biden Reverses Trump Ban on Transgender People In Military**

President Joe Biden signed an order 25 JAN reversing a Trump-era Pentagon policy that largely barred transgender individuals from serving in the military. The new order, which Biden signed in the Oval Office during a meeting with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, overturns a ban ordered by President Donald Trump in a tweet during his first year in office. It immediately prohibits any service member from being forced out of the military on the basis of gender identity.

The decision comes as Biden plans to turn his attention to equity issues that he believes continue to shadow nearly all aspects of American life. Ahead of his inauguration, Biden’s transition team circulated a memo saying Biden planned to use his first full week as president “to advance equity and support communities of color and other underserved communities.” As he signed the order on Monday, Biden said, “What I’m doing is enabling all qualified Americans to serve their country in uniform.” “America is stronger, at home and around the world, when it is inclusive. The military is no exception,” the order says. “Allowing all qualified Americans to serve their country in uniform is better for the military and better for the country because an inclusive force is a more effective force. Simply put, it’s the right thing to do and is in our national interest.”

The order directs the departments of Defense and Homeland Security to take steps to implement the order for the military and the Coast Guard. And it says they must reexamine the records of service members who were discharged or denied reenlistment due to gender identity issues under the previous policy. It requires the departments to submit a report to the president on their progress within 60 days. Austin, in a statement, voiced support for the change and said the Pentagon will work over the next two months to implement the new policy. “I fully support the President’s direction that all transgender individuals who wish to serve in the United States military and can meet the appropriate standards shall be able to do so openly and free from discrimination,” said Austin, who also was formally sworn in as defense chief by Vice President Kamala Harris on Monday. “This is the right thing to do. It is also the smart thing to do.”

Congress members and advocates hailed the signing. “This is the triumph of evidence-based policy over discrimination,” said Aaron Belkin, the executive director of the Palm Center, which researches and advocates against LGBTQ discrimination. “The inclusive policy will make it easier for trans troops to do

their jobs and to fulfill their missions.” The Trump policy triggered a number of lawsuits, including from transgender individuals who wanted to join the military and found themselves blocked. “It is my highest goal to serve my country in the U.S. military and I’ve fought this ban because I know that I am qualified to serve,” said Nicolas Talbott, an aspiring service member involved in one of the lawsuits. “I’m thrilled and relieved that I and other transgender Americans can now be evaluated solely on our ability to meet military standards. I look forward to becoming the best service member I can be.”

Others disagreed. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, said the move would divert “precious dollars from mission-critical training to something as controversial as gender reassignment surgery.” Under Biden’s new policy, transgender servicemembers won’t be discharged based on gender identity. The move to overturn the transgender ban is the latest example of Biden using executive authority in his first days as president to dismantle Trump’s legacy. His early actions include orders to overturn a Trump administration ban on travelers from several predominantly Muslim countries, stop construction of the wall at the U.S.-Mexico border, and launch an initiative to advance racial equity.

Until a few years ago service members could be discharged from the military for being transgender, but that changed during the Obama administration. In 2016, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that transgender people already serving in the military would be allowed to serve openly. And the military set July 1, 2017, as the date when transgender individuals would be allowed to enlist. After Trump took office, however, his administration delayed the enlistment date and called for additional study to determine if allowing transgender individuals to serve would affect military readiness or effectiveness.

A few weeks later, Trump caught military leaders by surprise, tweeting that the government wouldn’t accept or allow transgender individuals to serve “in any capacity” in the military. “Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail,” he wrote. After a lengthy and complicated legal battle and additional reviews, the Defense Department in April 2019 approved the new policy that fell short of an all-out ban but barred transgender troops and military recruits from transitioning to another sex and required most individuals to serve in what the administration called their “birth gender.”

Under that policy, currently serving transgender troops and anyone who had signed an enlistment contract before the effective date could continue with plans for hormone treatments and gender transition if they had been diagnosed with gender dysphoria. But after that date, no one with gender dysphoria who was taking hormones or has transitioned to another gender was allowed to enlist. Troops that were already serving and were diagnosed with gender dysphoria were required to serve in the gender assigned at birth and were barred from taking hormones or getting transition surgery.

As of 2019, an estimated 14,700 troops on active duty and in the Reserves identify as transgender, but not all seek treatment. Since July 2016, more than 1,500 service members were diagnosed with gender dysphoria; as of Feb. 1, 2019, there were 1,071 currently serving. According to the Pentagon, the department spent about \$8 million on transgender care between 2016 and 2019. The military’s annual health care budget tops \$50 billion. All four service chiefs told Congress in 2018 that they had seen no discipline, morale or unit readiness problems with transgender troops serving openly in the military. But they also acknowledged that some commanders were spending a lot of time with transgender individuals who were working through medical requirements and other transition issues. [Source: Associated Press | Lolita C. Baldor & Zeke Miller | January 25, 2021 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials**

**Reported 16 thru 31 JAN 2021 | 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> for a listing and details of the 141 accounted for in 2005. If you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict or have an inquiry about MIAs, contact:

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

Call: Phone: (703) 699-1420

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



Family members seeking more information about missing loved ones may also call the following Service Casualty Offices: U. S. Air Force (800) 531-5501, U. S. Army (800) 892-2490, U. S. Marine Corps (800) 847-1597, U. S. Navy (800) 443-9298, or U. S. Department of State (202) 647-5470. The names, photos, and details of the below listed MIA/POW's which have been recovered, identified, and/or scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin are listed on the following sites:

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

## LOOK FOR

-- **Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. Alfred F. Turgeon**, 23, was a pilot assigned to the 344th Bombardment Squadron, 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Turgeon was serving as a radio operator crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire during Operation TIDAL WAVE, the largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, Romania. Interment services are pending. [Read about Turgeon.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Chief Machinist's Mate Class Lada Smisek**, 42, of Cleveland, Ohio, served at the Naval Ammunition Depot and Submarine Base in Cavite, Philippine Islands, when Japanese forces invaded. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942. According to prison camp and other historical records, Smisek died Sept. 28, 1942, and was buried along with fellow prisoners in the local Cabanatuan Camp Cemetery, in grave number 437. Smisek will be buried on Jan. 29, 2021, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. [Read about Smisek.](#)

[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | January 2021 ++]

\* VA \*



## VA Covid-19 Care

### Update 04: Vet Caregivers Now Eligible for the Vaccine through VA

Tens of thousands of caregivers providing critical medical support to disabled veterans will be eligible to receive coronavirus vaccine doses soon under a new policy announced by the Department of Veterans Affairs this week. The move comes after a coalition of veterans groups lobbied for the caregivers to be pushed to the top of the vaccine list, arguing that they deserved to be included in the first wave of medical professionals being protected against the deadly illness. In response, Dr. Richard Stone, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, released a memo this week asserting that individuals registered with the department's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers can be given the vaccine "in a coordinated manner with the veterans for whom they provide care."

Specifics on an exact timeline for vaccinations was not released. The memo states that decisions will be made "in balance with site-specific resources, needs, vaccine availability, hesitancy to accept the vaccine, and status of the pandemic locally. In an interview with Military Times, Stone said that he is shifting many of those vaccination decisions to local officials, in an effort to provide coverage to more individuals. "We need to leave it up to people at the besides, to make sure they are making the best decisions for veterans," he said. "When someone brings a veteran in to give them the vaccine, they can easily identify what the other needs are."

About 20,000 veterans are registered in the VA caregivers program, which provides monthly stipends and other support to individuals providing regular medical assistance to infirm veterans. Most of that group are family members of post-9/11 veterans. The caregiver assistance program expanded last fall to veterans who served before May 1975. Beller was among the first to be included in that new group. The program is set to expand to all veterans in late 2022.

Last week, a coalition of veterans groups including The Independence Fund, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the Non Commissioned Officers Association sent a letter to Federal Emergency Management Agency officials asking them to authorize VA to administer the caregiver vaccines, under its role as the lead coordinator of federal response to the pandemic. But VA officials in this week’s memo argue they have the ability to move without that specific bureaucratic step, saying the caregiver program authorities allow them to provide such services in an effort to better protect and serve veterans. “The laws and regulations on this issue are very complex,” said Bob Carey, executive vice president for advocacy and strategy at The Independence Fund. “It’s not easy to navigate the various authorities and processes available to make this happen. But the VHA team leading this vaccine effort were dogged in finding a solution.”

Stone said as of 13 JAN, VA officials had administered the first dose of the two-part vaccine to more than 332,000 department health care employees and veterans at high-risk of contracting coronavirus. Another 45,000 individuals have already received their second dose. Vaccines have been distributed to more 195 department facilities, but health officials have warned that it could be months before they can administer the more than 7 million vaccines they expect to be requested by veterans and staff. More than 180,000 patients connected to the Veterans Health System have contracted coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, and more than 7,500 have died from complications related to the illness. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | January 14, 2021 ++]

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## **VA Covid-19 Care**

### **Update 05: Vet Income Level Impact on Obtaining Vaccine Shot**

They served in the military decades ago, often putting their lives on the line for their country. But aging veterans are learning that their sacrifice may not guarantee them a COVID-19 vaccine at a Veterans Affairs clinic. Army veteran Paul Jacobs, 91, found out the hard way. Jacobs showed up at the VA clinic in West Palm Beach on Sunday hoping to get the shot, but he says he was turned away three hours later because he makes too much money. “It’s not fair that they turned us away,” he said. “It was just a shame that veterans were discriminated against because of their income.”

Years ago, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offered medical care to nearly all military vets. That changed in 2003, when the underfunded and overburdened agency imposed income limits. To receive cost-free VA health care, veterans can’t make more than certain amounts depending on where they live, said Kenita Tills, public affairs officer for the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center. For those who live in Palm Beach County, the limit ranges from \$51,535 for a veteran with no dependents to \$58,905 for a veteran with one dependent. In Broward County, the limit increases to \$51,865 and \$59,290, respectively.

The VA sent out notices saying eligible vets 70 and over could get vaccine shots, no appointment required. The notice did not outline the income limits but did have a link at the bottom of the second page for those wanting to review “income limitations.” Some marveled that vets who served their country are being turned away for a vaccine while people flying in from outside the U.S. are not. “I would like to see every veteran get it,” said Jerry Toomey, a Lauderhill resident and commander of Disabled American Veterans Chapter 133. “I don’t know what the rules are that they have to live with [at the VA]. Now should they be waived during this pandemic? That would probably be a good thing to do.”

Jacobs and other vets had high hopes when they heard the VA was holding a special walk-up event over the long Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. Some drove from as far as Miami and Port St. Lucie to get their shots — and more than 2,700 of them did. But many were turned away. “There were 16 of us sent away,” said Jacobs, a retired attorney from Detroit who spends winters with his daughter in Palm Beach Gardens. “I was so upset. I couldn’t even drive home. My daughter had to drive.” Jacobs said he heard about the walk-up event on the news. “They did not mention anything about an income limit,” he said. Tills says all VA medical centers have no choice but to follow the rules, pandemic or not. “I know people were frustrated,” she said. “But this rule is set by Congress. It’s not a decision made at the local level.”

Tills could not say how many veterans were turned away over the three-day weekend. But more than 360 vets who did meet the income requirements were able to get their shots after enrolling as members of the clinic. “We had an incredible turnout,” Tills said. “It was so heartwarming to see so many people so happy to get the vaccine.” Altogether, more than 2,700 veterans were vaccinated against the virus last weekend.

Air Force veteran Mauricio Montana was not one of them. Montana, 75, left his house in Delray Beach at 3:30 a.m. Saturday to head to West Palm Beach. He lined up behind 150 fellow veterans, eager to finally get his first shot. Montana, who went to work for IBM as an electrical engineer after leaving the service in 1969, got the bad news around 8 a.m. He didn’t qualify because his annual earnings were too high. “My daughter is outraged,” said his wife, Valerie Montana. “I called her in tears after he told me he was turned away.” It’s a national tragedy that military vets were turned away solely based on income, Valerie Montana said. “We the people were promised free vaccines to everyone who wanted one,” she said. “These veterans who served their country deserve to receive protection from this virus.”

Fort Lauderdale veteran Bob Hulsy, 76, got up before dawn Sunday to wait in line at the clinic, but was also turned away. “To qualify, there is an income limit,” Hulsy said of the VA’s vaccine protocol. “Too much income, no shot.” Had he known about that, he wouldn’t have made the long drive to West Palm Beach at 4 a.m., he said. Hulsy served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. After his tour of duty, he got a master’s degree in business administration and joined the corporate world. He’s now back to square one looking for a vaccine. “I can’t get on the Broward [health department] site,” Hulsy said. “I’ve been trying Holy Cross and Memorial and can’t get on there either.”

Jacobs, who served in Korea from 1953 to 1955, was stunned the VA would not relax the rules, considering we are in pandemic times. When Jacobs complained to the VA official who delivered the news, he was told to call his congressman. “They told us if they got permission, they would call us,” Jacobs said. “But I don’t have any hope for that.” The Montanas are now signed up to get their first shot of the vaccine in Orlando, thanks to a little help from their daughter. When they got the good news, they quickly found a way to celebrate, Valeria Montana said. “We sat down on our back porch and poured a scotch.” [Source: South Florida Sun Sentinel | Susannah Bryan | January 21, 2021]



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## **VA COVID-19 Cases**

### **Update 11: Patient Deaths Reach 8,000+**



The Department of Veterans Affairs reached yet another grim milestone Jan. 20 – 8,000 patient deaths, with more than 1,000 of those deaths recorded in the last two weeks. January on track to become the deadliest month of the pandemic for VA patients, with 1,481 deaths recorded this month as of 20 JAN. December was the deadliest month of the pandemic so far for VA patients and staff, with more than 1,500 patient deaths and 21 staff deaths recorded. The more than 1,000 patient deaths recorded in the last two weeks represent more than 13% of VA's total patient deaths during the pandemic. Deaths at the department are up about 31% in the last month, roughly coinciding with a sharp spike in active cases among VA patients and staff, though active cases hit a two-week low of more than 15,000 on 20 JAN.

VA said previously that the number of deaths recorded in a given month may not be a fully accurate account of those who died that month, since data may lag behind, sometimes by weeks. VA officials have repeatedly cited the percentage of patients who require hospitalization as the most reliable judge of how patients are faring amid the pandemic, and that number has consistently fallen since a height of 38% in March to 12% in both November and December. The total number of patients hospitalized also had been increasing up until last week. In the latest of VA's weekly pandemic response reports for Jan. 12-18, the department reported 1,508 COVID-19 inpatients, down slightly from the week prior but still up nearly 113% from November.

While VA has recorded a significant spike in total number of patients who have died because of the virus, VA's overall mortality rate continues to decrease. In October, it was about 5.5%. So far in January, it has reached about 4.2%, which is still significantly higher than the about 1.7% for Americans overall, according to the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. Earlier during the pandemic, VA's mortality rate reached a high of nearly 6.8%. VA's mortality rate is influenced by the age and overall health of its patients, who tend to be older and less healthy than the overall American population. January is also on track to become the deadliest month for VA staff, with 19 deaths already recorded this month. In all of December, 21 employee deaths were recorded. VA has so far refused to provide details on whether those workers were medical staff in contact with patients or other employees.

Since VA cares for about half of the roughly 18 million veterans in America, its numbers are representative only of those in its care and do not include veterans who receive care elsewhere or who do not qualify for VA health care. VA's publicly available data also includes its staff and some non-veteran patients the department treated as part of its Fourth Mission. VA has already recorded 10 staff deaths in January, for a total of 105 during the pandemic so far. The top 10 VA health systems with the most active cases are: Columbia, South Carolina (359); San Antonio (336); Loma Linda, California (336); Phoenix (335); Atlanta (332); Long Beach, California (313); Dallas (300); Los Angeles (281); Cleveland, Ohio (280); Gainesville, Florida (260).

The VA health systems that have recorded the most deaths during the pandemic include those in: Cleveland; Minneapolis; Phoenix; Columbia, South Carolina; New Jersey; New York; Texas; and Boston. Those with the most confirmed cases were North Chicago; Cleveland; Phoenix; San Antonio; Columbia, South Carolina; Loma Linda, California Atlanta; Orlando; Houston; and Dallas. On 18 JAN, VA announced it had provided more than 438,000 people at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine -- 224,000 veterans and 214,000 employees. Some VA facilities have opened eligibility up to veterans 65 and older and veterans who are also essential workers. VA also announced last week that some veteran caregivers are now eligible to receive the vaccine. [Source: Connecting Vets | Abbie Bennett | January 20, 2021 ++]

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## VA Secretary

### Update 94: Dat P. Tran Appointed New Acting Secretary



A new president is in the Oval Office and that means a new Department of Veterans Affairs secretary. But before President Joe Biden's pick can receive approval from the Senate and be sworn in, the 46th president needed an acting VA secretary.

Less than two hours after Biden took the oath of office, his administration, like others before, announced a series of new acting VA leaders and political appointees to lead the second-largest federal department and the largest healthcare system in the country. Chief among those is the new acting Secretary Dat P. Tran, who previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for enterprise integration at VA. Tran replaces outgoing VA Secretary (and Trump appointee) Robert Wilkie.

All major national veteran service organizations and many others called for Wilkie's resignation or removal in recent months after a damning watchdog report found he and senior staff sought to discredit a woman veteran who reported being sexually assaulted at the Washington, D.C. VA. Wilkie refused to step down and the White House made no public moves against him. Tran will continue to serve in an acting capacity as leader of the VA until Biden's nominee, Denis McDonough, gets an official nod from the Senate. Tran has also served as deputy assistant secretary for data governance and analysis at VA, and has more than a decade of experience leading data analytics and statistics at the department, according to his biographical information on the VA website.

From 1995 to 2001, Tran was a staff member for the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and before his government service, he was the manufacturing operations manager for Square D Electrical Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He's a graduate from The Ohio State University with a degree in Industrial Systems Engineering. Joining Tran are several other VA officials stepping up in acting roles, including Dr. Richard Stone, the executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, who will serve as acting undersecretary for health at the department. In an email to VA staff Wednesday obtained by Connecting Vets, Stone said that he had been asked to continue in his role as VHA leader under the Biden administration.

"While we anticipate shifts in direction and policy over the coming weeks, our work continues, the pandemic continues and veterans continue to need care," Stone wrote. "I am glad to share that I will continue in my role under the new administration. I believe it is as true today as ever that VHA is critical to veteran health care and to the nation's COVID-19 response." Thomas Murphy, previously the director of the northeast district of the Veterans Benefits Administration, will become acting undersecretary for benefits and Dr. Carolyn Clancy, previously assistant undersecretary for health, discovery, education and affiliate networks will serve as acting deputy secretary.

Tran and other acting senior leaders will perform the duties of department leadership until Biden administration appointees are confirmed and sworn in. For a list of other VA officials and their acting roles, go to the VA [website](#). The Biden administration also announced on 20 JAN a list of VA political appointees, many of whom are familiar faces at VA or in the veteran community. [Source: Connecting Vets | Abbie Bennett | January 20, 2021 ++]

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## **VA Secretary**

### **Update 95: Denis R. McDonough Nomination Hearing**

Veterans deserve a leader who will “fight relentlessly” for them, said Denis McDonough, President Joe Biden’s nominee for VA secretary while speaking before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee today. McDonough said caring for Veterans and their families by providing health care, benefits and cemetery services will be his guiding principle. “I’ve been given a clear mission by President Biden: to be a fierce, staunch advocate for Veterans and their families,” he said. “If confirmed, I will embrace that assignment with the solemnity it demands.”

McDonough laid out five priorities the president directed him to focus his efforts if confirmed as VA secretary. The first priority McDonough addressed is getting Veterans through this pandemic. As the

pandemic continues to claim Veteran lives, he said the path ahead won't be easy. "The Department of Veterans Affairs faces great challenges – challenges made even more daunting by the coronavirus pandemic," he said. "Its capabilities have not always risen to the needs of our Veterans. If confirmed, I promise to fight – every single day – to ensure that our Veterans have the access to world-class, compassionate care they have earned."



McDonough cited four other priorities. These included helping Veterans build civilian lives of opportunity with the education and jobs worthy of their skills, talents and service. He also said he wants all Veterans, including women Veterans, Veterans of color and LGBTQ Veterans, to feel welcome at VA. Lastly, he plans to work to eliminate Veteran homelessness, mentioning also that reducing suicide is a high priority, as is keeping faith with families and caregivers.

McDonough previously served as a former White House chief of staff, deputy national security advisor and chief of staff of the National Security Council. In his role with the National Security Council, he helped lead work on behalf of military families and Veterans. "I understand how to untangle and solve large, complex challenges – both across and within large agencies," he said. "I have seen firsthand that when our government is at its best, it can help serve the American people – including our Veterans – and allow them to live in security and dignity." Although not a Veteran himself, McDonough previously said his Marine grandfather, his World War II Veteran high school football coach and troops he met during visits to Walter Reed all inspired him.

"Most of all, like every American, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to those who have worn the cloth of our nation," he said. "It would be a tremendous honor to serve our Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors by leading VA – to ensure our nation serves our Veterans as well as they have served us." Veteran sacrifice McDonough hailed the sacrifice Veterans and families make. "When visiting our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen on our bases in Afghanistan and Iraq, I have witnessed the heavy burdens of long deployments away from their families," he said. "Beside their hospital beds when they come home, I've seen their resilience in the face of wounds – visible and invisible – that can last a lifetime. Standing there at Dover when our fallen heroes come home one final time, I've seen the unimaginable grief of military families, to whom we owe a debt that cannot be repaid and whom we stand by forever."

He also said Veterans make an impact in other roles. "Inside and outside of government, I've been inspired how our Veterans continue to strengthen our communities and our country out of uniform – as

teachers, coaches, first responders and public servants,” he said. The VA secretary nominee said those who served allowed the hearing to happen. “We can meet today, in peace and freedom, because generations of service members have stepped forward and sacrificed in our name,” McDonough said. “And though only a small percentage of Americans have served in our armed forces, the president has called on every American to embrace our responsibility to support our Veterans and their families.”

Refer to <https://youtu.be/p76G0z4hUo4> to view the hearing on the pending nomination of Denis R. McDonough to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. [Source: Vantage Point | Adam Stump | January 27, 2021 ++]

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## **Fisher House Expansion**

### **Update 24: Oklahoma Selected to Receive its First**

The Oklahoma City VA Health Care System has been selected as one of 12 sites to receive a Fisher House. “This is great news for Veterans and their immediate family members. This will be the first Fisher House in the state of Oklahoma,” said Assistant Director Jeff Bennett. A Fisher House is “a home away from home” for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers. These beautifully furnished and decorated homes enable family members to be close to their loved one during an extremely stressful time, hospitalization for a combat injury, illness or disease. A stay at a Fisher House is completely free of charge.

“Support from their loved ones plays an integral role in healing and recovery for Veterans,” said Bennett. “We are very grateful to VA and the Fisher House Foundation for approving our request.” The VA Fisher House will support access to care for thousands of additional Veterans traveling to VA facilities for treatment. There is not yet a timeline for construction of the Fisher House. These homes are normally located within walking distance of the treatment facility or transportation between the two is available. Typically, the houses are 5,000 to 16,800 square foot homes donated by the Fisher family and Fisher House Foundation. Each house is provides between 8 and 21 suites.

Fisher Houses are professionally furnished and decorated in the tone and style of the local region. The houses can accommodate 16 to 42 family members. They feature a common kitchen, laundry facilities, spacious dining room and an inviting living room with library and toys for children. Newer houses are 100% handicap accessible and include elevators. A Fisher House is a temporary residence and is not a treatment facility, hospice or counseling center. VA shares a long and successful relationship with Fisher House Foundation. Its first build was in 1994 and the program continues to experience growth in 2020. The VA Fisher House program plans to expand from 49 to at least 72 Fisher Houses by 2030.

The Fisher House Foundation constructs the homes on government land (military installations or VA facilities). On completion, the foundation donates the houses to VA or the Department of Defense (DOD). That organization then assumes responsibility for the operation, maintenance, upkeep, and staffing. There are 91 Fisher Houses internationally. For more information on the VA Fisher House Program, visit [www.socialwork.va.gov/fisher.asp](http://www.socialwork.va.gov/fisher.asp). [Source: Vantage Point | January 16, 2021 ++]

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## Glaucoma

### Update 06: The Leading Cause of Blindness for Veterans over 60



Normal Vision



Glaucoma Impact

Above is an example of what your vision would be like with glaucoma. It is a leading cause of blindness for Veterans over 60. But blindness from glaucoma can often be prevented with early treatment. The disease damages your eye's optic nerve. It usually happens when fluid pressure builds up in the front part of your eye. That extra fluid increases the pressure on the optic nerve. It can reduce blood flow to the optic nerve, causing damage and visual field loss. Some forms of glaucoma can damage the optic nerve from reduced blood flow, even when the eye pressure is in the normal range during the eye exam. This can happen when the eye pressure becomes high at other times of the day and the patient does not feel the pressure elevation.

It can also happen when blood flow to the optic nerve becomes reduced below a critical level. That can happen during periods of very low blood pressure, even during sleep. In some patients who take their hypertension medications right before bedtime, it can cause the blood pressure to drop too low during hours of sleep. Another risk factor that can adversely affect glaucoma is obstructive sleep apnea. That may also reduce the delivery of oxygen to the optic nerve. The prevalence of glaucoma is three times higher in African Americans than in non-Hispanic whites. Additionally, the risk of visual impairment is higher and the age of onset is earlier than in whites.

VA is at the forefront of vision research and glaucoma is one of our top priorities. A current study by Dr. Markus Kuehn is a Bioassay to Predict the Development and Progression of Glaucoma. The VA Rehabilitation, Research, and Development Division sponsors the study. The project uses our recent discovery that glaucoma affects the development of a cellular autoimmune response that can further reduce vision. The investigators are testing if the strength of the reaction from a blood sample is predictive of future loss of vision and quality of life of the patient.

Another Iowa City VA study by Drs. Randy Kardon, Mona Garvin, Ray Wang, Young Kwon Johannes Ledolter and Michael Wall is using a new type of artificial intelligence of image analysis. This intelligence is called a deep learning variational encoder. It diagnoses the severity of glaucoma, detects the earliest signs of worsening vision and its response to treatment. They are also relating the eye imaging to Veteran quality of life. Early identification of patients at high risk to develop vision loss allows more aggressive treatment before the damage occurs. The development of a predictive assay and new types of eye imaging analysis will provide eye care providers with valuable new tools to preserve the quality of life for Veterans.

VA's Dr. Dan Bettis answers some of the common patient questions about glaucoma. Take five minutes and watch his video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SlcOTqrwTw&t=15s> with your family. Veterans enrolled in VA health care can schedule appointments directly with Ophthalmology or Optometry

without a referral from primary care. Schedule an eye exam at your VA health care facility. [Source: Vantage Point | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## VA Debt

### Update 12: Biden Asks VA to Continue Collection Pause



President Joe Biden announced 22 JAN that he was asking the Department of Veterans Affairs once again to delay collecting debts from veterans. According to the White House, an economic relief executive order signed Friday "will help approximately 2 million veterans maintain their financial footing by asking the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to consider pausing federal collections on overpayments and debts." According to the announcement, the executive order will also:

- Ask states to expand and extend federal nutrition assistance programs (food stamps).
- Ask the Treasury Department to improve the delivery of relief payments.
- Prevent Americans from losing their unemployment benefits if they turn down a job that has unsafe working conditions that may expose them to COVID-19.

The text of the order, signed Friday afternoon, was less specific. "All executive departments and agencies (agencies) shall promptly identify actions they can take within existing authorities to address the current economic crisis resulting from the pandemic," it read. "Agencies should specifically consider actions that facilitate better use of data and other means to improve access to, reduce unnecessary barriers to, and improve coordination among programs funded in whole or in part by the Federal Government."

But Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) confirmed in a statement 22 JAN that the debt collection delay had been extended. "Far too often veterans face unexpected debt collection from the VA, some due to overpayments that were through no fault of their own," he said. "However, this Executive Order will provide the relief so many need and ensure that our veterans can focus on their physical and financial health during these trying times." While executive orders do not carry the weight of law, they often do result in substantial changes in the way that government agencies in the executive branch conduct business. It was not immediately clear when or if affected agencies would begin honoring the president's request. There was no indication on exactly what debts the VA would be requested to suspend or how long the suspension would last.

Late last year, the VA announced that it would begin collecting medical copayments owed by veterans for treatment during the previous nine months. The VA had suspended all debt collection since April 2020

in response to an executive order from President Donald Trump. On 29 JAN Acting VA Secretary Tran in a VA press release said VA looking for immediate ways to help over 2 million Veterans maintain their financial footing by exploring options to ease the burden of federal collections on compensation and pension overpayments, and medical and education-related debts. Also that VA will extend the existing moratorium on evictions and foreclosures until March 31, 2021. VA borrowers experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19 can review VA guidance for borrowers or call 877-827-3702 for additional information. [Source: Military.com & VA News Release| Jim Abshe | January 22 & 29, 2021 ++]

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## **VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse**

### **Reported 16 thru 31 JAN 2021**

**Atlanta – Camelia Revels**, a former case manager at HOPE Atlanta, and **Katrise Jones**, a property agent, have pleaded guilty to a criminal information charging them with conspiring to steal approximately \$124,000 in federal funds intended to help homeless veterans. “The defendants betrayed the trust of veterans who came to them for help,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Bobby L. Christine. “The victims are men and women who sacrificed for their country and deserve more than being taken advantage of for personal greed.”

According to Acting U.S. Attorney Christine, the charges and other information presented in court: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provide funds through a variety of programs, including the Supportive Services for Veterans program (SSVF), in order to assist homeless veterans. SSVF monies are in turn provided as grants to various organizations, including HOPE Atlanta (a/k/a Traveler’s Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta). HOPE Atlanta is a non-profit organization dedicated to combatting homelessness that has served metro-Atlanta for more than 100 years. Between approximately October 2013 and November 2015, Revels was employed at HOPE Atlanta as a case manager for the SSVF program. As part of her duties, Revels was responsible for confirming a veteran’s eligibility to participate in the SSVF program, assisting veterans in finding suitable housing, and preparing the SSVF vouchers to secure issuance of funds. Although Revels did not have final approval over SSVF vouchers, she provided all the relevant information to her supervisor, including the name of the vendor to whom the check would be issued on behalf of a veteran.

Among the vendors Revels provided to her supervisor as the payee were companies that were owned and operated by Jones, including Stratford Corporate Realty, Strategic Consultants, and Reserve at Bay Bridge. Jones was supposed to act as a “property agent,” who would assist the veterans find suitable housing. In other words, rather than listing the rental property as the payee, Revels provided one of Jones’s companies. In December 2014, HOPE Atlanta learned that Jones was not making rental payments on behalf of veterans who received SSVF funds and directed Revels to no longer work with her. Revels ignored this directive but continued her scheme with Jones.

In particular, Revels did not disclose to HOPE Atlanta that the “vendors” receiving SSVF funds were various entities controlled and operated by Jones. As part of the conspiracy, Revels and Jones in fact opened a joint bank account in the name of Strategic Consultants—one of Jones’s companies—in which stolen SSVF funds were deposited. The scheme lasted until November 2015 when HOPE Atlanta learned that



Revels had continued to work with Jones and that Jones's companies had continued to receive SSVF funds that were not being used to help homeless veterans.

Separately, Jones also stole HUD-VA Supportive Housing funds (VASH) funds from the Marietta Housing Authority (MHA) in August and September 2015. HUD-VASH is a collaborative program between HUD and VA that combines HUD rental assistance (Housing Choice Vouchers) with VA supportive services to help veterans and their families who are homeless. To receive the VASH funds, an individual must represent that they are the owner of the property to be rented or a registered agent of the property owner. MHA also required the applicant to show that the mortgage payments for the property were up to date (or otherwise the owner held free and clear title to the property).

MHA imposed these latter requirements to avoid placing veterans in properties that were subsequently foreclosed upon. Jones falsely misrepresented to MHA that she was a registered agent of a large, legitimate property management company in order to participate in the VASH program. As a result of Jones's misrepresentations to MHA, she received approximately \$3,000 on behalf of several veterans for rental payments but never made the payments. Sentencing for Camelia Revels, 50, of Hiram, Georgia, is scheduled for April 6, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Sentencing for Katrise Jones, 47, of Lexington, South Carolina, is scheduled for April 15, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. Both sentencings will be held before U.S. District Judge Mark H. Cohen. [Source: DoJ Northern District of GA | U.S. Attorney's Office | January 21, 2021 ++]

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**Fayetteville NC** – **Robert Morris Levy**, 54, of Fayetteville, Arkansas, was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison and ordered to pay approximately \$497,000 in restitution for one count each of involuntary manslaughter and mail fraud. Levy served as the chief of pathology and laboratory medical services at the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks in Fayetteville from 2005 until his termination in 2018. Levy was suspended in 2016 for being intoxicated on duty. Following a three-month treatment program, he returned to work under the condition he maintain sobriety and submit to random alcohol and drug screening. To avoid testing positive, however, Levy illegally used an undetectable chemical substance that causes prolonged intoxication. While employed by the VA, Levy incorrectly diagnosed diseases and falsified medical records, including the misdiagnosis of lung cancer in a veteran who would later die without treatment.

“This sentence should send a strong message that those who abuse their positions of trust in caring for veterans will be held accountable. I thank the VA OIG special agents who worked tirelessly on this case and the US Attorney's Office for its outstanding efforts. Our thoughts are with all those harmed by Dr. Levy's actions and we hope they find some small measure of comfort from what happened here today,” said VA Inspector General Michael J. Missal. [Source: Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General | | January 25, 2021 ++]

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**Seattle, WA** — A former doctor of osteopathic medicine who previously worked at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Beckley, West Virginia, was sentenced 25 JAN for depriving veterans of their civil rights under color of law by sexually abusing them. U.S. District Judge Frank W. Volk sentenced **Jonathan Yates**, 52, of Bluefield, Virginia, to 300 months in prison and three years of supervised release. Yates previously pleaded guilty on Sept. 17, 2020, to three felony counts of deprivation of rights under color of law.

According to the plea documents, Yates rubbed the genitals of two veterans and digitally penetrated a third veteran's rectum under the guise of legitimate medicine, when in fact he acted without a legitimate medical purpose. This conduct, performed while Yates was acting under color of law in his capacity as a VA physician and a federal employee, deprived the veterans of their constitutional right to bodily integrity and caused them pain. According to the plea documents, the veterans had sought treatment from Yates to manage chronic pain through osteopathic manipulative therapy. Several veterans addressed the court at sentencing, describing the trauma and mental anguish that Yates had caused them. Yates surrendered his medical licenses as a condition of his plea agreement.

- “The sentence today reflects the seriousness of this defendant’s misconduct. In a despicable betrayal of his oath, he used his specialized medical knowledge and expertise to sexually abuse his own patients. He has now been held accountable,” said Deputy Assistant Attorney General Gregory B. Friel of the Civil Rights Division. “It is a testament to the bravery of our veterans that so many came forward to bring this defendant to justice.”
- “Military veterans who serve and sacrifice to protect our nation deserve only the best of care. Yates betrayed his oath as a physician and the veterans under his care,” said U.S. Attorney Michael Stuart for the Southern District of West Virginia. “Today, Yates has been called to account for his heinous acts. While his prison sentence will not undo the significant harm Yates inflicted on the victims, we hope that it will ease their pain. I want to commend the incredible work of the FBI and the Department of Veterans Affairs-OIG in this investigation. I also want to thank the victims and their families for their unwavering support during the prosecution of this case.”
- “Yates committed hideous crimes in a hospital room, which should be a sanctuary for patients,” said FBI Pittsburgh Special Agent in Charge Michael Christman. “The facts of this case are disgusting and these patients and their families deserved better care. While today’s sentence won’t take away what happened to these patients who dedicated their lives in service to our nation, Yates will never be able to hurt anyone again. Hopefully, this will serve as justice for his victims.”
- “This sentence is the culmination of the exceptional work of the Office of the Inspector General special agents and our law enforcement partners,” said VA Inspector General Michael J. Missal. “Our thoughts are with the veterans who suffered horrific abuse by a doctor entrusted with their care, and we remain vigilant in our efforts to keep all VA patients safe from harm.”

Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia at <http://www.wvsc.uscourts.gov/> or on <http://pacer.wvsc.uscourts.gov>. [Source: DoJ | Office of Public Affairs | January 25, 2021 ++]

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**Ocean Springs, MS** — A Mississippi businessman was charged with defrauding the United States and other health care providers in a \$1.8 million scheme related to acquiring and hoarding personal protective equipment (PPE) and price gouging health care providers, including numerous U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals in critical need of PPE.

**Kenneth Bryan Ritchey**, 57, of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, was charged in an indictment in the Southern District of Mississippi with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and mail fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States, conspiracy to commit hoarding of designated scarce materials, and hoarding of

designated scarce materials. The defendant made his initial appearance today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert Myers of the Southern District of Mississippi. An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The indictment alleges that after the first U.S.-confirmed case of COVID-19, Ritchey participated in a scheme to defraud health care providers, including the VA, of more than \$1.8 million by acquiring PPE and other designated materials from all possible sources, including home improvement stores and online retailers, and ultimately hoarding the same. The indictment alleges that due to nationwide PPE shortages and COVID-19-related fears, Ritchey directed sales representatives to solicit health care providers, including the VA, to purchase PPE and other designated materials at excessively inflated prices through high-pressure sales tactics and through misrepresenting sourcing and actual costs. It is alleged that Ritchey sold PPE to health care providers desperate to acquire the same at incredible markups. For instance, the indictment alleges that Ritchey sold N-95 masks to the VA and other health care providers for as much as \$25.00 per mask, despite acquiring such masks at much lower prices.

This case was investigated by the FBI's Jackson Field Office, VA-OIG, and ICE HSI. Principal Assistant Deputy Chief Dustin M. Davis and Trial Attorney Sara E. Porter of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kathlyn R. Van Buskirk of the Southern District of Mississippi are prosecuting the case. The Fraud Section leads the Health Care Fraud Strike Force. Since its inception in March 2007, the Health Care Fraud Strike Force, which maintains 15 strike forces operating in 24 districts, has charged more than 4,200 defendants who have collectively billed the Medicare program for approximately \$19 billion. In addition, the Health and Human Services (HHS) Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, working in conjunction with the HHS-Office of Inspector General, are taking steps to increase accountability and decrease the presence of fraudulent providers.

The public is asked to report COVID-19 fraud, hoarding or price-gouging to the National Center for Disaster Fraud's (NCDF) National Hotline at (866) 720-5721 or visit The Department of Justice's NCDF website.

\* Vets \*



## U.S. Capitol Riot

### Air Force Retiree Alleged Intent to Take Hostages Arrested

A retired Air Force officer who was part of the mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol on 6 JAN carried plastic zip-tie handcuffs because he intended "to take hostages," a prosecutor said in a Texas court on 14 JAN. "He means to take hostages. He means to kidnap, restrain, perhaps try, perhaps execute members of the U.S. government," Assistant U.S. Attorney Jay Weimer said of retired Lt. Col. **Larry Rendall Brock Jr.** without providing specifics.

The prosecutor had argued that Brock should be detained, but Magistrate Judge Jeffrey L. Cureton said he would release Brock to home confinement. Cureton ordered Brock to surrender any firearms and said he could have only limited internet access as conditions of that release. "I need to put you on a very short rope," Cureton said. "These are strange times for our country and the concerns raised by the government do not fall on deaf ears." Retired Lt. Col. Larry Rendall Brock Jr. was photographed on the Senate floor in combat gear holding zip tie handcuffs.



**Insurrectionist 'Zip-Tie Guy' identified as retired Air Force lieutenant colonel**

Brock appeared in court in a light green jumpsuit, a mask and with shackles at his hands and feet. The prosecutor did not detail a specific plan by Brock but noted "his prior experience and training make him all the more dangerous." Weimer also read in court social media posts from Brock, including one posted on the day of the Capitol riot that said: "Patriots on the Capitol. Patriots storming. Men with guns need to shoot their way in."

Brock was arrested 10 JAN in Texas after being photographed on the Senate floor during the deadly riot wearing a helmet and heavy vest, and carrying plastic zip-tie handcuffs. The 53-year-old is charged with knowingly entering or remaining in a restricted building or grounds without lawful authority, and violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds. Brock's attorney, Brook Antonio II, noted that Brock has only been charged with misdemeanors. Antonio said there was no direct evidence of Brock breaking doors or windows to get into the Capitol, or doing anything violent once he was inside. "It's all talk. It's all speculation and conjecture," said Antonio, who noted Brock's long service in the military, including being reactivated after Sept. 11 and his four tours in Afghanistan.

More than 100 people have been arrested in the Capitol riot, with charges ranging from curfew violations to serious federal felonies related to theft and weapons possession. The FBI has been investigating whether some of the rioters had planned to kidnap members of Congress and hold them hostage. Before his arrest, Brock told The New Yorker magazine that he found the zip-tie cuffs on the floor and that he had planned to give them to a police officer. "I wish I had not picked those up," he said. There was no evidence presented that Brock had a firearm on the day of the Capitol riot. Antonio asked an FBI agent who was testifying whether it was possible Brock had just picked up the cuffs, and the agent acknowledged that was a possibility.

Weimer read a termination letter from Brock's former employer that said he had talked in the workplace about killing people of a "particular religion and or race." Weimer also read social media posts in which Brock referred to a coming civil war and the election being stolen from President Donald Trump. Weimer said Brock's posts also referenced the far-right and anti-government Oath Keepers and the Three Percenters, a loose anti-government network that's part of the militia movement. The Oath Keepers claim

to count thousands of current and former law enforcement officials and military veterans as members. The FBI agent though testified there was no evidence beyond the social media posts that Brock was involved with either of those groups. [Source: Associated Press| Jake Bleiberg | January 14, 2021 ++]

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## **U.S. Capitol Riot**

### **Update 01: Reserve Participant Identified/Arrested**



**Army National Guardsman Jacob Fracker, left, and Thomas Robertson are photographed inside the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6**

Jacob Fracker, 29, and Thomas “T.J.” Robertson, 47, were arrested and charged in federal court 13 JAN on one count of knowingly entering a restricted building without lawful authority and one count of violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds, according to a federal criminal complaint. Fracker is a corporal and an infantryman with the Virginia Army National Guard, while Robertson previously served in the Army Reserve. Fracker is the first active service member known to be charged in connection to the Capitol riot.

Both men were photographed inside the Capitol building. In a photo included in the complaint, Fracker appears to be giving his middle finger to the camera in front of a statue of John Stark, an American Revolution veteran who led troops at the Battle of Bennington in New York. “CNN and the Left are just mad because we actually attacked the government who is the problem and not some random small business,” Robertson said on social media, according to the complaint. “The right IN ONE DAY took the f\*\*\*\*\* U.S. Capitol. Keep poking us.” In a now-deleted Facebook post, Fracker expressed little concern about the photo of him in the Capitol: “Lol to anyone who’s possibly concerned about the picture of me going around ... Sorry I hate freedom? ... Not like I did anything illegal.”

Also on 13 JAN, the Air Force confirmed that a North Carolina man arrested on an unlawful entry charge in relation to the Capitol riots was previously an airman. Lance E. Games, 42, served on active duty from 1997 to 2007. Games last served as an information systems technician at Fort George Meade in Maryland. Among the most prominent to emerge is a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and decorated combat veteran from Texas who was arrested after he was photographed wearing a helmet and body armor on the floor of the Senate, holding a pair of zip-tie handcuffs.

Another Air Force veteran from San Diego was shot and killed by a Capitol Police officer as she tried to leap through a barricade near the House chamber. A retired Navy SEAL, among the most elite special warfare operators in the military, posted a Facebook video about traveling from his Ohio home to the rally and seemingly approving of the invasion of “our building, our house.” Also under scrutiny is an active-duty psychological warfare captain from North Carolina who organized three busloads of people who headed to Washington for the “Save America” rally in support the president’s false claim that the November election was stolen from him.

While the Pentagon declined to provide an estimate for how many other active-duty military personnel are under investigation, the military’s top leaders were concerned enough ahead of President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration that they issued a highly unusual warning to all service members this week that the right to free speech gives no one the right to commit violence. [Source: ArmyTimes | Kyle Rempfer & Stephen Losey | January 14, 2021 ++]

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## **Congressional Vets** ‘

### **117<sup>th</sup> Congress by the Numbers**

When elected officials gathered on Capitol Hill to formally convene the 117th Congress on 3 JAN, they did so with 91 veterans among their ranks, the lowest total since at least World War II. The number of veterans in Congress has declined almost steadily since the mid-1970s, as the military shifted from an end strength of largely drafted individuals to an all-volunteer force. In 1973, nearly three in every four members of Congress had some type of military service. In 2021, it’ll be about one in every six members who have military experience. That’s the lowest since at least the start of World War II. Information on congressional members with veteran experience before then is incomplete, making comparisons difficult.

However, the number could grow in coming years. Of the 79 lawmakers elected to the 117th Congress who are aged 45 or younger, 21 (about 27 percent) served in the military. But for now, the shrinking cohort of veterans elected to the House and Senate this session will be charged with sharing their knowledge of Defense Department operations and Veterans Affairs procedures with colleagues who lack direct personal experience on the topics. Here’s a look at the group, by the numbers:

- 91 total veterans in the 117th Congress.
- 17 will serve in the Senate, 74 will serve in the House.
- 28 are Democrats, 63 are Republicans.
- 13 served in the military in the 1960s or earlier.
- 50 served in the military after 2000.
- More than half (49) had overseas combat deployments.
- 15 are first-time lawmakers.
- 6 are women, a decrease of 1 from last Congress
- 44 served in the Army, Army Reserve or Army National Guard.
- 15 served in the Air Force, Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard.
- 15 served in the Marine Corps or Marine Corps Reserve.
- 17 served in the Navy or Naval Reserve.
- None served in the Coast Guard.

- Texas has the most veterans in their state delegation, with nine.
- 12 states have no veterans in their state delegations (Idaho, Missouri, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming)

Refer to <https://republicans-veterans.house.gov/resources-for-veterans/veterans-in-congress.htm> for the complete list of veterans elected to the House of Representatives last fall or returning to incumbent House seats that were not up for re-election this cycle: Below is the full list of veterans elected to Congress last fall or returning to incumbent Senate seats that were not up for re-election this cycle:

Name	District	Party	Gender	Era	Branch	Combat?	Chamber
Mark Kelly	AZ Sen	D	M	1980s-2010s	Navy	Desert Storm	Senate
Ed Markey	MA Sen	D	M	1960s-1970s	Army	None	Senate
Gary Peters	MI Sen	D	M	1990s-2000s	Navy	Gulf War	Senate
Jack Reed	RI Sen	D	M	1970s-1990s	Army	None	Senate
Richard Blumenthal	CT Sen	D	M	1970s	Marine Corps	none	Senate
Tammy Duckworth	IL Sen	D	F	1990s-2010s	Army	OIF	Senate
Tom Carper	DE Sen	D	M	1960s-1990s	Navy	Vietnam	Senate
Roger Marshall	KA Sen	R	M	1980s-1900s	Army	None	Senate
Dan Sullivan	AK Sen	R	M	1990s-2010s	Marine Corps	OEF	Senate
Jim Inhofe	OK Sen	R	M	1950s	Army	None	Senate
Joni Ernst	IA Sen	R	F	1990s-2010s	Army	OIF	Senate
Lindsey Graham	SC Sen	R	M	1980s-2010s	Air Force	OIF, OEF	Senate
Mitch McConnell	KY Sen	R	M	1960s	Army	None	Senate
Rick Scott	FL Sen	R	M	1970s	Navy	none	Senate
Roger Wicker	MS Sen	R	M	1970s-1990s	Air Force	none	Senate
Todd Young	IN Sen	R	M	1990s-2000s	Marine Corps	none	Senate
Tom Cotton	AR Sen	R	M	2000s-2010s	Army	OIF, OEF	Senate

[Source: VVA Web Weekly | Leo Shane III | January 15, 2021 ++]

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### USMC Oldest Vet

Sgt. Dorothy (Schmidt) Cole Passes at age 107



The nation’s oldest living Marine veteran died of a heart attack on 7 JAN. Sgt. Dorothy (Schmidt) Cole enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1943 after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The 29-year-old initially had attempted to join the Navy two years earlier but was told she didn’t meet their height standards. The Marine Corps recognized Cole, born Sept. 19, 1913, in Warren, Pennsylvania, as the oldest living Marine in 2020 on her 107th birthday.

When Dorothy Schmidt Cole joined the Marine Corps in July 1943, she wasn’t thinking about the impact her service would have on the Corps or on generations of women to come. She just wanted that stylish uniform. “Everyone was out doing something — there were women helping the Red Cross, or even in churches they were knitting things,” Cole said in a memorial video tweeted by the Marine Corps. “So I decided that I wanted to do something and I would go into the Marine Corps.” She joined just months after the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve began training women to fill positions in male-dominated fields. Her service laid the foundation for women to serve in roles across the Marine Corps today. “Women Marines have served at every rank up to lieutenant general, leading and making Marines,” Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Joseph Butterfield told Marine Corps Times on Cole’s 107th birthday in September 2020. “Marines like Sgt. Cole helped pave the way for this continued tradition of service and sacrifice.”

After completing six weeks of boot camp at Camp Le Jeune, North Carolina, Cole proceeded to spend two years typing correspondence for officers in Quantico, Virginia. The centenarian Marine passed away at her daughter’s home in Kannapolis, North Carolina, the Charlotte Observer reported. She is survived by her daughter, two granddaughters and six great-grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, Cole requested that donations be made to Covenant Presbyterian Church in Concord, North Carolina, where she was a member four more than 40 years, or the Marine Corps League Cabarrus Detachment, according to her obituary. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Harm Venhuizen | January 14, 2021 ++]

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## **Vet Lawsuits | Nicholas Giovannelli**

### **Retailers Exploitation of His Afghan Photos for Profit**



Army veteran Nicholas Giovannelli is suing to stop several companies from “exploiting his image for profit” after he found them selling posters featuring photos of him taken in Afghanistan many years ago.



Giovannelli deployed twice and was medically discharged five years ago after suffering a traumatic brain injury and other wounds, his lawyer Craig D. Tobin said during a video press conference last week to announce the Chicago district court lawsuit. “Nick was very proud and is very proud of his military service,” Tobin said. “He has no problem with the fact that the United States military took photographs of him while he was on combat tours.”

But Giovannelli never consented to letting companies use those images for their own benefit, Tobin said. He was shocked to learn of the poster a few months ago, after someone he had served with brought it to his attention, he said. “It doesn’t take a great amount of imagination to understand that someone who has sustained pretty substantial injuries on behalf of his country can be seriously harmed — both actually and mentally — by having to see images he never consented to be sold publicly online,” Tobin said. The list of defendants include Walmart and Amazon, along with several websites that sell stock photographs or other art prints. Amazon declined to comment and several of the other sites did not immediately respond to inquiries.

“We take this seriously and once we are served with the complaint, we will respond as appropriate with the Court,” said Randy Hargrove, a Walmart spokesman. Tobin declined to provide the photos, but described some of them. At least one, taken as Giovannelli crossed a river in Zabul province in March 2009, still appears on a Defense Department website. Adam Mancini, who was an Army staff sergeant when he took the picture, had no idea the photo was available for sale, or that it had become the subject of a lawsuit. “I remember that day ... great group of guys,” Mancini said via Facebook Messenger.

At the time, Giovannelli was with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, at Forward Operating Base Baysalugh. A native of the Chicago suburb of Niles, he deployed later to Logar province with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the Chicago Tribune reported after his hometown presented him the keys to the city in 2015 for his service. He took part in some 100 combat patrols, earning unspecified valor awards, Tobin said, and suffered TBI in an incident where he held down a guard post in the midst of “relentless mortar fire.” He also earned the Purple Heart.

The photo of the river crossing doesn’t appear to still be for sale on Amazon or Walmart, though many other photos that the military provides for free still are. The images are in the public domain and may be used for both noncommercial uses, such as in newspapers, and for commercial purposes such as advertising and fundraising. Military release rules state that those pictured do not waive their personal privacy or publicity rights to the use of their likenesses for commercial purposes. That’s the issue in the Giovannelli case.

The companies selling the posters “owed a duty to Giovannelli under Illinois law not to publicize and/or sell his image for profit without first procuring his written consent,” the lawsuit alleges, the Sun-Times reported. Their failure to do so caused him “extreme emotional distress,” said the suit, which seeks damages of over \$1 million. Tobin claimed the military never intended the photos to be used in such a way. An Army spokesman did not have an immediate response but was looking into the matter. If the lawsuit succeeds, it could have wide-ranging implications, as a review of the defendant’s websites, including Stocktrekimages.com, Pixels.com and Posterazzi.com, show that many photos feature recognizable U.S. service members who may have similar rights claims.

“We want to make sure that the exploitation of these soldiers stops,” Tobin said, adding that any profits be given to the rightful owners of those benefits. However, the plaintiff’s case isn’t clear-cut. A California

court in 2001 found that an artist could not sell images of The Three Stooges without permission. But in 2013, a federal district court in Illinois found that Getty Images did not violate that state’s publicity rights act when it offered to sell photos of singer Marshall Thompson, a member of the Chi-Lites, a group that made several 1970s hits. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Chad Garland | January 20, 2021 ++]

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## **Vet Fraud & Abuse**

### **Reported 16 thru 31 JAN 2021**

**Hodgeville, WV** -- A West Virginia woman who once served in the Air Force was sentenced to more than 11 years in federal prison 25 JAN for planning to offer top-secret information from the National Security Agency to the Russian government. **Elizabeth Jo Shirley**, 47, pleaded guilty last year as part of a plea agreement to one count each of willful retention of national defense information and international parental kidnapping.

“Shirley held a position that required the highest level of trust,” U.S. Attorney Bill Powell of West Virginia’s northern district said in a statement. “When she committed these crimes, she not only broke that trust, she potentially endangered the very people who employed her and her neighbors. National security is one of our highest priorities. Shirley deserves her sentence and not a day less.”



Prosecutors said Shirley, of Hedgesville, leased a storage unit and kept a document — without authorization — relating to national defense that outlines intelligence information regarding a foreign government’s military and political issues. Shirley worked on assignments with the NSA while serving in the Air Force. From 2001 to 2012, Shirley held various positions with the Navy’s Office of Naval Intelligence, the departments of Defense and Energy, the National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force and at least five different cleared defense contractors. She also held top-level security clearances at various times, the statement said.

Shirley took her 6-year-old daughter to Mexico in July 2019 after she failed to return the child on the agreed-upon date to the girl’s custodial father, the primary residential parent, and his wife in West Virginia. Prosecutors said Shirley went to Mexico with the intent of contacting Russian government representatives to request resettlement in a country that would not extradite her back to the U.S. While in Mexico, Shirley

prepared a written message that referenced an “urgent need” to have items shipped from the U.S. related to her “life’s work before they are seized and destroyed,” prosecutors said.

Shirley was arrested in August 2019 at a hotel in Mexico City and the girl was returned to her father. Authorities said the NSA document was located that month in a storage locker in Martinsburg, while messages Shirley had drafted to Russian government officials along with other classified information were found on her electronic devices. “Shirley betrayed the trust of the American people when she took classified information from her work with the intelligence community,” said Assistant Attorney General John C. Demers of the National Security Division. “She then sought to profit from her betrayal by seeking to sell this information to Russia, one of America’s foremost adversaries, in order to further her criminal abduction of her daughter. “This sentence will hold Shirley accountable for her violations of the American people’s trust, and serves as a warning to others who would seek unlawful profit at America’s expense.” [Source: DoJ | Office of Public Affairs | January 25, 2021 ++]

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**Hanover, NH** -- The New Hampshire attorney general's office says it has recovered more than \$400,000 from a nonprofit that misappropriated funds meant to help military veterans. **Danielle Goodwin**, co-founder and former director of *Project VetCare*, pleaded guilty in 2018 to diverting money from the Hanover charity for her personal use. She was sentenced to 3½ to seven years in state prison and required to pay back nearly \$100,000. She was released from prison last month. The Valley News reports the Charitable Trust Division of the attorney general's office said in a report 26 JAN that funds recovered from Project VetCare included \$20,000 for a van for the Disabled American Veterans, and \$196,000 to the Veterans County program of the Easter Seals of New Hampshire and Vermont.



Goodwin was to pay \$90,000 when she sold her home, but when it was put on the market, the Charitable Trusts Unit reopened the agreement. The home sold in September for nearly \$600,000, and the Easter Seals Veterans Count program will get another \$200,000. The trusts unit also will get a \$10,000 civil penalty payment. The report concludes that Project VetCare's board had no knowledge of Goodwin’s actions until early 2016, and that Project VetCare lacked proper internal financial controls. [Source: Associated Press | January 27, 2021 ++]

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## WWII Vets [246]

### Norman Fellman | Berga an der Elster Camp POW



The Army drafted Norman Fellman, born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1944. In his senior year of high school, he transferred to a military school due to his mother's illness. Upon graduation, Fellman entered the Army. He was first sent to the medics and went through basic training with them. After finishing his training, Fellman went to an Army air base in Santa Ana, California. Fellman then made his way to a reassignment center in Monterey, California. While there, he became a half-track driver. Fellman went to Camp Adair, Oregon, to join the 70th Infantry Division as a scout.

He went overseas in January 1945, attaching to the 45th Infantry Division in Alsace-Lorraine. Fellman's company held a hill called Falkenburg Hill, which is outside of Philippsburg, Germany. Things quickly went awry for the company as their captain was wounded, their patrols went missing, they were low on ammunition and they ran out of food. They surrendered to the Nazis, since their only other choices were to freeze or starve. The Nazis packed the company into railroad cars and took them to Stalag IX-B, which was a prisoner of war camp. The U.S. clerks working in registration registered everyone as a Protestant, in attempt to save the Jews and Catholics. This deceit did not work for long. The Nazis soon ordered Jews to reveal themselves. Fellman, who was Jewish, turned himself in against the advice of the barrack leaders. Fellman did this for two reasons: he was afraid that an anti-Semite would turn him in if they were hungry enough and he was proud of who and what he was. After he turned himself over to the Nazis, he and 351 other Jews and Catholics went off to a labor detachment at Berga an der Elster Camp in Berga, Germany.

This was not a normal prisoner of war camp. This was a civilian concentration camp where there were no rules. Fellman recalled seeing a mass of humanity, men and women, but no children. They received bread that was mostly sawdust, and an identifiable liquid that some called coffee. Fellman and the other 351 men hollowed a mountain for an underground factory. Fellman served in Tunnel 11 and would pick up rocks to take them out of the mountain. One day in April, the Nazis began to march the prisoners of war around Germany. Fellman later found out that Hitler had given the orders to kill all of the prisoners, but luck was on Fellman's side. On April 20 the 90th Division liberated the prisoners of war. Fellman, who lost 92 pounds in captivity, went to a hospital in Paris. He then went to Richmond, Virginia, to recuperate from his imprisonment.

After leaving the Army, Fellman went to college. For a long time after the war, Fellman tried to ignore his past in the military and prisoner of war camp, many people who knew him didn't even know that he was in the military. Fellman's family managed to convince him 50 years after the war ended to start attending prisoner of war rap sessions. He found that these meetings helped him, and he soon started going weekly. After retiring, Fellman opened up a boot shop and volunteered at hospitals with his service dog.

Fellman passed away in 2014 at the age of 90. Find out more about Fellman's service [here](#). We honor his service. [Source: Vantage Point | Adrianna Hyland | December 10, 2020 ++]

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## Korean War Vets

Jim Valentine | Part of the 'Chosin Few' who Escaped



The front page of the Spokesman-Review on Nov. 28, 1950, reported that Chinese soldiers were attacking U.S.-led forces in North Korea.

Even at 88 years old, Jim Valentine finds himself waking up at night and shifting positions in an attempt not to freeze. "I would never have believed that you could live on the ground at 40 (degrees) below zero," said Valentine, who 70 years ago this month was among the thousands of U.S. troops encircled by Chinese soldiers on the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. "You would sleep on one side until it froze, and then you would turn on the other side and rub it. "I catch myself still doing it in bed today." It took Valentine, who signed up for the U.S. Army at 17 as a runaway hoping to escape the hard labor of picking cotton in California, several decades to talk about what happened during that attack that began Nov. 27, 1950. Recalling it now, 70 years later, still causes the longtime Cheney resident to pause, tears welling in his eyes.

"Personnel wasn't that great. It wasn't until '51, '52, '53 did people start showing up," said Valentine, who originally volunteered for what he understood was a "police action" in North Korea that exploded following that Chinese offensive into a full-scale war. He cleared his throat. "So much of that ..." he said, trailing off. "Sorry. It's all coming back now." Valentine was a member of the U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division, responsible for covering the Marine Corps' right flank as U.S. and United Nations forces pushed north toward the Yalu River, the dividing line between Korea and China. He'd landed at Incheon in mid-September and aided what appeared to be a decisive push of the North Koreans back to Communist China, an offensive so successful U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur visited the front and told the fighters they'd be home by Christmas 1950.

That didn't happen. A force of Chinese soldiers, estimated to be about 120,000 strong, circled U.S. and United Nations forces that totaled roughly 30,000, an offensive that was reported back home as one that might end in annihilation. MacArthur would later tell the Pentagon following the attacks in North Korea "we face an entirely new war." President Harry Truman removed him from command five months after the attack. Communication to the Army forces on the east side of the Chosin Reservoir was poor, Valentine said, and all he knew at the time was that he had to fight to stay alive. "If it wasn't for all those ships that came in at Hungnam harbor, they all shelled the complete perimeter that was 32 miles around, and they kept shelling that area so we could, you know, withdraw," he said.

While the Chinese attempted to pick off the soldiers from elevated positions, it was ultimately the cold of that winter that caused the biggest problem for both sides. Temperatures during the 17-day battle routinely dipped to 20 below zero, and sometimes reached 40 below zero. A summary prepared by Chinese military leaders after the battle determined that more of their men had died of temperature exposure than gunfire or artillery. American forces, Valentine among them, later reported symptoms of what's known as "timebomb consequences" — injuries sustained from the cold that take years to manifest. Valentine said his colleagues wouldn't dare light a fire during the battle, for fear of being picked off by Chinese fire or artillery. The only soldiers who did were Turkish forces fighting on behalf of the United Nations. "The Turks used to build their own fire," Valentine said. "The Chinese could drop a mortar on you instantly. They just didn't seem to care."

At just 17, Valentine said he didn't appreciate the violence that raged around him. He looked at fighting in the mountains as an extension of the games of cowboys and Indians he used to play as a child in the shrubby ranchlands of his home in the southwest. Estimates of the losses vary, but it's generally believed the U.N. forces suffered casualties totaling more than 17,000, of whom 6,000 were killed or reported missing. The Chinese lost about 19,000 to fighting, and many more to the elements. The battle was a Pyrrhic victory for the Chinese, who managed to force U.N. soldiers out of North Korea. But they were unable to destroy them, as Mao Zedong ordered, and the war ended in a stalemate three years later.

After the war, Valentine received a Bronze Star, "just for surviving," he said. He also received a Purple Heart for a gunshot wound to his backside and other decorations he felt he didn't deserve. Valentine left the Army with the rank of first sergeant. But the war didn't leave him. He said he used drugs and committed some crimes before meeting his wife, Beth, who has helped him cope with the memories of combat. "I run around the country, screwing everything up until I met her," he said. "A good woman does that every time," Beth Valentine said, smiling. Beth Valentine would work staggered shifts with her husband as they raised their children in an effort to avoid having to leave them with babysitters. Some nights she'd come home and her husband would already be asleep. "The first night I came home, and I leaned over to kiss him, to let him know I was home," Beth Valentine said. "And he knocked me across the room. It was just a reaction. So, after that I would crawl into bed, and then kiss him."

It was after Valentine joined the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post at the urging of a fellow veteran that he began to feel comfortable talking about the war. He also visited the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., as part of the Honor Flight program. He received letters from family members as part of the trip, thanking him for a service to his country he stumbled into as a teenager but left him with memories he spent several years trying to suppress. "The VFW here in Cheney helped me more than anything, by just letting me talk about it," he said. The memories are hard to escape, especially in a year when the Valentines have been confined to the home they've shared in Cheney for more than 30 years.

The couple bought a motor home just before the pandemic hit, hoping to travel across the United States and Canada, but those plans were dashed like so many others in 2020.

Jim Valentine would like to return to the country where he fought 70 years ago. Valentine was part of a force that twice liberated Seoul, the capital of South Korea, first in September 1950 after landing at Incheon and again in March of the following year, after it was captured by the Chinese. His only memories of the city are of a bombed-out metropolis with no buildings taller than two stories. "I don't know if it'll ever happen, because I'm 88 years old," said Valentine, who also recently lost weight with his wife in an effort to stay healthy. "So I can get around now, pretty good. But with everything in the world what it is today, it's just hard." [Source: | The Spokesman-Review | Kip Hill | November 29, 2020 ++]

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## Afghan Vets 16

**Matthew T. Abbate**



Matthew Thomas Abbate was born September 1984 and raised in Fresno, California. He graduated from Sierra Charter High and enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2006. He was a member of the “Darkhorse,” 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force based at Camp Pendleton, California. Abbate served three tours of duty in Iraq, Japan and Afghanistan, where he was killed in action Dec. 2, 2010.

Two months prior, Abbate’s sniper section was accompanying a squad of Marines on foot patrol in the Sangin River Valley. As they patrolled orchards and fields, enemy insurgents opened fire on their position to lure them into an unswept minefield. Almost instantly, improvised explosive devices detonated, injuring two Marines and a Navy corpsman. The blast incapacitated the patrol leader. Abbate recognized and took charge of the situation, running into the unswept minefield and drawing enemy fire as he rallied the disoriented survivors. Completely exposed, Abbate personally suppressed the enemy and directed the remaining squad members’ fire.

After coordinating a medical evacuation while the casualties received urgent aid, Abbate swept the landing zone for mines until enemy fire again forced the squad to take cover. Knowing the urgency of rapid evacuation for the critically wounded, Abbate once again rallied the squad and led a counterattack that cleared the landing zone of hostiles, allowing for a helicopter evacuation. He received a Navy Cross for his actions that day.

Abbate received fatal wounds two months later when another Marine patrol, pinned down by enemy fire, called in a coalition airstrike. The combination of the airstrike fragments and enemy explosives killed him. Survivors described Abbate as being “the perfect Marine.” In addition to the Navy Cross, Abbate received a Purple Heart, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal and other medals. We honor his service. [Source: Vantage Point | Nathan Wang| November 10, 2020 ++]

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## **Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule**

**As of 31 JAN 2021**

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

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

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

Note that events listed on the Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule may be cancelled or rescheduled. Before traveling long distances to attend an event, you should contact the applicable RAO, RSO, event sponsor, etc., to ensure the event will, in fact, be held on the date\time indicated. Also, attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214. Please report broken links, comments, corrections, suggestions, new RADs and\or other military retiree\vetterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, [Milton.Bell126@gmail.com](mailto:Milton.Bell126@gmail.com) [Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | January 31, 2021 ++]

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## **Vet Hiring Fairs**

**Scheduled As of 31 JAN 2021**



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 | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## **State Veteran's Benefits Wisconsin 2021**

The state of Wisconsin provides a number of services and benefits to its veterans. To obtain information on these refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits – WI**” for an overview of those in the below categories. They are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below refer to <http://dva.state.wi.us>:

- Housing
- Financial
- Employment
- Education
- Recreation
- Burial
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing
- Other Veteran Benefits

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/wisconsin-state-veterans-benefits.html> | JAN 2021 ++]

**\* Vet Legislation \***



## **TRICARE Coverage**

### **Update 09: H.R.0000 | Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act of 2021**

A proposal to allow adult children to remain covered under their parents' Tricare plan until age 26 — without having to pay an extra premium for a separate Tricare plan — has been introduced in Congress. It's a matter of equity, said Rep. Elaine Luria (D-VA) during a 28 JAN call with reporters. "In the military family, those using Tricare don't have the same ability to keep their children on their health care plan until age 26," unlike other health care plans as required by the Affordable Care Act, she said. Luria and Rep. Michael Waltz (R-FL) introduced the proposed legislation 25 JAN.

More than 37,000 unmarried, adult children of military sponsors were enrolled in either the Tricare Young Adult Prime or Select programs as of a year ago, according to the Defense Department. The bill, titled, "Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act of 2021," would eliminate the requirement to pay a separate premium for a young adult. That would save some families \$459 a month. As of 1 JAN, monthly premiums increased by 22 percent, to \$459 for those in Tricare Young Adult Prime; and by 12 percent, to \$257, for those in Tricare Young Adult Select. Currently, dependent children can remain on their parent's Tricare plan until age 21, or until age 23 if the child is enrolled in a full course of study, and the sponsor is still providing more than half of their financial support. At age 23, the child may qualify to purchase Tricare Young Adult.

Waltz said one estimate is that the proposal would cost the government about \$125 million a year, but cost estimates are part of the process of considering the proposal. He said part of the cost estimate will be looking at the retention benefits of the proposal, and believes the cost will be offset by those benefits. "I put it in the 'right thing to do' category," he said. Often, family benefits are a critical factor in troops' decisions about whether to stay in the military, he said. "We want to impact that good health care.... Something that's in line with what we're seeing now across the board in the private sector."

The same proposal was introduced last year, but didn't make it into law. Luria said it's hard to say what the chances are this year that it will be successful, but noted that COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of health care. "Persistence wins," Waltz said. "We'll just keep pushing for this one." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | January 14, 2021 ++]

**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>.



## USSF

### **Update 25: Alabama's Redstone Arsenal Chosen for Command Headquarters**

The Air Force has chosen Alabama's Redstone Arsenal to house the 1,400-member U.S. Space Command Headquarters, service and state officials said Wednesday. Outgoing Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett selected Redstone this month "as the preferred location" for SPACECOM, Air Force officials said. Service officials told Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey of their decision in a phone call Wednesday morning, Ivey's office said in a statement. "I couldn't be more pleased to learn that Alabama will be the new home to the United States Space Command!" Ivey said in the statement. "The bottom line is simple, the Redstone region is the most natural choice to become home to such an important mission for our country."

Redstone, an Army installation just outside Huntsville, was named one of six finalists for the headquarters in November after the Air Force conducted two searches for a permanent home for the Pentagon's newest combatant command, which is charged with overseeing and controlling the U.S. military's myriad space-based infrastructure and operations. The command has been housed temporarily at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colo., since it was established in August 2019.

The Air Force confirmed Redstone's selection 13 JAN. The decision is contingent on a required environmental impact study and could be finalized by 2023, the Air Force said in a statement. Ivey said the Huntsville region's reputation for supporting the military and its vast history of involvement in space operations was a key factor in the final pitch last month to Air Force officials to choose Redstone, according to her office. "This combination only enhances the outstanding relationships we have with the 65 diverse federal agencies on Redstone Arsenal, not to mention the growing presence of the FBI and other federal installations," she said in the statement.

Redstone beat out Peterson AFB, one of the other announced finalists, which has long hosted the military's top space operations and was seen as the front-runner to be named the permanent home for SPACECOM. But Peterson is expected to retain Space Command headquarters for several years "until the permanent location is ready to support the mission." Air Force officials have said previously the service estimated it could take some six years to build the facilities necessary to house U.S. Space Command. The process was estimated to cost about \$1 billion.

Huntsville is known as Rocket City, largely because Wernher von Braun and other rocketeers settled in the city in the 1950s to help develop the U.S. space and rockets program, according to a 2018 report by The Associated Press. The city is still home to NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center on Redstone Arsenal, responsible for civilian rocketry and spacecraft propulsion research. Huntsville is also home to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, a space exploration museum, perhaps best known as the home of Space Camp.

Air Force officials said 13 JAN that Barrett, who is set to leave her position 19 JAN, considered several factors in reaching her decision, including installations’ infrastructure capacity, support from the community and costs to the Defense Department. “Huntsville compared favorably across more of these factors than any other community, providing a large, qualified workforce, quality schools, superior infrastructure capacity, and low initial and recurring costs,” according to the Air Force statement.

Space Command’s establishment in 2019 was actually a re-establishment of the combatant command, after the Pentagon shuttered it in 2002 as part of the post-9/11 government restructuring. It was established just months before the newest military branch, U.S. Space Force, was founded. Under Defense Department structure, the military services — in this case, the Space Force — are responsible for training and equipping troops who then operate under the leadership and control of a combatant command— in this case, the Space Command. Space Force, as it grows, is expected to provide the bulk of the troops assigned to Space Command, but the other military services will also provide some troops to the command, officials have said. Space Command is led by four-star Army Gen. James Dickinson. Space Force, like all military services, is headquartered at the Pentagon, where it will remain. It is led by Gen. Jay Raymond, the chief of space operations. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Corey Dickstein | January 13, 2021 ++]

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## USSF

### Update 26: New Rank Names for Guardians Announced



Space Force has decided on the names for its ranks, and while officers will keep the same names that they have in the Air Force, several enlisted ranks have changed, according to a memorandum released 22 JAN. The service-wide memo is the most recent change for Space Force personnel 1 FEB.

For the junior enlisted who are E-1 to E-4, they will no longer be “airman” but “specialist,” and then depending on their grade, the rank will include numbers 1 through 4, according to the memo provided by the Air Force. For example, an E-3 will go from airman first class to specialist 3, or Spc3, in Space Force. They can be addressed as specialist, Spec3, or specialist 3, according to the memo. Guardians who are E-5 will no longer be a staff sergeant but a sergeant in the Space Force. Grades E-6 to E-9 with names technical sergeant, master sergeant, senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant will remain the same. The most senior enlisted guardian will now be the chief master sergeant of the Space Force, according to the memo. All the officer ranks, from second lieutenant to general, remain the same. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Caitlin M. Kenney | January 29, 2021 ++]

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## **Navy LCS Program**

### **Update 07: Ship Deliveries Halted Until Transmission Flaw Corrected**

The U.S. Navy has halted deliveries of Lockheed Martin's Freedom-class littoral combat ship, citing a design flaw with the ship's transmission. In a statement to Defense News, the Navy pointed to "a material defect" with the ship's combining gear, a complex transmission that transmits power generated by the ship's engines to its waterjet propulsion system, and said it is working to design a fix for in-service littoral combat ships while holding off on taking delivery on new ships.

The Freedom LCS was designed by Lockheed Martin and built by Fincantieri's Marinette Marine shipyard. The combining gear with the defect was designed by the German firm RENK AG. The Navy, Lockheed and RENK AG have worked together on a fix, which will likely take months to install for each ship, according to a senior Navy official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The acknowledgement of the design flaw — early failure of the ship's high-speed clutch bearings — confirms the Navy's suspicions first reported by Defense News in December. Navy officials have expressed confidence, however, that the service is on a good path to fixing the defect and getting the ships to a useful place.

In a statement, the Navy said it is working to ease the burden on commanders and enable them to still make use of the ship, even as the Navy works through the process of testing the proposed fix. "A design fix has been developed and is in production, to be followed by factory and sea-based testing," a Navy statement read. "The Navy is determining the plan to install this fix on ships in the Fleet. "The fix will be installed and tested on new construction ships prior to the Navy taking deliveries of those ships. Measures have been implemented to mitigate risk to the in-service Freedom variant ships while the Navy moves swiftly to correct the deficiency and minimize operational impacts."

The modified combining gear will be tested at the RENK AG factory and on a new ship at sea before it is accepted, said Rear Adm. Casey Moton, the head of the unmanned and small combatants office at Naval Sea Systems Command. "The planned redesign of the defective bearings will be rigorously tested both on land at the manufacturing facility and at sea on a new construction ship before it is accepted and installed in-service," Moton said in a statement. The Navy told Lockheed Martin it believes the combining gear issue was a "latent defect," meaning the service expects the company will be responsible for the repairs, according to a senior Navy official. Lockheed has not yet responded to the the Navy and no agreement has yet been reached over how those repairs will be paid for.

But just how much those repairs will cost is not yet know, said Capt. Danny Hernandez, spokesman for the assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition. "The cost of the repair will be determined once a government-approved solution has been identified," Hernandez said. Lockheed Martin said in a statement that it is committed to fixing the combining gear issue. "In partnership with the U.S. Navy, Lockheed Martin is aggressively pursuing a resolution to the gear issue the Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship is currently experiencing," the statement read.

The Navy has put out a class advisory on the Freedom variant, which restricts some operations of the ship. But a source familiar with the issue told Defense News that as designed, it can operate up to 34 knots even with restrictions in place in various configurations. The advisory restricts certain configurations that put stress on the failing clutch bearings, two sources confirmed to Defense News. The Freedom-class LCS

has been bedeviled by issues with its combining gear, which is arguably an imperfect solution engineered to meet the 40-knot-plus speed requirement.

The string of combining gear casualties dates back to at least late 2015, when the LCS Milwaukee broke down on its maiden voyage to its home port in Mayport, Florida, and had to be towed into the Little Creek base in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Early the next year, the LCS Fort Worth suffered a casualty to the combining gear in port when sailors accidentally ran the system without lube oil running through it. The early issues, however, are likely not the same as the clutch bearing failures that prompted the Navy to halt deliveries, however. Early in 2020, LCS-9 (USS Little Rock) suffered a breakdown of its combining gear, which was followed in October by the casualty to LCS-7 (USS Detroit). Detroit was forced to hobble back to port from a deployment to Latin America, but a power failure en route, forcing the Navy to have it towed to port. [Source: Defense News | David B. Larter | January 19, 2021 ++]

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## **USAF Academy**

### **Update 01: Cheating Scandal During COVID Lockdown Ensnarers 249 Cadets**

The Air Force Academy believes 249 cadets cheated on exams and other assignments during the rapid shift to remote learning during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic last spring. In a 22 JAN release, the academy said those cadets are suspected of violating the school's honor code in a variety of ways — from failing to properly cite sources and looking up answers on unauthorized tutoring websites while taking exams to completing final exams in small groups.

Most of those cadets have admitted to cheating and have been placed on probation and remediation for six months, said officials at the academy, located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The rest of the cases are pending, and are at various stages. Two cadets have been dismissed from the academy for cheating, academy spokesman Michael Slater said in a follow-up email. The cadets involved were spread across the lower three classes of 2021, 2022 and 2023, Slater said. No cadets who graduated in the class of 2020 last year were involved, he said.

Superintendent Lt. Gen. Richard Clark has ordered the first review of the academy's honor program in years as a result of the cheating scandal, the academy said. The review seeks to recommend ways to improve the honor program so it properly develops cadets' character and teaches them to follow the academy's honor code: "We will not lie, steal or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does." "The Honor Code is not only foundational to the Air Force Academy, but it serves as a guide for cadets to live an honorable life, whether serving in uniform or not," Clark said. "Honor serves as one of my fundamental institutional priorities for developing leaders of character."

Academy officials concluded last spring that they could not effectively separate all 4,000 or so cadets on campus to the degree necessary to prevent the coronavirus from spreading. Three-quarters of the students were sent home over an eight-day period — the first time this had happened in the academy's history — and the school quickly shifted to remote learning. But without in-person supervision over the next few months, some cadets allegedly resorted to cheating. Academic safeguards put in place by the dean of faculty detected infractions, which prompted the academy to launch investigations, the release said.

However, the process of working through possible honor code infractions is taking longer than usual due to the pandemic. Because cadets are in charge, the work could not begin until all students returned to Colorado Springs for the fall semester last year. Even after the process began, it proceeded slower than usual because of COVID restrictions, the release said. The academy believes probation and remediation will likely be enough for those cadets to learn their lesson. More than 90 percent of cadets who go through remediation do not offend again, the academy said.

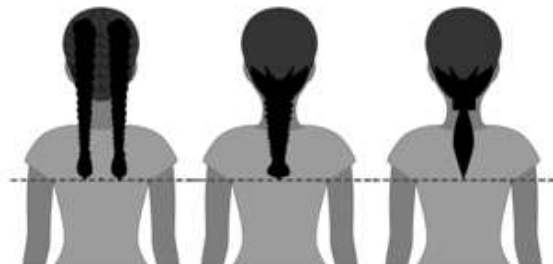
Cadets who have violated the honor code are also not allowed to represent the academy until they have finished their required remediation. “Remediation is a consequence and not an act of leniency,” Clark said. “If earned, remediation provides an opportunity to reset the moral compass and deepen a cadet’s understanding of and respect for the Honor Code. Developing leaders of character is not without life lessons and learning from these mistakes.”

The academy said Clark “has complete confidence” in its academic integrity, and that it is putting measures in place to try to deter cadets from future violations of the honor code. These measures include better using technology to monitor for plagiarism, and monitoring websites in real time to identify when cadets are improperly sharing information with one another. The academy has also developed supplemental course content and resources to improve cadets’ learning. [Source: AirForceTimes | Stephen Losey | January 29, 2021 ++]

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## **USAF Grooming Standards**

### **Updated 01: Women’s Hair**



Women in the Air Force can wear a ponytail or up to two braids with their uniform under an update to grooming regulations spurred by feedback that showed women experienced hair loss and migraines from the current standards. The changes take effect next month and are part of the Air Force’s efforts to address diversity and inclusion in the ranks, according to an Air Force news release sent 21 JAN. “As I outlined in ‘Action Order A: Airmen,’ this decision is a commitment to supporting the airmen we need and sustaining the culture and environment of excellence that will continue to make the Air Force an attractive career choice for airmen and families,” Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Brown, said in a statement. “I’m thankful for the feedback and research conducted from a number of women leaders, the Women’s Initiative Team, the Air Force uniform board, and our joint teammates.”

He approved the policy after considering feedback from the force, a uniform board recommendation, and the professional image and standards of the Air Force and military, according to the release. The change allows women to wear up to two braids or a single ponytail so long as the width does not exceed

beyond their head and the length does not extend below the top of each sleeve inseam, according to the release. In addition, women’s bangs may now touch their eyebrows, but not cover their eyes. These new changes will be effective upon publication of the new standards in Air Force Instruction 36-2903 in February and will also apply to women in Space Force. Under previous guidance, if a woman’s hair or ponytail was longer than her collar, it had to be secured with no loose ends.

The Air Force uniform board convened in November to discuss ideas gathered from airmen across the service who participated in a dress and appearance crowdsourcing campaign. Participants on the board included 19 diverse airmen of various ranks from across the major commands and headquarters directorates. Thousands of women across the Air Force provided feedback to the Women’s Initiative Team, which sent recommendations to the board. Women said constraints of current hair-grooming standards resulted in damage to their hair, migraines and hair loss. “In addition to the health concerns we have for our airmen, not all women have the same hair type, and our hair standards should reflect our diverse force,” said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass. “I am pleased we could make this important change for our women service members.”

The changes also support ongoing efforts to address diversity and inclusion in the ranks, according to the release. “We remain committed to removing barriers to service,” said Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services. “In an all-volunteer force, we want fully qualified volunteers who are representative of the nation to see us as a great opportunity to maximize their talent and serve.”

The board also considered beard regulations for men, according to the release. However, the board found no known health or hair loss issues associated with current male grooming standard compliance and did not make changes. Beards are permitted in conjunction with medical exceptions such as shaving waivers or for approved religious accommodations. Several other ideas from the board remain under consideration. The Army is conducting a similar review of its grooming standards and is expected to announce changes by the end of January. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Rose L. Thayer | January 21, 2021 ++]

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## **Army Grooming & Dress**

### **Update 03: New Female Hairstyle Policy +**

Female soldiers will be permitted by late February to wear several additional hairstyles in uniform under a new Army policy that is part of an effort to improve racial and gender equality throughout the service. Senior leaders approved new policies last month that allow women to shave their heads or wear ponytails and hairstyle combinations such as braided twists and locs at the same time in uniform, according to service documents released 26 JAN. The new grooming standards will take effect 25 FEB alongside an updated version of AR-670-1, the Army’s all-encompassing regulation governing appearance and how to wear uniforms, which was also announced Tuesday.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston, the service’s most senior enlisted soldier, told reporters 26 JAN that the changes were driven by feedback from soldiers. He said many women detailed the struggles that they faced with grooming standards, especially former policies that mandated women with long hair wear it in buns. “This is about listening to our soldiers, taking what they are saying and determining how



can we incorporate that into the Army,” Grinston said. “They spoke out, we listened, and I think we went through a really good process. I’m really excited about the changes we’re making.”

A uniform policy board of mostly female soldiers met in December and gave recommendations about changes they believed would benefit soldiers, said Army Sgt. Maj. Brian Sanders. The board did not meet in time to roll the new policies into the new AR 670-1, but Sanders said they would be included in that regulation next time it is updated. The changes include authorizing women to wear long ponytails during physical training, field training and combat operations. The policy allows women to wear the long ponytail out during fitness training, but female soldiers must tuck it into their Army Combat Uniform top when they are wearing a helmet.



Women for years had struggled to keep their helmets in the correct place while wearing a bun, Grinston said. The long ponytail option should allow them to properly wear headgear while shooting, he said. “We had to listen to our soldiers who said, ‘Hey, I’m having an issue, and I could be a better soldier if you just let the hair down when I’m wearing my helmet,’” he said. “It allows [them] to be better soldiers and engage a target, and those are the things you just have to be constantly aware of, and we have to be open-minded about it.” The regulation changes also allow women to wear short ponytails in all uniforms if they are “unable to form a bun due to the length and/or texture of [their] hair.” Those ponytails must not be wider than their heads, must not extend below the bottom of their uniform collars and cannot interfere with headgear.

Sanders said that regulation was geared largely toward women who had to go to great lengths to place their hair in a bun. A medical expert advising the panel concluded the change would help prevent alopecia and other forms of hair loss common in military women who force their hair into buns, Sanders said. The panel also approved women to wear “multiple hairstyles at once as long as it is neat in appearance and does not impact the wear of headgear and equipment.” The change was aimed primarily at Black women, said Sanders, and allows female soldiers to mix styles such as twists, braids, locs and cornrows.

Female soldiers will also now be allowed to wear their hair shorter than one-quarter inch, a policy that brings the service in line with regulations at places such as Ranger School, where women attendees must

shave their heads like men. “We decided, do we want to make [buzz cuts] only for school, or do we want to give our women in the Army the opportunity to have their hair at any length? Sanders said. “We went with ‘Let’s not tell our women what hair they can have.’ So, now we’ll have it specifically that there’s not minimum hair length for our women in the Army.”

Some of the new policies extend beyond hair. The new regulations allow female soldiers to wear lipstick and nail polish as long as the colors are not considered extreme, such as purple, blue, black or very bright shades. It also permits women to wear earrings in the Army Combat Uniform for the first time in Army history, Sanders said. Women have long been authorized to wear earrings in their dress and service uniforms. They will now be allowed to wear gold, silver, or diamond stud earrings when wearing combat uniforms in a garrison setting. Earrings remain restricted from field training, combat or other tactical settings, Sanders said.

Not all the changes were geared exclusively toward women. The new policy allows men to wear clear nail polish in uniform. That measure is meant for soldiers who work with harsh chemicals regularly and want to “protect their nails,” Sanders said. The new grooming policy also allows men and women to wear natural color highlights in their hair. The changes to AR 670-1, the first update to the regulation since 2017, primarily include previously announced policy adjustments driven largely by the implementation of the service’s new World War II-inspired Army Green Service Uniform, Sanders said.

The regulation does include at least one new change: Soldiers with hyphenated names will now be authorized to wear their full name with the hyphen on their name tapes and plates. It will also allow accent marks on soldiers’ name tapes and plates. Grinston said the Army had not yet scheduled another uniform policy board, but he and other top leaders were open to hear soldier’s suggestions. Sanders said a future board could take up the topic of male soldiers wearing beards in uniform, but nothing official has been discussed. Some soldiers have been granted policy exceptions allowing them to wear beards for religious or medical reasons. “It’s a topic that all of us are very aware of,” Sanders said. “I think it’s safe to say that this is definitely one of the topics that is going to be considered during our next review panel. It’s a topic that needs to be discussed.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Corey Dickstein | January 26 2021 ++]

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## **Military Sniper Rifle**

### **MRAD Mk22 for the Army, Marines and SOCOM**



The great sniper rifle replacement across the Army, Marine Corps and SOCOM has begun with the newest sniper rifle and it’s the Barrett Multi-Role Adaptive Design rifle chambered in three calibers. Over the next five years, the MRAD will replace the Army’s existing M107 sniper rifle and M2010 Enhanced Sniper

Rifle under the Precision Sniper Rifle program, and all bolt action rifles in the Marines, delivering conversion options so that snipers can choose from 7.62mm, .300 Norma Magnum and .338 Norma Magnum, depending on their shooting needs. The military designation for the rifle will be the Mk22, which is the nomenclature for the PSR.

“The Army plans to purchase Multi-Role Adaptive Rifle (MRAD) systems for Foreign Military Sales and Precision Sniper Rifles (PSR) systems for Army Snipers and EOD personnel,” PEO Soldier spokesman told the website Task & Purpose. “The MRAD is one component of the PSR.” Marine Corps budget documents from early 2020 noted that the “ASR will replace all current bolt-action sniper rifles in the Marine Corps.” Those documents cited a purchase of 250 MRAD rifles for the Corps. That means the decades-old M40, which has been in service midway through the Vietnam War. The M40, was scheduled to be replaced by the Mk13 Mod 7.

SOCOM awarded a contract for the MRAD back in March 2019 and deliveries were scheduled to start this January, according to a Barrett company release. The search for the convertible rifle began back in 2016 with a SOCOM request. The original plan was for the Army to buy 536 MRAD rifles under the previous program, a PEO Soldier spokesman told Task & Purpose that the new plans will include purchasing an estimated 2,800 rifles over the next five years. To learn more about the MRAD refer to <https://youtu.be/IvwW4Rtva7c>. [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | January 29, 2021 ++]

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## **Army Housing**

### **Update 02: \$1.1B to Be Invested in Improving Housing at 6 Bases**

The Army on 27 JAN announced \$1.1 billion will be invested in improving military housing by a company that manages residences at six bases across the country. Lendlease, a company that manages housing at Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Campbell and Fort Knox in Kentucky, Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Fort Drum, N.Y., and Army housing in Oahu, Hawaii, will use the money that it has obtained from lenders to accelerate plans to revitalize or build about 14,000 homes at the bases. The new injection of funds will speed up renovation plans by more than a decade, the company said.

Under its contract with the Army, Lendlease is responsible for the management and sustainment of about 26,000 homes, which it leases to service members at a rate that does not exceed their basic allowance for housing. “Under the guidance of Army senior leaders to ensure readiness of our force and quality of life for soldiers and their families, we have reached an extraordinary milestone with Lendlease,” said Gen. Ed Daly, commander of Army Materiel Command, which oversees base housing for the service. “This additional investment will go a long way in improving the quality of homes for soldiers and their families.” The \$1.1 billion investment will fund “significant improvements” to 12,000 existing homes at all six bases and the construction of more than 1,200 new homes at Fort Hood, Fort Campbell, Fort Knox and Fort Wainwright, the Army said.

Specific improvements vary by base and include new home construction, major exterior and interior renovations, as well as demolition of outdated homes, Lendlease said. Work should begin in the spring. “We stand committed, alongside our Army partners, to continue improving the quality of life for service members and their families now and into the future,” said Denis Hickey, CEO of Lendlease Americas.

“Thanks to privatization and our innovative approach to financing, we’re able to expedite our improvement plans, allocating funds to projects based on those with the greatest needs and priorities, without appropriations from Congress.”

Fort Hood will get a significant portion of the total investment, the Army said. Lendlease, which manages more than 5,600 homes at Fort Hood, is now repairing the exteriors of 972 houses at the Texas base that are known to have a flaw that can cause water leaks. Work began in July and 137 homes have been completed, according to the company’s website. All those repairs should be finished by the spring 2022. The Army said it had previously approved the efforts of other privatized housing companies to secure investments to fund the development and renovation of more than 3,500 homes and replacement of more than 800 other homes. Details on the locations of those projects were not provided.

“We are getting in front of housing issues,” Daly said. “Commanders at all levels are engaged. Our leaders and housing staffs continue to address problems quickly. The feedback loops – such as web-based apps, installation town halls and help-desk lines to ensure our residents can quickly identify and report problems – are working. Leaders and housing company personnel are responding quickly, and we are seeing significant results.” At least nine lawsuits have been filed against the companies that manage on-base family housing, with one filed as recently as December. There are at least two lawsuits pending against Lendlease for housing conditions at Fort Hood and Camp Lejeune, N.C. The Fort Hood suit has moved to pending arbitration.

The military housing crisis drew national attention more than two years ago when Reuters published a series of reports on dangerous conditions some military families face when they lease homes on bases across the country. Since then, Congress has held hearings and passed legislation to combat to list of problems that families presented, including exposure to lead paint, asbestos and mold, pest and rodent infestation, water leaks and a lack of timeliness and proper handling of maintenance requests. The military service branches have also identified ways to improve oversight of contracts. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Rose L. Thayer | January 27, 2021 ++]

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## **Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang**

### **‘Royal Marine’ thru ‘Scope Dope’**

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

**Royal Marine** – (RN) British Marine. "Her Majesty's Royal Marines," when they are up and dressed (seldom). Aka 'bootneck', 'jolly'.

**RPO** - (RN) Regulating Petty Officer.

**RTB** - Return To Base.

**Rug Dance** - Quality time spent with a senior officer or NCO, usually in a very one-sided conversation. Typical topics of discussion include one's parentage and probable eventual fate. Aka 'chewing out, ass chewing, etc.'

**Sagging** – The condition of a ship in which the bow and stern are supported by wave crests and the midships area is less supported by the trough. See also HOGGING.

**Sally Ship** – Causing a ship to list by having parties of men run from one side of the ship to the other. When a ship runs aground, a suction often forms between the hull and the sea bottom mud, and sallying ship can break that suction, making it possible to back off of the reef. Somewhat akin to a TRIM PARTY, but for very different reasons.

**Salty** – One whose level of experience is extreme. One who is "in the know" regarding matters maritime.

**Salvo** – One or more guns fired together, or the shells which have been fired.

**Sandbag** – (1) To ask a question of someone to belittle or deride them, or to do something behind their back. (2) To not give 100% of one's abilities; to hang back, or hold back.

**Sandcrab** - A sideways-walking, scavenging beach creature. Refers to a civilian Naval contractor or civil service.

**Sandy Bottoms** - (RM) The usual result of making a hot WET (q.v.) with melted snow.

**SAPFU** - Surpassing All Previous Fuck-Ups.

**SAR** – Search And Rescue. Pronounced as a word, not initials.

**Scope** – (1) The length of the anchor chain. 'Increasing the scope' means to veer (pay out) more anchor chain. (2) The Cathode Ray Tube display for a radar.

**Scope Dope** – A radar scope, or one who watches same.

[Source: <http://hazegray.org/faq/slang1.htm> | January 31, 2021 ++]

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## **Military Wives**

### **Things You Should Never Say To a Pregnant One**

Most pregnant woman run into awkward situations anyway (i.e. strangers rubbing your belly). But being a pregnant military spouse means you get a whole 'nuther set of tactless questions. Not saying that a regular preggo lady is completely different from a preggo lady married to a service member. Here are 12 things never to say to a pregnant military wife unless you want to suffer the consequences of a dirty look, being cussed out... or worse.

1) Well, you're in (insert duty station), there's nothing better to do but breed

- 2) Was it planned or was it a homecoming baby?
- 3) Is the Dad going to be there for the birth?
- 4) The Dad is going to miss out on a lot if he deploys.
- 5) Aren't you scared of taking care of the baby all by yourself?
- 6) Well, you don't want to gain too much weight or else you'll become one of those fat military wives.
- 7) That's nothing, I've had to give birth alone, with 3 kids, all large babies, natural, with no medications, after (x) number of hours in labor... upside down, backwards, underwater, with no hands.
- 8) You're REALLY going to use the base hospital?
- 9) So you're going to keep moving around because of the military, how will that affect the kid?
- 10) Are you going to plan the next one after he gets back?
- 11) I have no idea how you do it. I could never...
- 12) Are you actually going to let him/her join the military when they're an adult?

[Source: Pinterest | January 19, 2021 ++]

**\* Military History \***



**WWII Civil Defense  
Emergency / Invasion Planning**

Prior to the outbreak of War, the great fear in England was the bomber. The Government started to put into place Air Raid Precautions during the mid-1930's. During the Battle of France, the British Expeditionary Force was continually hampered with refugee movements. GHQ was determined that this would be avoided in any subsequent invasion of Britain. Therefore the planning of managing civil requirements in a state of emergency / invasion was considered as important as the military planning. One element of this was how to warn the public of an invasion and steps to be taken if it occurred.

If conditions were favorable for invasion the warning order 'Stand To' would be issued. It did not require any action on Emergency / Invasion committees or Home Guard with the exception that they should ensure emergency arrangements were ready to put into immediate operation. If invasion was imminent, the warning order 'Action Stations' would be issued. The Home Guard would be called out and civil arrangements for feeding them would come into operation. Invasion was split into four phases which determined the help the military could give to the civil population:

- Phase A (In the event of a large scale bombing attack under immediate threat of invasion) - military could give every assistance in clearing roads of debris etc.
- Phase B (When the invasion has begun but the enemy is some distance away) - only limited assistance could be given.
- Phase C (When battle is taking place locally or is imminent) - no assistance could be given as military would be fully manning defenses.
- Phase D (Enemy in temporary occupation of neighborhood)

The following Alarm signals were the only ones permitted:

- Siren – national signal for ‘Alert’ and ‘Raiders Passed’.
- Wardens Whistles – incendiary bombs falling.
- Church Bells – warning for the landing of airborne or parachute troops. Warning was not to be used for seaborne landings.
- Rattle – military or civil warning for gas.

When invasion was in progress, although the fighting not in the vicinity of the local town or parish (Phase A and B), the civil community should still be expected to be isolated as normal communications and arrangements broke down. The Emergency / Invasion committee would have to ensure emergency arrangements (e.g. food distribution) were put into operation. If the fighting reached the local community or the enemy occupied the area (Phase C and D), the Emergency / Invasion Committee would coordinate emergency arrangements and help and guide the civil population.

[Source: <http://www.civildefence-suffolk.webeden.co.uk> | January 20, 2021 ++]

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## **Civil War Capitol Repeat**

### **National Guard Sleeping in the Rotunda**



To most Americans, the sight of armed National Guard troops sleeping in the Capitol Rotunda this past week was shocking and disturbing. However, it was an echo of the far-distant past. "Don't despond," Maj. Bowman Bigelow Breed wrote to his anxious wife back home in Massachusetts as his comrades lounged around him on the polished marble floors in the grand hall that was now their bivouac. "You must know by this time that we are here in safety. We may have to fight but my own opinion is that the overwhelming force concentrated here will prevent an attack." Insurrection was in the air, and these citizen soldiers had

been called up to secure the seat of government. The date was April 27, 1861. The writer was surgeon of the 8th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia.

Having transcribed his great-grandparents' Civil War correspondence, Allen G. Breed, knew that Bowman's unit had spent the first days of the war bivouacked in what he called "the Hall of the Dome." Harper's Weekly published an illustration (above right) of the 8th's men, their weapons leaned against the marble walls or stacked, bayonets intertwined, like fodder shocks in a farmer's field. "I wish you could look in on us this morning and see how comfortably we are settled here," he wrote in that first missive, scribbled on letterhead for the "Thirty Sixth Congress House of representatives." The regiment called itself "the Minutemen," after those New England patriots who grabbed their muskets and rushed to face the Redcoats at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. Breed's great-grandmother, Hannah Pope Breed, was descended from one of those men.

And, so, when President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to put down the insurrection of the Southern states, there was no question but that Bowman — privileged son of a wealthy industrialist — would go. The 8th headed south just four days after rebels opened fire on Fort Sumter. Passing through hostile territory in slaveholding Maryland, Bowman was unable to fulfill his promise to write every day. "How I have suffered when I knew that all communication was cut off and that you were torn hour after hour by the terrible suspense of hope deferred," he apologized to Hannah, who was left alone to care for their infant son, Isaiah. "Don't despond my darling. God will preserve us all and in time of war you must have faith in the handy old proverb that no news is good news."

While the enlisted men slept in the rotunda, the 10 officers shared a small room just off the main hall. "A little room opening from that serves for my hospital, very small and very inconvenient," Bowman wrote. "I have not been able to open my medical stores yet and can use only what I can carry about in my bag. I have been on the run Ever since I came here, trying to arrange matters, but red tape rules here and I have been referred from one to another till I am tired out." The Capitol was undergoing a massive expansion. The regimental chaplain held services in the old Senate chamber. "The men all stood in a circle with the officers on one side and the chaplain in the centre," he wrote. "He made a very appropriate prayer and then we all sang, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'"

The day after their arrival, Bowman and his comrades were treated to a visit from Secretary of State William H. Seward and the president himself. "We were all introduced and had quite a chat with them," he wrote. "They were both in good spirits. Lincoln said that if the city had been as unprotected then as it was a week before it would have been taken." The regiment was drawn up, Bowman said, "and the Pres made them a little speech." It was early in the Republican's first term, and most did not yet know what to make of this "dirty Hoosier," as Hannah referred to the Kentucky-born, Indiana-bred Lincoln. "All that has Ever been said of Lincolns awkwardness is mild compared with the reality," Bowman wrote. "Some of his gestures would make the fortune of a circus clown." Nonetheless, the new president inspired confidence in the citizen soldiers. "The men gave three cheers for Lincoln, three for Seward and three rouses for the Union," Bowman wrote.

When the 8th was stationed there, the higher, more ornate Capitol dome was not yet complete. As the war dragged on, critics suggested that the costly work be halted. Lincoln felt otherwise. "If people see the Capitol going on," he said, "it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on." Bowman would serve throughout the entire war. As painful as their separation would be, he told Hannah in that first letter from Washington, he hoped that the struggle was "the means God in his goodness has provided to remove the dark cloud under



which we have seemed to be resting for so long." "I have faith to believe that all our steps are ordered for the best," he wrote. "Let our prayers mingle now as heretofore and all the blessing of a holy calm will descend, to strengthen us." [Source: Associated Press | Allen G. Breed Essay | January 17, 2021 ++]

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## **Desert Storm 30**

### **Update 02: First and Last Rules**



On their second mission during Operation Desert Storm, the crew of an AC-130H gunship, call sign Ghost 02, flew a mission that none of them should have lived to tell. Flying into Iraqi airspace, the 14 men aboard destroyed a command and control center, then evaded three surface-to-air missiles through death-defying maneuvers in the lumbering, four-propeller aircraft. The crew's actions followed their aircraft commander's first and last rule: **All 14 men come home alive.**

When the crew first arrived during Operation Desert Shield, Air Force Veteran Phil Lebrun said they were in a "two-week cycle mindset." Lebrun's crew and another spelled the initial crews, who only spent a few weeks in theater, then rotated home. Commanders initially rotated people every few weeks to give crews experience. That soon stopped, leaving many junior members in place. "Higher authorities said, 'No, rotations stop. You got what you got,'" Lebrun said. Crews started flying and mission planning for a rear area security and air base defense mission after studying the threats up north. That's also when Lebrun went over his rules. "I sat down with my crew and we went over Captain Lebrun's rules, objectives and goals," he said. "The first goal was to get 14 guys home alive. Then we went into a few other things about command structure, respect, tactics, getting gear ready, communications gear and how we're going to work in the airplane. Then, I went over my last rule, which was to get 14 guys home alive."

Lebrun said his goal was to let the crew know their welfare was his priority. "I wanted to emphasize to them that was my job as their commander – to take care of them," he said. "I wanted them to be aware of that and respect that everything y'all do supports my goal of getting us home alive while at the same time inflicting as much damage as possible to the enemy and accomplishing our mission."

AC-130H crew members stand in front of an aircraft during Desert Shield.

On their second mission of Desert Storm Jan. 21, 1991, Lebrun said the crew had good spirits. "Everyone had tasks to perform," Lebrun said. "There was no grumbling or any issue. As we did our planning, there was slowly developing some concern over where we were going and the threat level." It became clear the gunship wasn't going to be on the back end providing rear area security. Instead, it would be flying over

the border, deep into Iraq. Following the mission assignment, the crew started checking intelligence reports for the areas. They discovered they would fly near known SA-2 and 57mm anti-aircraft artillery, or AAA, sites. They also read there was a possibility of SA-6, SA-8, SA-3 and additional AAA sites.

For the crew, that meant a strong chance of flying into danger. While their AC-130H does have countermeasures to fend off enemy attacks, its large radar profile and flying style – slow and low – created a huge risk for the crew. “The majority of the threats were mobile and therefore could not be accurately located within the assigned kill zones, greatly hampering our ability to avoid the deadly threats,” Lebrun said. “I knew that our operating altitudes and speed of the gunship would make us an easy target. But we had our orders.”

The crew lifted off 21 JAN from King Fahd International Airport in Saudi Arabia. Following a refueling, Lebrun checked in with an airborne controlling aircraft. After dodging several radar threats, Lebrun rolled the aircraft into their first engagement, an Iraqi command and control center. Screens showed two large buildings and eight smaller buildings, with vehicles and Iraqi military members across the area. Moments later, Lebrun pushed a button on his yoke and unleashed the first rounds from the 105mm Howitzer cannon. Immediately after Lebrun unleashed the 105mm, the Iraqi command and control center’s air defense system returned fire. “The skies erupted into blurred streaks of red and orange fire,” Lebrun said.

In a matter of moments, after firing the 105mm Howitzer cannon, the crew had incoming fire on three sides of the aircraft. Despite the incoming fire, the Ghost 02 crew continued to fire. After corrections to the fire control computer, the crew then scored a direct hit on one of the large buildings. The other large building took a close hit from the 105mm. The crew kept calling out the AAA rounds, which exploded closer to the aircraft. As the crew continued to engage, they scored a direct hit on one of the smaller buildings. As soon as Lebrun rolled into one of the AAA sites, the Iraqis launched an SA-14/16 surface-to-air missile directly at Ghost 02, which was followed by calls over the radio. “BREAK RIGHT! BREAK RIGHT! STRELLA 9 O’CLOCK! FLARES!”

At the same moment, AAA rounds were heading toward the nose of the aircraft. “BREAK RIGHT! BREAK RIGHT! ACCURATE TRIPLE A 11 O’CLOCK!” With the missile tracking, Lebrun had to push the AC-130 to its limits. Lebrun ordered a defensive maneuver to the right to leave the target area. “MAX POWER! FLAPS UP! FLARES!” Lebrun yelled. Lebrun yanked on the aircraft’s yoke, breaking hard right, left and then right again. The crew somehow averted disaster, defeating the surface-to-air missile and avoiding the AAA. Shortly after, a call came across the radio to head to a new target.

Lebrun turned the AC-130H toward the new target. His crew immediately recognized a danger. Lebrun rolled to his left and noticed a faint light on the ground. The big item on screen was an early warning radar site. The site also had two separate radar systems. Within moments, Lebrun called over the radio to target the facility. The crew unleashed the 105mm Howitzer, pounding the target for five minutes. While destroying the target, a call came over the radio. “Ghost 02, we have a missile launch 310 degrees from your position!” Ghost 02 was now facing another enemy missile. Lebrun said he was aware of an SA-2 missile site located northwest of the gunship’s position. With his hands on the yoke, he turned the gunship to put the missile at their six o’clock position so it would be directly behind the aircraft. As he did that, he directed the crew to scan for the SA-2.

Suddenly, the crew had another problem. “BREAK RIGHT, RADAR SAM ONE O’CLOCK!” At the front of the gunship, Lebrun was faced with a nearly impossible decision. The gunship had two missiles

tracking the aircraft, one at the nose and one at the tail. Racking his brain, Lebrun decided on using untested tactics – and developing new ones on the spot – to defeat both the surface-to-air missiles. As the gunship passed through 2,000 feet above the ground, Lebrun jinked hard left, then right and again called for the chaff. To this point, nothing Lebrun did made the SA-8 break its lock on the gunship. If Lebrun was going to keep his promise to get his crew home safely, he said he knew he needed to push the gunship harder.

“The hair on the back of my neck suddenly stood up, and I knew the missile would soon impact,” he said. “I decided it was time to suck it up and go for broke with everything possible.” Lebrun jinked hard left. “MAX POWER! HANG ON CREW! CHAFF!” he yelled out. As countermeasures shot out the back, Lebrun turned and looked at the engine performance gauges. Every single one was pegged – understandable at an 85-degree bank and 290 knots indicated airspeed. One gauge Lebrun couldn’t get an exact reading on was the G-meter. AC-130s are typically limited to 2 G’s. Lebrun was pushing the AC-130 to between 3 and 4 G’s. As he continued pulling on the control yoke, vibrating in his hands, the SA-8 exploded near the gunship’s nose.

Lebrun said the brilliant flash and echoing explosion sounded like a cherry bomb going off inside a tin can. He attempted to level the aircraft using the full right aileron, but nothing happened. He then tried right full rudder. Still nothing. Finally, after the aircraft flew through the explosion, the gunship responded. Lebrun rolled the aircraft until the wings were level. “We’re still flying, guys,” Lebrun said. “Is everyone alright?” The crew started checking in. Unfortunately, their relief was short lived by a call on the radio. “BREAK LEFT, BREAK LEFT! SA-6, FOUR O’CLOCK!” “I could not believe it: another one,” Lebrun said.

Lebrun forced the aircraft down once again. As the gunship nosedived to 1,000 feet, several crew members started shouting “ALTITUDE!” and “PULL UP!” As Lebrun yanked on the yoke, the aircraft started leveling off at 500 feet above the ground. His previous 3-4 G’s were now history. The aircraft G-meter stopped at 5 G’s. Lebrun passed the last mark on the meter. With the SA-6 still tracking, Lebrun continued his descent, dropping down to 300 feet – an extremely dangerous altitude for the four-engine gunship blind by darkness. With the aircraft at such a low altitude, the SA-6 stopped tracking the gunship. The crew was in the clear. “I was sure we were damaged by the SA-8 and the required maneuvering,” Lebrun said. “The airplane could not withstand much more.”

From the back, Lebrun heard one of the crew. “Are we gonna make it back, sir?” “Shit, yeah,” Lebrun responded. “I made you guys a promise, remember?” Over the radio, Lebrun heard a response. “You mean Captain Lebrun’s rule number one.” “That’s right,” he replied. “Get 14 guys back home alive, period.” Despite his remarks, the crew still had a major problem. They still needed to fly an aircraft with significant damage through enemy airspace. “The airplane was still flyable and under my breath, I talked real sweet to her,” Lebrun said. “At minimum altitude, we escaped the area dodging several known threat sites on the way.” After the crew landed at King Fahd, Lebrun sat in his seat, numb. “After landing and taxiing to our parking spot, I could not move from my seat,” he said.

During postflight inspection, maintenance crews discovered the massive damage to the gunship, pushed to the limits by Lebrun’s flying. The SA-8 that detonated at the nose of the aircraft left blast and shrapnel damage on the forward fuselage. The inspection also revealed Lebrun popped 250 rivets on the aircraft. Rivets hold together sheets of aluminum. By popping 250 rivets, Lebrun had nearly broken pieces of the wings off the aircraft. Despite the damage, the crew made it home alive. The crew’s sensor operator,

responsible for tracking targets, said the mission still lives with the crew three decades after the death-defying flight.

“We’re lucky to be alive,” said Air Force Veteran Chris Shock. “We broke the airplane, the whole bit.” Lebrun and Shock both said the crew’s actions that night was a total team effort, which led to a Distinguished Flying Cross. Although they agreed, Shock added that Lebrun’s leadership as their aircraft commander – ensuring everyone followed the first and last rules – is why the crew survived. “He was good, and he saved our lives.” [Source: Vantage Point | Adam Stump | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## **WWII Calais Hoax** **The Elaborate Ruse Behind D-Day**



As Nazi Germany tightened its grip on much of Europe in the summer of 1943, Allied military leaders decided to make the sandy beaches of Normandy the epicenter of a massive invasion that would liberate the continent and turn the tide of World War II. The Allies needed nearly a year to prepare for the complicated offensive, but they knew that the entire D-Day mission could be doomed to failure if the Nazis gained even 48 hours of advanced notice on its location and timing, so they launched an elaborate disinformation campaign, codenamed Operation Bodyguard, “to induce the enemy to make faulty strategic dispositions in relation to operations by the United Nations against Germany.”

To cloak the details of the true invasion site, the Allies employed a complex web of deception to persuade the Nazis that an attack could come at any point along their Atlantic Wall—the 1,500-mile system of coastal defenses that the German High Command had constructed from the Arctic Circle to Spain’s northern border—or even as far away as the Balkans. Vital to Operation Bodyguard’s success were more than a dozen German spies in Britain who had been discovered, arrested and flipped by British intelligence officers. The Allies spoon-fed reams of faulty information to these Nazi double agents to pass along to Berlin. For instance, a pair of double agents nicknamed Mutt and Jeff relayed detailed reports about the fictitious British Fourth Army that was amassing in Scotland with plans to join with the Soviet Union in an invasion of Norway. To further the illusion, the Allies fabricated radio chatter about cold-weather issues such as ski bindings and the operation of tank engines in subzero temperatures. The ruse worked as Hitler sent one of his fighting divisions to Scandinavia just weeks before D-Day.

The most logical place in Europe for the D-Day invasion was France’s Pas de Calais region, 150 miles northeast of Normandy and the closest point to Great Britain across the English Channel. The Allies had passed over the region as a landing spot because it was the most heavily fortified section of the Atlantic Wall, but they wanted to delude the Nazis into thinking they were taking the shortest route across the channel.

To give the appearance of a massive troop buildup in southeast England, the Allies created a largely phantom fighting force, the First U.S. Army Group, headed by George Patton, the American general whom the Nazis considered to be the enemy's best commander and the logical man to lead a cross-channel invasion. The Allies broadcast endless hours of fictitious radio transmissions about troop and supply movements and planted wedding notices for fake soldiers in local newspapers. They deceived Nazi aerial reconnaissance planes by fashioning dummy aircraft and an armada of decoy landing crafts, composed only of painted canvases pulled over steel frames, around the mouth of the River Thames. They even deployed inflatable Sherman tanks, which they moved to different locations under the cover of night, and used rollers to simulate tire tracks left behind in their wake.

Since Allied code-breakers had been successful in deciphering Germany's secret communications, they knew that the Nazis had fallen for the deception as D-Day approached. In the weeks leading up to the invasion, the Allies stepped up their aerial attacks on Pas de Calais to throw the Nazis off the scent. They even employed Lieutenant M.E. Clifton James, a bit Australian actor who bore a striking resemblance to Bernard Montgomery, to impersonate the British general. After James spent time with Montgomery to study his mannerisms, he donned one of the general's uniforms and black berets and flew to Gibraltar on May 26, 1944, and then to Algiers where German intelligence was sure to spot him and surmise that no attack across the English Channel could be imminent with the Allied general scouting the Mediterranean.

As the D-Day assault on Normandy began, the deception continued. Allied aircraft flying toward Pas de Calais dropped clouds of aluminum strips to give false radar readings that made it appear as if a large fleet was approaching. Other aircraft far away from Normandy dropped hundreds of dummy paratroopers that were wired to simulate the sounds of rifle fire and grenades when they hit the ground. British special operations forces also landed amid the dummies and operated phonographs to broadcast the sounds of soldiers' voices and combat fire.

In spite of the success of the initial landing, Operation Bodyguard did not end on June 6, 1944. Three days later, Spanish businessman Juan Pujol Garcia, who was one of Britain's most valuable double agents, fed information to Berlin that the Normandy landing was merely a "red herring" and that the most critical attack was yet to come with the First Army poised to strike at Pas de Calais. As proof he pointed out that Patton had yet to move from England. So trusted was Garcia that Hitler delayed releasing reinforcements from Pas de Calais to Normandy for seven weeks after D-Day as the Allies gained the toehold they needed to achieve victory in Europe, a result that may not have been possible without the audacious scheme to fool the Nazis.

Boynton Beach, Florida's Lee Weiss played a leading role in shifting World War II to the Allies' favor in this operation. Only thing was that Weiss, who turned 100 years young on 24 DEC didn't know it until decades later. Weiss served as a radio operator in the U.S. Army's 3103 Signal Service Battalion that was employed in the elaborate ruse to make the German high command believe the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France would take place in Pas de Calais, not Normandy. Weiss' job was to send coded messages creating the illusion of a large-scale troop buildup for the Calais assault.

It wasn't until around 30 years later that Weiss was reading an article on the Calais hoax and realized his battalion was at the center of it, said Barbara Strogatz Pankhurst, Weiss' daughter. "We were sending these messages, but we didn't know what we were sending because it was all coded," said Weiss, who retains a sharp recollection and wit about the experience. "I didn't know what I was doing. It's a good

thing somebody else knew what they were doing.” Weiss wasn't done making history. He arrived with his battalion in France shortly after D-Day and took part in the Battle of the Bulge, a German counteroffensive in late 1944 that was Adolf Hitler's last bid to maintain his crumbling fortunes. January 25<sup>th</sup> marked the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge's conclusion. "We wiped out the Germans," Weiss said.

Weiss was living in Pittsburgh and ice skating with his then-girlfriend Renee on Dec. 7, 1941 when he heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. He immediately decided to enlist, but was stopped short by his mother. "I was ready to go, but my mother said she would kill me before the Germans did," Weiss quipped. He eventually enlisted anyway and was schooled as a tank radio operator. In January 1944, his battalion shipped out to Europe where it began to simulate messages from the fictional 1st U.S. Army Group led by Gen. George S. Patton.

Weiss said he was tasked with assuming the identity of someone else in the military and sending scripted messages meant for the consumption of the Germans. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower later said he "cannot over-emphasize the decisive value" the trick had on the Normandy landings. "Whatever they told us to do, I did it," Weiss said. "That's why I'm still here." Weiss escaped World War II unscathed except for a disease — he can't remember exactly what it was — that put him in a hospital in France. Weiss jokes that it wasn't too bad because it gave him an opportunity to meet nurses.

"He was just a young kid, having a good time, not taking things seriously and just doing his job," said Strogatz Pankhurst, one of Weiss' two children. Married to Renee by the time he returned home from Europe, Weiss came back to Pennsylvania to raise a family and go to work as a salesman hawking Duro-Test light bulbs. Among his clients was an Atlantic City, N.J., casino owner named Donald J. Trump. Weiss reached an agreement to outfit Trump's Taj Mahal casino with his company's bulbs. "He never paid me," Weiss said. Six months after the first order, Weiss said Trump wanted more light bulbs. He was told he would have to pay for the first order. "He didn't pay for either one," Weiss said. "He told me, 'Tell everybody you sold to me and they'll buy from you.'"

These days, Weiss lives in a Boynton Beach senior's community with his second wife, Cele Lieberman, 97. Renee Weiss died in 1999. Weiss played softball for most of his life, regularly tossing both ends of doubleheaders in a recreation league in Pennsylvania, before giving it up at age 87. Instead, he's taken up duplicate bridge four times a week. He bets 50 cents a game. "I win, I lose, but it keeps the mind going," Weiss explains. Weiss said he doesn't reflect on his military service "anymore." He says all of his old pals from the 3103 Signal Service Battalion have passed away. The focus now is on his family, which includes three great grandsons. They, and a score of other family members, joined a Zoom call last month to celebrate Weiss' 100th birthday. "I've had a great run," he said. [Source: [www.history.com](http://www.history.com) & Palm Beach Post | Jorge Milian | January 25, 2021 ++]

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## **WWII War Bonds**

### **Update 01: 85 Million Americans Purchased \$185.7 Billion Dollars**

In November 1942, the United States held its first War Loan Drive. The Second World War cost the United States \$300 billion dollars, with the federal budget rising from \$9 billion in 1939 to \$98 billion in 1945. How was the nation to pay for that?



Taxes were increased with an additional 5 percent Victory Tax. To assure payment, on June 10, 1943 the government approved the first automatic deduction of taxes from paychecks. But more was needed, and the government turned to bonds, which had been effective in World War I. War bonds were sold at 75 percent of face value (a \$25 bond sold for \$18.75) and matured over ten years. While the rate of return was below market value, bonds were a stable investment with the bonus of aiding the war effort. Channeling cash into bond purchases helped prevent inflation in the robust wartime economy as well.

Defense Bonds first went on the market on May 1, 1941, and they were renamed War Bonds after the US entered the war in December 1941. Bonds were available in denominations of \$25 through \$1000, designed to be affordable for everyone. For 10 cents, people could purchase stamps, which were placed in special albums. When full, the albums were redeemed for a bond. War stamps were especially popular with children. Employers set up automatic payroll deduction systems, so employees could set aside a certain amount for War Bonds with each paycheck. A robust advertising campaign, rallies and other promotions, and a series of War Loan Drives brought in even more needed money.

As part of the war effort, many newspapers, magazines, and radio stations donated advertising space and time. Posters sprang up in store fronts. Even comic books got in the act as superheroes promoted bond sales. Popular songs also encouraged sales, such as Bing Crosby's recording of "The Road to Victory" for the Sixth War Loan Drive. Bond rallies were extremely popular, featuring Hollywood stars and popular musicians. Celebrities conducted auctions – a kiss from Hedy Lamarr, Betty Grable's stockings, Jack Benny's violin, and the horseshoes of Triple Crown winner Man O' War. Movie theaters and baseball stadiums sometimes offered free admission with the purchase of a War Bond. At the UCLA-USC game on 12 December 1942, a student-led war bond drive raised \$2 million.

Eight War Loan Drives were conducted in the US from 1942 to 1945. Each was meant to raise an additional \$9-\$15 billion in sales. Towns received quotas, with the aim of promoting competition between towns. Volunteers went door-to-door, pleading for sales and rewarding purchasers with stickers to display on their window or door. The drives were conducted on the following dates:

- First War Loan Drive: Nov. 30 to Dec. 23, 1942
- Second War Loan Drive: Apr. 12 to May 1, 1943
- Third War Loan Drive: Sep. 9 to Oct. 1, 1943
- Fourth War Loan Drive: Jan. 18 to Feb. 15, 1944
- Fifth War Loan Drive: June 12 to July 8, 1944
- Sixth War Loan Drive: Nov. 20 to Dec. 16, 1944
- Seventh War Loan Drive: May 14 to June 30, 1945
- Victory Loan Drive: Oct. 29 to Dec. 8, 1945

By the end of the war, 85 million Americans (out of a population of 131 million) had purchased \$185.7 billion dollars of bonds – over \$2000 per person, at a time when the average income was \$2000 per year. The patriotism and personal sacrifice of the average citizen played a significant part in the Allied war effort. [Source: Sarah's Blog | Sarah Sundin | November 29, 2017 ++]

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## Hitler's Bunker

### What His Last Days Refuge Contained



Rear entrance to the Führerbunker (left) in the garden of the Reich Chancellery. The bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun were burned in a shell hole in front of the emergency exit at left; the cone-shaped structure in the center served for ventilation, and as a bomb shelter for the guards.

On 16 JAN 1945 Hitler retired to his bunker after deciding to remain in Berlin for the last great siege of the war. Fifty-five feet under the chancellery (Hitler's headquarters), the shelter contained 18 small rooms and was fully self-sufficient, with its own water and electrical supply. He left only rarely (once to decorate a squadron of Hitler Youth) and spent most of his time micromanaging what was left of German defenses and entertaining Nazi colleagues like Hermann Goering, Heinrich Himmler, and Joachim von Ribbentrop. Constantly at his side during this time were his companion, Eva Braun, and his Alsatian dog, Blondi.

On 29 APR, he married Eva in their bunker hideaway. Eva Braun met Hitler while working as an assistant to Hitler's official photographer. Braun spent her time with Hitler out of public view, entertaining herself by skiing and swimming. She had no discernible influence on Hitler's political career but provided a certain domesticity to the life of the dictator. Loyal to the end, she refused to leave the bunker even as the Russians closed in.

Only hours after they were united in marriage, both Hitler and Eva committed suicide. Warned by officers that the Russians were only about a day from overtaking the chancellery and urged to escape to Berchtesgarden, a small town in the Bavarian Alps where Hitler owned a home, the dictator instead chose



to take his life. Both he and his wife swallowed cyanide capsules (which had been tested for their efficacy on his "beloved" dog and her pups). For good measure, he shot himself with his pistol.



Map of the Reich Chancellery



Map of Outer (1-19) & Main (20-47) bunker

### Reich Chancellery (Führerbunker) Legend

1. Mittelbau mit Marmogalerie (Mittelbau Marble Gallery)
2. Eingang zur Reichskanzlei (Entrance to the Reich Chancellery)
3. Eingang zur Präsidialkanzlei (Entrance to the Office of the Reich President)
4. Kasernenbauten (Barracks Buildings)
5. Hebebühne zu den Katakomben (Lift to the Catacombs)
6. Gartenportal zu Hitlers Arbeitszimmer (Garden portal to Hitler's Office)
7. Bauzufahrt zum Führerbunker (Entranceway to the Fuhrer Bunker)
8. Zufahrt – Tiefgarage und Führerbunker (Access - Underground Parking and Fuhrer Bunker)
9. Einfahrt – Tiefgarage und Feuerwehr (Entrance - Parking and Fire Brigade)
10. Zufahrt Führerbunker (Access - Fuhrer Bunker)
11. Haus Kempka (Kempka House)
12. Gewächshaus (Greenhouse)
13. Ehrenhof (Courtyard of Honor)
14. Festsaal mit Wintergarten (Ballroom and Conservatory)
15. Alte Reichskanzlei (Old Reich Chancellery)
16. Speisesaal (Dining Hall)
17. Propagandaministerium (Ministry of Propaganda)
18. Erweiterungsbau zur Reichskanzlei (Reich Chancellery Extension)
19. U-Bahn-Eingang Wilhelmplatz (Wilhelmsplatz Subway Entrance)
20. Kaufhaus Wertheim (Wertheim Department Store)
21. Leipziger Platz (Leipziger Plaza)
22. Ministergärten (Ministry Garden)
23. Tiergarten (Great landscape park Tiergarten)
24. Hermann-Göring-Straße (Herman Goring Street)
25. Voßstraße (Voss Street)
26. Wilhelmstraße (Wilhelm Street)

### Outer bunker (Vorbunker) Legend

1. Keller des Wintergartens (basement of the winter garden)
2. Keller des Festsaaes (basement of the ballroom)
3. Kannenberggang (Kannenberg passage)
4. Aufenthaltsräume (lounges)
5. Waschraum/Duschen (lavatory/showers)
6. Toiletten (toilets)
7. Anrichtraum/Küche (pantry/kitchen)
8. Wache (guard room)

9. Maschinenraum (engine/generator room)
10. Alte Wache (old guard room)
11. Haupteingang (main entrance)
12. Notausgang (emergency exit)
13. Warteraum (waiting room)
14. Sekretärin (secretary)
15. Aufenthaltsraum – Wache (guards' lounge)
16. Treppenhaus zwischen Bunker und Führerwohnung (staircase between bunker and Hitler's apartment)
17. Gasschleuse (airlock)
18. Aufenthaltsraum (lounge)
19. Speiseraum (dining room)

### **Main bunker (Hauptbunker)**

20. Betonverfüllung (concrete backfill)
21. erster Notausgang des Hauptbunkers (first emergency exit of the main bunker)
22. Abwasser/Strom (sewage/electricity)
23. Badezimmer (bathroom)
24. Privates Gästezimmer Adolf Hitlers (Adolf Hitler's private guest room)
25. Vorraum Adolf Hitlers (Adolf Hitler's lobby)
26. Arbeitszimmer Adolf Hitlers (Adolf Hitler's study)
27. Schlafraum Adolf Hitlers (Adolf Hitler's bedroom)
28. Kartenzimmer/Lageraum (map room/situation room)
29. Warteraum/Lagevorraum (waiting room/anteroom to the situation room)
30. Flur und Wartebereich (corridor and waiting room)
31. Fernschreiber/Telefon (teleprinter/telephone)
32. Sanitätsraum (infirmary)
33. Raum – Dr. Morell (room of Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Morell)
34. Schlafraum (bedroom)
35. Personal (staff/servants)
36. zweiter Notausgang des Hauptbunkers (second emergency exit of the main bunker)
37. Beobachtungsturm, im Bau (observation tower (under construction))
38. Belüftungsturm, im Bau (ventilation tower (under construction))
39. Lüftungsturm für Generator, im Bau (ventilation tower for generator (under construction))
40. Bunkerwände (bunker walls)
41. Haus Kempka (the home of Hitler's chauffeur, Erich Kempka)
42. Bunkerzufahrt (bunker entrance)
43. Pergola (pergola)
44. Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office)
45. Führerwohnung (Hitler's apartment)
46. Lastenaufzug (goods lift)
47. Fundamente/Alte Reichskanzlei (foundations/Old Reich Chancellery)

[Source: Dinge & Goete | Jun Nel | January 19, 2021 ++]

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## **Military History Anniversaries**

**01 thru 14 FEB**

Significant events in U. S. Military History over the next 15 days are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 14 FEB**”. [Source: This Day in History [www.history.com/this-day-in-history](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history) | January 2021 ++]

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## Beirut Bombing

### Iran \$50 Million Settlement Payments Start



Thirty-seven years after terrorists exploded a truck bomb in a Marine barracks in Lebanon, killing 241 U.S. military personnel, Iran has started to pay. Among the victims that day was Lex Trahan, 19, a Comeaux high graduate and the lone child of Percy "Blackie" Trahan and his wife, Shirley, of Lafayette. Attorney Warren Perrin, who represents the Trahan family, said he was notified 17 JAN that the first payment — \$300,000 — of an almost \$50 million settlement had arrived. Settlement of the suit will be made as assets of the Iranian regime are secured.

They will generally be reaped from seizure of illegal goods; in this case, the payment to the Trahans and others was made by capturing an Iranian ship that was trying to illegally evade an embargo last year. Payments will vary according to how much illegal goods are seized. Perrin said Trahan's father, "Blackie," the sole remaining member of the family, was "really moved" that the initial payment of the settlement had arrived. His wife died in 2019.

Lex Trahan joined the Marines in 1982 and planned to attend college when his service was complete. His intention was to work in the energy industry. But first Trahan, a combat engineer, was assigned to duty in Beirut, Lebanon, as part of a multinational peacekeeping effort. His room was on the third floor of a four-story dormitory when a terrorist driving a truck loaded with some 2,500 pounds of explosives broke through steel fences and sandbags at 6:20 a.m. on Oct. 23, 1983, creating an explosion that left a crater 30 feet deep and 40 feet wide. The death toll included 220 Marines, 18 Navy sailors, three Army soldiers and some 60 French peacekeepers.

The attack was later identified as terrorism sponsored by Iran. The toll was the worst single-day loss for U.S. troops since Iwo Jima in World War II. The court case against Iran began in 2016 under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. Perrin described collection of the award as "a long-term effort" from the U.S. Victims of State-Sponsored Terrorism fund established by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. The fund, created after 9/11, consists of penalties assessed against rogue entities such as banks, terrorists and governments.

After his death, his high school class set up a fund to put flowers on his grave annually on his birthday. The flowers continue to arrive every Jan. 14. Trahan is buried in Lafayette Memorial Park. There is a

memorial fund in his name at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where his mother worked. [Source: The Advocate | Ken Stickney | January 20, 2021 ++]

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## Every Picture Tells A Story

### Troops of the Eight-Nation Alliance



Troops of the Eight-Nation Alliance (except Russia) that fought against the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. This shot of [the Eight-Nation Alliance](#), an international military group created after the Boxer Rebellion in the Qing Empire of China was made up of the United States, British Empire, Germany, France, Austro-Hungary, Italy, Russia, and Japan, and they came together to exert their influence over China. At the time, the Boxers wanted to remove all western influence from China and they started by attacking any westerners who they found in the area. In 1900, they trapped large quantities of foreigners inside Beijing as the Chinese government put its weight behind the Boxers. A brief war broke out when the Eight-Nation Alliance sent two relief expeditions, one on June 10th and another on August 4th to fight off resistance, break the Boxer stronghold and end the short, albeit extremely bloody war.

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## WWII Bomber Nose Art

### [68] Ain't Miss Behavin'



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## Medal of Honor Awardees

Eli Whiteley | WWII



*The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the*

**MEDAL OF HONOR**

*To*

**Eli Whiteley**

**Organization:** U.S. Army, Company L, 15th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division

**Place and date:** DEC 27 1944 Sigolsheim, France

**Entered service:** April 1942

**Born:** December 10, 1913, Florence, Williamson County, TX



Army Capt. Eli Whiteley was an academic interested in agriculture when World War II consumed the world, but he volunteered for the Army to do his part. In 1944, he led his platoon through a fierce battle in France that killed several Germans and captured dozens more. His leadership and courage despite intense wounds led him to earn the Medal of Honor.

Whiteley was born Dec. 10, 1913, and grew up on his family's farm near Georgetown, Texas. After high school, Whiteley applied to the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A&M University). But, according to the Texas State Historical Association, he was told he needed better grades and more coursework. Instead, Whiteley took odd jobs to earn money for school and eventually landed a position with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, a new federal agency. After six years of work, Whiteley reapplied for college at AMCT and was accepted. Majoring in agriculture, Whiteley took as many courses as he could year-round while working two jobs and participating in ROTC. He graduated in 1941 — in three years — with a Bachelor of Science degree in agronomy. However, since he graduated early, he failed to finish the required courses that would have led to a military commission.

Whiteley then moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, to start his master's degree at North Carolina State College (now North Carolina State University). But then Pearl Harbor happened, and, according to the Texas State Historical Association, Whiteley volunteered his name to the draft board to be chosen during the next call-up. So, in April 1942, the 28-year-old joined the Army. After basic training, he went to Infantry Officers Candidate School to earn his commission. He worked stateside training other recruits and soldiers until November 1944 when he was shipped to Europe as a rifle platoon leader assigned to Company L, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. The unit was in France, where it had begun its push toward Germany.

There was bitter fighting along the way. During a fierce battle in Bennwihr, France, on Dec. 23, 1944, Whiteley's company lost more than half of its men. As devastating as that was, it was about to get worse. On Dec. 27, 1944, then-1st Lt. Whiteley was leading his platoon in a brutal campaign that required the men to fight from house to house in the fortress town of Sigolsheim, France. As he charged alone into a house off a fire-laden street, he suffered serious wounds to his left arm and shoulder, but he still managed to take out the two Germans occupants. Using grenades, he then charged into the next house, killing two more while helping his platoon capture 11 enemy soldiers. House by house, Whiteley led his platoon as it cleared hostile troops from buildings along the street. By the time they reached a Nazi stronghold, Whiteley's left arm was completely useless. But he pushed forward anyway, blasting out a wall with a bazooka before charging through a hail of gunfire that followed. He had to wedge his submachine gun under his uninjured arm as he ran into the house through the blast hole, killing five enemy soldiers and forcing the remaining 12 to surrender.

Whiteley continued his attack and was again critically wounded when one of his eyes was pierced by a shell fragment. Despite the intense pain, he yelled for his men to follow him into the next house. He stayed in the fight as the head of his platoon until medical personnel forced him to evacuate. All in all, Whiteley's courage under intense fire led to the death of nine Germans and the capture of 23 more. His leadership during the battle led to an Allied victory that shattered any remaining enemy resistance in the area. Whiteley was evacuated to get medical help. After three months, he was sent back to the U.S. for treatment, which took 18 months and included plastic surgeries and an artificial eye. While he was still in recovery, he was flown to Washington, D.C.

On Aug. 23, 1945, he received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman during a White House ceremony. His mother and one brother were able to attend; he was also promoted to captain. Afterward, he returned to the hospital for treatment. It took 18 months for Whiteley to recover. In May 1946, he was discharged from the Army. A distinguished war hero, Whiteley returned to North Carolina and finished his master's degree in 1949. That same year, he married a woman named Anna. The pair had two sons and three daughters. After earning his degree, Whiteley accepted a job teaching agronomy at his alma mater, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. He worked there for 30 years as a teacher. He also researched plants and soil management, which helped him earn him a doctorate in soil physics in 1959. Whiteley retired in 1979 and was named a professor emeritus in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences.

Whiteley remained active in the military community. He was once a post commander at his local American Legion, and he served for a while as the president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. Whiteley died of a heart attack on Dec. 2, 1986. He was buried with full military honors at College Station City Cemetery. Whiteley's name lives on at Texas A&M. The Eli Whiteley Memorial Medal of Honor Park

was named in his honor. A dormitory was also dedicated in his name. Whiteley's Medal of Honor is also on loan to the Sam Houston Sanders Corps of Cadets Center on the university's campus, where it's currently on display. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | December. 28, 2020 ++]

## \* Health Care \*



## TRICARE Low Back Pain Coverage

### New | Physical Therapy

Do you have acute or chronic low back pain? If the answer is yes, you aren't alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, low back pain is [the most common type of pain reported by patients](#). You can take [preventive steps and manage low back pain](#) safely and effectively. As of Jan. 1, 2021, if you need physical therapy for your low back pain, the [Defense Health Agency established a demonstration](#). With the demonstration, TRICARE will waive cost-shares for qualified beneficiaries for up to three physical therapy sessions in 10 states.

Low back pain responds well to self-care as well as physical therapy. Self-care should be the first treatment for low back pain. This includes stretching, hot or cold therapy, strengthening exercises, and anti-inflammatory drugs that you can get over the counter. If these methods aren't effective, then your provider may recommend that you [get physical therapy](#) for your low back pain. "We want you to seek appropriate and quality care when you need to for your back pain," said Erica Ferron, a health care policy analyst with the Defense Health Agency. "We hope this trial demonstration encourages those who need physical therapy to treat and manage their low back pain."

### What is the demonstration and who qualifies?

Under the [Low Back Pain and Physical Therapy Demonstration](#), TRICARE will waive cost-shares for up to three physical therapy sessions for those with low back pain. This is only available in 10 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Virginia. If you're an active duty service member (ADSM), you aren't eligible for the demonstration. As an ADSM, you already have no cost-share (i.e. A percentage of the total cost of a covered health care service that you pay) for physical therapy. However, [medically necessary physical therapy is a covered service](#) for all TRICARE beneficiaries. This is regardless of your eligibility for the demonstration.

To qualify to have your cost-share waived, you need a new primary diagnosis of low back pain. You must both live in and get care in one of the 10 above named states. And you must have a referral from a TRICARE-authorized provider. An authorized provider is any individual, institution/organization, or supplier that is licensed by a state, accredited by national organization, or meets other standards of the medical community, and is certified to provide benefits under TRICARE. There are two types of TRICARE-authorized providers: Network and Non-Network. DS. Your referral must be to a network TRICARE-authorized provider, unless you're using [TRICARE For Life](#).

If you're already getting physical therapy for your low back pain, you won't get the three waived cost-shares. Only your new physical therapy treatment is eligible for waived cost-sharing. After the three sessions, you must pay your regular cost-shares and copayments for your future sessions.

### **What is a TRICARE demonstration?**

A demonstration is a special provision that lets TRICARE try new methods of delivering health care. It also gives financial relief to a certain population. After the demonstration, the service may or may not become a [TRICARE covered service](#). The low back pain demonstration runs from Jan. 1, 2021 to Dec. 31, 2023. TRICARE may extend the demonstration or end it.

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To learn more, check out [Low Back Pain and Physical Therapy Demonstration](https://www.tricare.mil/lowbackpain) at <https://www.tricare.mil/lowbackpain>. You can also reach out to your [TRICARE regional contractor](#) if you have questions or need assistance. Take command of your health this year. [Source: TRICARE Communications | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## **Tricare/CHAMPUS Fraud**

### **Update 23: Fraudster Receives 18 yr Sentence & \$350M Fine**

A Mississippi man described as the “mastermind of the largest health care fraud scheme” in that state’s history has been sentenced to 18 years in prison and ordered to pay nearly \$350 million in connection to his role in a scheme to defraud Tricare, Justice Officials said. **Wade Ashley Walters**, 54, of Hattiesburg, Miss., who earlier pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, was sentenced 15 JAN in federal court in Mississippi, according to an announcement from the Justice Department. He is co-owner of numerous pharmaceutical distributors and compounding pharmacies — companies that make individualized medications for people.

He was ordered to pay nearly \$288 million in restitution, and to pay an additional \$57 million to forfeit his personal profit from the scheme, officials stated. The sentencing “is another mile marker on the long road to justice for victims, our veterans, our military, and all American taxpayers, as the mastermind of the largest health care fraud scheme in Mississippi history has been held to answer for his crimes,” said Mike Hurst, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, in the Justice Department announcement. Since 2007, federal officials have been engaged in a coordinated, large-scale investigation of health care fraud. Some involve schemes to submit claims to Medicare, Medicaid and Tricare for treatments that weren’t medically necessary, and sometimes never provided. Some schemes resulted in convincing Tricare beneficiaries to fill prescriptions for pain creams, ointments and other topical medicines they didn’t necessarily need, resulting from illegal kickback schemes.

Between 2012 and 2016, Walters ran a scheme to defraud Tricare and other health care benefits programs by distributing compounded medications that weren’t medically necessary, officials stated. According to Justice Officials, Walters and his co-conspirators:

- Adjusted prescription formulas to ensure the highest reimbursement without regard to effectiveness; and solicited recruiters to get prescriptions for high-margin compounded medications,



- Paid those recruiters commissions based on the percentage of reimbursements paid, including claims reimbursed by Tricare, and set up a system to make it appear that the pharmacies were collecting copayments, while waiving or reducing copayments paid by beneficiaries.
- Solicited medical practitioners to authorize prescriptions for high-profit compounded medications, and sometimes paid kickbacks to those practitioners.

The investigation into this specific scheme began in the FBI’s Jackson, Miss., field office. Among the federal agencies that investigated are the Defense Criminal Investigative Service’s southeast field office, the Internal Revenue Service’s Atlanta field office, and the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics. The Justice Department Criminal Division’s Fraud Section leads the Health Care Fraud Strike Force, formed in 2007. That has resulted in charging more than 4,200 defendants who have collectively billed Medicare for about \$19 billion, according to Justice Officials.

In May, 2015, a Tricare policy change required screening of all ingredients in the compounded prescriptions and rejecting any that contained non-FDA approved ingredients. These prescriptions were increasingly costly to the Defense Health Agency, which spent nearly \$1 billion on compounded prescriptions in the first four months of 2015 alone. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | January 21, 2021 ++]

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## **Migraines**

### **Update 03: Top Treatments**

According to the study conducted by the Migraine Research Foundation, migraines are one of the most commonly prevalent conditions in the world, and it runs majorly among adults and in families with children. A survey carried out by the same foundation says that nearly 12% of Americans suffer from migraines. A migraine is not just a persistent, severe headache as it goes way beyond that. It is a part of a neurological ailment often coupled with other migraine symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound. It is a chronic condition hindering the daily life of the people facing it.

Specific preventative medications can prevent migraines, but the natural treatments are equally worth considering as they can significantly impact the overall health. In this particular write-up, we will focus on some of the best natural cures/remedies that can help you relieve migraine headaches.

#### **Exercise Regularly**

When you exercise, your body releases particular chemicals that restrict the pain signals from reaching the brain. Besides, these chemicals also help ease anxiety and depression, which can make migraines worse. In addition to that, obesity also enhances the risk of developing significant headache pain. Maintaining a healthy body weight through regular exercise can offer additional benefits other than relieving a migraine. If your physician allows, choose any exercise that you enjoy the most. It could be swimming, walking, cycling, and other such impactful practices. However, remember to gradually ease into the routine, as highly vigorous exercises may prove to be migraine triggers.

#### **Practice Meditation And Yoga**

You can significantly benefit from the throbbing pain felt in your head by regularly practicing meditation or yoga. Both of these are some of the most impactful and easy-to-do relaxation techniques that can help you prevent migraines. Yoga improves the blood flow in the body and reduces muscle tension that relieves some significant symptoms experienced by the people who get migraines. Besides, meditation has its benefits too. Frequently occurring migraine attacks may be triggered by stress, tension, anxiety, etc. Relaxation techniques like meditation inhibit the nervous system's specific region that causes stress and ultimately relieve headaches by easing the underlying stress.

### **Try Aromatherapy**

Aromatherapy is a holistic, remedial treatment that utilizes natural plant extracts to improve health and well-being. It is also known as essential oil therapy as it makes use of aromatic essential oils in medicinal ways to enhance the body and mind's health. A study conducted by European Neurology suggests that inhaling lavender essential oil helps lower migraine headaches. Besides, it is also helpful in relaxing stress, headache, and other types of headaches. Apart from that, you may additionally try using different essential oils such as Rosemary, Peppermint, Chamomile, and Eucalyptus as they also show promising results in treating migraines.

### **Fix Your Sleep Schedule**

Multiple scientific studies suggest that there is a strong connection between lack of sleep and migraine pain. Often, migraines get triggered by low sleep quality or an irregular/insufficient sleep schedule. To prevent migraines, establish a regular sleep pattern so that you sleep for at least 7 hours at night. If you are habitual to daytime naps, keep them as short as 20 to 30 minutes so that you do not wake up with a headache. However, sometimes falling asleep while having a headache can be quite challenging. During these times, try to minimize all the possible distractions before sleeping, such as watching TV. Avoid the consumption of caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol as these components severely interfere with your sleep cycle.

### **Eat Healthier**

What you eat plays a significant role in your migraine conditions, and therefore, it is of utmost importance to maintain a nutritionally sound diet. Consume a sufficient amount of fruits and vegetables and avoid triggering food items such as aged cheese or processed meat. Along with eating healthy food, it is also essential to eat consistently. Ensure that you are eating at the right time every day, and do not skip meals at any cost. Skipping meals or fasting can majorly increase the risk of migraine attacks. Other than that, you may also consider maintaining a food journal to keep track of what you eat and which food items trigger a headache so that you can develop a better understanding of your body and mind.

### **Manage Stress**

Stress is one of the most common triggers leading to a migraine. Stress can also worsen a pre-existing migraine, creating a vicious cycle that gets almost intolerable after a point. Therefore, if you are prone to migraine headaches, keep stress away from you at all times. For this, you should look for outlets for releasing tension in the form of calming practices like journaling, leisure activities like painting, music, dance, etc. You may also consider taking an occasional break from your routine, especially when you feel overwhelmed or are experiencing burnout. Try to simplify and organize your thoughts and actions as much as you can. Avoid squeezing too many tasks within a short period to prevent unnecessary stress.

### **Drink Enough Water**

Not drinking plenty of water is a leading cause of developing a migraine; besides, it takes minor dehydration to cause a regular headache. People who face a persistent dehydration problem may consider

the consumption of oral rehydration to make up for the missing electrolytes in the body, provided your doctor agrees to it. A study has shown that people who added 1.5 liters of water to the amount they usually used to drink experienced fewer headaches after that. In addition to that, the pain they felt while facing a headache was also significantly lower than before. Water is an oxidizing agent that ensures proper supply to the blood vessels in all parts of the body, ultimately reducing the risk of developing pain in any body part.

### **Try Acupuncture**

A comprehensive and systematic study conducted in 2012 evaluated the effectiveness of acupuncture to treat migraines and other similar conditions. The authors of this study discovered that acupuncture is a practical treatment choice for people who experience frequent migraine headaches. However, additional factors may be playing a part as well. Those interested in practicing acupuncture for migraines should ensure that they find a licensed practitioner for the treatment. In this process, the needle stimulates the nerves for releasing hormones like endorphins, triggering an effective response in your body. Such stimulation of the immune and circulation system promotes a relief in migraines and other tension headaches.

### **Consume Herbal Supplements**

Certain herbal supplements like Butterbur and Feverfew have proven helpful in reducing migraine pain up to a considerable extent. According to the American Migraine Foundation, a regular dose of 150 mg of Butterbur will help you lower the frequency of migraines if taken for three months. The association suggests that Feverfew is relatively less effective as compared to Butterbur. Feverfew may still be suitable for some people. However, it is essential to realize that there are some risks or side effects of using these herbs. These side effects may be too severe in exceptional cases, which is why anyone wishing to try such herbal supplements should ensure that their doctor approves of it considering their condition.

### **Practice Compression Therapy**

Many people experiencing migraines usually proclaim a cold compress preference, but warm or cold, any of them can work. However, know that there are some side effects of practicing this therapy. In addition to that, people dealing with specific circulatory problems, diabetes, or skin ailments should preferably avoid extreme temperatures. It suggests that even known compression therapy may prove to reduce migraine pain. Still, you should always speak to your doctor before trying it out and do it only when you get a green signal from a trained medical professional.

### **Biofeedback Therapy**

Biofeedback is a type of therapy that people generally use to trigger a sense of release and relaxation of their bodies' tighter muscles. Such intensive therapy demands a substantial amount of practice and training. For this, you place sensors on the specific muscles fed in a small device that delivers real-time feedback about the muscle tension felt in the body. It allows users to release tight areas excellently. These sensors are placed near the forehead, jawline, or even trapezius muscles within the shoulders, targeting the tighter muscles and ultimately helping relieve migraine pain.

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, living with migraines is quite frustrating and pretty much a daily challenge, but by making healthy lifestyle choices, you can control the pain up to a great extent. Approach your friends, family, and loved ones for support and assistance to deal with the condition, as it is not just physically challenging but also mentally draining. If, at any point, you feel anxious, depressed, or generally uncomfortable, please

consider registering for a support group or seeking therapy. Always believe in your capability to take control of the pain experienced by you.

[Source: <https://aginghealthytoday.com> | January 11, 2021 ++]

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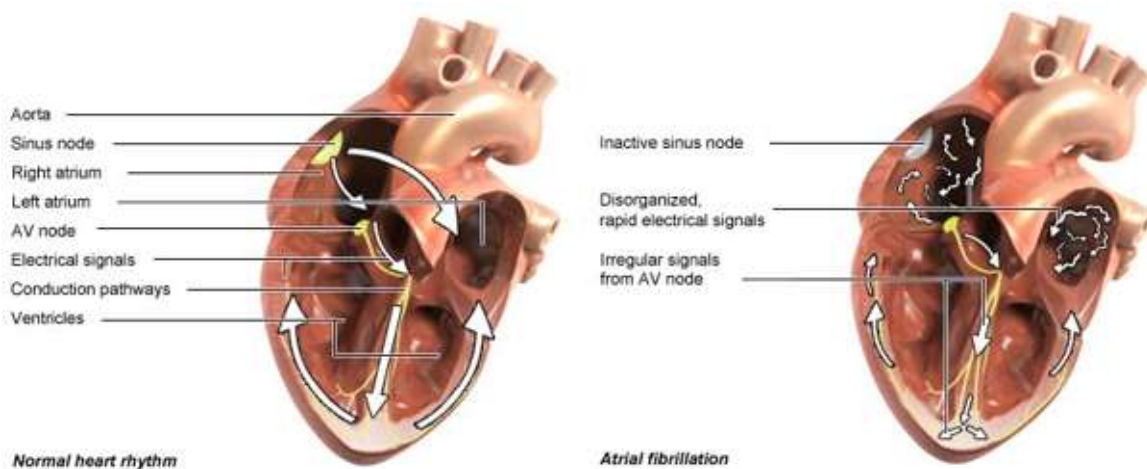
## Arterial Fibrillation

### Update 01: What it is and How to Deal With It

Atrial fibrillation is an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia). It is usually chronic. The heartbeat is continuously irregular and often so fast that the heart pumps less blood into the body. Atrial fibrillation is one of the most common types of irregular heart rate. Atrial fibrillation isn't immediately life-threatening. In the long term, though, it increases your risk of a stroke. Thanks to various treatments, most people can live a normal life despite having

**Symptoms** -- The most common symptom is a pounding or racing heart (palpitations) that can be felt in the chest or neck. The person's pulse is then usually higher and less regular than normal. A healthy resting heart rate usually ranges between 60 and 90 beats per minute. In people who have atrial fibrillation this can increase to between 120 and 160 beats per minute. Other possible symptoms include feeling weak, exhausted, light-headed and dizzy. But up to 30 out of 100 people don't notice that they have. People who also have other heart problems may have other symptoms as well. For instance, [heart failure](#) (cardiac insufficiency) can lead to shortness of breath and exhaustion, particularly during physical activity.

**Causes** -- Every time the heart beats, it contracts (squeezes) and pumps blood into the body. The heartbeat is regulated by electrical signals. The signal that starts a heartbeat is generated in the sinus node, which is found in the wall of the right atrium (the upper right chamber of the heart). This signal spreads like a wave across both atria (upper heart chambers), causing them to squeeze. The sinus node is sometimes described as the heart's "natural pacemaker." A normal heartbeat is known as the sinus rhythm.



**Normal heartbeat and atrial fibrillation – as described in this article**

In atrial fibrillation, the electrical signals spread across the upper chambers in a chaotic way. This makes them quiver (“fibrillate”) uncontrollably. The upper chambers of the heart usually help the lower chambers (ventricles) to fill up with blood. They provide about 20% of the heart’s pumping power. In atrial fibrillation, the heart doesn’t have this extra pumping power. The lower chambers still pump blood into the body, but not as much and in a less regular rhythm. Atrial fibrillation can be caused by various things. The most common causes include:

- High blood pressure
- Coronary artery disease
- Heart attack
- Heart failure (this is sometimes caused by Atrial fibrillation instead)

Sometimes atrial fibrillation is caused by a treatable condition such as a leaky heart valve or an overactive thyroid gland. If that is the case, the atrial fibrillation might go away following heart valve surgery or thyroid treatment. In about one third of all people who have atrial fibrillation, the cause remains unknown.

**Risk factors** -- The biggest risk factor is older age. It is estimated that about 2% of the total population and about 7% of people over the age of 65 are affected. If you have close relatives (parents, brothers or sisters) who have atrial fibrillation you are more likely to develop it yourself. Some types of heart surgery can cause atrial fibrillation too. The risk factors that you can influence include the following:

- Alcohol (drinking too much or too regularly)
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Being very overweight
- Sleep apnea (pauses in breathing during sleep)

**Outlook** -- Atrial fibrillation typically occurs in rare, short episodes at first. Over time, it can then gradually progress to longer episodes or permanent. There are four different types, depending on how long the episodes last:

- In paroxysmal (“intermittent”) atrial fibrillation the heart rhythm usually returns to normal on its own within about 48 hours. It can sometimes last up to seven days, though. Paroxysmal may occur only once or keep coming back in episodes.
- Persistent atrial fibrillation lasts longer than seven days.
- Long-standing persistent atrial fibrillation lasts longer than a year.
- Permanent atrial fibrillation is always present.

But this classification can only serve as a rough guideline: It often isn’t clear whether someone has already had episodes of atrial fibrillation in the past, or how long they have already had it for. The main thing to know is that all types of atrial fibrillation increase the risk of a stroke. So the specific type of atrial fibrillation isn’t all that relevant when deciding whether or not to have treatment with anticoagulants (anti-clotting medication).

**Effects** -- Although atrial fibrillation can cause various noticeable symptoms, it is usually not an acutely life-threatening condition. But it can lead to various health problems in the long term. The main ones are:

- *Heart failure* (a weak heart, also known as cardiac insufficiency): If the atria (upper heart chambers) no longer squeeze properly, the rest of the heart has to work harder to provide the body with blood. This can become too much for the heart to handle, making it weaker over time. If someone already has heart failure, atrial fibrillation can make it worse.
- *Stroke*: In atrial fibrillation, the upper heart chambers no longer pump enough blood. As a result, it takes longer for blood to pass through these chambers and it builds up there. This increases the likelihood of blood clots forming. If a blood clot is carried to the brain in the bloodstream, it may block a blood vessel there and cause a stroke.

A person's individual risk of stroke will depend on whether they have risk factors other than atrial fibrillation. People who have atrial fibrillation often have other medical conditions too, such as high blood pressure or coronary artery disease.

**Diagnosis** -- Various things can help to get an accurate atrial fibrillation diagnosis, find out the cause, and plan the treatment:

- A talk about your medical history (anamnesis): The doctor asks questions about your symptoms, other medical conditions, age and family history, as well as risk factors for heart disease.
- Physical examination: This includes measuring your pulse rate and blood pressure.
- Electrocardiogram (ECG): An ECG measures the electrical activity that regulates the heartbeat. This is a reliable way to diagnose atrial fibrillation. ECGs can be done when you are at rest, exercising or over a period of 24 hours (Holter monitor).
- Blood test: Blood tests can be used to check various things, including thyroid function. Atrial fibrillation is sometimes caused by an overactive thyroid gland, or taking too high a dose of thyroid medication. The electrolytes (salts and minerals) in your blood can be measured too. Atrial fibrillation is sometimes associated with an electrolyte imbalance.
- Ultrasound scan of the heart (echocardiography): This is commonly known as an "echo." It can be used to, for example, see how big the heart chambers are and check for heart valve problems.

Some tests are particularly helpful when planning treatment: For example, kidney and liver function tests are important because some medications aren't suitable for people with kidney or liver problems. Because atrial fibrillation doesn't always cause symptoms, it is sometimes discovered by chance, for instance if an ECG is done for a different reason.

**Prevention** -- There's a lot you can do yourself to keep your heart healthy – which helps to prevent atrial fibrillation too: Quit smoking, get more exercise, lose weight (if you're overweight), eat less salt (if you have high blood pressure), and drink less alcohol. Research has shown, for instance, that people who have fewer episodes if they generally avoid alcohol. One study also found that losing weight reduced the symptoms and frequency of episodes.

**Treatment** -- The treatments for atrial fibrillation have two main aims: One aim is to get rid of – or at least reduce – the symptoms caused by the irregular heartbeat. The other is to prevent strokes. There are various medications for each of these aims, with their own advantages and disadvantages.

**Treating the symptoms** -- It is sometimes enough to reduce the too-high heart rate with medication – usually a beta blocker. This treatment takes the strain off the heart and helps to reduce the symptoms. It is referred to as heart rate control. If that doesn't make a big enough difference, doctors can try to reset the rhythm of the heart. This approach is known as cardioversion. It attempts to stop the irregular quivering ("fibrillation") and restore a normal rhythm. Cardioversion is usually done in a hospital by delivering

controlled electric shocks to the heart. But the rhythm of the heart may become irregular again afterwards. The risk of this happening can be reduced by treatment with medication or a procedure known as atrial fibrillation ablation. This is a good idea if your risk is high, or if the atrial fibrillation has already returned several times. In rare cases, atrial fibrillation can become dangerous and, for example, lead to a big drop in blood pressure. If that happens, the heart rhythm is usually quickly restored using controlled electric shocks.

**Stroke prevention** -- Most people who have atrial fibrillation are advised to take medication to prevent strokes. Medications called oral anticoagulants reduce blood clotting and can greatly lower the risk of a stroke. It is best to talk with your doctor about whether or not to use anticoagulants, and decide together. Here it is a good idea to carefully weigh the pros (stroke prevention) and cons (risk of bleeding). Your personal risk of a stroke and bleeding will depend on your personal risk factors. Special calculators can help to determine your risk.

**Everyday life** -- Most people aren't aware of their heart if it beats normally. That's different in people who have atrial fibrillation. They often notice that their heart is not beating as it should. Many find this so worrying that they see a doctor about it. Being diagnosed with atrial fibrillation might come as a shock at first, but the symptoms can usually be effectively managed using various treatments. Patient education courses can be helpful too: Here people can learn how to cope with the condition in everyday life, and how to use their anticoagulant medication properly. The doctor will help you to apply for patient education. But many people still feel worried. Some wonder whether they should try to avoid strenuous activities, and whether they can continue living as usual and do things like sports. There's no medical reason not to. Research has even shown that moderate exercise can improve your physical fitness. It's best to talk to your doctor about which type of exercise would be suitable.

[Source: <https://www.informedhealth.org> | January 28, 2021 ++]

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## Unhealthy Food

### Food That Is Not Good For You



You would assume that with the internet at the tip of our fingers and many sources to check from. We would have some sure answers about what works well for our health and what doesn't. However, health is a complex matter, and finding what adds more nutrition to your life is a task that can require some effort. Well, to help you preserve some of that effort for directing to another topic, this article will tell you about the 5 foods that aren't as healthy as you thought. Of course, we should always note that context would be an integral part of our lives. We have various body shapes and types, health conditions and allergies, and many other things. However, it's always a good start to cut out calorie-loaded foods that don't offer much nutritional value from your diet, like the following five foods.

### Fruit Juice

A little surprise here is valid. You must be wondering how fruit juice can be anything other than healthy or beneficial. And particularly thanks to how companies have been increasing more and more options of 'all-natural' juices advertised as the one health solution you had been waiting for all these years, it may be even more shocking. But as is the truth, when you buy juices from outside, it's more likely than not that they're full of sugar and calories, something decidedly not what you're looking for. It's better to prepare your juice at home with whole foods and no sugar instead of relying on the packaged stuff available at the grocery stores.

This goes for the natural fruit juice options as well, since sugars can be natural too. However, it would help if you were informed about what you consume and the quantity you're consuming it in, and starting with replacing a glass of fresh juice made at home instead of the packaged one is a good step.

### **Dried Fruit**

The surprise doesn't end. Who knew that what you pegged for as a healthy fix is actually not that, well, healthy? Dried fruit makes things very convenient. It's there when you can't grab some fresh fruit, and it doesn't rot away in a rush like fresh fruit can. You can also carry it everywhere from the gym to the office, and the variety you can choose from is delightful. And if it's coming from fresh produce and is so nutritional, what's the harm?

Sadly your favorite dried mango is bursting with sugar. You will also need to be very careful about the portions you're consuming, thanks to how calorie-dense your dried pineapple is. It would be best for you if you also remembered that the extended shelf life of the dried fruits you're mindlessly snacking on - which is another problem -is coming from abundant preservatives. Don't be upset, though. You can still have these dried fruits, but you'll need to check the nutritional value and be aware of the portion size you're munching on.

### **Granola Bars**

Can this list be more heartbreaking? As you'll find out, yes. Many of your favorite breakfast cereal-based bars are not healthy for you, thanks to the common ingredients they have – processed flour and sugar. It's saddening because people try hard to get something worth eating for breakfast, choosing the seemingly healthier options over the clearly unhealthy ones. Too bad, because even these varieties, like granola breakfast treats, offer only slight nutritive value. On the other hand, they're also loaded with calories. The high sugar content is something your health won't appreciate, and it's better to make another choice. An excellent way of ensuring that you get maximum health benefits is by making your foods at home with whole grains and high nutritive ingredients. Even if you can't, it's better to replace your older breakfast cereal varieties with alternatives like rolled oats so that you can get a lot of fiber as well.

### **Fat-Free or Low-Fat Food**

It's extraordinary to find this one on the list. Many studies have warned that the low-fat/fat-free foods we consume so confidently, assuming it to be healthy, is likely to have more calories and sugar. This is to compensate for the flavor lost -without fat, there won't be much flavor left to your foods, and who will buy it from companies then? To make up for this, the producers include additional flavors and extra sugar. Consuming such foods is not a move in a healthy direction.

Another point to be careful about when you're buying fat-free or low-fat food is the likelihood of you overeating it. Many consumers tend to overeat such foods because they're assured that reducing fat from foods makes them healthy. To avoid this trap, it's better to prepare your food at home with healthier



ingredients, like yogurt and fruit purees. Replace the usual potato chips with kale chips or roasted chickpeas for healthier snack options.

### **Instant Oatmeal**

Instant Oatmeal can be deceptively unhealthy, containing extra sugar and carbohydrates. While the body needs a little bit of everything, consuming anything in excess can spell trouble for your health. And if you're particularly concerned about your health and trying to make better choices, the friendlier choice for you would be to consume a homemade bowl of oatmeal. Since you're making it yourself, you can make it a genuinely healthy choice by adding less sugar and carbohydrates.

The delightful news to compensate for all the shocks this list has given you is that there's a wide range of exciting recipes you can try out instead. In just 15 minutes, you can make oatmeal banana pancakes, and it's not only healthy but also delicious. To boost up the health factor, you can add chia seed or flaxseed to it. Or you can prepare some fig infused oats. This will give you the satisfaction of having cooked something new and exciting. You'll also be doing yourself some major health favors by making these choices.

### **Conclusion**

As we're growing more aware of how much we need to prioritize our health and how a healthy diet goes a long way of ensuring and promoting a stress-free life, it's high time we start questioning traditionally accepted foods and bust myths. While we would hate to say goodbye to some of our favorite foods, it's also necessary to replace them with options that positively affect our health. Making better-informed and healthier choices, of course, does not mean that you cannot eat dried fruit or drink fruit juice ever again. Having them in controlled portions occasionally can still be done. Plus, the other exciting options you can try by ditching the same old packaged stuff you buy on every grocery trip will be a nice change too! Ask your body after you make the change – it will agree.

[Source: HealthTipsNow | December 26, 2020 ++]

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## **Breathing**

### **Exercises to Make You Feel Calmer or Reduce Stress**

Taking out some time from your day to practice breathing techniques can help you find better focus and deal with anxiety-inducing thoughts. Breathing is one of the most crucial requirements of living, and yet, most of us do not try to set aside some time for it. From improving lung function to coping better with your racing thoughts, you can count on the breathing exercises mentioned below. Try out some of these the next time you feel anxious or are having trouble sleeping. It not only can cure your racing thoughts but is also beneficial for your lung function, so start to work some of these into your daily routine.

#### **Pursed Breathing**

Let's begin with a simple but effective exercise. You can calm yourself through pursed breathing at any time and place. You must remember first to relax your shoulders and neck. This exercise involves inhaling through the nose, then puckering your lips as you would before whistling, and then exhaling through pursed lips. Do this till the count of four and try to include this exercise four or five times in your daily routine.



### **Sama Vritti**

This yoga exercise is also known as equal breathing and is particularly suitable at bedtime but you can do it anywhere. Just find a comfortable seat with your back supported and feet on the floor.

- Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose, slowly counting to 4. Feel the air filling your lungs.
- Hold your breath here and slowly count to 4 again. Try not to clamp your airways shut. Simply avoid inhaling or exhaling for 4 counts.
- Slowly exhale to the count of 4.
- Hold the exhale for another 4 counts.
- Repeat steps 1–4 for 4 minutes or until you feel calm and centered.
- Once you're used to this natural resistance from breathing through the nose, you can try to do it for six to eight counts.

### **Breath Focus Technique**

This breathing technique involves keeping a word or phrase in mind that you feel calm or neutral about. For example, if it's the word 'peace,' you can use this word for building focus in your session. You are basically expected to grow aware of your breathing and calming yourself mentally as you self-talk about inhaling peace. Instead of words or phrases, you can also choose imagery that brings you peace and takes your focus away from anxiety.

Deep breathing is the foundation of breath focus, which is quite simple to do. Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit or lie down. Start by noting the difference between breathing normally and breathing deeply. First take a normal breath. Now try a deep, slow breath and hold your breath as you count to five. The air coming in through your nose should move downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully. Now breathe out through your mouth (or your nose, if that feels more natural). Alternate normal and deep breaths several times. Pay attention to how you feel when you inhale and exhale normally and when you breathe deeply. Shallow breathing often feels tense and constricted, while deep breathing produces relaxation. People who struggle with shortness of breath can do this exercise to get more fresh air and feel more relaxed.

### **Alternate Nostril Breathing**

Alternate nostril breathing is another breathing exercise coming from yoga. This technique has been proven to lower your heart rate and improve cardiovascular function. However, it would be best if you did this exercise on an empty stomach. Sick people should avoid doing this exercise. The use of the correct fingers is essential here, so it's recommended to watch some expert videos such as <https://youtu.be/Xbbr6Udg1UA> before attempting on your own.

### **Coherent Breathing**

You may also know this exercise by the name of resonant breathing. It involves breathing five full breaths in one minute. Breathe in and out for a count of five and help your heart rate in maximizing. Coherent breathing, or deep breathing, helps to calm the body through its effect on the autonomic nervous system. Whether it is practiced as part of yoga or meditation, or simply on its own as a relaxation strategy, coherent breathing is a simple and easy way to reduce stress and calm down when feeling anxious. Resonant breathing is considered useful for reducing stress and symptoms of depression. A few minutes of this breathing exercise can calm your mind and prepare you to face the day.

### **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

It's normal to feel stressed sometimes. But if your stress builds up, or it continues for a period of time, you might carry the tension in your muscles. You could have muscle tightness without even realizing it. For best results, try to do this breathing technique while you're sitting. It involves tensing up intentionally, and then one by one relaxing all your muscle groups. Take deep breaths while you're doing this exercise. Start loosening the muscle groups from bottom to top, starting with your feet and ending with your jaw and eyes. If you struggle or face discomfort in breathing, try slowing down with the exercise.

### **Abdominal Breathing Technique**

For stressful situations like giving exams or going for an interview, doing the abdominal breathing technique can help you relax. You can do this exercise by placing one hand on your chest and the other on your belly and breathing deeply, so your diaphragm feels like it is stretching. Exhale slowly, and do this six to ten times in a minute. You will feel much better and calmer. Refer to <https://www.wikihow.com/Do-Abdominal-Breathing> for more variations on this technique.

### **4-7-8 Breathing**

If you struggle with falling asleep at night, you should try this exercise. Also known as the 'relaxing breath' technique, it is a lot like equal breathing and has roots in yoga exercises. The name comes from how the method is executed:

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight. This is one breath.
- Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

### **Humming Bee Breath**

This yoga breathing practice involves creating a unique sensation. People have found this exercise, also known as bhrumari, to be useful in calming down anxious thoughts and relaxing from a state of frustration. You can do this exercise by finding a comfortable position and partially covering your ears as you inhale and exhale. With your mouth closed, make a humming sound as long as it helps you relax. Refer to <https://youtu.be/nfW68TlvtA8> for a video on the technique.

### **Stress Relief Breathing**

Changing your breathing – slowing it down, taking deeper breaths, controlling your exhale – releases endorphins (“feel-good hormones”), removes toxins from your body, slows your heart rate, and provides oxygenated blood that makes every system work more efficiently. Just this one simple action makes everything else better. You won't find a simpler wellness plan! Check out VA's Cynthia Mealer as she

offers several breathing techniques that will start you on the road to better health in the 6 min video at <https://youtu.be/h-CYAQpvcw> .

[Source: Aging Healthy Today & Vantage Point| December 16, 2020 ++]

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## **Covid-19 Vulnerability**

### **Update 11: Diseases That Are Common in Seniors Who Get COVID-19**



Seniors with 12 chronic conditions are especially vulnerable to ending up hospitalized for COVID-19, according to newly updated data from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are age 65 and older or who have disabilities or certain medical conditions. CMS says that more than 1.9 million Medicare beneficiaries were diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, between the start of last year and 21 NOV. Of those beneficiaries, more than 493,000 were hospitalized as inpatients with a COVID-19 diagnosis during that period.

Those numbers, released in mid-January, reflect cases and hospitalizations that CMS knew about as of 18 DEC. The federal agency notes that all data in its latest report will continue to change as CMS processes more Medicare health insurance claims. The present data reveals that 12 chronic conditions are most common among the Medicare beneficiaries who have been hospitalized:

- Hypertension: 79%
- Hyperlipidemia: 61%
- Chronic kidney disease: 49%
- Diabetes: 49%
- Rheumatoid arthritis/osteoarthritis: 46%
- Ischemic heart disease: 45%
- Anemia: 44%
- Heart failure: 33%
- Depression: 33%
- Alzheimer's disease/dementia: 32%
- Obesity: 32%
- Peripheral vascular disease: 31%

Of the beneficiaries who were hospitalized, 19% died and 35% were discharged to their homes. The others moved from the hospital to skilled nursing facilities (20%), home health care (15%), hospice (5%) or another health care facility (4%), CMS says. About half of the hospital stays lasted for fewer than eight days, while 11% percent of the stays were at least 21 days.

The coronavirus disease appears to be affecting people of color, older adults and the poor in greater numbers, and that disparity also shows up in the Medicare data. CMS says COVID-19 hospitalization rates are especially high for:

- Black beneficiaries (1,569 hospitalizations per 100,000 beneficiaries)
- Hispanic beneficiaries (1,258 hospitalizations per 100,000 beneficiaries)
- Beneficiaries who are age 85 or older (1,436 hospitalizations per 100,000 beneficiaries)
- Beneficiaries who are age 75 to 84 (917 hospitalizations per 100,000 beneficiaries)
- Beneficiaries enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, the government insurance program for people with low incomes (1,794 hospitalizations per 100,000 beneficiaries)

By comparison, the overall rate for all Medicare-only beneficiaries was 527 hospitalizations per 100,000 people. Regardless of your race, ethnicity, age or financial standing, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of contracting the coronavirus. Some measures are obvious or have gotten a lot of media attention. You can find helpful tips in the following stories:

- [“Are You Making These 7 Hand-Washing Mistakes?”](#)
- [“5 Cleaning Products You Should Be Using in 2021“](#)

Other ways to keep the coronavirus at bay might be less obvious. You can learn more about them in:

- [“Do This in the Car If You Want to Avoid COVID-19“](#)
- [“Use This Trick to Avoid Crowds at Shops and Restaurants“](#)
- [“How to Protect Your Eyes From the Coronavirus“](#)

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | January 22, 2021++]

**\* Finances \***



## **IRS 2020 Filing Season**

### **Update 02: Start Date Delayed**

Taxpayers hoping to get their return to the IRS quickly this year will have to wait longer than usual. The federal agency announced 15 JAN that it will not begin accepting and processing income tax returns until 12 FEB. That is about two weeks later than in recent years past. For example, last year, the tax season began on 27 JAN. Why the delay? The IRS says waiting until 12 FEB will give the agency time to perform extra programming and testing of IRS systems in the wake of federal tax law changes that President Donald Trump signed into law on Dec. 27. These changes include the second round of stimulus payments.

The IRS says that without the delay, tax refunds might fall behind schedule. The agency also notes that even though the start of tax season will be later than usual, you can still begin working on your return now: “People can begin filing their tax returns immediately with tax software companies, including IRS Free File partners. These groups are starting to accept tax returns now, and the returns will be transmitted to the IRS starting 12 FEB.” It is estimated that more than 150 million federal income tax returns will be filed this year. Last year, the average tax refund was more than \$2,500.

The deadline for filing your federal tax return is April 15. The IRS expects 90% of taxpayers to get their refunds within 21 days of filing if they file electronically and use direct deposit, assuming there are no issues with their returns. Before diving into your return, make sure you understand how tax law has changed over the last year. For more, check out “[10 Ways Your Income Taxes Will Be Different in 2021.](#)” Millions of Americans use tax software when filing their taxes. Examples of such software include:

- [TurboTax](#)
- [H&R Block](#)
- [Tax Slayer](#)
- [Jackson Hewitt](#)

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## **IRS Economic Impact Payment Debit Cards**

To speed the delivery of economic impact payments to as many people as possible, the Treasury Department and the IRS are issuing millions of prepaid debit cards, along with paper checks and direct deposit. If the [Get My Payment](#) tool on [IRS.gov](#) shows a date on which your payment was mailed, you should watch your mail for either a paper check or debit card. The debit cards will be sent to those eligible who don't receive direct deposit. They arrive in a white envelope that prominently displays the U.S. Department of the Treasury seal (pictured here.)



There's a special section about prepaid debit cards on IRS.gov. Here are a few of the common questions people may have about these cards:

**Did the IRS send prepaid debit cards?**

Yes. The prepaid debit cards are known as the Economic Impact Payment Card, and were prepared by the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, part of the Treasury Department. Check your mail carefully. These cards arrive in a plain envelope from "Money Network Cardholder Services." The Visa name will appear on the front of the card. The back of the card has the name of the issuing bank, MetaBank®, N.A. Information included with the card explains that the card is the recipient's Economic Impact Payment Card.

**Can someone transfer money from their debit card to their bank account?**

Yes. The limit on ACH transfers to a bank account is \$2,500 per transaction. People can easily transfer the money from their card to an existing bank account online at EIPCard.com. Card holders can also transfer money using the Money Network Mobile App, which can be downloaded as an app onto a smart phone. Card holders will need the routing and account number for their bank account.

**What does someone do if their prepaid debit card was lost or destroyed?**

Individuals who have lost or destroyed their EIP Card may request a free replacement through MetaBank® Customer Service. The standard fee of \$7.50 will be waived for the first reissuance of any EIP Card. Any initial fee charged to a customer from an earlier date will be reversed. Individuals don't need to know their card number to request a replacement. They may also request a replacement by calling 800-240-8100 and choosing option 2 from the main menu.

The IRS will mail a letter about the Economic Impact Payment to the individual's address of record within 15 days after the payment is made. Watch out for websites and social media attempts that request money or personal information and for schemes tied to Economic Impact Payments. The IRS encourages people to share this information with family and friends. For more information click [Economic Impact Payment FAQs](#)

[Source: Rep Scott Peter’s Weekly Recap | January 15, 2020 ++]

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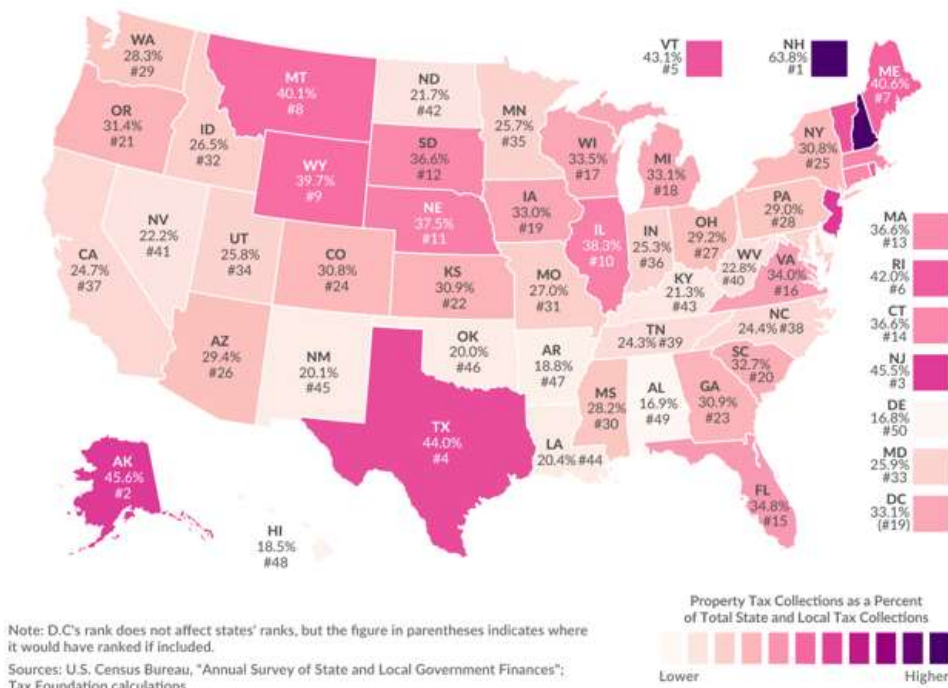
## **Property Tax**

### **Update 03: How Much Your State Relied On It in 2018**

Property taxes represent a major source of revenue for states and the largest source of tax revenue for localities. In fiscal year 2018, the most recent data available, property taxes were such a significant source of local revenue that they accounted for 71.7 percent of local tax collections nationwide and 31.1 percent of total U.S. state and local tax collections, a greater proportion than any other source of tax revenue. In that same year, 26 states and the District of Columbia collected the greatest share of their combined state and local tax revenue from property taxes, with property taxes the largest share of local revenue in all but two states (Arkansas and Louisiana, both of which have high local [sales taxes](#)).

A variety of local political subdivisions—counties, cities, school boards, fire departments, utility commissions, to name a few—have the authority to set property tax rates. While most tax jurisdictions levy property taxes based on the fair market value of a property, some base it on income potential (in the case of commercial properties) or other factors. In addition, some states place limits on how much property tax rates may increase per year or impose rate adjustments to achieve uniformity throughout the state.

Property Tax Collections as a Percent of Total State and Local Tax Collections, FY 2018



Property taxes are often unpopular with taxpayers but tend to be favored by public finance scholars—sometimes for the same reasons. Property taxes are more transparent than most: people often have a greater sense of what they pay in property taxes each year than they do for income taxes (much of which are typically withheld), let alone for sales taxes (paid in bits and pieces over the year). This transparency is good, but also makes the burden compare unfavorably to the burdens of other, less transparent, taxes in the minds of many taxpayers.

Property taxes are also imposed on the value of owned property, which strikes some as unfair (paying taxes on something they already own), but which helps taxes on real property accord reasonably well with what is known as the benefit principle, where taxes are imposed in proportion to the benefit the taxpayer receives. The value of one’s property corresponds, if imperfectly, with the market value of the benefits governments provide, like roads, police and fire protection, and schools. In fact, some of these expenditures are self-reinforcing: a better school district can improve the value of a property.

When property values are increasing, property taxes can sometimes rise faster than the cost (or value) of the services they pay for, which is one argument for [levy limitations](#) or other restrictions on the rate of growth of property taxes. Efforts to cap the burden on *specific* properties, however, can often backfire, not only creating inequities in the tax system but discouraging people from moving or from improving their property even when it is in their interest to do so. [Source: Tax Foundation | Janelle Cammenga | January 19, 2021 ++]

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## Return Policies

### Update 01: Three Retailers Telling Customers to Keep Some

The next time you try to return an item purchased from Amazon, Walmart or Target, you might be told to keep the product. At no cost to you. In some — although certainly not all — cases, big retailers are deciding



the expense of returning an item is not worth it. So, they are refunding customers and allowing them to keep their purchases, according to a Wall Street Journal report. The newspaper reports that Amazon and Walmart are among companies employing artificial intelligence to decide when it is more cost-effective not to accept returns.

According to the WSJ: “For inexpensive items or large ones that would incur hefty shipping fees, it is often cheaper to refund the purchase price and let customers keep the products.” Amazon long has been known for refunding purchases while also sometimes allowing customers to keep the items. CBS News reports that the online retail giant most often uses this option for inexpensive or bulky items such as basic yoga mats and dog food. Other situations where Amazon reportedly has used this approach involve returns of: Napkin rings, Baby bottle nipples, Clocks, and Paperback books.

Other retailers are using the same tactic. A spokeswoman for Target told the WSJ that the retailer occasionally refunds a customer, but tells her or him to keep or donate the item. At Walmart, a spokeswoman said the retailer has a “keep it” option that sometimes is used for merchandise it isn’t going to resell. Decisions to employ the “keep it” approach are based on factors such as the customer’s purchase history, the value of the product and the cost of processing the return. The trend of allowing customers to keep returned items is expected to grow among retailers, especially given that returns have surged during the pandemic. Returns of e-commerce purchases jumped 70% in 2020, according to Narvar Inc., which processes returns for retailers. Amit Sharma, Narvar chief executive, told the WSJ: “We are getting so many inquiries about this that you will see it take off in coming months.” [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | January 19, 2021 ++]

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## Postal Rates

### Update 05: Increases Effective January 24, 2021

Some letters and packages soon will be more expensive to mail. Starting on Jan. 24, rates are increasing for 10 types of deliveries the U.S. Postal Service makes. Let’s start with some good news, though. The price of mailing a 1-ounce letter with a first-class Forever stamp is not budging, at least for now. That will remain 55 cents. Many other services will become more expensive, however. Following are the new rates for mail services, with the old 2020 rate in parentheses.

- Letters weighing more than 1 ounce — 20 cents per additional ounce (up from 15 cents in 2020)
- Metered 1-ounce letters — 51 cents (50 cents)
- Domestic postcards — 36 cents (35 cents)

Following are the new rates for Priority Mail shipping services.

- Small flat-rate box — \$8.45 (\$8.30)
- Medium flat-rate box — \$15.50 (\$15.05)
- Large flat-rate box — \$21.90 (\$21.10)
- APO/FPO large flat-rate box — \$20.40 (\$19.60)
- Regular flat-rate envelope — \$7.95 (\$7.75)
- Legal flat-rate envelope — \$8.25 (\$8.05)

- Padded flat-rate envelope — \$8.55 (\$8.40)

Overall, the proposed price increases are approximately 1.8% for first-class mail products and 1.5% for other mailing services product categories. Meanwhile, the cost of Priority Mail service is rising by about 3.5% overall, while the cost of Priority Mail Express service is ticking up 1.2%. You can view all USPS prices on the organization’s Jan. 24 price list. While some mail is most welcome — such as a note from a loved one or a check — other mail is less likely to leave you warm and fuzzy. If you want to stop unwelcome mail, check out “[5 Ways to Put an End to Junk Mail.](#)” [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | January 21, 2021 ++]

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## **MOAA Education Assistance**

### **Application for the 2021-2022 School Year Is Now Open**

Applicants for MOAA programs must be attending an accredited college or university as full-time students during the **2021-2022 academic year**. All loans, scholarships, and grants are for students seeking their first undergraduate degree and are awarded for no more than five school years. No loans, scholarships, or grants are available for graduate-level studies.

**General Eligibility:** Applicants must be under 24 years old. Applicants must have a parent eligible for MOAA membership or be children of active duty, Reserve, National Guard, or retired enlisted military personnel. If the applicant served in a uniformed service before completing college, his or her maximum age for eligibility will be increased by the number of years he or she so served, up to five years. Applicants must have a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher. Children attending U.S. military academies and academy prep schools are not eligible. If selected for any Educational Assistance program, the sponsoring parent must have a paid MOAA membership throughout the college years and, if applicable, until the loan is repaid. Male applicants must affirm they have registered or will register for the Selective Service (by accepting the terms at the end of the application).

**Selection Criteria:** MOAA evaluates students based of their scholastic ability (1/3), extracurricular activities (1/3), and financial need (1/3). The applicant provides this information in the online application.

**Process:** MOAA will notify semifinalists in mid-March, and they must submit supporting documentation. They will notify finalists in early June, and they must submit proof of MOAA membership as appropriate and a fully executed promissory note.

#### **Assistance Type**

- **Interest-Free Loans --** These are MOAA’s main program. The interest-free loans are renewable annually for up to five years of full-time undergraduate study. The interest-free loan program currently provides a \$7,000 loan per student each year. Students selected as loan recipients and their sponsoring parent must sign a promissory note before receiving funds. Funds are disbursed electronically in two increments: one-half in early August and one-half in mid-December.
- **Scholarship -- American Patriot Scholarship:** Limited to students who qualify for the interest-free loan program and whose military parent has died on active service or is receiving Traumatic

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (T-SGLI) payments. Currently, students receive scholarships of \$7,000 each school year.

- **Grants:**

- **Designated Scholar Program:** MOAA considers all loan recipients for this program. Students chosen receive a \$6,500 interest-free loan and a \$500 grant named by the donor. Students must correspond with the donor or their designee each fall.
- **Senior Grants:** We notify current loan recipients entering their final year in college of these grants in January of their junior year. Students who believe they are eligible for these grants and who do not receive an emailed link to the application should email [edassist@moaa.org](mailto:edassist@moaa.org) for additional information. Recipients of Senior Grants become ineligible for further Educational Assistance programs. The number of grants awarded varies from year to year.
- **General John Paul Ratay Educational Fund Grants:** These grants are limited to children whose military parent retired and subsequently died. Students qualifying for a loan who meet the criteria of a Ratay grant are automatically considered. Students who believe they are eligible for these grants and who do not receive a request for supporting documentation should email [edassist@moaa.org](mailto:edassist@moaa.org). Funding for this grant is limited, so we might not award these annually.

MOAA disburses scholarships and grants in early August. Students may only receive one type of Educational Assistance each school year. For more information about the scholarship program, including how to donate, visit [www.moaa.org/scholarship](http://www.moaa.org/scholarship). Click [here](#) for other financial aid resources, and click [here](#) for more information about MOAA member-only [discounts on programs](#) to prepare for college entrance exams such as the SAT and ACT.

**Notes:**

1. The application for the 2021-2022 school year is now open for students who are NOT currently receiving funds from our program. Apply or login at <https://scholarship.moaa.org>.
2. Students currently receiving funds may now [renew](#) for next year. Rising seniors in the program may also [apply](#) for a senior grant.
3. If you are in repayment and have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, [complete a deferment](#).
4. NEW in 2021: Submit your transcripts digitally when renewing your educational assistance. See Page 2 of the renewal application.
5. Already receiving assistance? Check out your renewal and repayment [options](#).

[Source: MOAA Newsletter | January 21, 2021 ++]

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## **Social Security Changes**

### **Update 01: Biden's Reform Plan**

The Senior Citizen's League (TSCL) monitors legislation regarding Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid as well as other issues of importance to seniors. The need to fix Social Security has come to center stage this week with articles in major news outlets pointing out the urgency. During his campaign President Biden proposed a plan to reform Social Security by giving eligible workers a guaranteed minimum benefit

equal to at least 125% of the federal poverty level. People who have received benefits for at least 20 years would get a 5% bump. Widows and widowers would receive about 20% more per month. He also proposed changing the measurement for annual cost-of-living increases to the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly, or CPI-E, which could more closely track the expenses retirees face. To pay for those higher benefits, Biden would apply Social Security payroll taxes to those making \$400,000 and up. In 2021, workers generally pay the 6.2% Social Security tax on up to \$142,800 of wages.

TSCL has been in touch with Congressman John Larson (D-CT) regarding his Social Security 2100 legislation which he introduced last year and which TSCL strongly supported. The Larson bill aims to boost benefits and restore the program's solvency for the next 75 years by raising payroll taxes. He has not yet reintroduced his bill but, according to an article on CNBC.com, he said the Biden administration, and members of the Senate and House, are looking to come to a consensus by holding roundtables and evaluating different proposals. "There are a lot of similarities between the Social Security 2100 Act and President Biden's campaign proposal," Larson said. "We will be reintroducing a modified Social Security 2100 Act based on what comes out these discussions."

Getting a bill through the House is one thing, but getting it through the Senate is another. With a Senate equally divided between the two parties, the power of every Senator is enlarged because it would only take one Senator to pass or defeat legislation. But in addition, because of the ability of an individual Senator to mount a filibuster, it often actually takes 60 votes to pass legislation. One of the worrisome aspects of any Social Security reform legislation is that conservative politicians would likely object to raising benefits across the board, according to Rachel Greszler at the conservative Heritage Foundation. "There could be room for a compromise to be made here in terms of boosting the minimum benefit that's provided, so it's at least at the poverty level," Greszler said. "But that would have to come ... with a reduction in benefits at the top."

One challenge that could emerge in the negotiations is for leaders to face the decision of whether Social Security should be an anti-poverty or entitlement program, Greszler said. The Heritage Foundation is advocating for a universal benefit to protect those who are low income, while reducing how much middle-to high-wage earners rely on benefits. In short, some politicians and others want to cut the benefits of certain Social Security recipients in order to increase the benefits of others. TSCL is totally opposed to that kind of "fix," which is no fix at all. [Source: TSCL Press Release | January 25, 2021 ++]

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## **Netflix Scam**

### **Update 01: Don't Get Tricked by this Phony Free Offer**

Between the winter weather and COVID-19, most people are spending a lot of time at home. Streaming services, such as Netflix or Hulu, are more popular than ever. BBB Scam Tracker has gotten numerous reports of a text message con tricking would-be watchers with "free" Netflix for a year.

#### **How the Scam Works**

- You receive a text message that says something like this: "Due to the pandemic, Netflix is offering everyone a free year of service to help you stay at home. Click the link to sign up." Sounds great,

right? If you click, you'll be taken to a website to fill out your personal information and add a payment method.

- However, the website is not run by Netflix! If you “sign up,” you'll have given your personal information to a scammer. If you add payment information, you may be charged for services that you'll never receive because scammer doesn't have anything to do with Netflix.
- One victim told BBB Scam Tracker that scammers charged their credit card repeatedly – even after they asked for a refund. “[The scammers] said no other money would be taken out of my account again,” the victim reported. “Then, about a week later, they took \$39.99, and I called and asked for a refund. They told me 3 days at first. Then, after 3 days I called back, and they told me 7-10 business days. It's been 10 business days. And now I have no refund.”

### **Protect yourself from text message scams:**

- Don't believe every text you receive. As a general rule, companies can't send you text messages unless you opt in to receive them. If you receive a text message from a company you haven't given permission to contact you in this way, proceed with caution.
- Go straight to the source. If an offer seems strange, or too good to be true, contact the company directly by looking up their official contact information online. Call or email customer service to find out if the text message you received is legitimate.
- Ignore instructions to text “STOP” or “NO.” Even if you realize the message is a scam, don't text back. Replying helps scammers verify that your phone number is active.

### **For More Information**

Learn more about smishing scams on BBB.org. Con artists are sending phony texts pretending to be [banking alerts](#), [“mandatory” COVID-19 tests](#), and [package delivery problems](#). If you've received text messages from scammers, report your experience to [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Your report can help raise consumer awareness about this common scam tactic. [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## **COVID-19 Vaccine Scams**

### **BBB Sees New Reports**

COVID-19 vaccine distribution is in full swing, and scammers have been quick to take advantage. BBB Scam Tracker is getting reports of cons ranging from calls phishing for personal information to messages claiming you need to pay to guarantee your dose. If you are eligible to receive the vaccine, be sure to double check any messages before sharing personal information.

### **How the Scam Works:**

- You get a phone call, social media message, or an email saying that you are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. It appears to come from a friend, a public health official, or someone from a local hospital or clinic. That's great news! You start to schedule your appointment, but you quickly find there's a catch. The person who contacted you needs personal information or requires you to pay upfront.
- For example, in one version reported to BBB Scam Tracker, a phony caller claims that they need your Medicare number and home address. “I gave [the scammer] my Medicare number and

confirmed my name and address,” one victim reported. “He said he was going to come out to my house to administer the [COVID-19] test, and then the vaccine but he never showed.” In another version, scammers are impersonating people on social media, contacting their “friends,” and claiming that – if paid – they can “guarantee... the vaccine ASAP.” In yet another version, scammers are offering vaccine shots for as low as \$150, on apps and through email.

- No matter what scammers insist, be sure to check it against information from your local government or official news sources. Even if you don't pay up, sharing personal information with scammers opens you up to the risk of identity theft.

### **How to spot a vaccine scam:**

- Know your region's plan for rolling out the vaccine. In the United States, each state has its own process for dispensing the vaccine. Check with your local government or health department. See Canada's COVID-19 immunization plan. Understanding the process in your area and how you can expect to be contacted will help you spot a scam.
- Research carefully: Scammers are very creative, so be skeptical of anything that seems too good – or crazy – to be true. Double check any information about the vaccine with official news sources, and be aware that none of the vaccines can be currently purchased online or in stores.
- Guard your government-issued numbers. Never offer your Medicare ID number, Social Security number, health plan information, or banking information to anyone you don't know or trust.
- Think the link may be real? Double check the URL. Scammers often buy official-looking URL domains to use in their cons. Be careful to ensure that the link destination is really what it claims to be. If the message claims to be from the local government, make sure the URL ends in .gov (for the United States) or .ca (for Canada). When in doubt, perform a separate internet search for the website or call the source directly.

### **For More Information**

BBB has identified many ways in which scammers are cashing in the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about [clinical trial scams](#), [contract tracing cons](#), [counterfeit face masks](#), and [government agency imposters](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB ScamTracker](#). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](#). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | January 22, 2021 ++]

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## **COVID-19 Vaccine Scams**

### **Update 01: Posting About Your Vaccine? Do It Safely**

Got your COVID-19 vaccine? Great job! But don't share a photo of your vaccination card on social media. The self-identifying information on it makes you vulnerable to identity theft and can help scammers create phony versions.

### **What to watch out for:**

- You got your COVID-19 inoculation, and you are excited to share the good news and encourage others to do the same. You take a selfie holding your vaccination card and post it to Facebook, Instagram, or another social media platform.

- Unfortunately, your card has your full name and birthday on it, as well as information about where you got your vaccine. If your social media privacy settings aren't set high, you may be giving valuable information away for anyone to use.
- Sharing your personal information isn't the only issue. Scammers in Great Britain were caught selling fake vaccination cards on eBay and TikTok. It's only a matter of time before similar cons come to the United States and Canada. Posting photos of your card can help provide scammers with information they can use to create and sell phony ones.

**Share safely on social media:**

- Share your vaccine sticker or use a profile frame instead. If you want to post about your vaccine, there are safer ways to do it. You can share a photo of your vaccine sticker or set a frame around your profile picture.
- Review your security settings. Check your security settings on all social media platforms to see what you are sharing and with whom. If you only want friends and family to see your posts, be sure that's how your privacy settings are configured.
- Be wary of answering popular social media prompts. Sharing your vaccine photo is just the latest social trend. Think twice before participating in other viral personal posts, such as listing all the cars you've owned (including makes/model years), favorite songs, and top 10 TV shows. Some of these "favorite things" are commonly used passwords or security questions.

**For More Information**

For more information about privacy concerns on social media, see BBB's Scam Alert on [Facebook quizzes](#) and [like farming](#). BBB has identified many ways in which scammers are cashing in the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about [vaccine scams](#), [clinical trial scams](#), [contract tracing cons](#), [counterfeit face masks](#), and [government agency imposters](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](http://BBB.org/ScamTracker). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](http://BBB.org/AvoidScams). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | January 29, 2021 ++]

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**Tax Burden for Maryland Retired Vets**

**As of JAN 2021**

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 other ways including sales taxes, excise taxes, license 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 Maryland:

**Sales Taxes**

The Maryland state sales tax rate is **6.0%** which is higher than 71.2% of states.

- Groceries and prescription drugs are exempt from the Maryland sales tax

- Counties and cities are not allowed to collect local sales taxes
- Maryland has no special sales tax jurisdictions with local sales taxes in addition to the state sales tax
- Maryland has exemptions to its sales tax for medicines, residential energy, and most raw groceries (but not soda, candy, or alcohol). Most services are not taxed, but most tangible purchases (including Internet purchases and mail orders such as magazines) are. Selective sales taxes are also applicable to some items like Alcohol, which is taxed at a special rate of 9%.
- Maryland has a once-a-year "tax holiday" in August when no sales tax is collected on the sale of certain back-to-school items like clothing and books.

### **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 Maryland 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 Maryland Sales Tax. The Maryland 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. Maryland's excise taxes, on the other hand, are flat per-unit taxes that must be paid directly to the Maryland 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 Maryland merchants pass on the excise tax to the customer through higher prices for the taxed goods. Maryland collects an average of \$505 in yearly excise taxes per capita, higher than 58% of the other 50 states.

- **Alcohol:** Liquor \$4.62 per gal | Wine: \$1.35 per gal | Beer: \$0.49 per gal. Maryland's excise tax on Spirits is lower than 64% of the other 50 states and is ranked #32 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on wine is higher than 74% of the other 50 states. Maryland's excise tax on wine is ranked #13 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on beer is one of the highest beer taxes in the country. Maryland's beer excise tax is ranked #9 out of the 50 states.
- **Cannabis Tax:** none
- **Cellphone:** The average tax collected on cell phone plans in Maryland is **\$12.23 per phone service plan**, higher than 78% of the other 50 states. Maryland's average cellphone tax is ranked #11 out of the 50 states. The Maryland 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 Maryland excise tax on cigarettes is \$2.00 per 20 cigarettes, higher than 78% of the other 50 states. Maryland's excise tax on cigarettes is ranked #11 out of the 50 states. The Maryland cigarette tax of \$2.00 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.
- **Fuel:** The Maryland excise tax on gasoline is 23.90¢ per gallon, higher than 68% of the other 50 states. Maryland's excise tax on gasoline is ranked #16 out of the 50 states. The Maryland gas tax is included in the pump price at all gas stations in Maryland and is in addition to the federal excise tax of 18.4¢ per gallon on gasoline and 24.4¢ per gallon, on diesel. For all state and federal taxes by type of fuel refer to <https://www.salestaxhandbook.com/vermont/gasoline-fuel>
- **Vehicle:** Maryland 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 Maryland Department of Transportation and receive documentation (registration and title papers) proving the fees were paid.

### **Personal Income Taxes**

The average family pays \$1,525.00 in Maryland income taxes

**Tax Rate Range:** Low – 2.0%; High – 5.75%

**Income Brackets:** Eight. Lowest – \$0 to \$2,000; Highest – \$250,000 to \$300,000+

**Personal Exemptions:** \$3,200 each if adjusted gross income (AGI) is \$100,000 or less. Amount reduced in increments to zero for AGI amounts between 100,000 and \$200,000. You and your spouse are permitted to claim additional exemptions for being age 65 or over or for blindness. These additional exemptions are in the amount of \$1,000 each. If any other dependent claimed is 65 or over, you also receive an extra exemption of up to \$3,200.

**Standard Deduction:** 15% of Maryland adjusted gross income with minimums of \$1,550 and \$3,100 and maximums of \$2,300 and \$4,650, depending on your filing status.

**Itemized Deductions:** You may itemize your deductions only if you itemized deductions on your federal return and you can claim the same itemized deductions on your Maryland tax return as you did on your Federal tax return.

**Medical/Dental Deduction:** None

**Federal Income Tax Deduction:** None

**Retirement Income Taxes:** Income from most private pensions or annuity plans is taxable in Maryland. Certain government pensions, however, are exempt under Maryland law. In general, exempt pensions include contributory pensions from the U.S. Government or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its political subdivisions, and noncontributory military pensions.

**Retired Military Pay:** Exclude up to \$5,000 of military retirement income, including death benefits, received by a qualifying individual during the tax year if the taxpayer has not yet attained the age of 55; or up to \$15,000 of military retirement income, including death benefits, received by a qualifying individual if the taxpayer is age 55 or over.

**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 as not mentioned specifically on their website

**Delinquent Fee:** The penalty for late payment is 1% per month (or fraction thereof) of the tax due, up to a maximum of 10%.

**Website:** Comptroller of Maryland <https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/index.php>

### **Tax Forms:**

- Form 502 Instructions [https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/forms/current\\_forms/resident\\_booklet.pdf](https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/forms/current_forms/resident_booklet.pdf)

- Form 502 Resident Income Tax Return  
[https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/forms/20\\_forms/502\\_502B.pdf](https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/forms/20_forms/502_502B.pdf)
- All Tax forms  
[https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/individual/income/forms/2020\\_income\\_tax\\_forms.php](https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/individual/income/forms/2020_income_tax_forms.php)

### **Property Taxes**

The median property tax in Maryland is **\$2,774.00 per year** for a home worth the median value of \$318,600.00. Counties in Maryland collect an average of **0.87%** of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax per year. Maryland has one of the highest average property tax rates in the country, with only ten states levying higher property tax. Maryland's median income is \$86,881 per year, so the median yearly property tax paid by Maryland residents amounts to approximately 3.19% of their yearly income. Maryland is ranked 19th of the 50 states for property taxes as a percentage of median income.

The exact property tax levied depends on the county in Maryland the property is located in. Howard County collects the highest property tax in Maryland, levying an average of \$4,261 (0.93% of median home value) yearly in property taxes, while Garrtt County has the lowest property tax in the state, collecting an average tax of \$1,173 (0.69% of median home value) per year.

Property taxes are collected on a county level, and each county in Maryland has its own method of assessing and collecting taxes. As a result, it's not possible to provide a single property tax rate that applies uniformly to all properties in Maryland. For more localized property tax rates, find your county on the property tax map of Maryland county list at <http://www.tax-rates.org/maryland/property-tax#Counties>

Contact the assessor's office of the property's county at <https://www.taxassessors.net/maryland> if you need help with paying your property taxes, applying for a homestead exemption or other tax exemption, reporting upgrades to your home, appealing your property tax assessment, or verifying your property records. Real property is reassessed on a 3-year cycle by the real property valuation division. Every year, 1/3 of all property in Maryland is reviewed, including an exterior physical inspection of the property. The amount of the tax bill is determined by 2 factors: the assessment and the property tax rate. Assessments are based on the fair market value of the property and are issued by the Department of Assessments and Taxation, an agency of state government. Property tax rates are set by each unit of government: the state, counties and cities.

Maryland offers a variety of [property tax credit programs](#). The homestead property tax credit credit, commonly referred to as the assessment cap, limits the taxation of large annual assessment increases on owner-occupied residential property. For state tax purposes, any annual assessment increase for a home that is greater than 10% is not taxed. Maryland also offers property tax credits for renters who meet certain requirements. The renters' tax credit program was modeled after and designed to be similar in principle to the homeowners' tax credit program, which is also known as the Circuit Breaker Program. The concept is that renters indirectly pay property taxes as part of their rent and thus should have some protection, as do homeowners. To find your local property tax official, check the [State Department of Assessments and Taxation](#) Web page.

### **Inheritance and Estate Taxes**

A Maryland estate tax return is due for residents who died after Dec. 31, 2001, if the decedent's federal gross estate plus adjusted taxable gifts equaled or exceeded a specific limit at the time of death and the decedent was either a resident of Maryland at the time of death or owned real or tangible personal property

in the state. For decedents in 2015, estates of \$1.5 million or more are taxed. For 2016, the estate tax threshold is \$2 million. Maryland imposes an inheritance tax on the value of property passed from a decedent to some beneficiaries.

### Other State Tax Rates

To compare the above sales, excise, 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>.
- Excise Taxes (i.e. gasoline, cigarettes, cellphones, automobiles, beer, wine, and liquor): <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/excise-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>.
- Income Tax: <https://taxfoundation.org/state-individual-income-tax-rates-brackets-2019>
- State Tax Comparisons <https://www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/staterreportcard>

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A DMV guide for new residents is available at <https://www.dmv.org/md-maryland/new-to-maryland.php>. For additional information regarding your state income tax liability, visit the at [Comptroller of Maryland website https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/index.php](https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/index.php) or contact your local offices or schedule a virtual appointment at <https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/contact-us.php>.

[Source: <https://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#MARYLAND> | JAN 2021++]

\* General Interest \*



## Notes of Interest

January 16 thru 31, 2021

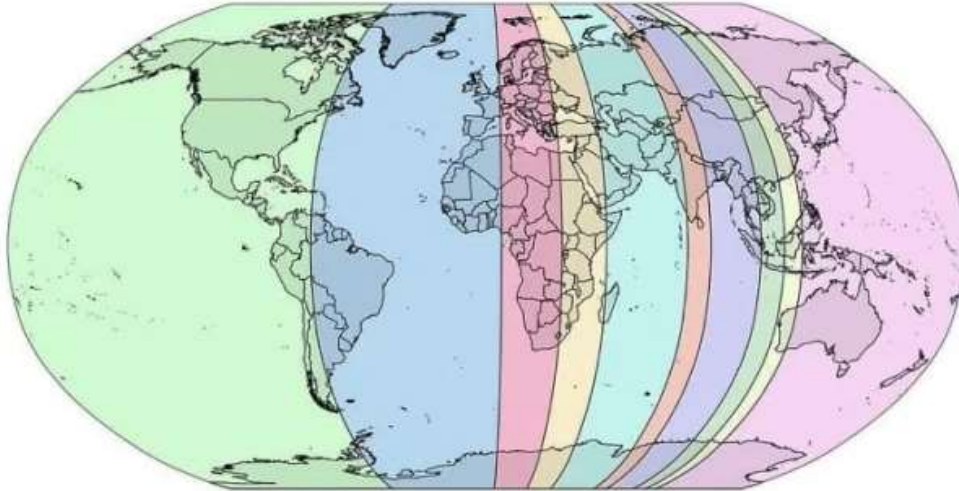
- **Covid-19 Vaccine.** VA Loma Linda is now offering COVID-19 vaccination appointments for enrolled Veterans ages 65 and older. Call to schedule your first shot as early as this week! 909-825-7084 ext. 5085. For those of you that ARE NOT ENROLLED in the VA hospital system, you can start that process by calling Health Resource Center 1-877-222-8387, when asked for options press zero for person. For enrollment, press 1.
- **COLA Watch.** The December 2020 CPI is 254.081, 0.3 percent above the FY 2021 COLA baseline. The Consumer Price Index for January is scheduled to be released Feb. 10. The CPI baseline for FY 2021 is 253.412.
- **CARES Act.** At <https://youtu.be/br5EPugsnLs> is a 3 minute video that explains forbearance and how it can help many home loan borrowers meet their payment obligation to prevent foreclosure during the pandemic? Also, a fact sheet for Borrowers with FHA, VA, or USDA Loans is available at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/SFH/documents/IACOVID19FBFactSheetConsumer.pdf>.

[Source: Various | January 15, 2021 ++]

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## Map Comparisons

### World Population Density vs. Size



Each Section Has 10% Of The World's Population

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## U.S. Russia START Treaty

### Documents Exchanged to Extend Nuclear Pact

Russia and the United States traded documents 26 JAN to extend their last remaining nuclear arms control treaty days before it is due to expire, the Kremlin said. A Kremlin readout of a phone call between U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin said the two leaders voiced satisfaction with the exchange of diplomatic notes about extending the New START treaty. "In the nearest days, the parties will complete the necessary procedures that will ensure further functioning of this important international legal nuclear arms control tool," the Kremlin said. Immediately after the call, Putin submitted a draft bill on the treaty's extension to the Russian parliament.

The pact's extension doesn't require congressional approval in the U.S., but Russian lawmakers must ratify the move. Top members of the Kremlin-controlled parliament said they would fast-track the issue and approve the extension as early as Wednesday. "Both houses of parliament will not lose a single minute to extend the treaty," said Konstantin Kosachev, head of the foreign affairs committee in the upper house of parliament.

New START expires on 5 FEB. After taking office last week, Biden proposed extending the treaty for five years, and the Kremlin quickly welcomed the offer. The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to

verify compliance. Biden indicated during the campaign that he favored the preservation of the New START treaty, which was negotiated during his tenure as U.S. vice president.

Russia has long proposed to prolong the pact without any conditions or changes, but the Trump administration waited until last year to start talks and made the extension contingent on a set of demands. The talks stalled, and months of bargaining have failed to narrow differences. The negotiations were also marred by tensions between Russia and the United States, which have been fueled by the Ukrainian crisis, Moscow’s meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and other irritants. After both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, New START is the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries.

Earlier this month, Russia also announced that it would follow the U.S. to pull out of the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed surveillance flights over military facilities to help build trust and transparency between Russia and the West. The Kremlin said Putin and Biden discussed the Open Skies pact along with other issues during their Tuesday call. While Russia always offered to extend New START for five years — a possibility that was envisaged by the pact at the time it was signed — former President Donald Trump charged that it put the U.S. at a disadvantage. Trump initially insisted that China be added to the treaty, an idea that Beijing bluntly dismissed. The Trump administration then proposed to extend New START for just one year and also sought to expand it to include limits on battlefield nuclear weapons. [Source: The Associated Press | Vladimir Isachenkov | January 26, 2021 ++]

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## **STEP**

### **RP Vets and U.S. Citizens Encouraged to Enroll**

All Veterans and American Citizens residing in the Philippines are encouraged to register with the US State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <http://step.state.gov>. This is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The 24 Hour Consular Emergency Line is U.S. 1-888-407-4747 in the U.S. and 1-202-501-4444 outside the states. Benefits of Enrolling in STEP include:

- Receiving important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
- Helping the U.S. Embassy to contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency.
- Helping family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.

[Source: U.S. Embassy | January 2021 ++]

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## **China RP Relations**

### **Subic Bay Clark Air Base Railway Link**

China and the Philippines have agreed to build a railway linking a pair of former American military facilities on the island of Luzon that are still used by visiting U.S. forces. Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines

Huang Xilian trumpeted the \$940 million deal to link Subic Bay and Clark Air Base — which comprised America’s largest overseas military community before they closed following the 1991 eruption of nearby Mount Pinotubo — in a Facebook post Saturday. China’s state-run Xinhua news agency reported the same day that negotiations between the two countries over a loan to finance the project would soon begin.

"Once completed, the railway will build a resilient linkage between ports, railways, and airports along the Subic-Clark corridor, which will improve the logistic efficiency, trim the transportation cost and support the potential demand for freight services and economic activities in the region," the Chinese Embassy said according to the agency. The 44-mile railway is the most expensive government-to-government project involving the two countries and the flagship of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s “Build, Build, Build” program, Huang said in his post.

A 29 DEC notice awarding the contract to the China Harbor Engineering Co., is posted on the Philippines Department of Transportation website <https://dotr.gov.ph>. The firm, which is a subsidiary of the state-owned China Communications Construction Co., was accused of transferring funds to a Sri Lankan politician’s election campaign while engaging in a number of construction projects there in 2018, according to the New York Times. Construction on the Subic-Clark project is estimated to last 42 months, Huang said. The railway would have limited impact on U.S. forces visiting the facilities, although it could become an issue if the U.S. seeks a greater presence in the region, Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, said in an email 20 JAN.

Chinese commercial investments overseas are watched warily by U.S. military strategists. In 2015, as U.S. Marines were building a rotational presence in Australia’s Northern Territory, the government granted a 99-year lease for the Port of Darwin to a Chinese firm. That same year a Chinese company acquired a 99-year lease on a failing Sri Lankan port near Indian Ocean shipping lanes that had been financed with Chinese loans that were defaulted on. Duterte, since assuming office in 2016, has sought closer relations and infrastructure investment from Beijing, muting his criticism of China’s occupation of his country’s territory in the South China Sea. However, he hasn’t followed through on threats to expel U.S. Special Forces battling Islamic extremists in the south or withdraw from a visiting forces agreement that facilitates large-scale bilateral exercises, U.S. port calls at Subic or U.S. Air Force operations out of Clark.

A pair of Chinese companies signaled interest in a financially troubled Subic Bay shipyard in 2019, but there is speculation that the facility may be taken over by Australian shipbuilder Austal and U.S. private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management. Philippine officials recently said that a Chinese firm is not in the running to assume control of the shipyard, the Philippine Daily Inquirer reported 3 OCT. “[Subic is] not going to be a U.S. naval base like it was, but it would be a US/Australian company doing business to support both the U.S. and Philippine navies as well as countries in the region,” Austal’s customer affairs and business development director, Lawrence Ryder, told Stars and Stripes in a telephone interview last spring.

A Philippines expert at the University of Hawaii, Patricio Abinales, described the Clark-Subic rail announcement as a nice advertisement but all words. “I do not think this will pull through,” he said. Only about \$926 million of \$9 billion worth of infrastructure loans and grants promised to the Philippines by China in 2016 had been provided, the South China Morning Post reported 26 OCT. Chong added: “What may be worth looking out for in the future is whether changes to the US-Philippines mutual defense treaty and visiting forces agreement follow this development, if there are limitations or conditions placed on US military calls on these facilities, or if some exchange regarding the US military forces operating in and

around areas claimed by the Philippines occur.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Seth Robson | January 22, 2021  
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## **Wisconsin Badger Statue**

### **Navy Wants it Loan back After 30 Years**



The Wisconsin badger statue that has served as a literal touchstone for so many Capitol building visitors that they've rubbed the finish off his nose, could be headed to another den soon. Navy officials want the statue they loaned to the state more than 30 years ago back. But state historians aren't letting it go without a fight. The badger is synonymous with Wisconsin. It was selected as the state's official animal because lead miners in the state's early days were said to burrow into the ground like badgers. The University of Wisconsin-Madison's athletic teams are known as the Badgers, the school's mascot is a sassy badger named Bucky and an image of a badger adorns the state flag (although he looks more like a short-tailed beaver than a badger to the untrained eye).

Replicas of badgers can be found throughout the state Capitol. But the Badger and Shield statue holds a special place of honor outside the governor's office. The statue was crafted around 1899 from melted-down cannons taken from Cuba during the Spanish-American War, according to online travel guide Atlas Obscura. It was affixed to the USS Wisconsin battleship before World War I. It spent more than 60 years in a U.S. Naval Academy garden before the academy museum loaned it to Wisconsin in 1988 for a state historical society exhibition that coincided with the recommissioning of the second USS Wisconsin, which was built in Philadelphia. After the exhibition ended, the statue was put outside the governor's Capitol office in 1989. It has stood there ever since.

The building has been closed to the public for nearly a year because of the coronavirus pandemic, but the statue has been a highlight of tours in recent years, with throngs of adults and children rubbing its nose for good luck. So many people have touched the nose that its bright brassy gleam stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the statue. State Department of Administration officials said the Naval Academy's museum contacted them last March about returning the statue so that it could be displayed at the Nauticus Museum

in Norfolk, Va., where the second USS Wisconsin is now an exhibit. The Nauticus Museum is run by a nonprofit, not the Navy. Messages left at the museum weren't returned.

The Naval Academy Museum extended the loan through mid-September due to COVID-19-related closures. Christian Overland, the head of the Wisconsin Historical Society, wrote a letter to Claude Berube, the Naval Academy museum's director, in October asking for a two-year extension on the loan. Overland said the pandemic has driven up shipping costs and that the society uses the statue to help tell Wisconsin children about the state's ship-making history and its role in Great Lakes commerce. "The children on the tours become very engaged and excited to learn more about the history of the ship industry in our state and in their communities," Overland wrote. "It would be wonderful to continue telling and sharing stories of the U.S.S. Wisconsin and waterway history of our great state as we keep moving forward."

State Department of Administration spokeswoman Molly Vidal said that as of 25 JAN, the state hadn't heard back from the museum about extending the loan. Berube said in a phone interview 28 JAN that he never received the letter, but that the museum has to take back the statue. He noted that the original loan was for five years and has been repeatedly extended to more than 30 years.

Berube said permanent loans no longer exist in the museum industry, and though he understands how Wisconsin feels, it's now another organization's turn to benefit from displaying the badger. He also noted that academy museum had to return former President Jimmy Carter's plebe uniform to his museum in 2019. "Loans are done in good faith," he said. "I think it's great that children have been able to see this badger while it was on loan. Now we're trying to accommodate another facility that has also requested it. There will be a lot of children in the Norfolk area who will be able to enjoy it as well." [Source: Associated Press | Todd Richmond | January 30, 2021 ++]

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## Sugar

### Nine Peculiar Uses

From ancient times in the land of the Chinese to the most loved chocolate factory of the famous Willy Wonka, sugar has made it thus far with the most interesting life! Now one of the globe's most used staples, it has made its special mark all over the world. From cupcakes to coffee, puddings, to special culinary dishes, people from around the globe use sugar more than once every single day! However, what we don't know is that sugar does have a number of uses that do not involve food or beverages.

#### **Extend the Life of Lipstick**

Women all around the world use lipstick as one of their top fashion accessories. But sometimes this wears off when worn throughout the day and it leaves women with the hassle of having to apply and re-apply just to keep their lips looking luscious and glossy all day long. Now with the help of sugar, you no longer have to worry. After applying the color of your choice just sprinkle sugar on the top and let it sit for a minute after which you can just lick it off. This helps extend the life of the lipstick you use and you no longer have to worry about reapplying.

#### **Homemade Scrub for The Body**

Sugar crystals come in different forms, coarse as well as fine but in this case, the not so fine would do the job. These crystals make a wonderful exfoliating item used in body scrubs. With just a few spoons of



slightly coarse sugar crystals along with some ingredients, you can make your very own scrub at home. All you will need is sugar and oil. You can use any oils like olive, almond, canola, or jojoba. Mix the two together to create a paste, rub on your skin during a shower and just wash off. The results are great and your skin is exfoliated, fresh, and smooth!

### **Helps Nourish Your Plants And Flowers**

We all love fresh flowers in our home. However with the short life span when cut and brought into the house, some tend to shift to artificial flowers just so they last longer. But when it comes to the great staple, your flowers last longer and are well-nourished. With just three spoons of sugar and two spoons of vinegar per quarter of a cup of water, freshly cut flowers stay fresh longer than they would. The sugar helps to feed the stems of the plant and the vinegar stops bacteria from growing. In this way, you can keep your favorite plants on your dining table for more than just a day.

### **Get Rid Of Pesky Worms In Your Garden**

Does your garden have pest problems? Some of us have beautiful gardens in our back yard and we tend to fall prey to the unwanted microscopic annoying parasites that tangle the roots of our plants. There is an easy way to get rid of these nematodes naturally. For over 250 square feet of your garden, use 2.25 kilograms of sugar. It will help feed these organisms which will help increase the organic matter, making it an unfriendly environment for these pesky pests.

### **Homemade Trap For Wasps**

Are you attacked by wasps in your area? Wasp bites are very harmful and can cause infections and can be extremely painful as well. There are many people who suffer from these insects flying around causing harmful effects by their bites. Well, it's very simple, just get rid of them and the best way to do it is by making a syrup with just sugar and water. Boil them both together, put it in a jar and place it on your window sill to attract and trap wasps.



### **Used As A Cockroach Exterminator**

Most families around the world have cockroach problems. Whether it is in the garbage, in the attic, or the basement, the flying ones and the creepy crawlies are just too annoying. But with the help of sugar and baking powder, you can get rid of them easily. All you have to do is mix equal portions of sugar and baking powder and sprinkle it over the places that are infested. Sugar attracts them and the baking powder kills them. With the help of this easy method, you can now keep your home safe and healthy from these horrible pests and you don't need expensive pest controlling methods!

### **Clean Your Food Processors And Grinding Machines**

Every household has a grinding machine or a food processor in their kitchens. And when we use them, it is not very easy to clean, especially if its spices or coffees that are ground. They excrete oils that are very strong in flavor. However, sugar can help remove the smell as well as clean the grinder. All you have to do is grind half a cup of sugar for a few minutes, dump it, and then rinse under water or clean with the help of a sponge or damp cloth!

### **Get Rid Of Grass Stains**

Played with your kids in the grass in your favorite jeans? Are they grass-stained? Well not to worry any longer, these stains can be easily removed and all you need is sugar! Make a smooth paste with just some sugar and lukewarm water and apply directly onto the stained clothes. Let this mixture lie in the clothes for at least an hour minimum, if the stains are darker then keep it for a longer period and just wash off as you would usually do.

### **Helps Keep Bakery Items Fresh**

Don't we all love cupcakes, cakes, and cookies? Yes, we do. What better than to be able to store them in containers for later without having the worry of them getting spoiled. Throwing them away is definitely heartbreaking. But with the help of just a few sugar cubes, cupcakes and cookies can be kept in airtight containers, fresh. The sugar cubes keep the items fresh for a longer period of time. You can now eat your cupcakes fresh for over two or three days and eat them just like you bought them today.

[Source: TheOutdoor | December 15, 2020 ++]

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## **Cargo Socks**

### **Great Gift Idea But Don't Be Pranked**



Do you hate carrying around a bag of any kind but need a place to store keys, money and identification? Maybe you just want to bring a handful of cheddary Cheez-Its on an afternoon hike but want your hands to remain unencumbered. Forget a backpack or [pants](#), cargo socks are the way to go.

“Cargo Socks let you take areas that have traditionally remained pocketless and raise them to new heights in functionality,” according to [the packaging](#). “Combining the comfort of a tailored garment with the style and practicality of your favorite multi-pocket pants, Cargo Socks perform as great as they look. Whether your paylois is a favorite hard candy, or life-saving insulin, you can rest easy knowing it’s sound, and within arms reach, in your Cargo Socks.” Unfortunately, they aren’t real. Cargo Socks are part of ruse by a gag gift box company used to throw recipients off the trail of what they’re really getting. Other fake boxes sold include a “Fart Filter,” “NapSack,” and “Plant Urinal.”

Those victims who unwrap a cargo sock box will expect to tear through the cardboard to find epic utility stockings, only to realize that no such thing is housed inside. In order to make the gag more convincing, however, the box lists all the features of the socks, including flip flop slots for those that like to wear them with sandals and a freezer-grade gasket to keep your snacks hot or cold for hours. This box will have any recipient truly convinced that you just gave them the most bizarre gift of all time... but it's just a fake present box. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Sarah Sicard | January 12, 2021 ++]

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## Coffee

### Good for Much More Than a Morning Caffeine Jolt

Coffee is something of a miracle. It makes early mornings possible for many folks. It also bestows health benefits that reportedly range from a longer life to a lower risk of dementia. You also can enlist coffee beans, grounds and even the plant itself in an array of household hacks. Applications range from cooking and cleaning to keeping the kids and grandkids entertained — just to name a few. Following are several examples.

#### 1. Home decor

What kind of decoration doubles as an uncommon conversation piece? A coffee houseplant. Yes, you can grow plants like *Coffea arabica* — the species from which arabica coffee beans come — indoors. You can grow them outdoors as well, although you might want to put them in pots that you can move inside for winter unless you live in a frost-free region. You can find coffee plants online — they're even sold on [Amazon](#) — and possibly at a local nursery. You'll find care instructions online, too. Like most houseplants, a coffee plant also will help cleanse your home's air, even if it's not among the plants known for an exceptional ability to remove toxins from indoor air.

#### 2. Air freshener

As we detailed in “This Flight Attendant Hack Banishes [Nasty Bathroom Smells](#),” flight crews have been using coffee to spare passengers' noses for years. Some freshen the air with the aroma wafting from a pot of coffee. Others have given passengers bags of coffee to hold up to their noses. A 2012 [study](#) out of the City College of New York even found that caffeinated coffee can wipe out hydrogen sulfide gas — the chemical responsible for the stink of raw sewage.

#### 3. Recipe ingredient

What better way to impress friends or family with your cooking skills than by incorporating coffee into a homemade meal? It's a more versatile ingredient than you might think. It can be used in multiple forms — from brewed coffee to coffee grounds — and in various types of dishes. The internet abounds with recipes ranging from coffee-ground [meat rubs](#) to iced-coffee [popsicles](#).

#### 4. Paint

If you're feeling artistic or the kids or grandkids have used up all their store-bought paint again, consider dabbling in coffee. EmptyEasel.com offers [directions](#) that even work with instant coffee. A few artists have taken up coffee as a painting medium. Artist Maria A. Aristidou, for example, opened her studio after her paintings made entirely with coffee went viral. She stumbled across the medium after spilling a latte

all over a watercolor work, according to an NPR report. “The accidental spill, the shade of coffee, and how it got absorbed in the paper fascinated me,” she said.

### 5. Cleaning agent

Instead of reaching for a chemical-laden store-bought cleaner to help you scour stubbornly dirty pots and pans, try using your used coffee grounds as an abrasive cleaning agent. It’s healthier for you and your budget. Some folks also use grounds to scrub the lingering scent of onions or garlic off their hands after handling such pungent produce.

### 6. ‘Mud’ play putty

The next time the kids or grandkids are itching to play in the dirt outside but you don’t feel like cleaning them up afterward, hand them some “muddy” play putty. Better yet, let them make it themselves or with your assistance. Kids Activities Blog offers a [recipe](#) for gritty play putty that looks downright dirt-like — thanks to the inclusion of coffee grounds and instant coffee rather than dye.

### 7. Fertilizer

The internet abounds with anecdotal evidence of the benefits of fertilizing plants with coffee grounds. Money Talks News contributor Angela Colley wrote in “Upcycle Your Beverages [20 Uses](#) for Coffee, Tea, Soda and Beer“: “A friend once told me to mix coffee grounds in the soil for tomato plants. I tried it and grew a crop of gorgeous tomatoes.” Coffee contains nitrogen, an important nutrient for plants. Still, the best way to use coffee in the garden remains up for debate. Perhaps the safest way to use coffee in the garden is to toss your used coffee grounds into your compost pile and let them break down there. Then, use the finished compost in your garden. Grounds must break down before plants can benefit from them anyway, according to the University of Illinois Extension.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsher | December 24, 2020 ++]

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## Vocabulary

### Some Words to Enhance Yours

- **Aubade** [ *oh-bad; oh-bahd* ] -- a poem or piece of music appropriate to the dawn or early morning.
- **Blithe** [ *blahyth* ] -- 1. showing a casual and cheerful indifference considered to be callous or improper. 2. happy or joyous.
- **Cachinnate** [ *KAK-uh-nayt* ] -- to laugh loudly or immoderately.
- **Caseous** [ *key-see-uhs* ] -- cheeselike, especially in appearance, smell, or consistency.
- **Claptrap** [ *klap-trap* ] -- absurd or nonsensical talk or idea.
- **Euphoric** [ *yoo-fawr-ik* ] -- intensely happy or confident.
- **Guileless** [ *gahyl-lis* ] -- free from guile; sincere; honest; straightforward; frank.

- **Ingratiating** [ *in-grey-shee-ey-ting* ] -- charming; agreeable; pleasing; deliberately meant to gain favor
- **Kith** [ *kith* ] -- acquaintances, friends, neighbors, or the like; persons living in the same general locality and forming a more or less cohesive group
- **Piffle** [ *pif-uhl* ] -- nonsense, as trivial or senseless talk.
- **Puissant** [ *pyoo-uh-suhnt; pwis-uhnt* ] -- powerful; mighty; potent.
- **Sprite** [ *sprahyt* ] -- an elf, fairy, or goblin.
- **Surly** [ *sur-lee* ] -- bad-tempered and unfriendly.
- **Tortuous** [ *tawr-choo-uhs* ] -- 1. full of twists, turns, or bends; twisting, winding, or crooked. 2. deceitfully indirect or morally crooked, as proceedings, methods, or policy; devious.
- **Volitional** [ *voh-lish-uh-nl* ] -- done of one's own will or choosing; deliberately decided or chosen.

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## News of the Weird

Jan 16 thru 31, 2021

**High Anxiety** – As Delta Flight 462, en route to Atlanta, began to taxi away from the gate at La Guardia Airport on 21 DEC, passenger Brian Plummer noticed a man and woman with a service dog changing seats several times on the less-than-full plane, he told The New York Times, and heard the man say, "If I sit down, I'll freak out." Plummer soon felt the plane come to a stop, and flight attendants revealed why: The man, Antonio Murdock, 31, of Florida, had forced open an emergency exit door, causing a slide to activate, and picking up the dog, slid down to the ground with the woman, Brianna Greco, 23, according to a complaint filed in Queens Criminal Court, where the two were arraigned on a number of mischief and endangerment charges. "This doesn't happen every day at the airport," said Lenis Valens, a spokesperson for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. No one was injured in the incident, but the flight was delayed for hours. [New York Times, 12/22/2020]

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**Winemaking** -- Acting on an anonymous tip, authorities in DeKalb County, Alabama, raided the Rainsville Wastewater Treatment Plant on 17 DEC and discovered a large illegal winemaking operation that appeared to have been in operation for a long time, reported WHNT. The next day, plant supervisor Allen Maurice Stiefel, 62, of Fyffe, was charged with unlawful possession of illegally manufactured alcohol and suspended without pay, according to Rainsville Mayor Rodger Lingerfelt. The operation was found in a little-used building at the plant, where, Lingerfelt said, "Things happen like that." The sale of alcohol had been illegal in Rainsville until the city council passed an ordinance approving it in September. [WHNT, 12/18/2020]

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**Tunnel Affair** -- Police were called to a home in Tijuana, Mexico, to break up the fight that broke out after a man identified only as Jorge discovered a tunnel leading from his home to that of a neighbor, Alberto, who had been having an affair with Jorge's wife. Trouble began, reported the Daily Mail, when Jorge arrived home early from work and surprised his wife and Alberto, a bricklayer who was also married. Alberto hid behind a couch before disappearing down the tunnel, which appeared in photos to be professionally constructed. Jorge followed Alberto down the tunnel, eventually confronting him in Alberto's house. [Daily Mail, 12/29/2020]

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**Skull Thieves** – Two Florida residents, Brian Montalvo Tolentino, 43, of Davenport and Juan Burgos-Lopez, 39, of Lake Wales, admitted to police they had removed four human skulls from tombs they had robbed in Mount Dora, WKMG-TV reported. Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd told local media on 8 JAN that detectives serving a search warrant on Burgos-Lopez's property found a shed containing a ritualistic shrine and seven skulls the men told authorities they used in the practice of the Palo Mayombe religion. Three of the four graves robbed were of members of the armed forces because, Judd said, Lopez told authorities "the spirit is much stronger in a hero" and "it can protect you from evil." Before vandalizing the graves, Judd added, the men drank rum and spit it on the ground, then smoked a cigar and exhaled the smoke "to protect them from the spirits." DNA on the cigars led authorities to the suspects. [WKMG, 1/8/2021]

[Source: <https://www.uexpress.com/news-of-the-weird> | January 31, 2021 ++]

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## Have You Heard or Seen?

### Military Humor 15 | Navy Life [1] | Latest Satirical Cartoons

#### Military Humor 15

1. What's the purpose of the propeller?  
To keep the pilot cool. Doubt it? Stop the propeller and watch the pilot sweat.
2. What do you call a deer enlisted in the Air Force? A bombardeer
3. A shortlist of problems reported by a pilot, followed by the mechanic's response.  
(P) Left inside main tire almost needs replacement (S) Almost replaced left inside main tire  
(P) Something loose in cockpit (S) Something tightened in cockpit  
(P) Evidence of leak on right main landing gear (S) Evidence removed  
(P) DME volume unbelievably loud (S) Volume set to more believable level  
(P) Number three engine missing (S) Engine found on right wing after brief search
4. How do you know if there's an Air Force pilot at your party?  
Oh, don't worry. He'll tell you as soon as he walks in.
5. What's the ideal cockpit crew? A dog and a pilot.  
The pilot is there to feed the dog.  
The dog is flying so that he can bite the pilot if he tries to touch anything.

6. Which branch is the most patriotic? The Air Force because they are US AF.
7. What's the difference between a fighter pilot and a fighter jet?  
The jet stops whining once you turn the engine off.
8. What do you call a large formation of MAC aircraft? A Big Mac Attack.
9. Where do rabbits learn to fly? The hare force.
10. Just because there are no complaints, doesn't all mean parachutes are perfect.

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### Navy Life



### Satirical Cartoons





## Thought of the Week

"The Lord gave us two ends --- one to sit on and the other to think with. Success depends on which one we use the most."

--- Ann Landers

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