

RAO BULLETIN

01 JUL 2021

PDF Edition



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2. To read the articles open the website and slew to the page number of the article you are interested in.
3. Numbers contained within brackets [] indicate the number of articles written on the subject. To obtain previous articles send a request to raoemo@sbcglobal.net 'or' raoemo77@gmail.com
4. Recipients of the Bulletin are authorized and encouraged to forward the Bulletin articles to other vets or veteran organizations

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- Attachment – Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 15 JUL (Updated)



Military Coronavirus Treatment

Update 01: Austin Mulls Mandating Coronavirus Vaccine for Troops

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is considering whether to mandate the coronavirus vaccine for service members after the shot receives full Food and Drug Administration approval, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker told the House Armed Services Committee on 15 JUN. Austin's office is "coming up with

guidance” on requiring the vaccine for troops, Harker said during a hearing on the Navy’s 2022 budget proposal. “I believe the secretary is considering making that decision to do so, but it’s not something that he has announced to us yet,” Harker told the committee during a hearing that included in-person and virtual attendees after more than a year of online-only meetings because of the pandemic.

While the Pentagon can make vaccinations fully cleared by the FDA mandatory for troops, it cannot do so for the coronavirus vaccinations while they are authorized only on an emergency basis, unless the president orders it mandatory. President Joe Biden, so far, has not done so. Though not yet required, the coronavirus vaccine is optional for service members. To date, 840,492 active duty, Reserve and National Guard troops are fully vaccinated and another 291,809 have received at least one dose, according to the latest Defense Department data published Monday. That means about half of the total force of approximately 2.3 million active duty, Reserve and Guard troops have received the vaccine so far.

However, a vaccination mandate for troops could come soon as vaccine manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna applied for full FDA approval on May 7 and June 1, respectively. The third vaccine under emergency-use authorization, which was developed by Johnson & Johnson, has not yet applied for full approval. The FDA requires extensive data and reviews by the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research before issuing full approval. The FDA has not offered a timeline for how long that process will take for the coronavirus vaccines. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Caitlin Doornbos | June 15, 2021 ++]

Coronavirus Vaccine Concerns

Update 05: Army Scientists Warn of Deadlier Pandemics to Come



The U.S. Army scientists who have spent the last year finding vaccines and therapeutics to stop COVID-19 cautioned that the nation remains vulnerable to a viral pandemic—one that could be even deadlier than the current one. Since the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emerging infectious diseases branch at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research has worked to develop a vaccine that would help patients fend off not only the original virus strain but also new variants.

In initial tests on monkeys, horses, hamsters, and sharks, Walter Reed’s spike ferritin nanoparticle, or SpFN, vaccine has shown effectiveness against not only the current SARS-CoV-2 variants, but also against the completely different SARS-CoV-1 outbreak that occurred in 2003, the head of Walter Reed’s infectious diseases branch said at the Defense One 2021 Tech Summit 21 JUN. “If we try to chase the viruses after they emerge, we’re always going to be behind,” said Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, director of Walter Reed’s infectious diseases branch. “So the approach that we took with our vaccine, the nanoparticle approach, in

which we can place parts of different coronaviruses on to the same vaccine to educate the immune system about different coronaviruses all at the same time.”

Walter Reed’s vaccine is now in the early stages of human trials. “And we see the same thing over and over again: a very potent immune response and a very broad immune response,” Modjarrad said. “So if we show even a fraction of what we’re seeing in our animal studies in humans, then we’ll have a very good confidence that this is going to be a very good option as a next-generation vaccine.” Dr. Dimitra Stratis-Cullumis now working on developing a large dataset, a library of COVID strains that would help the lab then create and distribute synthetic antibodies to preemptively prevent a spread. She is the director of the Army’s transformational synthetic-biology for military environments program at the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command, Army Research Laboratory, who was tasked early on to assist the Houston Methodist Research Institute develop blood plasma as a COVID-19 therapeutic.

Creating a pan-coronavirus vaccine—or synthesizing antibodies slightly ahead of a known outbreak still isn’t enough, the scientists cautioned. “We don’t want to just treat what’s in front of us now,” Stratis-Cullum said. “I think we really need to be resilient. From an Army perspective. We need to be agile, we need to adapt to the threat that we don’t know that’s coming.”

The likelihood this generation will see another pandemic during its lifetime “is high,” Modjarrad said. “We have seen the acceleration of these pathogens and the epidemics that they precipitate. And it may not be a coronavirus, this may not be the big one. There may be something that’s more transmissible and more deadly ahead of us.” “We have to think more broadly, not just about COVID-19, not just about coronavirus, but all emerging infectious threats coming into the future,” he said. [Source: Defense One | Tara Coop | June 21, 2021 ++]

3M Earplugs Lawsuit

Update 10: 3M Found Partly Liable for Vet’s Hearing Loss in Third Trial

A federal jury on 18 JUN concluded earplug manufacturer 3M has some liability for an Army veteran’s hearing loss after using their product during military service. The jury determined the Minnesota-based company failed to provide warnings about their product, though the earplug was not defective, according to court documents from the trial held in Pensacola, Fla. The plaintiff, Lloyd Baker, had been diagnosed with hearing loss and tinnitus, and his damages were given an estimated worth of \$1.7 million by the jury. However, jurors found 3M only held 62% of liability and is responsible for that percentage of the damages, or about \$1.05 million. The remaining responsibility fell to Baker, according to court documents.

"We are humbled by the bravery and courage shown by service members like Lloyd Baker, not only for their service to our country, but also for standing up against 3M on behalf of all the veterans who now face preventable hearing loss and tinnitus as a result of the [combat arms earplug version 2]," according to a statement from Baker’s attorneys, who include Bryan Aylstock of Aylstock Witkin Kreis & Overholtz, PLLC; Shelley Hutson of Clark, Love & Hutson GP; and Christopher Seeger of Seeger Weiss LLP. Representatives for 3M issued a statement that said their product has always been “safe and effective to use, and on Friday, a jury agreed that the product was not defective.”

The verdict was the third this year as part of a series of trials from a multidistrict litigation case that includes more than 240,000 veterans. All claim their hearing was damaged from using 3M earplugs that were issued for use during military service primarily during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. During the first trial, held in April, a jury awarded \$7.1 million to three Army veterans who said they suffered hearing loss and tinnitus because of the earplugs. 3M won in the second trial in May, which involved one veteran. This year's cases have been bellwether trials, which can be used in multidistrict litigation to present a representative of the cases before a jury to gain information for potentially reaching a settlement for all cases. It can help both parties determine the costs of subsequent litigation.

Two more are scheduled for September and October and a third for early next year. Meanwhile, 3M said it will explore options to appeal. "Friday's outcome, as well as our win in the last bellwether trial, affirms our confidence in our case, and we will continue to defend ourselves in this litigation," 3M said in a statement. Plaintiffs have claimed the company knew of design flaws in the dual-sided earplug that would allow it to slip imperceptibly while worn. Work on the earplug began in 1990s, and it was used in the military until 2015. No recall was ever issued on the product and version 4 of the earplug remains in use by the military, according to 3M. [Source: Stars and Stripes | Rose L. Thayer | June 21, 2021 ++]

MAVNI Program

Update 13: Sen. Duckworth Wants Citizenship through Service Program Reinstated



Service members recite the oath of citizenship during a July 3, 2018, naturalization ceremony on the flight deck of the USS Midway Museum in San Diego

There was a time not so long ago when immigrants could enlist in the military and earn expedited U.S. citizenship. Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) is leading a crusade to bring that back. In a report sent to the Democratic caucus on 22 JUN, Duckworth lays out the history of a handful of policies administrations have used to grant citizenship to immigrant service members, including their suspension and degradation toward the end of the Obama administration and into Donald Trump's term, when stories of recruits in limbo and deported veterans made national headlines. "Yet, despite these efforts, there are still members of the U.S. Armed Forces that honorably serve and fight in combat overseas only to be discharged without receiving citizenship," according to the report. "Adding insult to injury, immigrant Veterans can, and have been, deported by the same Nation they took an oath to defend."

Duckworth sent a letter to President Joe Biden's office on inauguration day, asking that he take a look at the issue of veteran immigration and deportation. Congress will also consider the issue 23 JUN, during a hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee. As complicated as the U.S. immigration system itself, a web of programs has allowed legal U.S. residents to enlist and earn their citizenship, as well as prevent deportation of their non-citizen spouses and family members. That started to come apart in 2016, when the Obama administration suspended the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program, over concerns that immigrants' foreign ties were not being investigated thoroughly.

The plan was to develop an enhanced screening protocol, but in 2017, the Trump administration suspended MAVNI indefinitely, while thousands of recruits were waiting to ship to or were in basic training, ending not only their promise of citizenship, but putting some in a position to be deported. More than 5,000 immigrants were recruited into the program in 2016, and an estimated 10,000 were serving as of 2018, according to the Associated Press. The vast majority went into the Army, but some also went to the other military branches. At the same time, the administration rolled out new policies that made it harder for those already serving to complete their citizenship, including getting rid of a program that allowed recruits to complete the naturalization process when they graduated from one of three Army basic training sites.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services then closed 13 of 20 international field offices that had been tasked with supporting immigrants serving abroad through their naturalization processes. These measures only exacerbated an issue the federal government had yet to confront for decades: that immigrant recruits often mistakenly assumed that citizenship came automatically with the oath of enlistment, or that the naturalization process was so poorly explained and administered that they never completed the citizenship process. "Although DoD and USCIS have tried to modernize the naturalization process in the past, both agencies have failed to ensure that every immigrant servicemember who wants to naturalize can attain citizenship," according to the report. "In such an instance, a servicemember mistakenly believed he received citizenship upon enlisting in the U.S. Army."

At the same time, according to research, hundreds of non-citizen veterans were deported, and the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents handling those cases did not consider military service as a mitigating factor, despite policy guidance requiring them to. There is an extra screening process to deport veterans who don't have citizenship, but Immigration and Customs Enforcement is ignoring it. Duckworth's report recommends reinstating MAVNI, reestablishing basic training naturalization programs and reopening overseas USCIS offices, in addition to creating a DoD, Homeland Security and VA task force to identify deported veterans, repatriate them and enroll them in VA services.

"The U.S. Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs must actively coordinate outreach efforts to ensure that noncitizens understand the naturalization process and are able to actually move forward with the process to become American citizens," the report concludes. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Meghann Myers | June 22, 2021 ++]

DACOWITS

DoD Quietly Calls for Shutdown of 70-Year-Old Committee on Women in the Military

In January of this year, the Pentagon quietly demanded the resignations of the 21 volunteer members of the **Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services**, a roster that included eight retired generals and admirals. The ink was barely dry on the committee's 70-year historical review, a 58-page document that described how DACOWITS had advocated on behalf of military women since 1951 on issues ranging from their right to fly fighter jets and serve in combat to the fit of body armor and online harassment.

The committee's hollowing out was part of a sweeping move by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to dissolve all 42 DoD advisory committees pending a cost and efficiency review. The Defense Business Board, which had been populated with those loyal to Donald Trump in the final throes of his presidency, got the most attention in this move. But DACOWITS, which had been wrestling with timely issues such as the effect on women of the new gender-neutral Army Combat Fitness Test, was an unseen casualty.

While no decision has been made yet on how and when to bring back the vacated advisory committees, an April memo obtained by Military.com shows that the Defense Department's Manpower and Reserve Affairs office has recommended not bringing back DACOWITS in its current form. Rather, it wants to merge the historic committee with another yet-to-be-launched group to create a broader Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that would address everything from military extremism and opportunities for minority service members to ill-fitting uniforms and availability of child care. But those affiliated with DACOWITS fear bundling such a wide range of issues under a single advisory entity would make it very difficult to get meaningful work done -- and would shove women-specific military issues, such as hair regulations and anatomy-appropriate flight suits, far to the sidelines.

Cari Thomas, a retired rear admiral who was wrapping up a four-year term on the advisory committee, said she understood Austin's desire to eliminate waste by conducting a zero-based review of the committees. "However, I do have an issue, because DACOWITS has been around for a very long time and has been instrumental in advocating for women service members since the 1950s," she said. "In a post-'Me Too' environment, working on [topics like] sexual assault, the timing did not feel right to me."

Thomas wrote a letter in February to Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) urging him to act on behalf of the committee and preserve not only its format, but its institutional knowledge and expertise. "Losing momentum, expertise and initiative will have a deleterious impact on the critical work that the Committee does in service to the Secretary of Defense and Homeland Security," she wrote. "This is particularly important because the Marine Corps still does not have a fully gender integrated boot camp, the full opening of all combat positions to women is still under study, and women of color far lag behind their peers to promotions to the highest ranks in the services."

A query to Kaine's office did not receive an immediate response, but other lawmakers have signaled their interest and concern, despite the press of other priorities, including the fiscal 2022 budget. The office of Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) confirmed that she and the office's military legislative assistant are looking into the matter. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) told Military.com she hadn't been tracking the matter, but

didn't have an issue with a new, merged committee as long as it serves the same function as the previous one.

The 22 APR memo from Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Virginia Penrod said the proposed Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion would indeed be able to do that. "There is concern that the merger of DACOWITS with [the yet-to-be-formed Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion] will diminish the [DoD's] focus on, or signal a lessening in the Department's commitment to addressing issues unique to women in the services," Penrod wrote. "To the contrary, such a merger would offer the Department the opportunity to develop a broader over-arching committee with a more diversified skillset, providing for a holistic view of, not only issues related to women, but to all gender-related concerns including those faced by transgender members of the Armed Forces."

Those close to DACOWITS, however, said it's logistically improbable, if not impossible, that the merged committee would be able to cover all previous issues and new ones in appropriate depth. DACOWITS has a full-time staff of four, including two military members. Penrod's proposal would add just two additional staff for the hybrid committee, which she said would realize a "significant cost avoidance" when compared with setting up two separate committees.

In the scheme of military spending, though, the savings would be relatively minimal. A memo to the Defense Department from DACOWITS staff, which was included as an attachment to the Penrod memo, showed a budget of roughly \$1 million annually since 2016 -- although that number dipped to \$929,000 in 2020 amid the zero-based review. Committee members are uncompensated and reimbursed only for travel, which accounts for less than 10% of the budget. The rest largely consists of salaries for the staffers. If the two detailed military members' salaries are subtracted from the annual total, it dips to around \$600,000, barely a rounding error for the military.

Lory Manning, a retired Navy captain who now works as the director of government operations for the Service Women's Action Network, said she has been attending quarterly DACOWITS meetings since the 1980s, when she was still on active duty. She recalled an effort during the George W. Bush administration in 2004 to diminish the committee's work by cutting its funding and reducing staffing and membership. Notably, this took place as the committee fought to eliminate the long-standing ban on women in combat. That Combat Exclusion Policy was ultimately lifted in full in 2013.

Manning said she feels similarly about efforts to denature DACOWITS now, albeit for other reasons. Manning said LGBT issues in the military and continuing racial and ethnic divides need to be addressed in full. "Women are involved in all those communities," she said. "My concern is if they merge it, as too often happens, the women's issues will become secondary to other particular issues. There are still things going on that only DACOWITS has been able to bring to public attention."

Thomas, the retired admiral, noted that the Marine Corps had started sending the four-star assistant commandant, Gen. Glenn Walters, to DACOWITS meetings following the Marines United scandal in which investigative reporting revealed veterans and service members were sharing nude photos of female troops online. She said that DACOWITS had provided detailed recommendations about better monitoring social media behavior before the scandal ever came to light. "Without that kind of third-party group of independent people providing input to the secretary of defense, how are you going to make decisions?" she asked.

Manning listed an incident earlier this year in which Fox News host Tucker Carlson mocked an image of an airman wearing a maternity flight suit as proof that female troops still need advocates and defenders. And women in the military often have concerns that are overlooked, she said. "Sexism is still alive and well in the military, and a lot of it is inadvertent," she said. "I don't think the military set out to build an Army Combat Fitness Test that was skewed against women. DACOWITS was one of the groups that called them out on that and called them in to brief. Until [the committee] was disbanded, they were still working on that." [Source: Military.com | Hope Hodge Seck | June 24, 2021 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials

Reported JUN 16 thru 30, 2021 | Twenty Seven

“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 1st Lt. Myles W. Esmay, 21**, was a member of Company B, 236th Engineer Combat Battalion, reinforcing the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), also known as Merrill's Marauders. Esmay's battalion arrived at the recently captured airfield in Myitkyina, Burma, on May 28, 1944, where they were tasked with holding the airfield and taking part in the siege of Myitkyina. On June 4, the battalion attacked Japanese forces at Namkwi village northwest of the airfield. The fighting lasted until June 7. Esmay was reported to have been killed on the last day of fighting. Interment services are pending. [Read about Esmay.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Charles E. Lee, 18**, was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 20, 1950 after his unit was forced to retreat from the vicinity of Taejon, South Korea. He was never found, nor were any remains recovered that could be identified as Lee. He was declared non-recoverable in January 1956. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Lee.](#)

- **Army Cpl. Kenneth R. Foreman, 19**, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces as they attempted to withdraw near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Foreman.](#)

- **Army Pfc. John J. Sitarz, 19**, of Weirton, West Virginia, was assigned to Company L, 3rd Battalion, 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Germeter, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was declared missing in action on Nov. 2, 1944. Sitarz could not be recovered because of the on-going fighting, and his status was changed to killed in action on Nov. 3, 1945. Sitarz will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, at a date yet to be determined. [Read about Sitarz.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Philip T. Hoogacker, 23**, of Detroit, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment. He was reported missing in action on July 27, 1950, after his unit was attacked near Anui, South Korea. He was last seen after receiving first aid for a minor shrapnel wound. DPAA historians believe Hoogacker was captured by the Korean People's Army and forcibly marched to Seoul and then on to Pyongyang, where he died as a prisoner of war. Hoogacker will be buried July 23, 2021, in Livonia, Michigan. [Read about Hoogacker.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Bernard J. Sweeney, Jr., 22**, was assigned to Company I, 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division. His unit had been engaged in battle with German forces near Strass, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was reported missing in action on Dec. 16, 1944. His body was not recovered. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Sweeney.](#)

- **Army Sgt. Elwood M. Truslow, 20**, was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 12, 1950, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces as they attempted to withdraw near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Truslow.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. John E. Hurlburt, 26**, of Madison, Connecticut, was a member of the 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division. He was killed July 7, 1944, during a massive Japanese attack against the 105th on the island of Saipan. His remains were not known to have been recovered. Hurlburt will be buried Aug. 14, 2021, in New Haven, Connecticut. [Read about Hurlburt.](#)

- **Army Sgt. Lloyd A. Alumbaugh, 21**, of Jasper, Missouri, was a member of Ambulance Company, 7th Medical Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Alumbaugh will be buried June 25, 2021, in Reeds, Missouri. [Read about Alumbaugh.](#)

- **Army Staff Sgt. Raymond C. Blanton, 19**, of Richmond, Virginia, was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Germeter, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was killed in action on Oct. 14, 1944. Blanton could not be recovered because of the on-going fighting. He was declared non-recoverable in 1951. Blanton will be buried July 1, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Blanton.](#)

-- **Navy Chief Machinist's Mate Ralph A. Derrington, 42**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Derrington. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Derrington.](#)

-- **Navy Chief Water Tender Claude White, 40**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including White. Interment services are pending. [Read about White.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Malcom J. Barber, 22, Navy Fireman 1st Class Leroy K. Barber, 21, and Navy Fireman 2nd Class Randolph H. Barber, 19**, of New London, Wisconsin, were assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including the Barber brothers. Interment services are pending. [Read about the Barber brothers.](#)

- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Neal K. Todd, 22**, of Akeley, Minnesota, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Todd. He will be buried on July 10, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Todd.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Walter S. Belt, Jr., 25**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Belt. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Belt.](#)

- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Wesley J. Brown, 25**, of Helena, Montana, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese

aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Brown. He will be buried on Aug. 28, 2021, in Smithland, Iowa. [Read about Brown.](#)

-- **Navy Patternmaker 1st Class Stanislaw F. Drwall, 25**, of Thomas, West Virginia, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Drwall. He will be buried on Aug. 5, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Drwall.](#)

-- **Navy Radioman 3rd Class Earl M. Ellis, 23**, of Hope, Arkansas, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Ellis. He will be buried on Oct. 23, 2021, in Sutter Creek, California. [Read about Ellis.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Donald A. Stott, 19**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Stott. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Stott.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Russell C. Roach, 22**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Roach. Interment services are pending. [Read about Roach.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Warren C. Gillette, 21**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Gillette. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gillette.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Floyd D. Helton, 18**, of Somerset, Kentucky, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Helton. He will be buried July 31, 2021, in Burnside, Kentucky. [Read about Helton.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Raymond D. Boynton, 19**, of Grandville, Michigan, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Boynton. He will be buried on Sept. 8, 2021, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. [Read about Boynton.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Russell O. Ufford, 17**, of Kansas City, Missouri, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it

to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Ufford. He will be buried on July 16, 2021, in Salisbury, North Carolina. [Read about Ufford.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Walter R. Pentico, 17**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Pentico. Interment services are pending. [Read about Pentico.](#)

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

* VA *



VA Care | Rural Access

Update 26: Bill to Improve Mental Health Care Heads to President's Desk

The U.S. Senate announced 25 JUN that it has unanimously passed bipartisan, bicameral legislation introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) and Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-KS) to expand access to mental health care for rural veterans. This legislation now heads to the President's desk to be signed into law. The Senators' **Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021** will establish three new VA Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement (RANGE) program centers to provide community-based care and services for rural veterans diagnosed with serious mental health issues and support additional research on rural veterans' mental health care needs and treatment options. Text of the Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act (H.R.2442) can be found at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2441/text>. [Source: VVA Web Weekly | June 25, 2021 ++]

Syringe Services Programs

Providing Clean Syringes to Veterans Who Inject Drugs

Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) are historically community-based harm reduction programs. They provide preventive and treatment services, including providing sterile syringes to people who inject drugs. VA can provide Veterans using SSPs with substance use treatment and mental health services. SSPs can also provide preventative services like vaccinations, naloxone to prevent overdose, and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), a medication that prevents HIV. SSPs were introduced in the 1980s to reduce human

immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmission among people who inject drugs. It has since become an internationally recognized harm reduction practice standard.



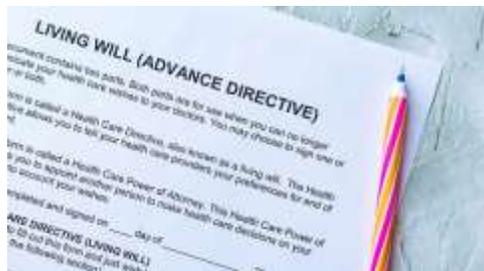
A Naloxone kit is free to VA patients who use or inject drugs

VA is recommending that medical centers either develop VA SSPs locally and/or refer Veterans to community partners for these services. These critical services will help Veterans get the sterile supplies they need to prevent infections like HIV, viral hepatitis, and endocarditis. In some areas, however, state, county or local law may restrict syringe services. If you inject drugs, talk to your VA provider about safer injection practices, including accessing sterile syringes.

There has been a rise in drug overdoses in the United States and involvement of illicitly manufactured fentanyl (potent opioid) in many deaths. Ask your VA provider about naloxone. It is a lifesaving medication that can reverse an opioid overdose. It's available free to VA patients who use or inject drugs. Your health is important to VA. Your health care team can help connect you with information and resources you might need to keep yourself safe and as healthy as possible. Learn more about SSPs at <https://www.cdc.gov/spp/index.html>, and VA Substance Use Treatment and overdose prevention: <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/substance-use/index.asp>. [Source: Vantage Point Blog | June 16, 2021 ++]

Advance Directive

Update 01: Have You Completed/Updated Your Living Will



Planning ahead in the military is something familiar to all service members. The logistics of moving to another installation, upgrading equipment and preparing advance directives and beneficiaries before deployments are familiar to most. But as these service members transition to Veteran status, they may not be aware that previously completed advance directive documents may no longer be valid.

Michael T. Kilmer, director of VA Eastern Colorado, urges fellow Veterans to ensure their preferences are documented. Kilmer served 15 years in the Coast Guard. He now works with post-9/11 combat Veterans transitioning from active duty and other Veterans. Kilmer's time in the service and his experience in health care helps him support other Veterans in the need for advance care planning. Kilmer urges fellow Veterans to start communicating their health care wishes now and to make sure their preferences are documented. To increase Veteran awareness, Kilmer shared that he even recently updated his own advance directive. "The directives are important because they allow the health care team to honor your wishes," he said. At <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA%20Form%2010-0137%20FILL.pdf> you can obtain VA's Advance Directive form 10-0137. For additional guidance to assist in preparing your directive refer to:

- VA Podcast: Choosing a Health Care Agent: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU9vNHwYDGU&feature=youtu.be>.
- VA Podcast: What's an Advance Directive and Why Should I Complete One? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSw13r93Lic&feature=emb_logo.
- VA Podcast: I've Been Chosen as A Health Care Agent – Now What?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0uu7ZzF7Og&feature=youtu.be>.
- To complete a VA Advance Directive form: https://www.ethics.va.gov/for_veterans.asp.
- For more content about Advance Care Planning: https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/advance_care_planning_topics.asp.
- To learn more about Advance Care Planning in a Group Visit setting: https://www.socialwork.va.gov/ACP_GV.asp.

[Source: Vantage Point | Elisabeth M. Skaggs | June 16, 2021 ++]

VA Transgender Policy

Update 01: Plans to Offer Gender-Confirmation Surgery to LGBTQ Vets

The Department of Veterans Affairs is moving to provide gender-confirmation surgery through its health care coverage, reversing a 2013 ban, VA Secretary Denis McDonough announced 19 JUN. McDonough pledged to overcome a "dark history" of discrimination and take steps to expand access to care for transgender veterans at a Pride Month event in Orlando, which this month marked the fifth anniversary of a mass shooting at Pulse, a gay nightclub, that left 49 people dead. The VA plans to begin the two-year process this summer, a VA spokesman confirmed. "This time will allow VA to develop capacity to meet the surgical needs that transgender veterans have called for and deserved for a long time," McDonough said to a crowd gathered at the Orlando event, "and I am proud to begin the process of delivering it."

The change marks a significant departure from VA under President Donald Trump, who limited transgender people from serving in the military, a prohibition reversed by President Biden soon after he took office. In 2013, while Biden was vice president, a department directive said VA "does not provide sex reassignment surgery," effectively preventing transgender veterans from a surgery considered medically necessary by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. The federal rulemaking process, expected to begin this summer, will include a period for public comment, spokesman Terrence Hayes told The Washington Post on Saturday.

Although the cost to VA is unknown, it is estimated that fewer than 4,000 veterans would be interested in this surgery, Hayes wrote in an email. The National Center for Transgender Equality estimates that there are about 134,000 transgender veterans. Some people treat gender dysphoria, a feeling that the body a person is born into does not conform to one’s gender identity, with medical treatments or transition-related surgeries.

Suicidal thoughts and mental illness are experienced at a far higher rate for LGBTQ veterans than those outside the community, McDonough noted. In addition to psychological distress, they also may experience prejudice and stigma. About 80 percent of LGBTQ veterans have encountered a hurtful or rejecting experience in the military because of their gender identity, McDonough said. Transgender veterans have reported suicidal thoughts disproportionately compared with other veterans or the general population, recent studies have found. “We’re making these changes not only because they are the right thing to do but because they can save lives,” McDonough said in prepared remarks.

He said VA would also change the name of the Veterans Health Administration’s LGBT health program to the LGBTQ+ Health Program to reflect inclusiveness. McDonough praised the facility he spoke at, Orlando Vet Center, sharing a story about a transgender woman who struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts until she was able to seek care. Since taking office, Biden has reoriented the federal government’s posture on transgender issues, expanding protections for transgender students and reviving anti-bias safeguards in health care for transgender people. In Florida, where McDonough spoke, Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) signed a bill this month preventing transgender athletes from participating in school sports, a move critics described as an “attack” on the community.

Noting the law signed by DeSantis, Gina Duncan, director of transgender equality for the statewide LGBTQ civil rights organization Equality Florida, told the Orlando Sentinel that her agency was “thrilled to have allies at the highest level of government.” “In a moment of fierce state and local backlash against the transgender community, this move by the Biden administration is a reminder that elections matter,” Duncan said. “Support for transgender veterans and the lifesaving health care they need to live authentically is a critical component to fulfilling our nation’s promise of caring for those who’ve served.” [Source: The Washington Post | Meryl Kornfield | June 20, 2021 ++]

VA Bladder Cancer Care

Know the Signs

Dennis Roscher served in the Army from 1972-1977 and is one of the 3,200 Veterans diagnosed with bladder cancer each year. Bladder cancer occurs when the cells in the bladder start to grow out of control. Most tumors develop on the inner layer of the bladder, the urothelium. As the cancer grows into deeper layers, it becomes more difficult to treat. Since early diagnosis is critical to successful treatment and recovery, VA is encouraging Veterans to talk to their doctors about the signs and symptoms of bladder cancer. Bladder cancer is the 4th most common cancer among Veterans. Symptoms of bladder cancer include:

- Blood in the urine; painful or urgent urination; inability to urinate
- Abdominal pain; lower back pain

- Fatigue
- Appetite or weight loss

“Early diagnosis of bladder cancer leads to good outcomes,” said Dr. Chong-Xian Pan of the VA Boston Healthcare System. “Two out of three bladder cancer cases are related to smoking. Even electronic cigarettes are linked to bladder cancer. Quitting smoking is the best way to prevent bladder cancer from occurring.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), a history of bladder cancer, certain gene mutations, taking some kinds of chemotherapy drugs, and chronic urinary tract infections are risk factors.

Chemical exposure, such as Agent Orange, also increases a Veteran’s risk of bladder cancer. Thanks to the passage of H.R. 6395, the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, VA added bladder cancer to its list of presumptive conditions linked with exposure to Agent Orange. Presumptive conditions are certain health problems that are automatically considered by VA to be connected to a Veteran’s military service. If a Veteran was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam and was diagnosed with bladder cancer, they or their survivors can file a VA disability compensation claim at [VA.gov](#). If a claim was previously denied, it will be automatically reviewed. VA encourages Veterans diagnosed with bladder cancer to choose VA, like Roscher, for their cancer care to receive best-in-class treatment.

Bladder Cancer care at VA

VA’s National Oncology Program (NOP) is with cancer patients every step of the way for their treatment. Through the National [Precision Oncology Program](#) (NPOP), NOP can identify which cancer treatment strategies will work best for a Veteran’s bladder cancer. With best-in-class molecular testing through Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS), NOP providers can recommend a course of treatment that targets a tumor’s specific mutation. Pharmacogenomics further tailors a patient’s dosage and options for commonly used medications. NGS enables VA clinicians to leverage the right tools when treating cancer and improve Veterans’ quality of life.

In summer 2021, VA is launching a Clinical Pathways program for bladder cancer. This program will standardize the best practices for bladder cancer diagnosis and care at VA to improve patient outcomes.

Know the signs, seek treatment

Know the signs, seek treatment

Roscher’s healthcare team at the Kansas City VAMC are keeping a close eye on his cancer. Since Roscher noticed the signs and spoke up about them immediately, his doctors caught his cancer very early. The former military policeman encourages all Veterans to see their doctor if they notice symptoms like blood in the urine. “I know it can be embarrassing to talk about urine, but just go ahead and do it,” Roscher said. “Use language that you are comfortable with and tell them how it is so you can find out what’s going on. Everyone at VA who I have seen has been genuinely caring. They take the time to listen.” If you notice any of the signs of bladder cancer, talk to your doctor. Ask your provider to rule out bladder cancer. Identifying bladder cancer signs early is important!

If you are a current smoker, quitting is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of bladder cancer. VA can help. Visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quittoabacco/howtoquit.asp or call 1-855-QUIT-VET to learn more about smoking cessation at VA. For more information on how VA works shoulder to shoulder to

provide best-in-class cancer care, visit <https://www.cancer.va.gov> or contact cancer@va.gov. [Source: Vantage Point | Boyd Loehr | June 15, 2021 ++]

GI Bill

Update 312: 77 Years In The Making



June 22, 2021, marked the 77th Anniversary of the GI Bill, originally titled the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944.” The GI Bill set out the authority and responsibility for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide Veteran education and training benefits, as well as loan guaranty services. Some may only associate the GI Bill with just education and training benefits, but there’s much more to it and its associated programs and benefits. VA set a record last fiscal year by providing more than 1.2 million home loans totaling \$375 billion. VA helped almost 120,000 Veterans avoid foreclosure, saving taxpayers more than \$3.4 billion in mortgage servicing fees. VA also provided nearly 2,100 adaptive housing grants worth over \$116 million.

VA continues to improve and expand the benefits and services that were connected to the GI Bill. This year saw several pandemic-related acts administered by VA.

- The Isakson-Roe Veterans Improvement Act of 2020 is a good example of how recent changes made by Congress recognize that the GI Bill is an economic opportunity engine. This new law features 32 provisions that impact the administration and oversight of GI Bill benefits including new requirements for enrollment verification, expanded restoration of entitlement opportunities, the sunset of the Montgomery GI Bill, substantial changes to our oversight of GI Bill approved schools, and other education related issues.
- To better support education, VA is implementing a Digital GI Bill that will modernize the information technology platform supporting the GI Bill. This will allow VA to deliver direct, online, one-stop access to GI Bill benefits and information to all GI Bill students, revolutionizing how Veterans and beneficiaries can interface with VA and their benefits while allowing them to receive benefits uninterrupted and on-time.
- Another goal is to improve overall outreach and usage of the GI Bill programs for special populations, such as women Veterans, military spouses, children and minority Veterans.

One change that beneficiaries may also have noticed recently is that Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) services have changed its name from the previous “Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.” The change reemphasizes our mission to encourage, promote and support transitioning service members

and Veterans with service-connected disabilities to achieve maximum independence in daily living and, to the maximum extent possible, to become employable and to obtain and maintain suitable employment. VR&E counselors work on military installations and college campuses across the nation to provide outreach and readiness services to service members and Veterans. VR&E is also currently undertaking a modernization effort to ensure the next generation of service members and Veterans reach their employment goals. It includes tele-counseling, e-VA communications, centralized mail, a web-based orientation tool and a state-of-the-art case management system.

Since 1944, over 26 million home loans have been guaranteed by VA worth nearly \$3 trillion. Since 1948, VA has made almost 45,000 housing grants totaling nearly \$1.7 billion. The GI Bill was a triumph when it was passed 77 years ago. Its impact today only grows as it continues to benefit Veterans and their beneficiaries. [Source: Vantage Point | Dan Kuester | June 22, 2021 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse **Reported JUN 16 thru 30, 2021**

Alexandria, VA — An Arlington businessman was sentenced today to 21 months in prison with three years of supervised release for making false statements to multiple federal agencies in order to fraudulently obtain multimillion-dollar government contracts, COVID-19 emergency relief loans, and undeserved military service benefits.

“In the early stages of the global pandemic, the defendant engaged in three egregious fraudulent schemes that he brazenly concocted to enrich himself,” said Raj Parekh, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. “He falsely represented to the federal government that he could provide \$38 million in life-saving N95 masks, and simultaneously, he fraudulently obtained over \$1 million in pandemic assistance intended for deserving families and businesses. The defendant also continued an offensive seven-year scheme to obtain unearned veterans benefits by falsely claiming to have served as a Marine. This case underscores our commitment to holding accountable those who exploit essential government programs at the expense of veterans, front-line medical personnel, and vulnerable members of our communities.”

According to court documents, **Robert S. Stewart, Jr.**, 35, was the owner and president of Federal Government Experts (FGE) LLC, an Arlington-based company that purported to provide various services to the U.S. government. In this capacity, between April 1, 2020 and May 14, 2020, Stewart made false statements to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in order to obtain lucrative contracts to provide COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE). In addition, Stewart fraudulently obtained loans under the federal Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program. He also defrauded the VA by falsely claiming to be entitled to veteran’s benefits for serving in the U.S. Marine Corps when, in fact, he never served in the Marines.

As part of his PPE scheme, Stewart falsely stated to procurement officials from FEMA and the VA that he was in possession of large quantities of PPE, including N95 masks. Based on Stewart’s false statements, the VA and FEMA awarded FGE contracts valued at \$35,000,000 and \$3,510,000, respectively. The VA

intended to use the PPE purchased from FGE to protect employees and patients at various Veterans Health Administration facilities, which serve the medical needs of over nine million veterans each year. FGE failed to supply any PPE to the VA and FEMA. The U.S. government suffered no financial loss because the contract called for payment upon delivery and inspection of the goods.

Stewart also applied for various loans on behalf of FGE under the federal Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program. These programs were designed to provide emergency financial assistance to the millions of people suffering the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The loan applications submitted by Stewart falsely overstated the number of FGE employees and the amount of FGE's payroll, two factors that were important in determining loan eligibility and the proper amount of the loan. In addition, Stewart used some of the loan proceeds for personal expenditures rather than to pay employees or for other appropriate business expenses. As a result of these fraudulent loan applications, Stewart obtained approximately \$1,066,000 in government-backed loans during the pandemic.

In a separate fraudulent scheme, Stewart, an Air Force veteran, submitted an application for benefits to the VA. The application was fraudulent in that Stewart falsely claimed that he also served in the U.S. Marine Corps. Stewart created fraudulent documents that stated he attained the rank of Corporal in the Marine Corps and was honorably discharged after receiving several awards and commendations, including the Rifle Expert Badge, Pistol Expert Badge, Meritorious Mast, National Defense Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Certificate of Appreciation, and the Kuwaiti Liberation Medal. Stewart, in fact, never served in the Marines. Based on his fraudulent application, he received excess benefits in the amount of \$73,722.45 between September 2013 and October 2020. [Source: DoJ Eastern District of Virginia | U.S. Attorney's Office | June 16, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Bowie, MD — A Maryland man was sentenced 14 JUN to 30 months in prison and ordered to pay \$150,000 in restitution for defrauding a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) program dedicated to rehabilitating military veterans with disabilities.

According to court documents, **Francis Engles**, 65, of Bowie, was the owner and operator of Engles Security Training School (Engles Security). In August 2015, Engles Security became an approved vendor of the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment program, which provides disabled U.S. military veterans with services. Thereafter, Engles Security obtained over 80% of its total revenue from the VA in exchange for purporting to provide certain courses to disabled military veterans.

To further the scheme, Engles falsely represented to the VA that his company was providing veterans with months-long courses for 40 hours per week and over 600 total hours. In fact, as Engles knew, Engles Security offered veterans far less than what Engles represented to the VA. In some instances, it offered only a few hours of class per day for several weeks. Some veterans did not attend more than one day of class. Engles nevertheless sent to the VA "Certificates of Training" stating that veterans had completed courses that they had not completed or, in some instances, had not taken at all. Similarly, Engles submitted letters to the VA falsely stating that the veterans were employed by Engles' private security business. Engles also instructed veterans to sign attendance sheets for classes that he knew they did not in fact attend. In total, Engles Security obtained \$337,960 from the VA for the purported education of military veterans.

Engles also attempted to obstruct the investigation into his fraud. During an interview with federal agents, Engles lied about veteran students' attendance at the school and later, when Engles Security was served with a grand jury subpoena, Engles prevented his employee from producing responsive documents that she had gathered. Some of these documents were later discovered in the government's search of Engles Security's office.

In February 2019, four other individuals were sentenced in related cases following their guilty pleas. **James King**, a former VA employee, was sentenced to 11 years in prison for committing bribery, defrauding the VA and obstructing justice. **Albert Poawui**, the owner of Atius Technology Institute, was sentenced to 70 months in prison for committing bribery. **Sombo Kanneh**, Poawui's employee, was sentenced to 20 months in prison for conspiracy to commit bribery. **Michelle Stevens**, the owner of Eelon Training School, was sentenced to 30 months in prison for committing bribery. [Source: Justice News | DoJ Office of Public Affairs | June 15, 2021 ++]

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Syracuse, NY — **Muhammad Z. Aabdin**, age 30, of the Bronx, New York, has been indicted for offering bribes to a public offic^{15 JUN} by Acting United States Attorney Antoinette T. Bacon and Special Agent in Charge Christopher F. Algieri, Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, Northeast Field Office.

The indictment, returned by the grand jury on June 10, 2021, alleges that in September and October 2020, Aabdin offered unsolicited bribes to a contracting officer with the Veterans Administration ("VA") in Syracuse. Aabdin allegedly offered to share profits with the VA contracting officer in exchange for her awarding VA contracts to him for personal protective equipment ("PPE") and assisting him in getting payments on such contracts. The contracting officer reported Aabdin's alleged bribery offers to law enforcement. Aabdin has been released pending disposition of the charges. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The charges filed against Aabdin carry a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors. [Source: DoJ Northern District of New York | U.S. Attorney's Office | June 15, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

McAllen, TX — A compound pharmacy owner, three marketers, a referring physician and two clinic office staff have been taken into custody in connection with a multi-million dollar health care fraud and kickback scheme, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Jennifer B. Lowery. A federal grand jury sitting in McAllen returned a 15-count indictment charging **John Ageudo Rodriguez**, 51, **Mohammad Imtiaz Chowdhury**, 40, his father Dr. **Tajul Shams Chowdhury**, 71, and **Alex Flores Jr.**, 51, all of McAllen; **Hector DeLaCruz, Jr.**, 50, Edinburg; **Araceli Gaona**, 35, Mission; and **Erika Hernandez Salinas**, 38, Donna. All were expected to have their initial appearances 18 JUN before U.S. Magistrate Judge J. Scott Hacker. The indictment includes charges of conspiracy to commit health care fraud, health care fraud, conspiracy to pay and receive illegal kickbacks and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

- Rodriguez was the owner of Pharr Family Pharmacy (PFP), according to the indictment. From May 2014 to September 2016, PFP allegedly billed various federal health care programs more than \$110 million, including claims that were false, fraudulent and the result of illegal kickbacks.

- According to the indictment, Mohammad Chowdhury, Flores and DeLaCruz were purported marketers for PFP who were the conduits for several million dollars in kickbacks relating to the referral of prescriptions for high-reimbursing compound drugs to the pharmacy. In numerous instances, the marketers allegedly received kickbacks from Rodriguez, which they shared with referring physicians.
- Dr. Chowdhury is a physician with a medical practice in Edinburg known as Center for Pain Management, according to the charges, while Gaona and Salinas were employees at the clinic. The indictment alleges Mohammad Chowdhury paid kickbacks to his father for referring prescriptions to PFP, including prescriptions for high-reimbursing compound drugs that were not medically necessary nor what the patients wanted. Gaona and Salinas are charged with conspiring to pay and receive kickbacks and conspiracy to commit money laundering in connection with their alleged receipt of kickbacks to help coordinate the flow of prescriptions from the medical clinic to the pharmacy.

The indictment alleges Rodriguez and his co-conspirators targeted specific health care benefit programs known to pay high reimbursements for compound drugs, such as Federal Employee’s Compensation Program, TRICARE, Medicare and various private insurance plans. As part of the scheme, Rodriguez allegedly provided PFP marketers with pre-filled prescription pads intended to be given to physicians. The charges allege these included compound drugs and other prescription items that would yield the highest possible reimbursement to PFP, without regard to medical necessity.

If convicted of health care fraud and conspiracy to commit health care fraud, they face up to 10 years in prison and a maximum \$250,000 possible fine. The penalty for conspiracy to pay and receive illegal kickbacks is five years with a \$25,000 maximum fine. Those charged and convicted of conspiracy to commit money laundering face up to 20 years in prison and fine of up to \$500,000. [Source: DoJ Southern District of Texas | U.S. Attorney’s Office | June 17, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Clarksburg, WV — Dr. **Kenneth C. Ramdat**, a physician formerly employed at the Louis A. Johnson VA Hospital in Clarksburg, West Virginia, has admitted to assaulting two hospital employees, Acting U.S. Attorney Randolph J. Bernard announced. Ramdat, 66, of Silver Springs, Maryland, pleaded guilty to two counts of “Simple Assault.” As a part of his plea agreement, Ramdat admitted to touching two staff women’s breasts without permission while in isolated rooms of incapacitated patients in two separate incidents in August 2019 and October 2019 at the hospital in Harrison County. Ramdat was sentenced to one year of probation. [Source: DoJ Northern District of West Virginia | U.S. Attorney’s Office | June 23, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Greeneville, TN – On 23 JUN **Kristopher M. Voyles**, 31, of Georgia, was sentenced to 27 months in prison, followed by three years’ supervised release, by the Honorable Clifton L. Corker, in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee at Greeneville. As part of a negotiated plea agreement, Voyles pled guilty to theft of more than \$1,000 of government property. Voyles will be required to make restitution of \$20,502 to the Department of Veteran’s Affairs.

According to court records, Voyles is not a veteran and has never served in the United States military. On October 9, 2019, Voyles used the name, date of birth, and social security number of a United States

veteran when receiving medical services at a hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. The next day, while still impersonating the veteran, Voyles obtained a transfer to the VA Medical Center in Johnson City, Tennessee. Voyles used fraudulently obtained identification documents, and a fraudulently obtained Form DD-214. For approximately a week, Voyles accepted medical goods, items, and services from the VA Medical Center.

The value of the goods, items, and services Voyles stole was \$20,502. When apprehended, Voyles still had the veteran’s identification documents with him, including the fraudulently obtained Form DD-214. Subsequent investigation revealed that Voyles had previously been prosecuted by Atlanta, Georgia authorities for using the same veteran’s identity to obtain prescription drugs from the VA Medical Center in Atlanta. [Source: DoJ Eastern District of Tennessee | U.S. Attorney’s Office | June 23, 2021 ++]

* Vets *



PFAS Toxic Exposure

Update 20: S.1973 | Filthy Fifty Act

Despite knowing about the hazards of PFAS-based firefighting foam, the Defense Department continued to use it for [decades](#) and now is fighting efforts to clean up legacy pollution. This map shows [military sites](#) where drinking water or groundwater is contaminated with PFAS at levels above the EPA’s advisory level. On 8 JUN the “[Filthy Fifty Act](#)” and “[Clean Water for Military Families Act](#)” were introduced in the U.S. Senate by Democratic Sens. Alex Padilla of California and Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, representing the two states with the most contaminated bases. Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters of Michigan are co-sponsors. A companion bill is also being introduced in the U.S. House.

“We have seen the harmful effects of these toxic chemicals in New York, California, and across the country,” said Gillibrand in a statement. “There is a clear link between the use of PFAS firefighting foam on military bases and dangerous levels of PFAS in the drinking water of the surrounding communities.” The legislation would authorize \$10 billion starting for PFAS cleanups starting next fiscal year. It would require the military to test all current and former bases and National Guard sites within two years, provide safe drinking water within 60 days to people living around them, and complete construction of all remediation systems within 10 years.

For bases on the “Filthy Fifty” list, the Department of Defense would have five years to complete remedial construction. It would also require the military to comply with state environmental PFAS laws that, in states like Michigan, are more stringent than existing federal guidelines. In Michigan, New York and elsewhere, the military has based its actions on an unenforceable health advisory level of 70 parts-per-

trillion (ppt) for two PFAS compounds, PFOS and PFOA, in drinking water that was set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2016.

The threshold is widely criticized as offering inadequate exposure protection to vulnerable populations, such as children and pregnant women, and states such as Michigan, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire and others have developed more stringent standards. Those rules are under attack from PFAS manufacturers like 3M, which is seeking to invalidate them in court. The large class of fluorinated chemicals have been linked to cancer, reproductive problems, immune system suppression and other chronic health problems. Bases on the Filthy Fifty list include:

- Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma.
- Arnold Air Force Base, Tennessee.
- Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana.
- Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado.
- Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois.
- Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina.
- Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi.
- Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.
- Eaker Air Force Base, Arkansas.
- Edwards Air Force Base, California.
- Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska.
- Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota.
- England Air Force Base, Louisiana.
- F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming.
- Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington.
- Galena Air Force Base, Alaska.
- Grand Prairie Armed Forces Reserve Complex, Texas.
- Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, New York.
- Horsham Air Guard Station, Pennsylvania.
- Iowa Air National Guard Base - Des Moines, Iowa.
- Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.
- Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.
- K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base, Michigan.
- Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.
- Marine Corps Air Station Tustin, California.
- Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota.
- Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, South Carolina.
- Naval Air Station Alameda, California.
- Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida.
- Naval Air Station Whidbey Island - Ault Field, Washington.
- Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, California.
- Naval Research Lab Chesapeake Bay Detachment, Maryland.
- Nevada Air National Guard Base - Reno, Nevada.

- Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York.
- Patrick Air Force Base, Florida.
- Pease Air Force Base, New Hampshire.
- Plattsburgh Air Force Base, New York.
- Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.
- Rosecrans Air National Guard Base, Missouri.
- Shepherd Field Air National Guard Base, West Virginia.
- Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.
- Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma.
- Travis Air Force Base, California.
- Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.
- Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma.
- Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.
- Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts.
- Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri.
- Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan.

[Source: ROA SmartBrief | Garret Ellison | June 9, 2021 ++]

Obit: Jack B. Weinstein

June 15, 2021 | Longest Serving Federal Judge



Former federal judge who earned a reputation as a tireless legal maverick while overseeing a series of landmark class-action lawsuits and sensational mob cases in New York City like that of the “Mafia Cops,” has died at age 99. A federal courthouse official, Eugene Corcoran, confirmed Jack B. Weinstein’s death on 15 JUN. The judiciary “has lost a national treasure,” Corcoran said in a statement.

Weinstein, a World War II veteran appointed by President Lyndon Johnson, had spent more 53 years on the bench in Brooklyn before retiring last year. In a 2012 interview with The Associated Press, he said his longevity had its advantages. “You don’t care really what people think of you,” the judge said. “You’re not going anywhere. You’re doing it for the joy. And as a public service.” Weinstein was known for championing class-action litigation as the little guy’s remedy for alleged injustices by big industry.

He made headlines in 1984 by approving a settlement requiring herbicide makers to pay \$180 million to Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange in a class action suit. He also presided over a 1999 trial ending in an unprecedented verdict finding handgun makers liable in shootings and negligent in their marketing practices. And in 2006, he gave the green light to a class-action suit brought by tens of millions of smokers seeking up to \$200 billion from tobacco companies for allegedly duping them into buying light cigarettes. His rulings often upset conservatives, who accused him of sacrificing judicial restraint to promote liberal causes. In many cases, appellate courts found that his decisions had overreached. In a book about mass tort litigation, Weinstein espoused a belief in “humankind’s obligation to create a just society.”

Weinstein was born in Wichita, Kansas, but grew up in Harlem and Brooklyn. As a teenager in the 1930s, he played bit parts in Broadway shows and worked on the docks to put himself through school. He later served in World War II before launching his legal career at Columbia Law School, where he graduated in 1948. He briefly went into private practice before serving as Nassau County Attorney from 1963 to 1965. He had returned to Columbia to teach when President Johnson named him to the federal bench in 1967.

The 6-foot-2 Weinstein was a stately presence in court, where he favored business suits over robes and sometimes ventured off the bench in the middle of trials to get a juror’s-eye view of the proceedings. He was impatient with long-winded lawyers, critical of sentencing guidelines he felt were too harsh on low-level criminals and concerned about judges falling prey to hubris. “One danger that every judge must guard against is ego,” he wrote in his book. “The court must control its own sense of importance — sometimes a very difficult chore.” He also expressed a faith in juries’ ability to tackle complex and contentious civil cases. Should a jury “be permitted to decide a vexing private litigation ... when the decision has so many important overtones, or should the judges themselves decide by holding that the matter is beyond the ken of a reasonable jury?” he wrote in the light cigarette case.

In 1997, Weinstein added his scholarly touch to a ruling affirming a 12-year prison term for Vincent “Chin” Gigante, the Mafia “Oddfather.” The boss of the Genovese organized crime family had escaped prosecution for years by wandering the streets in a ratty bathrobe like a madman. Quoting Shakespeare’s “As You Like It,” the judge wrote: “And one man in his time plays many parts. ... Last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history, is second childishness.” Weinstein also put his unique stamp on perhaps the most stunning police corruption case in city history: the trial of two detectives accused of moonlighting as hitmen for the mob. After defendants Louis Eppolito and Steven Caracappa were convicted in 2006, the judge declared that they deserved life sentences for “the most heinous series of killings ever tried in this courthouse.”

A month later, he stunned prosecutors by throwing out the convictions based on defense arguments that the statute of limitations for the eight murders had expired. An appeals court overturned the decision. Weinstein made news as late as 2019 by sentencing an American woman who admitted supporting the Islamic State group to four years in prison over the objection of prosecutors who wanted her locked up for decades. True to form, he said the lenient sentence had the potential to “save her as a human being.” [Source: MilitaryTimes | Eileen Putnam | May 26, 2021 ++]

Obit: Joseph Capone

June 16, 2021 | Thrice Wounded WWII Vet



Even among a group colloquially known as the "greatest generation," Joseph "Joe" Capone stood out. A highly decorated veteran in one of the toughest combat units of World War II and longtime business teacher at Westinghouse High School, some might think Capone's last name would have proved a burden. But it actually saved his life by lightening a very tense moment at a critical juncture in the war, his son recalled.

"At one point, he and a couple of other soldiers were taken prisoner by the Germans, and they didn't know if they would be shot or what," said Thom Capone, of New Kensington. "When they were checking dog tags, a German soldier started laughing: 'Ha! Ha! American gangster!' I mean, they knew about Al Capone, so he thought he was going to be in trouble, but once they all saw that, they had a good laugh. Thankfully, they were taken prisoner, not shot." Joseph Capone, of Wilkins, who also worked as a professional magician and was among the founders of the Pittsburgh Rockets Drum and Bugle Corps, died of complications from a fall on June 16. He was 98.

The son of Italian immigrants, including a father who fought in the First World War, Capone grew up in Homewood during the Depression. At the end of Prohibition, Capone's father bought a bar in a building along Homewood Avenue, where the family also lived and raised racing pigeons on the rooftop. As a young man, Capone helped out at the bar and served as a drummer for a band that often played in the bar's beer garden. "Even from an early age, he loved big band music," his son said. "He must have almost 1,000 78s of big band music." After graduating from Westinghouse High School in 1940, Capone enlisted in the Army, where he served on the Western Front, from January 1943 through December 1945, as an infantryman in Company E, 415th Regiment, 104th Infantry Division, also called the Timberwolf Division.

The division is perhaps best known for 195 consecutive days of combat — from its landing in northern France in September 1944, through Belgium, Holland and finally Germany — and for being the first American division to fight under Allied commanders. Pfc. Capone's description of the preparations and emotions leading up to Operation Grenade — the Allied invasion of Germany that began with the February 1945 crossing of the Roer River — is riveting.

"Men of all faiths had opportunity for final devotions, and again that nervous, uneasy restless tension gripped them as they wrote a last letter home," Capone wrote in his self-published memoir about the campaign. "I, like the others, consumed many cigarettes and, nervously, tried my best to keep at ease. However, the 'battle of nerves' that results from 'sweating it out' always seems the worst. Some men tried sleeping, some played poker, some wrote letters, or some, as I did, merely talked. ... Finally, word came

down from [command post] to fall in for the march to Merken. One last check of equipment, another cigarette, and out we poured into the pitch black night that enveloped Lucherberg."

A few hours later, he and a comrade scrambled to notify officers of quickly deteriorating conditions down river, alternately advancing and ducking into the frigid water — all the while dodging gunfire and munitions — until they became trapped along a river bank.

"We laid in the water with just our heads exposed trying to figure things out ... it was about 0430 hours and, being soaked from head to foot, cold, miserable, and frightened, we didn't know quite what to do," Capone wrote. "So, we prayed. Prayers do help and we prayed hard. However, about 15 minutes later a shell hit the water just a few feet behind us and the effect was terrific, because the next thing I knew, it was 1030 hours and overhead our planes were raining havoc. I tried to get my bearings and account for that time lost between 0445 and 1030 hours. When I tried to move my limbs, I found I couldn't do so. I was paralyzed from head to foot. The other fellows with me were in just as bad, if not worse, shape. My conclusion was that the concussion through the water was of such force that it blacked me out and after laying in the water for about six hours I was paralyzed from exposure."

In what would be the first of three hospitalizations during the war, Capone spent 11 days recovering before returning to the front. A month later, his regiment liberated the Dora-Mittelbau Concentration Camp in central Germany. "We were the first ones to uncover it, I guess," Capone said in a May 2012 interview for the Veteran Voices of Pittsburgh Oral History Initiative. "I'll never forget that site or that smell. ... Unbelievable. You know the pictures you've seen? That happened." At the camp, thousands of prisoners were forced to dig an underground factory where V2 rockets were built. Nazis evacuated most of the camp's inhabitants in notorious death marches in the days before American troops found those who remained, according to the Holocaust Encyclopedia. A medical detachment was brought in to help rescue sick and injured prisoners, Capone said, while mass graves were dug for the many dead.

He was wounded twice more and served in several major campaigns, eventually being recognized with a Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, a Purple Heart with two clusters, a Combat Infantryman Badge and several other honors. After the war, Capone married Rosemarie Morelli, also a Homewood native. "My mother was good friends with his sister Virginia, and she wrote to him during the war," their son said. "They kept in touch and married in August of 1951." Through the GI Bill, Capone attended the University of Pittsburgh, where he earned an education degree. But finding a job was harder than he imagined.

"There was shrapnel in his legs, and I think he was injured three different times — each one compounded the problems he had with his legs," Thom Capone said of his father. "When he came home, he walked with braces on both legs and a cane. That was why he couldn't get hired at Pittsburgh Public Schools. They told him it was because he was 'crippled.'" Capone successfully sued the district for discrimination and worked at Westinghouse from 1952 until his retirement in 1986. He was inducted into the school's Wall of Fame in 2009. "He loved teaching," his son said. "He still would run into former students who loved him." By the mid-1960s, Capone no longer needed the leg devices, thanks to physical therapy — including magic tricks that improved his dexterity and muscle tone.

After retirement, Capone spent many years perfecting and expanding his repertoire for his show, 'The Magic of Joseph'. "He started performing professionally at senior citizen centers and shows," his son said. "He really got into it." In 1947, Capone joined 11 other men from the Homewood American Legion Post 351 to organize the senior drum and bugle corps that was to become the Pittsburgh Rockets. He couldn't

perform due to his physical limitations, but Capone served for 27 years as the organization's business manager. He was inducted into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame in 1980. He was also an avid — and nationally ranked — duckpin bowler and a 30-year member of the Elks Lodge 577, where he served as leader for a term.

In his later years, Capone often wore a World War II ballcap and attended veterans-related events, including the Veterans Breakfast Club, where he was especially active. "He had a hat that he would wear, and people would always thank him for his service," his son said. "On Veterans Day, he always dressed up in his old uniform, and we'd take him out for breakfast. Before we could even get the bill, someone would always pay. He was very much a part of it all, and he was so proud to have served his country."

Along with his wife and son, Capone is survived by his children James, of Carlisle, Cumberland County; Virginia Bradley, of Rexburg, Idaho; Marie O'Connell, of Lake Worth, Fla.; Joseph, of Export; Victor, of Lawrenceville; Elizabeth Worrall, of Crafton; and Patricia, of Torino, Italy. He is also survived by a sister, Virginia Palguta, of Bridgeville; 23 grandchildren; and 21 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his siblings Carmen and Valentino Capone. He was interred with military at Mount Carmel Cemetery. [Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette | Janice Crompton | June 23, 2021 ++]

WWII Vets 262

Bruce Meyers | Battle of Okinawa Vet



Bruce Meyers was born in 1926 in Southern California. After dropping out of high school, he joined the Merchant Marines at the age of 17. However, during a trip to Hawaii, Meyers jumped onto another ship and came back as a stowaway to the U.S. He lived in California until the military drafted him at age 18. Due to his previous experience as a sailor, he joined the Navy. Meyers served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Bunker Hill as a gunner for one of the turrets.

On May 11, 1945, he saw combat in Japan during the Battle of Okinawa when two Japanese kamikaze aircraft rammed into a U.S. aircraft carrier. The ship erupted into flames, and amidst the chaos, Meyers offered another sailor his life preserver. Once he was in the water, Meyers carried injured pilots to the safety of a whaleboat. For the next several weeks, Meyers served as a swabbie on a stretcher, going back to the aircraft carrier and assisting in the removal of over 400 bodies of his fellow comrades.

After the war, Meyers attended the Chouinard Art Institute (now part of the California Institute of the Arts). He surfed, raced in the Baja 1000 and sailed to Tahiti on a trading schooner. His greatest achievement, however, came in the form of building boats and learning how to shape lightweight but sturdy fiberglass. This experience gave him the necessary skills he needed to build his personal project: the dune buggy.

Meyers built his first 12 dune buggies by hand, primarily for himself and his friends. The first one he finished was named Old Red, and he drove it for decades. Invented in 1963, Meyers called his creation the Meyers-Manx Dune Buggy. The Old Red was the first known fiberglass dune buggy. In 1964, Meyers founded B.F. Meyers & Co., later renamed Meyers-Manx in 2000. The company focused on more than just dune buggies, it took the form of making car kits applied to smaller chassis of the Volkswagen Beetle series. Moreover, the company manufactured kit cars, automobiles sold as a set of parts to be put together by the buyer. Meyers passed away on Feb. 19, 2021, at the age of 94. We honor his service. [Source: Vantage Point | Alex Boucher| May 19, 1021 ++]

WWII Vets 263

Susan Ahn Cuddy | First Asian American Woman in WAVES



Born to Korean immigrants in January 1915, Susan Cuddy’s father told her from a very young age to be the best American citizen she could be, whilst never forgetting her heritage. Her father, Ahn Changho, actively criticized the Japanese colonization of Korea in the early 20th century. Detained by Japanese police in Seoul, he later died in a hospital in 1938. As a result, Cuddy pledged to represent Korea while helping the U.S. defeat Japan. The military initially declined her due to rampant anti-Asian sentiments. She eventually joined the Navy WAVES in 1942, becoming the first Asian American woman in WAVES history.

Cuddy trained at the U.S. Naval Reserve Midshipmen’s School in Northampton, Massachusetts. She then went to Georgia, where she became an instructor with the U.S. Navy Reserve. There, she served as a link trainer, teaching air combat tactics to future officers and working with those struggling to handle firearms. Later, Cuddy transferred to Pensacola, Florida, and became the Navy’s first female gunnery officer. In this role, she trained pilots and door gunners how to shoot down enemy aircraft. Cuddy received significant pushback from her male subordinates, most of whom did not respect her due to her gender and Asian ancestry. Still, Cuddy remained in this capacity until the end of World War II, eventually attaining the rank of lieutenant.

Following World War II, Cuddy worked in the Office of Naval Intelligence as a code breaker. However, in 1946, she left the Navy and joined the National Security Agency (NSA). At NSA, she met and married her husband, Francis “Frank” Cuddy. Cuddy’s mother disapproved of her marriage to a white man, but the two married in 1947 at a Navy chapel in Washington, D.C. At NSA, Cuddy was section chief of the Soviet unit, a position in which she led 300 linguists and other specialists in collecting Soviet intelligence. She

commanded this division throughout the Cold War and continued to work on many top-secret government projects until her retirement from public service in 1959.

Cuddy returned to her home state of California, where she was a prominent leader and activist in her community. She defeated breast cancer twice before passing away in June 2015 at age 100. We honor her service. [Source: Vantage Point | Hannah Randolph | May 29, 2021 ++]

WW1 Vets 15

Army Nurse Beatrice MacDonald



Beatrice Mary MacDonald was born in 1881 in North Bedeque, a small town in the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island. MacDonald came to the U.S. to study nursing at New York Training School for Nurses on Blackwell's Island, which is now Roosevelt Island. In 1905, she became a registered nurse and worked in New York City as a surgical assistant. In 1915, MacDonald experienced war for the first time when she volunteered for four months with Hospital B, American Ambulance in Juilly, France. Then, MacDonald returned to New York and resumed her job.

When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, she enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps. In May 1917, MacDonald joined a team of doctors and nurses from New York's Presbyterian Hospital to establish Base Hospital No. 2 in Étretat, France. For the next year, MacDonald served as a surgical nurse at Base Hospital No. 2 and at British Casualty Clearing Station No. 61, a mobile unit always within a few miles of the front line. Casualty clearing stations triaged patients, provided emergency treatment and surgeries, then sent the soldiers back to the field or to other facilities for further care. Base hospitals were farther from the front line and provided longer-term care.

On the night of Aug. 17, 1917, MacDonald was at the clearing station in Belgium, four miles from the front line, when the Germans started an air raid in the area. MacDonald continued caring for the wounded until shrapnel hit her right eye, causing instant blindness. Surgical efforts to save her sight failed, and she was later fitted with an artificial eye. But, she insisted on staying. According to a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study article, MacDonald declared, "I've only started doing my bit."

She returned to her base hospital until May 1918. MacDonald then got orders to report to Evacuation Hospital No. 2, the American equivalent to British casualty clearing stations, in Baccarat, France, and promoted to chief nurse. She remained in Baccarat until the Armistice. After the war ended, MacDonald

went to Germany to serve for two months with Allied forces, but then returned home and resumed her nursing career in New York.

MacDonald received numerous medals, awards and accolades for her service from the United States, France and Great Britain. In addition to her service, MacDonald made history as the first woman to receive a Distinguished Service Cross and a Purple Heart. MacDonald passed away September 1969 in White Plains, New York. We honor her service. [Source: Vantage Point | Michael Veronda | June 14, 2021 ++]

Military Racial Injustice

Osceola Fletcher's Award | It's About Time



Former Army Private Osceola "Ozzie" Fletcher received a Purple Heart last week at age 99 after more than eight decades of unrecognized service in the Battle of Normandy. Fletcher was wounded in a German attack shortly after D-Day in 1944 while delivering supplies to Allied troops who were off the coast of France. The driver was killed, and Fletcher was left with a large gash on his head – a wound that would have typically earned him a Purple Heart for his service. But as was the case for many other Black Americans in the military at that time, he was denied the honor due to race inequalities.

"There were probably many others like myself who did not get honored, and I just lasted longer," Fletcher told "The Story" host Martha MacCallum on 24 JUN. "However, the guys of other complexions did get medals. They showed it in their neighborhoods and I found out about it in other ways....and the soldiers who got Purple Hearts are those people that weren't there in the very, very beginning and it seems that maybe many officers got Purple Hearts because they were White. But I don't know about any other unwhite soldiers, you might say, getting honored in any way [at that time.]"

After Fletcher's granddaughter reached out on his behalf, the 99-year-old veteran received the honor in a ceremony on 18 JUN in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn. Army officials and other leaders praised Fletcher for his service, acknowledging that he was a victim of racial injustice. "Today, we pay long overdue tribute for the sacrifices he made to our nation and for free people everywhere," US Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said at the June 18 event, according to the New York Daily News.

"I was an expert, emptied all of the bottom of the vessels that were bringing in materials. We had to stay there to make sure on the coast that everything needed by those guys going by and going into the roads and the forests and whatever place that they had to chase the Nazis," Fletcher recalled. "After fighting and after working, which is what mainly we were doing," Fletcher said, "it's about time." [Source: Fox News | Yael Halon | June 25, 2021 ++]

American Vet's Recollections



Lt. Jason Redman spent eight years as an enlisted U.S. Navy SEAL, and was commissioned as a SEAL Officer in 2004. He completed combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2007, outside of Fallujah, Iraq, Lt. Redman's Assault Team came under heavy fire and he was severely wounded. While recovering at Bethesda Medical Center, Redman authored a bright orange sign on his door, which became a statement and symbol for wounded warriors everywhere. He is the recipient of the Bronze Star with Valor, the Purple Heart, and the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, among other awards. At https://youtu.be/zdwizRp3z_w?list=PLaz8anrWIM49nO_mEpPWevAIMbio3KdGV watch as he tells the story and what he experienced in the 33 minute video. [Source: American Veterans Center | April 16, 2019 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule

As of 30 JUN 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/veterans related websites and resources.

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

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

Note that events listed on the Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule may be cancelled or rescheduled. Before traveling long distances to attend an event, you should contact the applicable RAO, RSO, event sponsor, etc., to ensure the event will, in fact, be held on the date/time indicated. Also,

attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214. Please report broken links, comments, corrections, suggestions, new RADs and/or other military retiree/veterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, Milton.Bell126@gmail.com.

[Source: Retiree/Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | June 30, 2021 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs

Scheduled As of 30 JUN 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>

[Source: Recruit Military, USCC, and American Legion | June 30, 2021 ++]

Vet Employment Opportunities

Listings from Companies Looking For Vets as of 30 JUN

Military Times has listings from companies looking for vets to hire which is updated daily. Anyone interested can check them out by clicking on <https://jobboard.militarytimes.com> which will open a daily listing by job title such as posted below. Clicking on the job title will reveal the company and location offering the position, the job summary and description, its core responsibilities, what employees are expected to do, plus prerequisite education and relevant work experience requirements. Also a tab to click on to apply for the job. Following is just one of the jobs currently listed.

JUN 29

- [Xfinity Retail Sales Consultant](#)
- Comcast -- Responsible for assisting and consulting with customers on our products and services by utilizing knowledge, skills and technology to achieve a world class sales and service experience Works with moderate supervision/guidance. Is accountable for individual results and impact on team.
- Southwest Florida Area FL

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Job Board | June 30, 2021 ++]

State Veteran's Benefits Louisiana 2021

The state of Louisiana provides a number of services and benefits to its veterans. To obtain information on these refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**State Veteran's Benefits – LA**” for an overview of those in the below areas. They are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below plus the state's current position on veteran issues refer to MOAA's www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/statereportcard & <http://vetaffairs.la.gov>

- Housing
- Financial Assistance
- Employment
- Education
- Recreation
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing
- Burial
- Taxation
- Women Veterans
- Other

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/louisiana-state-veterans-benefits.html> & <http://vetaffairs.la.gov> | June 2021 ++]

*** Vet Legislation ***



Military Mental Health Disorders

Update 02: **HR.0000/S.0000** | **Brandon Act**

After a failed attempt last year, lawmakers reintroduced a bill 15 JUN that would allow service members to quickly seek mental health care in confidence by using a safe word. The bill, titled the **Brandon Act**, was named for Brandon Caserta, a 21-year-old sailor who died by suicide June 25, 2018, at Naval Station Norfolk, Va. A command investigation into Caserta's death determined that belligerent and brash leadership of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28 contributed to his decision to end his own life. He felt alone, stuck and afraid of retaliation, his parents said.

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) is leading the House bill, and Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ) introduced the bill in the Senate. The measure made it into the House's version of the National Defense Authorization Act last year but was taken out in final negotiations. "We're back here again demanding Congress pass the Brandon Act," Moulton said Wednesday outside the Capitol. "By passing this bill, Congress could empower service members to quickly get help in an emergency situation as soon as they confided in someone that they needed it." Under the bill, all service members would have to tell their supervisor or commanding officer is that they had a "Brandon Act concern" to receive a referral for mental health care, Moulton said.

Caserta's parents, Patrick and Teri Caserta, have pushed for the change since their son died three years ago. The couple spoke outside the Capitol on Wednesday afternoon, continuing to advocate for the bill. "Brandon had a smile that made everyone want to smile," Patrick Caserta said. "He cared about everyone. Please support the Brandon Act. This is truly a matter of life or death." Brandon Caserta was one of 325 active-duty service members who died by suicide in 2018, and one of 68 sailors, according to military data. Suicides have increased since then. In 2019, 348 active-duty service members died by suicide, and in 2020 that number rose to 377. The military saw a significant spike in suicides during the end of 2020.

The Brandon Act creates a system modeled off the process available to victims of sexual assault, which would allow serve members who experience mental health issues to receive care without notifying their command or opening an official investigation of any allegations. The Casertas believe the change would help reduce the perceived barriers of self-reporting for mental health evaluations and ease service members' path to care. "While we can't get Brandon back, we can honor his legacy, honor his service and prevent tragic losses like these from ever happening again," Kelly said.

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | June 16, 2021 ++]

Vet Homelessness

Update 107: **S.2172** | **Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness**

A new bill in the Senate would make permanent the increased assistance given during the coronavirus pandemic to help combat the issue of veteran homelessness. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, on 22 JUN introduced the **Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2021**. The committee discussed the measure during a hearing 23 JUN. The bill would extend indefinitely the extra resources and flexibility given during the pandemic to the federal, state and local agencies that provide services to homeless veterans. Advocates have been warning

in recent weeks that the expiration of these resources could create an “unprecedented wave” of veteran homelessness.



“This bill makes permanent the COVID-related safety nets that have become essential to providing the most effective care and support to unhoused veterans and their families,” Tester said. “These requests are not wish list items but concrete changes advocates have said are absolutely necessary in the fight to effectively end veteran homelessness.” Tester criticized the Department of Veterans Affairs on for not offering its opinion on the bill during the hearing. The department has had a copy of the measure since 24 MAY but hasn’t provided any feedback, he said. “We want to help you,” Tester said. “We can’t help you if we don’t know what the hell you’re thinking.” When asked about the lack of input, Mark Upton, VA’s acting assistant undersecretary for health, committed to delivering that feedback sometime soon. “I know we are actively working on that,” Upton said.

Kathryn Monet, president of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, applauded the bill during Wednesday’s hearing. Her organization coordinates efforts to end veteran homelessness with Congress, the White House and the agencies that provide support to veterans. Monet has warned in recent weeks that, as emergency declarations for the coronavirus pandemic are lifted, the extra support for homeless veterans will also go away. “The impacts will be dire on veterans,” Monet said.

One of the actions Congress took at the start of the pandemic was to increase the maximum rates for the VA’s grant and per diem program. The money went to shelters, which get paid for filling beds but were unable to house as many veterans in order to abide by social distancing guidelines. Monet said that the higher rates allowed shelters to improve their facilities, space out veterans and provide better care. She asked that Congress make the rate increase permanent. Under Tester’s bill, the rate would increase from a maximum of 115% to 200%. “The rate has not been enough in the past to provide the level of services veterans need,” Monet said. “We’ve been pushing facilities to space people out better, give veterans the dignity they need. They can’t do that at 115%.”

In addition, the bill aims to provide all veterans with case-management services, increase funding for veteran employment initiatives, expand public transportation benefits to homeless veterans and house aging veterans as they wait for placement in long-term care facilities. It also establishes a five-year grant for programs that help veterans with recovery from substance abuse. The total cost of the legislation remained unknown Wednesday.

[Source Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | June 23, 2021 ++]

Military Sexual Harassment/Assault

Update 10: **H.R.0000** | Vanessa Guillen Military Justice Improvement & Increasing Prevention



House lawmakers introduced a bill 23 JUN that combines two high-profile measures to combat military sexual assault and harassment. The new legislation would remove the decision to prosecute serious crimes in the military. Instead, the decision would fall to trained, independent military prosecutors. This would apply to non-military, felony-level crimes, such as murder, rape, domestic violence and sexual assault. “The time has come,” said Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., lead sponsor on the bill. “Today we have broad, bipartisan support to make a critical and fundamental change to the military justice system.”

The bill, titled **the Vanessa Guillen Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act**, is being introduced as the House version of a bill by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). After nearly a decade of pushing for the change, Gillibrand’s Military Justice Improvement Act has been gaining momentum in the Senate. Gillibrand’s bill now has a filibuster-proof level of support from 66 senators, including 43 Democrats, 21 Republicans and two independents. However, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Jim Inhofe, (R-OK) respectively the chair and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, have blocked the legislation from advancing.

In a split with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 22 JUN Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin threw his support behind removing decision-making from military commanders over prosecution in cases of sexual assault. “It’s historic to have the first secretary of defense to agree with us that sexual assault should be taken out of the chain of command,” Gillibrand said. “That is a monumental step forward. It’s validation that our approach is the right approach.”

Gillibrand’s bill, though, goes beyond sexual assault and would send cases of all non-military, serious crimes to independent prosecutors. In letters last month, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that the bill went too far. “It is my professional opinion that removing commanders from prosecution decisions, process and accountability may have an adverse effect on readiness, mission accomplishment, good order and discipline, justice, unit cohesion, trust and loyalty between commanders and those they lead,” Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley wrote.

The legislation introduced 23 JUN combines Gillibrand’s bill with the *I Am Vanessa Guillen Act (S.1116)*, a House bill that would change the reporting process for sexual harassment and assault in the military and allow service members who are victims to seek monetary damages from the Defense Department. It was named for Spc. Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old small arms repair soldier who was sexually harassed before she was killed by a fellow service member last year. Speier sponsored the I am

Vanessa Guillen Act and will now lead the new Vanessa Guillen Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act. Natalie Khawam, the attorney for the Guillen family, said she and the family supported the new measure, believing it could get passed through Congress quicker than the I Am Vanessa Guillen Act. "We're doing it this way because we have the votes. We've got the Senate votes and the House votes," Khawam said. "We're making sure this can now get passed immediately and codified into law."

The new bill does not include the part of the Guillen Act that would allow service members to file claims against the Defense Department. Khawam said she wanted that language added as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which sets the Defense Department's annual budget and includes a slew of policies for the Pentagon. It's one of the only major bills that passes reliably through Congress each year, making it a desirable target for lawmakers to attach other measures. "There's no teeth in the law if there's no accountability," Khawam said. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | June 23, 2021 ++]

Pending Vet Legislation Update

Jun 15 thru 30, 2021

Senate

On June 23, 2021 at 3:00 PM in the Russell Senate Office Building, Room SR-418, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will be held a hearing on pending legislation. Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Moran presided Pending legislation under consideration include the following

- **S.372** Ensuring Quality Care for Our Veterans Act
- **S.539** A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the use of video cameras for patient safety and law enforcement at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **S.544** A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate one week each year as "Buddy Check Week" for the purpose of outreach and education concerning peer wellness checks for veterans, and for other purposes.
- **S.612** Improving Housing Outcomes for Veterans Act of 2021
- **S.613** PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act
- **S.727** CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act of 2021
- **S.796** Protecting Moms Who Served Act of 2021
- **S.887** VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act
- **S.951** PAWS Act of 2021
- **S.1040** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care from the Department of Veterans Affairs to include veterans of World War II.
- **S.1198** Solid Start Act of 2021
- **S.1220** United States Cadet Nurse Corps Service Recognition Act of 2021
- **S.1280** Veteran Families Health Services Act of 2021
- **S.1319** VA Quality Health Care Accountability and Transparency Act
- **S.1467** VA Medicinal Cannabis Research Act of 2021

- **S.1863** Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served Act
- **S.1875** Veterans' Emergency Care Claims Parity Act
- **S.1965** Planning for Aging Veterans Act
- **S.2041** Department of Veterans Affairs Provider Accountability Act
- **S.2102** Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environments (SERVICE) Act
- **S.2172** Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2021

Check video of this hearing at <https://www.veterans.senate.gov/hearings/hearing-on-pending-legislation-6-23-2021>. (Note: Hearing starts at the 33:20 minute mark).

House

House Committee on Veterans Affairs

On June 24, 2021 at 2:00 PM ET, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a full Committee hybrid markup on the "Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021.". Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost presided. This meeting was livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook. At <https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Committees.aspx?Code=VR00> can be found all hearing documents on the Committee Repository. Check video of this hearing at <https://veterans.house.gov/events/markups>.

H.R. 239, the Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act. On 2 JUN, the House passed H.R. 239. This bill would provide women veterans access to the same no-cost contraceptive care as their non-veteran counterparts.

Markup of FY 2022 Military Construction & VA Subcommittee Appropriations Bill

On June 25, 2021 at 9:00am in 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 a hearing on this bill's markup was held by Subcommittees: Debbie Wasserman Schultz, presiding Chairwoman. Check video of this hearing at <https://appropriations.house.gov/subcommittees/military-construction-veterans-affairs-and-related-agencies-117th-congress>

[Source: VVA News Flash | June 23, 2021 ++]

Note: To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-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>.

*** Military ***



Programmable Digital Fiber

Sewn Into Uniforms Could Help Monitor Troops' Health

A programmable fiber that can sense, store and analyze data could be stitched into soldiers' uniforms in the future and be used to monitor their movements, vital signs and exposure to toxins, Army researchers say. "This groundbreaking research ... could revolutionize soldier uniforms," James Burgess, program manager of the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command, said in a statement released 14 JUN. "We could outfit our soldiers with uniforms that could generate power ... all of this could be done with very little increase in weight carried by the soldier."



The fiber with digital capabilities was developed by researchers at the Army's Institute for Soldier Nanotechnologies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with Army funding. The thin, flexible material can pass through a needle, be sewn into fabrics, and washed multiple times before it breaks down, the Army said. Sewing the fiber into clothing worn by soldiers could give Army commanders a better sense of the effects the environment on their troops. Wearables containing the fiber could be used to indicate a soldier's exposure to toxins, including on deployments where they have been in contact with contaminants from burn pits.

When it was sewn into the armpit of a shirt, the fiber collected 270 minutes of surface body temperature data from the person wearing the shirt and analyzed how the data corresponded to different physical activities, the statement said. The fiber was able to determine with 96% accuracy what activity the person wearing the shirt was taking part in, it said. The fiber also has the potential to alert soldiers in real-time to health changes like a respiratory decline, an irregular heartbeat or changes to heart rate data during training exercises, the Army said.

The fiber is currently controlled by a small external device. The next step will be to design a chip to serve as a microcontroller that can be connected within the fiber itself. "When we can do that, we can call it a fiber computer," MIT doctoral student Gabriel Loke, one of the authors of a study published in Nature Communications that looked at how the fiber was developed, said in the statement.

The U.S. Army established the MIT Institute for Nanotechnologies in 2002 to conduct interdisciplinary research to improve the protection, survivability and mission capabilities of soldiers and the platforms and systems that support them. In addition to the Army, the National Science Foundation, the MIT Sea Grant and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency supported the research to develop the smart fiber. [Source: Stars and Stripes | John Vandiver | June 15, 2021 ++]

Troop Vaccine Refusal Impact

Those Who Refused Anthrax Vaccine Paid a High Price



Soldiers with the Army's 101st Airborne fill out forms for vaccination and testing in February 2003 at Ft. Campbell, Ky. All 20,000 Fort Campbell soldiers received shots for anthrax, smallpox and other chemical and biological risks as the 101st prepared to deploy.

During the first eight years that the Pentagon ran the anthrax vaccination program, hundreds of troops refused the vaccine due to perceived health risks or religious concerns — and many of them paid dearly for that decision. The penalties ranged widely. Some kept on working, others received nonjudicial punishment (NJP), lost rank and pay, saw their careers ended or even faced brig time and dishonorable discharges. Since then, an unknown fraction of those who were punished have sought to have their records corrected, but only a few have had success. Now, even more than 20 years later, some of those cases remain pending before military record corrections boards.

Numbers are hard to pin down, as service record corrections boards have not comprehensively tracked appeals specifically related to the anthrax vaccine. In many cases, those appeals were denied. But more recently, at least two corrections requests — one in 2019 and the other in 2020 — were granted by the Navy, which awarded two Marine veterans some backpay, rank restoration, discharge upgrades and access to veterans benefits. Retired Marine Maj. Dale Saran, a former JAG officer, represented one sailor and two Marines who refused the vaccine on Okinawa in 2000.

Saran stayed involved with the issue. He authored the book [“United States v. Members of the Armed Forces: The Truth Behind the Department of Defense’s Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program,”](#) published in 2020. He also offered legal advice to attorneys with clients facing punishments for refusals. Saran’s clients and many others were often top performers, some early in their careers and others nearing retirement. But once they refused the vaccine, their commands sought to punish them. “The venom with which they went after people ... I just find that abhorrent,” Saran said. Those service members “were charged and threatened, people’s lives were destroyed.”

Today, military records corrections boards are unable to provide reliable data on the number of appeals involving refusal to get the anthrax shot. When Military Times recently asked about the anthrax cases, the Army, Navy and Air Force were only able to confirm two specific cases. That’s despite language in the 2001 defense spending bill in which Congress told the secretaries for each of the branches to establish a system for “tracking, recording and reporting separations of members of the armed forces” that result from a refusal to participate in the anthrax vaccine immunization program.”

Years ago, official Pentagon statements indicated that an estimated 350 servicemembers had refused the vaccine between 1998 and 2000. At least three dozen of them were court-martialed and hundreds left the service to avoid the vaccine, according to Pentagon statements in 2005. Also, at least another 149 troops were forced out of the service for vaccine refusal from 2000 to 2004. Those numbers did not include troops who refused but were allowed to leave the service without punishment or simply allowed to not receive the shot and suffered no repercussions.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Thomas Rempfer was a vocal critic of the vaccination program. He left the Connecticut Air National Guard as a captain in 1999 due to his own anthrax vaccine refusal but was able to continue his career in the Air Force Reserve. Rempfer and fellow Guard pilot Lt. Col. Russ Dingle spearheaded efforts, including congressional testimony and lawsuits, to bring a halt to mandatory vaccinations until several major problems with the program could be fixed. Dingle died of cancer in 2005, Rempfer continues to push for draft legislation — in Dingle’s name to honor the late officer’s role as the intellectual inspiration of their shared work — that would require the Pentagon to proactively correct the records of service members who were punished in any form for their anthrax vaccine refusal.

To that end, Rempfer has created a website, Hoping4Justice.org, that catalogs key documents and a timeline of events in the anthrax vaccination program and recent success by some service members to have their records corrected nearly two decades later. “There needs to be a well-advertised effort to let these former service members know there’s an opportunity to get their records corrected,” Rempfer told Military Times. Veterans have sought records corrections through their respective boards from the early 2000s through at least the early 2010s, according to court records. Once those were denied, some of those veterans then appealed to the federal civil courts.

In 2004, a court injunction halted the military’s mandatory vaccination program, **declaring the previous six years of vaccine administration to be illegal**. Yet when individual veterans appealed their cases in federal court, the judges mostly rejected those claims, siding with a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces that dismissed arguments using the 2004 injunction. Rempfer has written to each administration since President Barack Obama. He has also created draft legislation for Congress to enact that would push the services to remedy the problem. So far, neither have gained backing.

Senior Airman Jeffrey Bettendorf was loving life in the Air Force. He’d joined six years before and already planned to do a full 30 years. An aerospace ground equipment mechanic, he was stationed at Travis Air Force Base, California, in 1998 when his squadron heard they were going to take a new vaccine against anthrax. Bettendorf told Military Times that most of his fellow airmen were nonchalant about it, basically seeing it as “just another shot.” But he was curious, so he started researching online, where he found government reports, testimony and groups sharing materials about safety issues at the [vaccine’s manufacturing plant](#), along with possible linkages to Gulf War Syndrome.

He compiled two 3-inch binders full of printed materials and scheduled a meeting with his commander. The senior airman didn’t get far. The commander didn’t even look at the binders. The CO told him that if he didn’t take the shot he faced a reduction in rank, fines and extra duty until he did. “Then he sent me to a psychiatrist, saying if I’m going to refuse this vaccine, there’s got to be something wrong with me,” Bettendorf said. He received nonjudicial punishment. At the same time, some of his fellow airmen were reporting side effects after taking the shot. A few told him they wish they’d refused it, too, but feared the consequences.

Bettendorf was reduced to E-3 and discharged in 1999. For most of the next year it seemed like every day there was a news reporter at his house or on the phone wanting to tell his story. For a while, he followed developments with the program and what the military was doing, but eventually he had to step away. Over the next few years, he went to the Air Force three times to get his records corrected but didn't get anywhere. Bettendorf said he believes that after the 2004 injunction that stopped the mandatory vaccinations, the military should have stepped up. "As soon as they made that program voluntary they should have reached out to the military members affected and offered them their contracts back and let them back in," Bettendorf said.

Gladys George, president and CEO of Lenox Hill Hospital, speaks to the media about the inhalation anthrax death of Kathy T. Nguyen Oct. 31, 2001, in New York City. Soon after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, letters laced with anthrax began appearing in the U.S. mail. Five Americans were killed and 17 were sickened in what became the worst biological attack in U.S. history. (Mario Tama/Getty Images)

Gladys George, president and CEO of Lenox Hill Hospital, speaks to the media about the inhalation anthrax death of Kathy T. Nguyen Oct. 31, 2001, in New York City. Soon after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, letters laced with anthrax began appearing in the U.S. mail. Five Americans were killed and 17 were sickened in what became the worst biological attack in U.S. history. (Mario Tama/Getty Images)

James Muhammad had come to the Marine Corps a little later than many of his peers but had quickly made up for lost time. Muhammad enlisted in 1999 at age 24 and made sergeant in less than two years after being a top performer and graduating with honors from multiple programs. By late 2001, he'd submitted a package to become a commissioned officer and Marine Corps aviator. He'd gone on one deployment right after 9/11, was slated for another and eager for the chance, he told Military Times. He'd actually taken a flu shot a few months before he'd learned that the anthrax shot was coming. But in the interim he'd become aware of a religious edict against vaccines. A faithful Muslim, he faced a choice: Disobey his commanders' orders or violate his own religious convictions.

Until that time, the Corps had accommodated his religious beliefs, allowing time for him to conduct his daily prayers and fast during periods of observance. Muhammad assumed he'd receive a religious exemption from the vaccine requirement. Even if he didn't get the shot, he fully expected and wanted, to deploy with his unit. "I wasn't trying to make a political statement," Muhammad said recently. Serving in Alpha Company, 8th Communications Battalion, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, at the time, Muhammad told the command he was weighing whether or not he could take the shot and needed more time. But his commander said that Muhammad had already made his decision. So, instead of deploying, receiving a commission and his flying wings, the stellar sergeant was headed for court-martial. People he trusted and respected turned their backs on him. "This decision broke a lot of relationships," he said.

"Through the court-martial process and through the inquiry process the story got so confused and twisted that people began to say things like, 'he's afraid of going to war,' 'he's a conscientious objector,' 'he's malingering,' and all kinds of other character assassinations, none of which were true," Muhammad said. He faced court-martial in April 2003. He'd been told through his military lawyer that the command could seek the death penalty and that he wouldn't have much room to state his case based on medical or religious concerns. The only issue would be whether he'd disobeyed an order. Muhammad decided to enter a guilty plea, with only a layman's understanding of the complex legal issues at stake. He was busted down to private and served part of a 60-day sentence in the brig before returning to his unit briefly and then being

put on “appellate leave,” basically an unpaid status awaiting results of other court cases that could affect the decision in his case.

Any jobs he had in Jacksonville, N.C. were not satisfying, because he was there to be a Marine. As he waited, his house was foreclosed, he had to sell a car and he moved back to the Washington, D.C., area. When he read that a federal judge ordering a stop to the mandatory vaccine program, he thought it could change everything. “I checked my mailbox every day waiting for a letter or phone call to come back to active duty, that they realized they made a mistake and they wanted to make it right,” he said. “But that letter or phone call never came.” He called the Washington, D.C., Navy Yard where he was “assigned” while on appellate status. They had no record of him. It wasn’t until a year later that he showed up on their roster.

Muhammad appealed his case but the lawyer who represented him didn’t even mention the judge’s order to stop the program. He only learned that later from reading the court’s opinion. A July 2018 memorandum that directed the Pentagon to review corrections requests involving inequity or injustice seemed to directly relate to Muhammad’s case and was appended to his request for review. In late 2019 he got his first good news in a long time. The board agreed and redacted the brig time from his DD-214, restored his rank and backdated benefits. Marine Corps headquarters issued him a second Good Conduct Medal and finalized his honorable discharge.

In the interim, Muhammad made a good life with his wife, rearing children, starting a business, becoming a civilian pilot and holding several positions in community-based organizations. But it took years for him to share with peers that he’d been in the military or to reconnect with fellow veterans. It was just too painful. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Todd South | June 17, 2021 ++]

Military Fraud & Abuse

Update 03: Scammers Target U.S. Sailors in \$4.8M Life Insurance Scheme

OAKLAND, Calif. — Commissioner Ricardo Lara, California Attorney General Rob Bonta and San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan on 14 JUN announced that **Paul Flanagan**, 56, was sentenced to 357 days of house arrest and ordered to pay \$500,000 for defrauding more than 4,000 U.S. Navy sailors in San Diego County through a tax and insurance scheme. Another defendant, **Ranjit Kalsi**, 54, was previously sentenced and ordered to pay \$500,000 in restitution. The scheme, perpetrated through a company called *Go Navy Tax Services*, sold expensive and unnecessary insurance products to service members at a substantial commission for the defendants.

“Our military service members and their families contribute so much to our nation – yet there are people without honor who want to cheat our American heroes. We hope that today’s announcement helps right the wrongs that were committed by the malicious scammers of Go Navy Tax,” said Attorney General Bonta. “The California Department of Justice will continue to investigate and prosecute schemes that hurt our men and women in uniform. We protect our military families as we applaud them for protecting our country.”

Defendant Flanagan was sentenced to 357 days of house arrest and given credit for 8 days served in custody after pleading guilty to one felony count of conspiracy to commit insurance twisting, or making

misrepresentations to consumers to induce them to take out insurance policies. Defendant Kalsi previously pleaded guilty to one count of identity theft, a felony, and was sentenced on February 10, 2021, to serve 358 days in custody and pay \$500,000 in restitution. A third defendant, **Gregory Martin**, pleaded guilty to one count of grand theft, a misdemeanor, on December 7, 2020, and received credit for 517 days served in custody.

The defendants operated Go Navy Tax Services out of a trailer located just outside of the front gate of Naval Base San Diego that advertised free income tax preparation services for military members. The trailer was adorned with military flags intended to deceive service members into thinking the business was affiliated with the U.S. military. The defendants lured service members into the trailer under the pretext of free tax preparation services. The defendants then persuaded service members to purchase retirement accounts, but rather than opening those accounts, the defendants used those service members' personal information to open unnecessary life insurance policies without their knowledge or consent. The defendants earned over \$2 million in commissions related to sales of nearly 5,000 applications for life insurance policies and annuity contracts.

Defrauded sailors are to receive \$1 Million in restitution. If you believe you or someone you know has been the victim of fraud, you can report it at <https://oag.ca.gov/consumers>. [Source: CA Dept of Insurance | Richard Sisk | May 30, 2021++]

Military Pay Raise 2022

House Panel Backs 2.7 Percent for Troops



House appropriators on 29 JUN backed a 2.7 percent pay raise for all troops next year and agreed to White House plans to trim military end strength under their defense spending plan for fiscal 2022. The \$706 billion proposal (which does not include military construction funds) is still months away from becoming law, but shows solidarity between House Democratic leaders and the administration on funding levels for fiscal 2022. It's also a strong indication that despite the potential fights ahead, the military pay raise is unlikely to be a sticking point in the funding debates.

The 2.7 percent raise would be slightly below the 3.0 percent pay raise troops saw this past January, but is in line with the federal formula estimating the growth in private sector wages next year. Troops' pay raises are all but guaranteed each year, but don't always keep up with inflation and civilian pay boosts. However, lawmakers for the past five years have opted to stick with the federal formula for pay raises and not make any changes, citing the need to keep military salaries competitive with private-sector pay. For junior enlisted troops, a 2.7 percent raise in 2022 would amount to roughly \$790 more a year in pay over

2021 levels. For senior enlisted and junior officers, that hike equals about \$1,400 more. An O-4 with 12 years service would see more than \$2,600 extra next year under a 2.7 percent increase.

The House Appropriations spending plan would fund a military end strength of nearly 1.35 million troops, about 2,000 below current levels. That’s also in line with the White House budget request outlined in May. Democratic leaders on the appropriations committee’s defense panel added about \$55 million in new funds for sexual assault and prevention efforts within the Defense Department, almost 14 percent above the White House request. In a statement, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., said the money would combat “a serious and pervasive problem that for too long has been overlooked by the Pentagon.” The proposal also includes \$1 million for the renaming of military facilities and locations which honor leaders of the Confederacy.

Combined with about \$11 billion in military construction funds included in a separate appropriations bill released last week, the total Defense Department spending proposed by the House panel roughly matches the \$716 billion proposed by the White House for next fiscal year. In a press event Tuesday morning, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA) said he expects that spending total to be a “challenge” for lawmakers in coming months. Conservatives in Congress have argued that number is far too low to match current threats worldwide, and are pushing for a total defense spending plan which tops \$750 billion. Meanwhile, some progressive members of the Democratic Party are pushing for further cuts, arguing the department has seen too-late boosts in recent years.

The House Appropriations’ subcommittee on defense is expected to debate the proposal in a closed-door meeting 30 JUN. The full committee is expected to advance some version of the measure later this month. Senate appropriators have not said when they will offer their first draft of the defense budget. A final agreement between the chambers is not expected to be released until late this year. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | June 29, 2021 ++]

Basic Training

No. 1 Recruit Concern before Heading To Basic Training



A recent scan of online forums revealed that new recruits beginning their military career have one very big concern: number two. “What is it like pissing/s**tting in boot camp?” asked one Redditor. His concerns were not isolated. Scores of posters on Reddit, Quora and Twitter have taken to social media and message boards to ask about the service-by-service basic training bathroom situations. Offered solutions to the deuce dropping conundrum run the gamut, with some of the experiences of past recruits proving rather harrowing.

The most consistent advice, it seems, is to go after dark. “Poop at night. It’s most peaceful then,” wrote user DogofWar. “Technically you can always ask to go to the head if you absolutely can’t hold it. Usually you’ll get f***ed with but they’ll still let you go.” A few others echoed that sentiment. “You’ll be awake prior to 0400 due to all kinds of noises at night,” user TacticalTaco01 wrote. “Use this time to use the head, even if you don’t think you have to go, go ahead and flush yourself out. It really sucks holding it in while getting f***ed with in the morning on line.” Another user found his latrine time downright enjoyable. “I used to s**t every evening after mail call during your one hour ‘free time,’” wrote CoffeeJoeJava. “Sitting on the can reading letters!”

However, not everyone experiences the same luck when pursuing floodgate release. “Had one guy in my platoon piss himself on the firing line during weapons qual because he waited 2 hours for his turn to shoot and didn’t want to lose his spot,” wrote user TheLaughingMan21. “He decided peeing himself was the correct answer.” Most accidents, it appears, are self-inflicted like the above. In essence, if you have to go, sound off. You might be given a hard time about it, but the alternative is ... much more messy? “While in basic, we were on a 10-mile ruck and one of the guys in my platoon needed to take a s**t,” wrote user gte401e. “Didn’t say anything on the bus back to the barracks or when we were dropping off the weapons. Afterwards, he told our [drill sergeant] and immediately he yelled for me to accompany this guy to the barracks. I had no idea what was going on until we were inside and took a whiff. That smell coulda woke up the dead.”

Despite the fears of new recruits, one Quora user said that drill instructors are generally reasonable — that is, unless you break a rule. “The only reason, I see, for a drill instructor not to allow you to go to the bathroom is because the last time you got permission to go to the bathroom, you came back late, and broke the fundamental bathroom rules of your beloved drill instructor,” wrote Ben Kolber. So, in the words of Tormund Giantsbane, “Happy s**tting.” [Source: MilitaryTimes Observation Post | Sarah Sicard | June 16, 2021 ++]

USMC Tattoo Policy

Reenlistment Photo Requirement Change



The Marine Corps has done away with a tattoo policy rule requiring its members to submit 360-degree photos of themselves when seeking enlisted retention, or special assignments like embassy guard or drill instructor. In an administrative memo last week, the service ended the nearly 7-year-old requirement for the photos, which were used to validate compliance with the service's tattoo regulations, the strictest in the Defense Department. Marines have complained for years that the tattoo policy hurts careers and retention

and may prevent otherwise qualified recruits from joining the service. Other Marines have lamented all the body art they won't get — such as “sleeves” — so long as the rules remain in effect.

As the Corps drew down from 202,000 to 182,000 active-duty personnel and reduced its involvement in Afghanistan, officials in 2014 began to focus more on issues of appearance and grooming standards. The service's tattoo rules were relaxed somewhat in 2016 to “balance the personal desires of Marines with high standards of professional military appearance and heritage,” the Corps said at the time. But after years at war, the still-rigid tattoo order was still seen as a “career killer” for some combat veterans who said they weren't allowed to reenlist, Marine Corps Times reported in 2017.

Marines under current regulations aren't allowed to get sleeve tattoos, such as the ones pictured (above right) on this Camp Lejeune, N.C.-based Marine back in 2007. Marines can have “an unlimited number of tattoos” that can't be seen when they're wearing a physical training uniform. But they are prohibited from designs on the head, neck, mouth, wrist, knee, elbow or hand, and there are limits on the size and number of tattoos visible when in PT gear. The new photo policy does not change those standards. And it requires Marines with visible tattoos to provide a close-up photo of each, aligned with a measuring device to show that each one isn't too close to a knee or elbow, as required by the tattoo regulation. But Marines whose tattoos aren't visible in the T-shirt and shorts of the PT uniform no longer have to submit photos or sketches of their hidden tattoos.

Marine officials over the years have justified the service's stringent body art rules as just one of many ways the Corps sets itself apart. Still, many Marines have bridled at the restrictions. Last year, an infantry corporal started a Change.org petition seeking a modification to allow sleeve tattoos. It received over 76,000 signatures. The sleeve ban has also been a source of disagreement at the highest levels. Former Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, who implemented the 2016 policy, told Military.com two years later that his wife thought he was “stupid” for prohibiting the full-arm designs. “I just don't want them being Marines,” Neller told her in response, he said. The Marine Corps did not immediately respond to an inquiry about the reason for the change to the photo requirement. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Chad Garland | June 28, 2021 ++]

Drone Gun Tactical Can Pluck UAVs Right Out Of the Sky



The ever-increasing implementation of unmanned aerial vehicles, drones, in modern warfare has yielded an on-the-ground race to develop technologies necessary to knock them out of the sky. One Australian developer is hoping to be a staple in that market. Enter DroneGun Tactical by DroneShield, a remarkably

large (56 inches long), yet lightweight (16 pounds), weapon that looks more akin to the offspring of an FN SCAR and an E-tool on steroids. Running off dual rechargeable lithium batteries that can operate in excess of two hours, DroneGun deploys non-kinetic jamming technology to knock out a drone's connection — and its flight — from more than two kilometers out, Asia Times first reported.

But it does one better than simply destroy UAVs entirely. According to its maker, DroneGun, which comes with rifle-inspired rails for scope-mounting, has the satellite navigation jamming capability to commandeer the drone and force an immediate landing, allowing for further investigation of enemy tech. Once the UAV's operation is interrupted, the video feed on the drone operator's end will immediately cease. Depending on the jamming frequency, one programmed via a simple dial on the rear of the weapon, DroneGun can also simply send the UAV right back where it came from. All the user has to do is remain

CONUS-based use, however, will have to wait, given that DroneGun Tactical “has not been authorized as required by the United States Federal Communications Commission,” the company asserts. “This device is not, and may not be, offered for sale or lease ... in the United States, other than to the United States government ... until such authorization is obtained.” When — or if — we might see it in action remains a mystery. Check out the DroneGun Tactical video at <https://youtu.be/ADW63thj-Pg>. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | June 23, 2021 ++]

Coffee Drinkers

Update 04: Goodbye? Service Members Might Soon Be Fueled By a Jolt to the Brain



Joe, mud, java. There are many names for the steamy brown sludge we robotically pour into mugs adorned with clever caffeine-centric quotes. But now, thanks to a study performed by the Air Force Research Lab, coffee will perhaps someday be replaced ... with a jolt to the brain. Forty active-duty military personnel from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base participated in the study, one funded by NASA, in an attempt to analyze the efficacy of Transcutaneous Cervical Vagus Nerve Stimulation in treating migraines and the impacts of sleeplessness.

“One possible way to enhance alertness could be by (non-invasively) stimulating an area of the brain called the locus coeruleus,” the study said. To do so, the study looked at how a noninvasive electrical neuromodulation device, which has also been used to treat drug-resistant epilepsy and depression, could influence the military's exhaustion-fueled abuse of energy drinks and coffee. “Fatigue is a serious and unavoidable problem for many professions such as medicine, transportation, and the military,” reads the study. “In general, it is a serious public health risk. Fatigue induced by sustained wakefulness can cause

slower reaction times, a reduced ability to multitask, and increases in lapses of attention that can lead to costly, even deadly mistakes.”

And who has to deal with “sustained wakefulness” more than service members? “We delivered cervical transcutaneous vagal nerve stimulation (ctVNS) via a handheld neurostimulation device originally approved to treat cluster headaches and migraines,” the study’s authors wrote. “This device passes a noninvasive electrical current pulsed at 25 Hz through the skin to the nerve via two electrodes placed over the neck.” Additionally, the treatment “only takes 6 min per stimulation dose,” the study reads, which sounds much more simple than all the rigmarole associated with making a cup of coffee. (Although it probably doesn’t taste as good.)

The therapy, the study concluded, is said to “increase wakefulness, attention, and arousal and improve mood during periods of sleep-deprivation-induced stress.” Perhaps the reign of Rip Its (Energy Drink) will soon come to an end. [Source: MilitaryTimes Observation Post | Sarah Sicard | June 25, 2021 ++]

Cargo Rocket Delivery

Update 01: Military Wants Anywhere in the World in Under an Hour



The U.S. Air Force wants to test whether it's possible to move hundreds of tons of military equipment to forward operating locations and bases around the world using reusable rockets instead of mobility aircraft. In early JUN, the service announced that "Rocket Cargo" will be the fourth experiment under its Vanguard program, which examines how new technologies and commercial capabilities can be applied to its missions. The service is asking lawmakers for \$47.9 million in its 2022 budget request to develop the technology and test "whether it can deliver cargo anywhere on the Earth in less than one hour," according to budget documents. "We decided it's time to make an investment and see if this turns into an operational capability," Greg Spanjers, Rocket Cargo program manager at the Air Force Research Laboratory, said during a briefing with reporters Friday.

While the lab typically oversees the science and technology elements of Vanguard programs, the U.S. Space Force will take the lead on Rocket Cargo, a first for the fledgling service. The idea of using rockets for cargo delivery is not new. Last year, U.S. Transportation Command, or TRANSCOM, and aerospace company SpaceX began looking at the project. And in 2018, Gen. Carlton D. Everhart II, then head of Air Mobility Command, or AMC, laid out his vision for the command's future priorities, including rocket

logistics delivery. "About five years ago, when we brought this [idea] onboard, honestly, a lot of people looked at me and went, 'Are you nuts?'" Everhart said in an interview 7 JUN. Military.com caught up with the retired general on the recent developments.

"It's a game changer," Everhart said, "and I think it opens up a huge amount of avenues for logistics and new logistics systems, which further opens up avenues for jobs and the economy. "It also is a game changer in the fact that we can do point-to-point cargo rapidly, which gets inside the [decision-making process] of our enemy, which really opens up new avenues for strategy," he added. Spanjers on 4 JUN agreed there was skepticism about Everhart's initial proposal years ago. "I was, frankly, one of the scoffers at the time because we've looked at this for many, many decades, and it's never made sense," he said, adding that it's different this time.

Some key findings have changed, including upper limits on how many tons of cargo a rocket can carry. To start, it should be roughly the same as a C-17 Globemaster III, Spanjers said. "The cost per pound to transport it decreases as the rockets get larger," he said. "We also have multiple companies that are using their own money to develop various aspects of reentry systems that allows you to get the global reach to return the payload anywhere on the planet." Private industry tackling the issue gives the services leverage, said Todd Harrison, director of the Aerospace Security Project at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

The private sector has been working on the technology to make rocket resupply feasible for years, with "SpaceX arguably at the forefront with its Starship and Super Heavy family of vehicles," Harrison said in an email Monday. "Blue Origin is also in the mix. "Suborbital cargo and passenger flights are likely to become a reality within this decade, so I wouldn't discount the idea [of rocket resupply]," he said. "If it is a fully reusable system that refuels before flying back, then it will need a fair amount of infrastructure on both ends. But if it is a capsule that flies out and may be considered expendable, then you could image 'space drops' of cargo into forward locations on unprepared terrain." He added, "It would still be a niche capability because of the price per pound, but it could be worth it under certain situations."

The Rocket Cargo program will study how the military can safely land a rocket "near personnel and structures, engineer a rocket cargo bay and logistics for rapid loading and unloading, and air-drop cargo from the rocket after reentry in order to service locations where a rocket or aircraft cannot possibly land," the Air Force said in a release. The research lab also is looking at ways "to rapidly measure high-altitude weather, which is a key aspect of the launch," Spanjers said. Rocket resupply potentially could be used for disaster relief and humanitarian or nontraditional missions in remote areas, easing the burden on TRANSCOM and AMC units, officials said.

The Air Force's Space and Missiles Systems Center, or SMC, will be responsible for transitioning the Vanguard to a Space Force program of record, said Brig. Gen. Jason Cothorn, vice commander and primary executive officer for the Space Enterprise Corps at SMC. The organization would treat rocket resupply similarly to the way it oversees space launch activities today, Cothorn said during Friday's briefing. As the Pentagon pivots to the Pacific, rocket resupply would be useful in the vast expanses of that region, Everhart said. As noted by Popular Mechanics, it takes a C-17 cargo aircraft 12 hours to make the trip from California to Okinawa, Japan; a rocket could do it in 30 minutes. "That is the gator next to the boat, if you will," he said, referring to the region to watch.

Everhart predicts there will be further applications for the technology. "Could you preposition cargo in space?" he mused. "Could you bring it down and place it where you want it to? I mean, there's a whole lot of branches and sequels to this thing. "I think any region would benefit with it," including the U.S., Everhart added. [Source: Military.com | Oriana Pawlyk | June 9, 2021 ++]

Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang

‘Sub’ thru ‘Tacking On’

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

Sub - (RN) Pay advance, loan.

Suck and Blow Sailor – Airedale. "Suck and Blow" also refers to jet aircraft, for obvious reasons. Early jets were called "blow jobs."

Suck Rubber - To use an EAB mask.

SURTASS – SURveillance Towed Array Sonar System.

Swab – (1) Sailor. (2) Mop.

'Swain - (RN) Ship's Coxswain. Similar to the COB in the US Navy.

Sweat – To worry about something or to be overly conscientious, or one who worries excessively.

Sweat Grenade - Someone whose sweat pumps are always running at full speed. An excitable person, or one who takes humorous situations too seriously.

Sweet - Good, or functional. "Homeplate, I have sweet lock on your gadget (TACAN)."

Swinging Dick - Men (or personnel), as in "I want every swingin' dick in Deck Division working on the problem!"

Swinging the Lead - (RCN) To work in a lazy manner. "OS Bloggins has BIRDS for swinging the lead."

SWO – Surface Warfare Officer.

SWOS – Surface Warfare Officer School.

TACAN – TACTical Air Navigation. A radio navaid (navigational aid) which provides bearing and distance data to the aircraft. Slang term is ‘gadget.’ Tack - (1) A piece of rope (line) used as a blank in a signal flag

hoist, used for punctuation or to set aside a part of the message. (2) A punctuation mark in a written or voice message, written as a dash.

Tacking On - "Tacking on the crow" refers to the practice of punching the arm of a newly-promoted Petty Officer, a practice now in disfavor due to past abuses. See CROW. May have originated in the tradition of having one's shipmates each take a stitch in attaching a new crow.

[Source: <http://hazegray.org/faq/slang1.htm> | June 30, 2021 ++]

* Military History *



Pusan Perimeter

The Early Days of the Korean War

On June 25, 1950, North Korea decided to take advantage of the post-World War II drawdown of American forces in the Pacific region. With the strongest American presence being all the way in Japan, the Communists sent 89,000 troops in six columns across the 38th parallel, the postwar border between North and South Korea. Caught completely by surprise, 38,000 South Korean defenders were neutralized almost immediately. Pockets of resistance were crushed in the initial North Korean advance. North Korean troops almost pushed the U.S. and South Korea into the Sea of Japan. Those defenders fell back into a 140-mile battle line around the port city of Pusan (now Busan) at the southeastern tip of the peninsula. The U.S. Army's 24th Infantry Division was immediately ordered from Japan to Korea to help stop the bleeding, but they were still outnumbered.

As North Korea's Korean People's Army (KPA) advanced, allied resistance toughened, but it would not be enough to stop the KPA completely. For six weeks, the Americans and South Koreans held out until reinforcements could be brought en masse. However, the increasing resistance bought the allies time to disrupt the North Korean movement and took a heavy toll on the KPA's numbers. It cost the Communists, 58,000 men to push the allies to Pusan. They would have to use untrained conscripts and green soldiers to continue, which would prove critical in defense of Pusan's 140-mile front. The United Nations also voted to intervene in Korea, proving pivotal in pushing the North Koreans back. With the Pusan Perimeter in place, the allies fought the Communists back as they waited for help from abroad.

During this time, the North Koreans didn't help themselves much. Their own supply lines were stretched thin with their quick advance across the peninsula. To recoup the loss in manpower, it took to push the defenders to Pusan; they raised 13 infantry divisions of inexperienced troops to face a firm allied defensive line. By July 1950, the Republic of Korea (the South Koreans, also known as ROKs) had taken some 70,000 casualties. At the line, 70,000 KPA soldiers and 40 Soviet-built T-34 tanks faced down an estimated 47,000 American ground troops and another 45,000 ROK soldiers.

But the UN forces had complete control of the seas around the peninsula and complete air superiority. Ships from the Royal Navy and British Commonwealth countries provided naval support. The Pusan Perimeter itself was bounded on either side by large bodies of water, with the Sea of Japan to the east and the Naktong River to the west. Punch through the line required the KPA to traverse difficult mountainous terrain in the thick summer weather. There would be no more retreat for the United Nations forces. In August 1950, the North Koreans advanced on the Pusan Perimeter in four separate locations; Masan and Naktong in the south, Taegu in the north, and Kyongju in the east.

- At Masan, Task Force Kean met the KPA in three days of heavy fighting and managed to capture Chondong-ni, but a Communist counterattack with T-34 tanks wiped out American artillery units in the area. Marine Corps tanks responded in force, but the Americans were forced to withdraw to Masan, giving up all the ground they'd retaken.
- In Naktong, the Communists managed to cross the Naktong River and advance between the American lines. This attack caught the U.S. forces by surprise, and the KPA made some quick initial gains. American forces pushed them back across the river within seven days. The North Koreans retreated in such a hurry; they left behind their artillery, which the Americans quickly turned on them.
- Around P'ohang-dong, Taegu, and elsewhere, the fighting raged in a similar fashion. American planners failed to anticipate the North Koreans' ability to cross rivers effectively and were often caught unprepared for the KPA advance. But even where the Communists had the superiority in numbers, they only had 70,000 troops along the entire perimeter.

The North Koreans made more than a half-dozen river crossings to penetrate the Pusan Perimeter but were repelled, scattered, or annihilated within days - and sometimes hours - of the allies' response. Many times, UN naval bombardment and aerial support were the critical factors in pushing back the KPA advance. Even in areas where North Korea massed its most experienced and well-supplied troops, they were unable to face down a force of U.S. Army and ROK soldiers and the United States Marines supplied by air and supported by naval guns and aerial bombing.

By the end of August, the Communist forces were in desperate need of supplies. The U.S. and UN air forces were wreaking havoc on transportation hubs and other military centers in their rear, and UN forces were massing all along the Pusan Perimeter. Moreover, they had taken tank losses in numbers they could not afford. Its last-ditch effort to push the Americans into the sea came after dark on August 31st and in the early morning hours of the next day to negate UN naval and air supremacy. A total of 13 divisions pushed nearly simultaneously at five points along the fighting line, in what the North called "The Great Naktong Offensive."

Once again, the UN forces were caught by surprise, believing that North Korea no longer had the ability to mount such an offensive. From 1 to 8 SEP, the KPA forced the United Nations troops to desperately defend the perimeter. The line was stretched thin and mobile reserves had to be moved all along the lines to control the incoming invaders' ebb and flow. The Communist offensive managed to break through the line but never effectively broke out in any single area. It forced the 8th Army headquarters in Taegu to fall back to Pusan, and it forced the Army to form another fallback position. By the 8th of September, however, it was apparent the Pusan Perimeter would hold.

On 15 SEP, Gen. Douglas MacArthur landed 40,000 allied infantry far behind the perimeter at the port city of Inchon. With their supply lines decimated, amasses a group of fresh troops behind the perimeter,

and now 40,000 UN troops in their rear, the North Korean People's Army fell apart. The remaining North Korean troops hightailed it from Pusan to the 38th parallel, being chased by UN forces along the way. [Source: Together We Served | June 2021 ++]

WWII Normandy Invasion

Update 02: Did a Scottish Soldier Really Play Bagpipes There?



On June 6, 1944, the Allied forces launched Operation Overlord, the largest and most complex amphibious landing in history until that point. Invading Hitler's Fortress Europe was no small matter, even with all the preparations and forethought Allied planners made in advance of the landings. In the years and decades that followed, D-Day became one of the most thoroughly studied and documented events of World War II. Still, it seems like more and more personal stories, fascinating accounts, and even urban legends from the invasion emerge every day.

Only those who were there can really know what it was like to hit the beach that day. But given recollections from veterans, photos and film reel taken that day, and Steven Spielberg's realistic depiction of the event in the 1998 film "Saving Private Ryan," we have a pretty good idea of what it looked like. So it's all the more shocking to hear the legend of the Scottish soldier who walked up and down Sword Beach playing the bagpipes - and survived. The truth is that it really happened. As the sounds of artillery exploded around them, as bullets whizzed by and the general din of combat echoed all around him, Private Bill Millin of the British 1st Special Service Brigade filled the air with the sounds of his bagpipes.

Millin landed on Sword Beach at 0820 local time and waded to shore as his fellow commandos fell to the heavy machine-gun fire from the defenders' many pillboxes. The 21-year-old private, wearing a ceremonial dagger and his father's World War I-era kilt, pulled out his pipes while he was still in waist-deep water. He serenaded an assault force made up of British troops, along with Free French Forces, Polish and Norwegian troops, with a stirring rendition of Hielan' Laddie, a regimental march but also a popular Scottish folk song. The private wasn't crazy or eccentric; he was acting on orders. They were illegal orders, but those were his orders nonetheless.

Bagpipers being used in combat had been banned during World War II, as the pipers used in World War I suffered an astronomically high casualty rate. They made themselves easy targets in the trenches of the First World War, with the sound giving away their positions. Millin's commanding officer was Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser, Chief of the Clan Fraser and the 15th Lord Lovat. Knowing Pvt. Millin had been a bagpiper since the age of 12 and was in his outfit; Fraser appointed the young man as his personal piper. He ordered

Millin to play the pipes for landing forces. When he pointed out that bagpipers were forbidden by British Army regulations, Fraser wrote off the regs, telling Millin, "Ah, but that's the English War Office. You and I are both Scottish, and that doesn't apply."

For the troops in the landing craft, the bagpiper's music was what we would call a "Force Multiplier" these days. Morale among the men was lifted along with their spirits, and for Millin, it allowed him to concentrate on something other than the seasickness and death that swirled around him on the beach. As Millin played, bullets seemed to go right around him, his fellow troops waved him on, and the legend of the "Mad Piper of Normandy" was born. It was those bagpipes that likely saved his life. An estimated 4,400 Allied troops fell on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, but Millin walked away physically unharmed. Pvt. Millin continued to play the pipes as the combined force took the beach and began to move inland, stopping only a handful of times.

As his unit moved, they were decimated by German sniper fire. When asked why they didn't target the piper after the battle, German snipers said they didn't shoot him because they thought he was either insane or an idiot. He played throughout the day on June 6, as his unit moved to link up with British paratroopers who had landed earlier in the evening. Millin continued to play into the following day but was forced to stop when shrapnel tore through the instrument. He would find another set of pipes later in the war and play those until they were damaged too. Millin lived to see the end of the war and donated both sets of pipes to museums. He lived until the age of 88. Complications from a stroke finally took down "the Mad Piper" in 2010. [Source: Together We Served | June 2021 ++]

Pinatubo

1991's Eruption Served as Shattering Finale to US Basing In Philippines



Eruption of Mount Pinatubo as seen from Clark Air Base, Philippines

Ash, smoke and mayhem descended onto Clark Air Base when nearby Mount Pinatubo erupted three decades ago in the Philippines. Such was the power of Pinatubo's eruption, ripping a hole in the earth, tearing a community apart and, ultimately, severing America's longtime ties with Clark. Within a year, the United States would abandon the base devastated by thick ash from the most powerful eruption of the 20th century that occurred in a populated area.

Anyone living at Clark had a clear vista of Pinatubo, only 14 miles west of the installation. But few had a better view of the simmering volcano than Lou Arthur after it began belching steam in early April 1991. Then an Air Force staff sergeant, Arthur worked in communications and handled mobile radios for the base. Volcanologists from the U.S. Geological Survey and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology arrived at Clark in April to begin monitoring with mountainside seismographs. Arthur was tasked with accompanying them in a Huey helicopter as they checked the equipment and flew over Pinatubo to monitor sulfur releases and other clues about a pending eruption.

“The level of confidence in the team to be able to predict when the thing would go off was, I would say, not very high,” Arthur recalled during a recent phone interview from his home in Denver. He recalled overhearing their conversations discussing “what type of equivocating language to use” in reporting to the general and his staff. For the airmen and their families living on Clark, an impending volcanic eruption was an added layer of unease. A growing faction of Filipinos opposed the U.S. military’s presence, a backlash that manifested in numerous killings of American service members in the years before the eruption, including three airmen in 1987. In 1990, an assassination squad with the Communist group New People’s Army killed two visiting airmen. The threat had led the military to restrict airmen’s off-base movement to a small area. Members of the Philippine senate were vociferous in their opposition of extending leases to the United States for Clark and nearby Naval Base Subic Bay, which were under negotiation as Pinatubo began percolating. Life there for both the active duty and the families could be tense.

Mark Hanneman, then an agent with the Air Force’s Office of Special Investigations, arrived at Clark in January 1989 as part of a counterterrorism team investigating the airmen homicides. He and Arthur played together in a rock band, and the latter showed up for practice in a panic one evening in early June 1991. Hanneman recalled: “He came in and he’s cussing and swearing and pops open a bottle of Mickey’s green-death wide bottle [malt liquor] we got cheap from the PX and says, ‘My family’s out of here Monday! We’re on the Freedom Flight out here. We’re all gonna die, blah, blah, blah.’ ”

Arthur remembered that evening well — and the events of the day that set him off. He had been in the chopper making passes over Pinatubo when he heard the volcanologists aboard chattering in amazement as they peered down into the seething maw. “They identified the fact that a spine — the word they used was a spine — was emerging up out of the fissure, where the majority of the pressure was being released,” Arthur said. “And the conversation that I could hear over the Dave Clark headsets in the helicopter was that this will eventually plug and that will then cause it to build pressure and blow its top.” With that knowledge seared in his mind, Arthur told his bandmates that night he believed Air Force leaders were “not being completely transparent” about the imminence of eruption and that everyone needed to prepare for a fast bug out — soon.

The appearance of that first magma dome inside Pinatubo set in motion the massive Operation Fiery Vigil on 10 JUN, when about 15,000 active-duty troops and civilians were evacuated to Naval Base Subic Bay. Hanneman recalled that he, his wife and two young daughters packed about a week’s worth of clothing, a camp stove, lanterns and a water jug. “And then we grabbed stuff that could not be replaced, like family photographs, some of our valuables, jewelry, that kind of stuff,” Hanneman said during a recent phone interview from his home in the Tri-Cities area in Washington. “We all proceeded in the long, long caravan down to Subic.” Arthur’s wife, daughter and son were evacuated from Clark, but he remained behind because of his essential role in communications. His wife and children, like thousands of others, were shuttled out of Subic Bay aboard a fleet of Navy ships, eventually flying back to the U.S. from Guam.

There was some expectation that everyone would have a chance to return to Clark at some point. Few ever did. The Hanneman family was taken into the home of a fellow agent at Subic, while most other Clark refugees were housed in the huge gym or other large buildings. On 12 JUN, Pinatubo “cleared its throat” with an immense 12-mile-high column of ash, Hanneman said, describing it as hitting him as a whoosh of pressure as he stood outside at Subic with other agents burning classified documents in 55-gallon drums.

Three days later, on 15 JUN, Pinatubo released its full fury, exploding with a force eight times greater than the Mount Saint Helens eruption a decade before. Arthur and the volcanologists were holed up in a command center just outside of Clark, where they had been roiled for several days by violent earthquakes “that made everything jump straight up and down” as they monitored the seismographs, he said. The seismograph “went off the scale and went flatline” as the eruption commenced that early Sunday morning, Arthur said. “I remember going outside and looking up, and it was as if Godzilla had opened up from the gates of hell,” he said. “The Godzilla noise still rings in my ears.

“The sky ultimately turned black — or very, very dark gray. The visual of seeing lightning happening — all different types and colors of lightning, green, orange, purple, red, chain-lightning sheets going on — while this thing is erupting.” As the eruption continued, Susan Kreifels, Stars and Stripes’ Philippines bureau chief who lived on the base, was just outside Clark gathering information for a story — beset with anxiety. Volcanologists had warned that the eruption could bring pyroclastic flows of lava, which can surge at speeds well over 100 mph as they follow streams and ravines. “So, if you happen to be in the path of one of these pyroclastic flows, you would be instantly incinerated,” she said.

Kreifels owned a car, but she routinely hired a local man, Virgilio, to drive her around because of the complexity and risks of navigating Philippine roads. She wanted Virgilio to drive her down to Manila that day to submit a news story, but she said he told her to go on by herself because he needed to return to his family at nearby Angeles City. She directed him instead to drive to his home, where they picked up his wife, children and his pregnant sister. It was with this packed car they drove their way out of the eruption zone. They had also picked up a few elderly women during the drive. Her driver inched through the dusk created by the mushroom cloud of ash that blotted out the sun until the car was stuck in a snarl of traffic on her way to Manila. As it ground to a halt in the congestion, a man walked up to Kreifels’ open window, plopped a crying baby into her arms and hastily disappeared.



“I didn't know what to do with that poor crying baby. “All I could think about was how scared people had to be to leave their baby with a stranger.” Virgilio advised the panicked journalist to give the infant to one of the elderly women they were driving to an emergency shelter outside the eruption zone. Three decades later, Kreifels said she still agonizes over whether baby and parents were ever reunited. Ultimately, Kreifels, escaped to Manila to write and file reports on the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. The eruption claimed the lives of more than 800 Filipinos, most of whom died from collapsed roofs. Within the first 24

hours of eruption, a typhoon swept through the northern Philippines, turning the ash into sticky, heavy mud. On Clark alone, more than 100 buildings collapsed from the weight, with 200 more seriously damaged by it. Volcanic mudflows, called lahars, flowed as deep as 18 feet onto base. One lahar scooped up and stacked new cars for sale at the Clark PX.

At the height of the eruption, the ash was so thick it blotted out the sun, throwing an area as far south as Manila into total darkness in midafternoon. Even Subic Bay, located about 25 miles southwest of the volcano, was not spared. The base and the adjacent city of Olongapo were covered by more than a foot of ash, and many buildings were damaged. Two people, including a 9-year-old American dependent daughter, were killed when a roof at the George Dewey High School there collapsed under the weight of the ash. Cleaning up and repairing the mess, the Pentagon concluded, was not feasible. The so-called Ash Warriors who stayed behind after the eruption, like Hanneman and Arthur, helped wrap up the affairs of a U.S. military presence that went back to the turn of the century.

Arthur described the event as “a defining point” for him and his family, a time of stress, uncertainty and creeping fear. “So 30 years down the line,” Arthur said, “it is still seared into my id — all of the events that I can remember and even just the general effect of everything that I can't remember.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Wyatt Olson | June 14, 2021 ++]

Bermuda Triangle

Mysterious Disappearance of Flight 19



At 1410 hours on 5 December 1945, a group of five TBM Avenger torpedo bombers took off from the U.S. Naval Air Station, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for a routine overwater navigational training flight. The flight leader in charge of the unit, dubbed “Flight 19,” was U.S. Navy Lieutenant Charles Carroll Taylor, who had amassed some 2,500 flying hours in addition to the completion of a combat tour in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Taylor and his crew of 13 airmen, some trainee pilots, were to execute “navigation problem No. 1,” described by the Naval History and Heritage Command as the following:

“(1) depart 26 degrees 03 minutes north and 80 degrees 07 minutes west and fly 091 degrees (T) distance 56 miles to Hen and Chickens Shoals to conduct low level bombing, after bombing continue on course 091 degrees (T) for 67 miles, (2) fly course 346 degrees (T) distance 73 miles and (3) fly course 241 degrees (T) distance 120 miles, then returning to U. S. Naval Air Station, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.” (NHHC)

The weather in the area to be covered by the training flight appeared fairly standard. Save for a few scattered showers, visibility, and wind speeds were considered to be normal for a training exercise of this nature. The beginning of the exercise was just that: normal. Taylor and his crew made it easily to Hen and Chickens Shoals, where bombs were dropped according to plan sometime around 1430. At 1500 hours, a recording shows that one of the student pilots in the flight requested and was permitted to drop his plane's last bomb.

Flight 19 turned and began to make its way toward the second leg of its exercise, and things took a turn for the strange. A radio message was intercepted from the flight at around 1600 hours, recording a conversation likely between Taylor and the pilot of one of the other planes. On the recording, one of the student pilots was asked by a crewman for a compass reading, to which the pilot replied, "I don't know where we are. We must have gotten lost after that last turn." On the same recording, Lieutenant Taylor can be heard saying, "Both my compasses are out, and I am trying to find Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I am over land, but it's broken. I am sure I'm in the Keys, but I don't know how far down and I don't know how to get to Fort Lauderdale."

Soon after, one of the planes in the flight called in to the NAS Fort Lauderdale to report that they were lost. Operators at the NAS tried many suggestions, from switching radio frequencies to the search and rescue frequency, to imploring Taylor to turn on his YG (IFF transmitter) so that his location could be triangulated. For whatever reason, these attempts were ignored by Taylor and the other pilots of Flight 19. In one of these recordings, a member of the flight can be heard exclaiming, "Dammit, if we could just fly west we would get home; head west, dammit." Taylor ordered the flight east.

By this time, weather conditions in the area had deteriorated, and the sun had set. A handful of land-based radio stations were able to triangulate Flight 19's position as being somewhere north of the Bahamas and significantly off the coast of Florida. Despite this knowledge, the flight's location was not adequately reported to naval air traffic control personnel at NAS Fort Lauderdale. At 1820, the last message from Flight 19 was received. In this recording, Taylor was heard saying, "All planes close up tight ... we'll have to ditch unless landfall ... when the first plane drops below 10 gallons, we all go down together." All 14 airmen involved in Flight 19 were never seen or heard from again. But these 14 men wouldn't be the only men to vanish into thin air on 5 December 1945.

Knowing that the planes' fuel would have run out at 2000 hours, a search and rescue effort was launched to locate the flight and its crew at around 1800 hours that evening, just before the last message was received. Surface vessels, both military and merchant, were notified of the disappearance and two consolidated PBM Mariner flying boats were diverted from their original training flights to participate in square pattern searches in an attempt to locate any trace of Flight 19. One of these planes, PBM-5 Bureau Number 59225, took off from NAS Banana River in Brevard County, Florida, at 1927 hours carrying a crew of 13 rescue personnel. The plane called in a routine message a few minutes later but disappeared off the radar entirely within around 20 minutes of takeoff. That night, a merchant ship off the coast of Fort Lauderdale reported seeing a "burst of flame" shortly before passing through an oil slick in the same vicinity the missing PBM had dropped off the radar.

At daybreak the following day, the Navy launched an even larger rescue effort, now having to search for a total of six downed aircraft. The efforts lasted around 5 days, during which 300,000 square miles were combed for any sign of the planes or the men working aboard them. Theories surrounding these

disappearances are varied, ranging from alien abductions, to secret government experiments, to the fan-favorite Bermuda Triangle. The official account of the events of 5 December 1945 suggest that Lieutenant Taylor mistook his location, believing he was flying over the Florida Keys and the Gulf of Mexico. Armed with broken compasses, he was unable to determine his true location. Eventually, Taylor and his airmen ran out of fuel, forcing them to down their planes and succumb to the elements. The disappearance of the PBM-5 is most often attributed to an explosion, as this particular model of plane was prone to such accidents.

Whatever the case may be, not a single trace of them has been found. 5 December 2021 will mark the 76th year of not knowing the fate of Flight 19 and the consequent rescue craft. [Source: USNI Naval History Blog | Frankie Witzenburg | December 2, 2019 ++]

Medal of Honor Awardees

Emil Kapaun | Korea



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

MEDAL OF HONOR

To

Capt. Emil Kapaun

Organization: U.S. Army, 3d Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division

Place and date: November 1, 1950 at Unsan, Korea

Entered service: July 12, 1944 Herington Air Base, Kansas

Born: April 20, 1916, in rural Pilsen, Kansas



Army Chaplain Emil Kapaun inspired his men during the Korean War with calm, courageous leadership, instilling in his fellow prisoners of war a desire to stay strong — even after he no longer could. His actions eventually earned him the nation's highest military honor, as well as a potential path to sainthood.

Kapaun was born April 20, 1916, in rural Pilsen, Kansas. He and his brother, Eugene, learned how to do chores and repair things around the family farm — a skill that would later serve Kapaun well. After high school, Kapaun studied at Conception College in Conception, Missouri, before starting at Kenrick Seminary (now Kenrick-Glennon Seminary) in St. Louis. Four years later, in June 1940, he was ordained as a priest. Kapaun was serving as an auxiliary chaplain at Herington Air Base, Kansas, in 1944 when he noticed the need for faith-based leaders in the military. He felt compelled to join, so, on July 12, 1944, he became an Army chaplain, serving for the rest of World War II in the China-Burma-India theater.

When he returned to the U.S. in 1946, Kapaun separated from the Army to earn his master's degree in education from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. However, he rejoined the Chaplain Corps in 1948 as a captain. Two years later, the war in Korea broke out, so he was deployed in July 1950 with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. By the fall of 1950, Kapaun's battalion had pushed depleted North Korean soldiers back to Unsan, an area in northwestern North Korea near the Chinese border. It was assumed the war would soon be over since things were looking good for the U.S. and its South Korean allies. But on Nov. 1, 1950, the tide turned when Chinese Communist forces launched a vicious attack.

During the fight, Kapaun calmly walked through the battle zone, offering comfort and medical aid to the injured and helping to pull men out of an area considered no-man's land. The Americans were able to repel the assault initially, but by nighttime, they were surrounded and forced to find safety in foxholes and behind bunkers. By midnight, the battalion was ordered to evacuate before the Chinese blocked all escape routes. Those who were injured were trapped, and Kapaun chose to stay behind with them, despite knowing he would likely face capture or death. He continued to make his rounds as the hand-to-hand combat grew closer. When he noticed an injured Chinese officer near his men, he pleaded with the officer to negotiate their safe surrender. It worked, and most of the men were spared.

As Kapaun was led away, he saw another Chinese soldier preparing to shoot a wounded soldier, Sgt. 1st Class Herbert A. Miller. Without concern for himself, Kapaun pushed that enemy soldier aside, picked up Miller and started to carry him away. Stunned, the enemy soldier allowed it. Kapaun ended up carrying Miller for miles as they incessantly marched toward the unknown. The chaplain helped others who struggled, too, begging them to not give up so they wouldn't be shot. After being marched from village to village with little food or water, Kapaun and his men ended up at a POW camp in Pyoktong on the bank of the Yalu River.

"I don't know the name of that valley, but we called it the Kapaun Valley because that is where Father Kapaun instilled in us a will to live," Korean War POW Mike Dowe said in 2013. While in captivity, Kapaun remained a trusted leader. His courage inspired prisoners of all faiths to survive the camp's hellish conditions and the frigid temperatures, resist enemy indoctrination, and keep hope alive. He helped the wounded and often sneaked out at night to steal food for the prisoners. "He was the best food thief we had," Army Capt. Joseph O'Connor, a fellow POW, told *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times* after his repatriation in 1953. "He always used to say a prayer to St. Dismas [the penitent thief] before he went out scrounging. Once, he came back with a sack of potatoes. How he got it I'll never know — it must have weighed 100 pounds."

By spring, however, the camp's squalid conditions and inhumane punishments had taken their toll. Kapaun grew seriously ill and malnourished, but he managed to hold one last Easter Mass for the prisoners in late March. Shortly after that, he was transferred to an old pagoda that the Chinese called a hospital. It

was unheated and filthy, and it was reported that its prisoners weren't given food or medical attention. Kapaun died there on May 23, 1951. He was 35. In August 1951, Kapaun was honored with the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest medal for valor, while he was still listed as missing in action. Officials learned of his death when his fellow POWs were released after the armistice was signed in 1953.

For decades, Kapaun's comrades lobbied Congress to get his Distinguished Service Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor. On April 11, 2013, that request was granted. President Barack Obama lauded the chaplain's service during a White House ceremony. "[Kapaun was] an American soldier who didn't fire a gun but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all — the love for his brothers — so pure that he was willing to die so they might live," Obama said. The chaplain's nephew, Ray Kapaun, received the medal on his behalf. Several family members and Korean War vets who served with Kapaun joined for the celebration. With no remains to bury, Kapaun's family set up a memorial to him at St. John Nepomucene Catholic Cemetery in his hometown. Earlier this month, however, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced it had finally identified Kapaun's remains.

"After 70 years, Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun has been accounted for," acting Army Secretary John E. Whitley said in a 5 MAR news release. Officials told Ray Kapaun that his uncle's remains, along with those of several other soldiers, were returned to the U.S. shortly after the end of the war and buried at the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. They were only recently identified using dental records and DNA. Arrangements for a burial in his hometown are still being made. There are still more than 7,500 unaccounted-for Korean War service members. Kapaun's repatriation is evidence that the DPAA mission continues its commitment to never leaving a fallen comrade behind.

In 1993, Pope John Paul II declared Kapaun a servant of God — the first step toward sainthood. Every year in Kansas, the Catholic Diocese of Wichita holds a 60-mile pilgrimage from a Wichita church to the chaplain's hometown in his honor. To read more stories of the chaplain's heroics from the men who served with him, click [here](#) and [here](#). [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | March 15, 2021 ++]

WWII Bomber Nose Art

[77] Rhode Island Red



Every Picture Tells a Story

Aircraft Carrier?



If it floats, is powered and carries an aircraft... is it still an aircraft carrier? Here in Colombo, Ceylon (or in any anchorage near a Royal Navy repair depot or replenishment center), a purpose-built motorized barge takes a Fleet Air Arm Corsair out to a waiting British carrier. The barges were needed when either the carrier could not tie up to a pier for offloading and uploading or when the confines of the harbor and other ships at anchor prevented the aircraft from “landing on”. The Royal Naval Air Station at Colombo was called HMS *Bherunda* and was established in 1943 at the Colombo Racecourse. The big Royal Navy base at Colombo was called Lanka and perhaps the boat was used for transferring aircraft from a replenishment carrier directly to a fleet carrier.

Military History Anniversaries

01 thru 15 JUL

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

* Health Care *



Health Care Reform

Update 67: Supreme Court Upholds ACA

The nation's highest court has ruled that the ACA remains the law in the U.S. A coalition of Republican-leaning states, led by Texas, asked the Supreme Court to invalidate the Affordable Care Act (ACA). They argued that the court should strike down the health law because in December 2017, Congress eliminated the ACA's tax penalty for failing to purchase health insurance. They argued the individual mandate is inseverable from the rest of the law and became unconstitutional when the tax penalty was eliminated; therefore, the entire health law should be struck down.

But the justices voted 7-2 to uphold the ACA, saying that the coalition could not legally challenge the health law, according to Bloomberg News. "We conclude that the plaintiffs in this suit failed to show a concrete, particularized injury fairly traceable to the defendants' conduct in enforcing the specific statutory provision they attack as unconstitutional. They have failed to show that they have standing to attack as unconstitutional the act's minimum essential coverage provision. Therefore, we reverse the Fifth Circuit's judgment in respect to standing, vacate the judgment, and remand the case with instructions to dismiss," Justice Stephen Breyer wrote for the majority, according to ABC News.

Justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch voted against the majority. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case in November, and at the time, a majority of Supreme Court justices indicated they supported upholding the ACA. [Source: Bloomberg News | Kelly Gooch | June 17, 2021 ++]

TRICARE Dental Program

TDP Wellness Program Benefits



If you or a TDP enrolled family member has been diagnosed with a chronic condition, the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Wellness Program is available to provide additional dental benefits at no cost to you. Getting the proper treatment and maintenance for gum disease will have a positive effect on your overall wellness as scientists continue to uncover connections between certain chronic conditions and gum disease. TDP Wellness Program is for people with the following chronic medical conditions:

- Cerebral Vascular Disease (stroke)
- Coronary Artery Disease (heart)
- Diabetes
- Lupus

- Oral Cancer
- Organ Transplant
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Pregnancy (additional, third cleaning in a consecutive 12-month period, only)

Improved TRICARE Benefits Service Coverage

- Periodontal maintenance – an additional service per year: 100% (Standard frequency limitations apply)
- Scaling and root planning: 100% (Standard frequency limitations apply)
- Periodontal surgery – four procedures related to gingival flap or osseous surgeries: 100%

To receive this enhanced coverage, you (or anyone on your dental plan) must report the covered condition via [My Account](#). Register to use TDP Wellness Program any time after your TDP effective date of coverage. Here's how:

- Select the red "Log in to My Account" button at the top of this page and log in using your DS Logon
- Select "Manage My Wellness"
- Add your medical condition

Once registered, talk to your dentist about your medical condition and your additional coverage through TDP. You may or may not need the extra services that are available, but your dentist can recommend which (if any) additional procedures can help the condition of your mouth.

TDP Eligibility

Family members of active duty service members (ADSMs) and National Guard and Reserve family members:

- Spouses
- Unmarried children until reaching age 21 (including stepchildren, adopted children—both pre-adoptive and finalized adoption, and court-ordered wards). Beneficiaries in this category are eligible up to the end of the month in which they turn 21.
- Unmarried children between ages 21 and 23:
- Up to age 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study at an approved institution of higher learning, and if the sponsor provides over 50 percent of the financial support. These students are eligible up to the end of the month in which they turn age 23. However, if the student ends his or her education prior to turning 23, eligibility ends at the end of the month in which their education ends.
- If they have a disabling illness or injury that occurred before their 21st birthday; or they have a disabling illness or injury that occurred between ages 21 and 23 and, at the time of the illness or injury, were enrolled in a full-time course of study at an approved institution of higher learning, and the sponsor provided over 50 percent of the financial support.

National Guard and Reserve service members:

- Members of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve may enroll in the TDP when they are not on active duty orders for a period of more than 30 consecutive days

- Any National Guard or Reserve member who is called or ordered to active duty for a period of more than 30 consecutive days receives the same benefits as an ADSM and cannot be enrolled in the TDP

Not Eligible

- ADSMs, including National Guard and Reserve members called to active duty for more than 30 consecutive days
- Retired service members and their families
- Former spouses
- Parents and parents-in-law
- Disabled veterans
- Foreign military personnel
- Service members in the Transitional Assistance Management

[Source: <https://www.uccitdp.com> | June 2021 ++]

TRICARE Retirement Brochure
Now Available Online



When you retire from active duty, you experience a major life change. Some parts of your TRICARE coverage will also change. Understanding your new options will help you and your family make the best health care decisions. Wouldn't it be helpful if you had a resource you could download? Now you do. Check out the TRICARE Retiring from Active Duty Brochure at file:///C:/Users/User/AppData/Local/Temp/AD_Retire_Br.pdf. Here are just a few things this brochure will help you learn.

1. Actions You Need to Take

When you retire, you want to make a smooth transition. Do you know what steps to take to avoid a break in your TRICARE coverage? The brochure highlights some important actions you need to take, including:

- Get a new Uniformed Services ID card.
- Update your information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).
- Decide which health plan you want to use, which will depend on your eligibility and location.
- Enroll in a plan and pay enrollment fees within 90 days of your retirement date.

- Sign up for Medicare Part B if you're entitled to Medicare Part A, if applicable.

2. Ways to Get Care

As a retiree, you may get care differently from when you were an active duty service member. You may or may not be seen at a military hospital or clinic. If you choose a TRICARE Prime plan, your primary care manager will provide your routine care and refer you to a provider for specialty care. If you enroll in TRICARE Select, you'll visit the TRICARE-authorized provider of your choice for routine and specialty care.

The brochure also goes into details about other plans that you and your family members may be eligible for after retiring. And it discusses costs. As a retiree, you'll now pay retiree costs for care. To see what your retiree costs with your health plan will be, you can use the TRICARE Compare Cost Tool.

3. Options for Pharmacy, Dental, and Vision Care

As stated in the TRICARE Retiring from Active Duty Brochure, "If you have a TRICARE health care plan, you have pharmacy coverage." Your options for filling prescriptions depend on the type of drug your provider prescribes and where you live. Keep in mind, most retirees and their families have to fill select maintenance medications using the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery.

What about your dental and vision coverage options? The brochure introduces you to the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), offered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. You and your family members may qualify to purchase dental and vision coverage through FEDVIP.

[Source: TRICARE Communications | June 17, 2021 ++]

Sleep Disorder

Update 06: What to Do When You Can't Sleep

Compared with other insomnia symptoms, having difficulty falling asleep in 2002 was the main insomnia symptom that was predictive of cognitive impairment (dementia) 14 years later, in 2016. More frequent trouble falling asleep was predictive of poorer episodic memory, executive function, language, processing speed, and visuospatial performance. The associations between sleep initiation and later cognitive impairment were partially explained by depressive symptoms and vascular disease burden for all domains except episodic memory, which was only partially explained by depressive symptoms. Trouble falling asleep a modifiable risk factor for dementia.

If you're one of the millions of Americans who struggle with insomnia, you may find your mind racing and your body tossing and turning when you just want to be asleep. With the right approach, you can reliably fall asleep within a matter of minutes. One of the keys to smoothly

falling asleep is relaxation. Research shows that the [relaxation response](#) is a physiological process that positively affects both the mind and body. By reducing stress and anxiety, the relaxation response can enable you to peacefully drift off to sleep. Some of the below step-by-step guides offer proven relaxation methods that may help with insomnia and other sleep problems. Experts emphasize that it can take time to master these techniques, but the practice pays off. Even better, these methods are customizable, so you can adjust them over time to make them work for you.

The Four Key Elements to Cultivating Relaxation

For thousands of years, relaxation has been a central focus of spiritual and cultural practices, enabling a sense of calm and connection with oneself and the surrounding world. Only in recent decades, though, have meditative practices for relaxation become a focus of scientific research, which has come to identify four key elements³ for fostering the relaxation response.

- *A quiet environment.* Quiet does not have to mean completely silent. Calming sounds or music can be beneficial. Loud, abrasive sounds or noises should be avoided.
- *A focus of attention.* A word, phrase, mantra, breathing pattern, or mental image can all be used to draw your attention and reduce thinking about external concerns.
- *A passive attitude.* Accepting that it's normal for your mind to wander allows you to remain at-ease and draw your focus back to the object of your attention.
- *A comfortable position.* Finding a cozy place to relax is critical. Naturally, when relaxing to fall asleep, the recommended position is lying in bed.

All of the following methods are ways of achieving these core elements so that you can calmly fall asleep. Keeping these basics in mind empowers you to adjust these methods to suit your preferences. Once you're lying comfortably in bed, try one of these techniques to put yourself at ease and settle gently into sleep.

Controlled Breathing -- This is excellent for people just getting started with relaxation techniques or who have difficulty using other objects of focus like imagery or mantras. A series of slow, deep breaths can enable a sense of calm. This method, also known as pranayamic breathing, is believed to help reduce stress in the nervous system⁴ and may prepare the brain for sleep⁵ by reducing excitatory stimulus. How to Do It:

- *Option 1: Counting Breaths*
 - Inhale slowly and gently through your nose.
 - Exhale slowly and gently through your mouth.
 - Count up. You can count each breath or each cycle of inhalation and exhalation,, whichever comes more naturally to you.
- *Option 2: Dr. Andrew Weil's 4-7-8 Method*
 - Place the tip of your tongue near the ridge behind your front two teeth and hold it in this location throughout the breathing exercise.
 - With your mouth closed, slowly inhale through your nose while counting to four.
 - Hold your breath while counting to seven.

- Open your mouth and exhale while counting to eight. Because of the location of your tongue, exhalation should cause a whooshing sound.
- Repeat this 4-7-8 cycle three more times.

Meditation and Mindfulness -- This is centered around slow, steady breathing and a non-judgmental focus on the present moment. By reducing anxiety and rumination, it has been found to have sweeping health benefits, including an ability to help reduce insomnia. Anyone can meditate, including with mindfulness meditation, but it can take more practice to get used to. As a result, it usually works best for people who can devote at least five minutes per day to increase their comfort with it. There are many variations of mindfulness meditation for different situations. One easy to use style is the [body scan meditation](#).

- Focus on slowly inhaling and exhaling at a comfortable pace.
- Notice the position of your body on the bed.
- Notice any sensations, good or bad, in your legs and feet. Let your legs be soft.
- Continue the “body scan,” observing, from your legs up to your head, each region of your body and its sensations. The goal is to stay present and observe your body without judging or reacting and then letting each part of your body relax.
- After scanning each part of your body, reflect on your body as a whole and allow it to relax.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation -- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) creates a calming effect by gradually tightening and releasing muscles throughout the body in conjunction with controlled breathing. Studies have found that PMR can help people with insomnia, and when done carefully, may be beneficial for people who are bothered by arthritis or other forms of physical pain. PMR is not recommended for people with uncontrolled cardiovascular problems. How to do it:

- With your eyes closed, slowly breathe in and out.
- Starting with your face, tense your muscles (lips, eyes, jaw) for 10 seconds, then release your muscles and breathe deeply in and out for several seconds.
- Tense your shoulders for 10 seconds and then relax and breathe.
- Continue tensing and relaxing the following body parts, skipping any area where tensing the muscles causes pain: Shoulders, Upper arms, Lower arms and hands, Back, Stomach, Buttocks, Hamstrings, Calves, and then Feet.

Imagery -- Visualizing a peaceful image from your past and all of its details engages your attention in order to promote relaxation. Visual thinkers who easily recall past scenes replete with details are ideally suited to using imagery as part of their bedtime relaxation. How to do it:

- With your eyes closed and in a comfortable position, think about a place or experience in your past that feels relaxing, such as a quiet natural setting.
- While slowly breathing in and out, reflect on the details of this setting and how it looks.
- Continue focusing on this image by adding details relating to your other senses (smell, sound, taste, touch) and experiencing the calmness of this mental imagery.

What If I Still Can't Fall Asleep?

If you get into bed and cannot fall asleep after 20 minutes, get up, go to another part of your house, and do something soothing, such as reading or listening to quiet music. Lying awake in bed for too long can create an unhealthy mental connection between your sleeping environment and wakefulness. Instead, you want your bed to conjure thoughts and feelings conducive to sleep. Before you actually get into bed, a few simple tips can help make sure your mind and body are prepared to fall asleep easily:

- Wind down for at least half an hour before bedtime. Reading, light stretching, and other relaxing activities are ideal during this time.
- Disconnect from close-range electronic devices like laptops, phones, and tablets because they can stimulate the brain and make it harder to fall asleep.
- Dim the lights to help your eyes relax, and make sure you're in comfortable clothing.
- Make sure your bedroom is set to a pleasant temperature. The cooler the better.
- Consider a calming scent, like lavender essential oils, that can generate a calming effect.
- Avoid big meals, spicy foods, caffeine, and alcohol in the lead-up to bedtime.

Big-Picture Tips to Fall Asleep Easily

Beyond the immediate run-up to bedtime, incorporating fundamental sleep tips can aid in falling asleep and prevent serious sleeping problems.

- Follow a consistent sleep schedule with the same wake-up time every day, including on weekends. This helps fine-tune and entrain your internal clock for more regular sleep.
- Make time for physical activity. Regular exercise benefits the body in many ways, and facilitating better sleep is one of them.
- If you have a hard time sleeping, start keeping a sleep diary to identify trends that could be throwing off your nightly rest.
- See a doctor. If your sleeping problems are severe, long-term, or worsening, it's important to see a doctor who can work with you to try to identify a cause and recommend optimal treatment

[Source: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/treatment/what-do-when-you-cant-sleep> | July 29, 2020 ++]

Hernias

Update 01: What Every Vet Should Know

This June, the Military Health System celebrates National Men's Health Month, and sheds light on a variety of medical areas that primarily impact men. June is also Hernia Awareness Month. According to the National Institutes of Health, men are eight to 10 times more likely than women to develop inguinal hernias. So, what is a hernia? And what do you need to know about diagnosing, treating, and preventing hernias?

Your abdomen is covered in layers of muscle and strong tissue that help you move and protect internal organs. A hernia is a weakness or defect in this muscle wall that allows internal organs or fat to protrude through the abdominal wall causing a bulge, explained Navy Cmdr. (Dr.) Jesse Bandle, vice chairman,

Department of General Surgery, Naval Medical Readiness and Training Command in San Diego. "The most common hernias occur near areas where blood vessels or other structures naturally penetrate, or have penetrated the abdominal wall," Bandle said, such as the umbilical cord in men, women, and infants, and the inguinal canal near the groin, most frequently in men.



Inguinal hernias usually show up as lumps near the groin or testicles, and most often appear on the right side. Men commonly describe the sensation of an inguinal hernia as feeling as if something "popped" or gave way. The symptoms can also include:

- A bulge you can see or feel
- Aching pain in the area
- A feeling of pressure
- A tugging sensation of the scrotum around the testicles

Hiatal hernias occur when part of the stomach is pushed up through a hole in the diaphragm. "Hernias also can occur at the spot where a prior incision for surgery was made," Bandle said. "The clearest symptom of a hernia is a new bulge in your abdominal wall," Bandle continued. However, "many hernias do not produce pain symptoms, and patients often have mild or subtle discomfort or sensations of pressure, or achy, burning discomfort." He noted that the bulge often "is only seen or felt when doing strenuous activity or actively increasing intra-abdominal pressure, such as straining to urinate or defecate, or working out."

What are some of the causes of hernias? Increased intra-abdominal pressure over time increases the chances of developing a hernia, Bandle continued. This increased pressure, he added, can come from pregnancy, heavy lifting, chronic coughing, obesity, and straining. Hernias also may develop "later in life, when the muscles weaken or deteriorate due to aging, strenuous physical activity, after an injury or abdominal surgery, or coughing that accompanies smoking," Bandle said. Or, they can be congenital, or due to a birth defect.

If you think you have a hernia, Navy Cmdr. (Dr.) Andrew Kung, a general surgeon with the Naval Medical Center - Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, said to make an appointment with your primary care provider for a routine evaluation. The provider also may choose to prescribe a CT scan or ultrasound, he said. If you have symptoms of a hernia, you should be evaluated by a surgeon, Kung said. For active-duty service members, "some surgeons will recommend surgical repair of the hernia to prevent issues while deployed," even if there are no signs of difficulty.

"A more urgent evaluation would be needed if you are unable to push the bulge back in," Kung said. "This could be a sign of the hernia contents being trapped, or incarcerated. An incarcerated hernia can become strangulated," he explained, "which means that the blood supply is cut off to the tissue that is trapped. A strangulated hernia can become life threatening if it is not treated by surgery." Kung said emergency surgery may be called for, especially if you have:

- Sudden pain that quickly worsens
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Fever
- Difficulty having a bowel movement or passing gas
- Bloating or distension of your abdomen
- Red, purple, or dark skin over the bulge

The surgeon will push back the herniated tissue inside the intestinal lining and sew up the surrounding muscle. Sometimes, a mesh fabric piece will be used to reinforce the repair. There are more than 750,000 hernias in the United States that are operated on each year, Bandle said. Worldwide, he noted, it is estimated that more than 20 million hernias are operated on each year.

How can you prevent a hernia? "You can try to reduce the strain on your abdominal muscles and tissues," Kung advised. This includes:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating a balanced high-fiber diet to prevent constipation and straining
- Lifting heavy objects carefully or avoiding heavy lifting
- Quitting or avoiding smoking, which could lead to a chronic cough

Bandle agreed. "Most hernias will slowly evolve over time. There are no clear ways to prevent a natural hernia from forming if your body has an inherent weakness at one of the sites that are prone to hernias," he said. "However, you can modify some of the risk factors for hernias, such as obesity, smoking, and chronic constipation. Stay fit, don't smoke, keep hydrated, and eat fiber." [Source: Health.mil | Janet A. Aker | June 11, 2021 ++]

Hair

Update 02: Tips to Treat Thinning Hair on Men

More than 35 million men worldwide suffer from hair loss, of which thinning of hair, receding hairline, excessive hair loss, etc., are the initial signs. Thinning of hair, in most cases, is natural, something that comes along as one ages. However, many other factors such as stress, genetics, hormonal imbalance, environmental changes can also be reasoned. Thanks to the advancement in science, the number of ways to combat hair loss today is continuously expanding. From lifestyle changes to artificial regrowth methods and medication, various methods can be employed to re-establish the past beauty of your locks.



How to Tell If the Hair Is Thinning Out?

Though many face the issue of hair thinning, only a few men spot the early signs of it. Noticing the issue as it develops gives one a better chance to tackle the same before excessive hair loss occurs. In most men, the thinning of hair starts around the forehead or on the top of the head. Receding hairline, therefore, can be viewed as a typical early phase or sign of hair loss and must be taken care of accordingly. Since people look at themselves almost every day, a receding hairline might go unnoticed or hard to spot. Therefore, noticing changes in the hair quality and hairline over time is the best approach to spot initial signs.

Compare your current hairline to that from 2 years ago (through a picture) to acknowledge if the hairline is receding or not, and if so, how severe the case is. Alternatively, one can check if the hair on top of their head is thinning by middle parting the hair down regularly to see how much scalp is revealed.

Why Does Hair Thin Out In Men?

In particular, thinning of hair comes most naturally as a part of aging for most men. But, premature hair thinning is not uncommon. So, what other factors can cause hair to thin out ahead of time? Many factors, including genetics, hormonal imbalance, medical condition, constant stress, inflammation, etc., can be reasoned behind losing your hair. However, smoking, male pattern baldness, and lack of nutrition happen to be the prime causes for the same, with faster hair loss. Smoking increases the toxin levels in the body, disrupting the blood flow in the scalp and hair follicles, causing them to thin out. What's more, smoking also damages papilla, hair follicles, and hormones that stimulate hair growth while increasing estrogen production, which counters the effects of androgen. By the same token, since hair follicles are made of protein fibers, not having enough nutrition or protein intake through the diet also significantly affects your hair quality, causing several hair issues, including hair loss.

Ways to Tackle Hair Thinning

Androgenetic alopecia, or what is also known as male balding pattern, is one of the prime hair loss reasons in men and also the permanent one. Unfortunately, the condition currently has no actual cure in terms of treatment or otherwise. However, one can slow down the process with proactive approaches like medication, diet, thickening, and regrowth methods, not to mention disguising the same using the appropriate hairstyles.

What to Do to Thicken the Hair

The easiest, effective, and most affordable way to treat any hair condition is to adopt healthy lifestyle changes. These changes in broad terms include diet and first-hand protection from any harmful element. What one consumes directly shows in the quality and health of their hair. Therefore it is a given the need to watch what one drinks and eats in a day as per their nutritional consistency and benefits. For hair specifically, increase protein intake, vitamin C, iron, and Omega 3 in the diet. At the same time, make sure you drink enough water while minimizing alcohol consumption for the best results.

One can alternatively refer to hair growth vitamin and protein supplements available in the market. Again, though, make sure you consult your doctor before starting on with any supplement. Regular exercising, especially those focused on increasing blood circulation in the head, is an excellent way to keep one's hair healthy, strong, and thick. Multiple shampoos are available in the market to fight hair thinning. Those that block DHT (a hormone responsible for male pattern baldness) are highly recommendable and useful for treating or at the very least slowing the process of hair loss.

What NOT to Do to Thicken the Hair

Fast foods, excessive caffeine, sugar, deep-fried foods, etc., are all linked to hair loss in men or related issues, and therefore it goes without saying the need to cut these foods off from the diet. Moreover, using styling products such as sprays, chemically loaded shampoos for washing your hair, masks, etc., can result in long-term damage to your hair, especially those operating with heat, such as curling iron and dryer. Exposing hair to high heat for an extended period can cause damage and hair breakage. Simple changes like letting one's hair dry naturally instead of blow-drying can also result in visible improvement. Though, in case you can't leave your hair wet, use a dryer or curling iron at the lowest heat to reduce damage while using protection spray beforehand.

Hair Regrowth Methods

If a person suffers from hair loss despite a healthy lifestyle, the condition goes beyond diet or unhealthy habits. Referring to medical treatment, hair growth products, hair transplant, etc., such cases become a suitable option to turn to. While many of these products for treating hair loss are readily available in the market, ensure you take an expert consultation before making any decision, as a wrong product can do more damage to your hair and scalp than good.

Make Our Hair Look Thicker

No hair remedy or treatment will show instant results, and therefore finding ways to disguise thin hair as thick through grooming and hairstyle becomes imperative. There are many hairstyle options for men to choose from that can focus on a receding hairline or thin hair while boosting the overall appearance. Short and cropped haircuts, in particular, can both help in blending in the thin patches and making the head seem fuller given their light strands. Other cuts to consider for men with thinning hair include undercut, buzz cut, crew cut, etc.

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As natural as the process of thinning hair is in men, one does not have to live that way. Consulting an expert as soon as one notices the initial signs of hair thinning or loss is an excellent way to ensure that the problem is treated before it develops further. What's more, regularly nourishing hair while reducing unhealthy lifestyle choices can also help recover the lost hair health better together with the treatment you choose to go along with. Happy Scrolling! [Source: Aging Healthy Today | June 22, 2021 ++]

Malnutrition

The Early Signs

Malnutrition occurs when an individual doesn't have the nutrients they need to function, which includes the amount of protein and calories they need to give their body energy, though it also means micronutrients like vitamins and minerals. When someone's diet is unbalanced, they might get enough calories without getting enough nutrients. Overnutrition is also a form of malnutrition and occurs when an individual takes in too many nutrients, causing their body's metabolism and functioning to become unbalanced. Different types of malnutrition present with different symptoms. Certain vitamin deficiencies have hallmark symptoms that might present even if an affected individual is taking in enough calories. Everyone needs to understand the following signs of malnutrition so they can adjust their diet accordingly.

Reduced Appetite

A reduced appetite is one of the most common signs of undernutrition. When the body isn't getting the calories it needs, the individual's metabolism will slow down. This means they will expend less energy and require fewer calories to maintain their body. Though this protects against starvation, long-term shifts in metabolism like this will make individuals more likely to gain weight in the long run, which is why crash dieting and highly restrictive diets are unlikely to result in long-term weight loss.

Affected individuals might lose interest in food and drink. It might become difficult to eat large portions because the stomach has reduced the amount of matter it can hold at one time. Trying to eat the same amount as the average person may cause intestinal distress. Children who have a reduced appetite due to malnutrition are at a higher risk of stunted growth. Children need to take in a certain number of calories for their bodies to develop healthily. An unexplained reduction in appetite can also be a sign of an underlying health problem.

Chronic Fatigue

Malnutrition can lead to chronic fatigue, which is one of the most common signs of malnutrition. When individuals don't consume enough calories and protein, their muscles and brain don't have the energy they need to function. It's common to feel physical fatigue and pain in the muscles. It's also common to sleep more than the average person, take naps, and constantly feel exhausted. Various micronutrient deficiencies can also lead individuals to tiredness and an inability to concentrate. They can experience impaired cognitive function and even potential brain damage if the nutrient deficiencies last for too long. Fatigue can be caused by other underlying medical conditions as well, some of which can be potentially life-threatening if left untreated.

Some of the most common nutritional deficiencies that lead to fatigue are lack of iron, vitamin B12, folic acid, potassium, and magnesium. Iron is the most common nutritional cause of fatigue. Individuals are more likely to suffer from an iron deficiency if they follow a vegetarian or vegan diet, so it's important to make sure they have some iron sources in their diet.

Weight Loss

Weight loss is a common sign of undernutrition. When an individual stops taking in as many nutrients as they need, they often experience a sudden and dramatic loss of weight, though this typically happens unintentionally. Most researchers agree a loss of five to ten percent or more loss of an individual's body weight over three to six months is indicative of malnutrition. Even if an individual is dieting, losing this much weight can be a sign they aren't getting the vitamins and minerals they need. Such a dramatic shift in body weight will slow down an individual's metabolism, which means they're more likely to gain excess weight in the long term. Malnutrition is sometimes caused by an underlying health condition that causes malabsorption of nutrients. If an individual's body isn't absorbing all the calories and vitamins in their food, they can experience malnutrition symptoms even if they eat a balanced diet. If individuals experience dramatic weight loss without changing anything about their diet or exercise habits, they should talk to a doctor.

Increased Length and Frequency of Illness

Malnutrition can have a serious effect on an individual's immune system. When their immune system is impaired, individuals can't off illnesses as easily. They'll be more likely to get sick because viruses and other infections will have an easier time taking root in their body, and they'll have a longer recovery time. This can make individuals feel even more fatigued than they already do. It's a vicious cycle since fatigue

also impairs the immune system. Researchers have drawn correlations between immune function and malnutrition that suggest immune suppression can both cause and be caused by malnutrition.

Undernourished children who die typically perish from common infections. Immune deficiencies have been reported systemically in cases of both overnutrition and undernutrition. When a parent is malnourished during pregnancy, it can affect their infant's metabolic and immune system genes. Malnutrition can also be made worse by inflammation and recurring infections because these alter the function and structure of the gut. Malnutrition impairs certain vital immune cells from functioning properly.

Feeling Cold Frequently

Many individuals who are malnourished also feel cold frequently. They might feel like they can't retain body heat. If they aren't by a source of warmth like a heater, they might constantly feel cold, even if they're covered in insulating clothes and blankets. Individuals may also not get hot on hot days. Feeling cold can also be a sign of other issues, one of the most prominent being thyroid dysfunction. One of the reasons individuals might feel cold because of malnutrition is due to anemia, which occurs when individuals don't have enough red blood cells, or the red blood cells they have aren't functioning adequately. Iron deficiencies are among the most common causes of anemia, with B12 deficiencies being right behind. Anemia can be diagnosed through blood tests. In addition to anemia, malnutrition can cause other mineral and vitamin deficiencies that might affect an individual's ability to regulate their body temperature.

Delay In Wound Healing

The body requires carbohydrates, proteins, minerals, and vitamins to adequately heal wounds. Without energy and nutrients from food, the systems inside the body can't work together to heal injuries in a timely manner. Just one nutrient deficiency can have a serious impact on wound healing, depending on the substance. Multiple nutrient deficiencies and lack of calories can be disastrous. Researchers have also found through statistical analysis that malnourished individuals have an increased risk of infection and decreased tensile strength in their wounds. Some malnourished patients develop infections due to a sluggish immune system, pressure ulcers due to cardiovascular issues, and slow wound healing due to compromised clotting factors. This can cause wounds to become chronic instead of healing. When a wound is chronic and doesn't heal, the chances of serious infection and other complications are much higher. Chronic wounds greatly increase mortality rates, especially in malnourished individuals whose immune systems are struggling to compensate.

Concentration Issues

One common sign of malnutrition is dealing with concentration issues. It can be hard to pinpoint malnutrition as the underlying cause, though, since many medical conditions can lead to focus issues. The lack of energy from not eating can lead to 'brain fog,' which makes it harder to process information, commit facts to long term memory, follow instructions, and remember how to do tasks. This is without even considering how many different vitamin and mineral deficiencies can affect an individual's ability to concentrate even if they have consumed adequate calories. These problems are particularly concerning for children, since they can have implications for their ongoing neurological development. Undernourished children are more likely to perform badly in school and fail to learn.

An iron deficiency can contribute to concentration issues by creating fatigue and a weakened immune system. Chronic iron deficiencies can stunt a child's physical and intellectual development. Meanwhile, chronic iodine deficiencies in children can cause permanent brain damage that leads to learning disabilities. Vitamin B deficiencies can also slow thought processes and impede mental connections.

Depression

Malnutrition has been linked with depression in multiple studies for a few potential reasons. One is the lack of nutrients prevents the brain from generating the energy, connections, and neurotransmitters than it usually should, which can lead to lethargy, listlessness, unhappiness, and loss of interest. Other reasons for the connection include external circumstances and shared underlying causes. For example, individuals in impoverished communities suffering from the stress and pain of chronic malnutrition are more likely to feel unhappy and helpless. One study showed elderly individuals in rural communities can sometimes feel isolated and become depressed, which leads to a loss of interest in eating, which leads to malnutrition. Some individuals also become malnourished due to eating disorders, which are often exacerbated by depression or share an underlying chemical component with depression. This becomes a vicious cycle, since the sadness from the lack of energy leads to an increased desire to restrict food. Individuals who are malnourished due to eating disorders need mental health treatment just as much or more than they need food.

General Weakness

Malnutrition is one of the biggest possible contributors to general weakness in the body. When individuals eat, their body uses energy in the form of carbohydrates and fats. The fats are used for energy right away, while any excess carbohydrates are converted into fat cells and stored for later. If individuals aren't taking in enough food, their body will begin breaking down its fat stores. It will also start breaking down their muscle and use that for energy. Individuals experience deeper weakness throughout their body and a shrinking ability to complete tasks. Even without taking the muscle shrinkage into account, the lack of energy in the body means individuals will be too tired to complete tasks. Some may collapse when they try to stand or walk any distance, since they simply don't have enough energy to keep their brain conscious and their body moving. A lack of protein has a significant impact on muscles, since the body has nothing to feed and strengthen them with.

Behavioral Changes

Behavioral changes can occur as a result of malnutrition, though the exact presentation and reason for this varies. In severe cases, malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies might lead to neurological symptoms like severe emotional instability, hallucinations, paranoia, irrational behavior, and extreme and unwarranted anger. Individuals experiencing sudden and unexplained behavioral or personality shifts should be evaluated by a doctor right away. There are other cases where behavioral changes are more gradual, though, especially in children. Malnutrition leads to a significant increase in overall stress, especially if it's also impeding performance in school or at work. The stress and hopelessness can manifest in volatile external behaviors, particularly for children who are still developing their ability to emotionally self-regulate.

Researchers have found children who exhibit aggressive behavior, extreme anger, hyperactivity, and inordinate defiance toward authority have a much higher incidence of malnourishment at home. In addition to stress, researchers believe malnutrition has neurological effects on children, chiefly that their neurons are reduced and neurotransmitters are unable to function properly. This predisposes them toward recklessness, impulsivity, volatile emotions, and hyperactivity.

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The Bottom Line -- Malnutrition refers to overnutrition and undernutrition. People who are undernourished may experience weight loss, fatigue and mood changes or develop vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Overnutrition can lead to overweight, obesity and inadequate micronutrient intakes and deficiencies. Both types can lead to health issues if not addressed. If you believe that you or someone you know may be malnourished, especially undernourished, talk to a doctor as soon as possible. The top 5 list of tips to help when you or your Veteran experience unintended weight loss or malnutrition.

- Eat small meals more often. Try to eat every 2-3 hours. Increasing food intake by eating more often can help to get more calories and protein in. It is a bonus if you can work fruits and veggies into snacks!
- Have meals that are easy to prepare, such as sandwiches or ready-to-eat items. This could also mean prepping foods like soups or stews that hold up well in the freezer and freezing any leftovers that make for easy healthy meals to pull out whenever you need something quick. Test out this [White Chicken Chili](#) recipe for added protein and fiber. It makes a great freezer meal!
- Try to make eating enjoyable! This can be something that is tough to do, especially when we are really motivated to help someone increase nutrients or avoid losing more weight. If you are a caregiver, try to keep comments about food intake away from mealtimes.
- Try to eat larger meals when you feel the best. So, if the afternoons or evenings seem to be when you or your Veteran eat the most, make sure you have a good balanced meal with fruits and vegetables at that time. Try a smoothie for an afternoon snack!
- Make every bite count by choosing items high in calories and protein. Try to avoid using low fat or low-calorie type foods, and do add some condiments to make foods that you are already eating have more calories and protein.

[Source: <https://fitnessopedia.com> & Vantage Point | June 2021 ++]

Barbiturate Overdose

Symptoms, Effects, and Risks



Understanding the symptoms, effects, and risks associated with a barbiturate overdose can help those effected to understand what barbiturates are and what they are used for and do. Barbiturates are a group of sedative-hypnotic drugs that can treat seizure disorder, neonatal withdrawal, insomnia, preoperative anxiety, and induction of a coma for increased intracranial pressure (ICP); and can even be used for anesthesia. Some examples of barbiturates include Phenobarbital, Amobarbital (Amytal), Secobarbital (Seconal), and Butalbital.

As is the case with most substances with similar effects, barbiturates see illegal use and abuse throughout the United States. Barbiturates are generally misused in an effort to produce a mild euphoria, induce sleep, reduce anxiety, decrease inhibitions, or treat some of the unwanted effects of illicit drugs. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in 2018, approximately 405,000

Americans aged 12 and higher reported using barbiturates and 32,000 Americans aged 12 and higher reported misusing barbiturates.

Dangers of Barbiturate Intoxication and Overdose

Barbiturates have a high potential for abuse, and prolonged use can result in tolerance and physical dependence. A person with an increased tolerance will often seek a higher dosage in order to produce the desired effects, and this may result in dependence and addiction. Frequent barbiturate users may experience severe withdrawal symptoms within 8 to 15 hours of stopping the drug. [Polydrug use](#) has long been associated with barbiturate abuse, and barbiturates have historically been a secondary drug of abuse for people who misuse alcohol and heroin as their primary drug of choice. Co-administering barbiturates with alcohol and opioids like heroin—as well as benzodiazepines—increases the risk for overdose significantly. Barbiturates have an additive effect on these substances, and consume in conjunction with one another makes them especially dangerous.

Barbiturates are particularly dangerous for individuals with severe respiratory or kidney diseases. These drugs should be avoided by women who are pregnant, as it poses a health risk to the fetus. Pregnant women who take barbiturates during the third trimester can give birth to addicted infants who undergo an extended withdrawal syndrome. Many of the symptoms of barbiturate intoxication and overdose are very noticeable; awareness can be key in alerting someone to the need for medical help

- Signs and symptoms of barbiturate intoxication include:
 - Altered or decreased consciousness
 - Coordination problems and muscle weakness
 - Clouded thinking
 - Lack of balance/vertigo
 - Nausea
 - Slurring of speech
 - Slow heart rate
 - Decreased urine output
- Signs and symptoms of barbiturate overdose include:
 - Shallow breathing
 - Clammy skin
 - Dilated pupils
 - Weak and rapid pulse
 - Respiratory failure
 - Coma

Responding to a Barbiturate Overdose

In the event of a suspected barbiturate or polydrug overdose, call 911 immediately, especially in the event of any breathing problems. The presence of medical professionals on the scene can improve the chances of surviving the overdose, which can be deadly. Knowing whether or not an individual mixed a barbiturate with an opioid can be helpful for medical professionals to know when they arrive on the scene, as naloxone may be a viable immediate treatment. Naloxone is a drug that can help the person regain consciousness and reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, although naloxone cannot reverse a barbiturate-induced coma.

Barbiturate Withdrawal, Detox, and Treatment

For someone who is physically dependent on barbiturates or who are using barbiturates in addition to alcohol and/or opioids, withdrawal can be a painful and dangerous process and typically requires medical assistance. Symptoms of barbiturate withdrawal include: Restlessness, Anxiety, Tremors, Low body temperature, Sweating, Insomnia, Anxiety, and/or Seizures.

Detox should be done in a rehabilitation treatment facility that includes 24-hour monitoring by medical professionals. Doctors will start by tapering drug dosages in an effort to fully wean someone off barbiturates. After tapering off, patients will then begin cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine CBT examines the connection between feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and how those in recover are influenced by the substance they are addicted to. With the help of medical professionals and a treatment plan, those suffering from addiction can recover. Long-term sobriety can be achieved with the new learned behaviors form therapy and support from family, medical professionals, and community support groups. [Source: American Addiction Centers | Ryan Kelley | September 27, 2019 ++]

Food Leftovers

How Long They Will Last in the Fridge

What's the use of putting perishable food in the refrigerator if you're just going to let it perish? Even the best of us have turned the far corners of our refrigerators into food graveyards by losing track of food or ignoring its expiration date. While leftovers have a finite shelf life as it is, even refrigeration only delays the inevitable. With help from the Food and Drug Administration's food-contaminant [guidelines](#) and [FoodKeeper app](#), here 17 items you should keep an eye on once you've placed them in the fridge. For additional items check out www.eatbydate.com.

Soups and Stews - Time: 3 to 4 days

It doesn't matter if there's a meat or vegetable involved: Leftover soup won't last all that long in a refrigerator. However, making soup or stew with leftovers and then freezing it for 2 to 3 months is a great way to preserve them.

Red Wine - Time: 1 to 3 days

No, you don't typically chill red wines, but refrigerating an opened bottle isn't "chilling" it. You're slowing down the oxidation and preserving the flavor of the wine that remains, and Wine Enthusiast thinks that's a fine approach.

White Wine - Time: 1 to 3 days

Hey, if you're chilling your white wine anyway, you may as well keep it in the refrigerator once you've opened it.

Hot Sauce - Time: More than 6 months

As the folks at Heat Hot Sauce Shop note, if you don't think you're going to finish hot sauce in a couple of weeks, stick it in the fridge. It'll slow oxidation and preserve color and flavor.

Barbecue Sauce - Time: 4 months if opened

Barbecue folks argue that the amount of vinegar in some sauces should help it keep without refrigeration. However, the folks behind Sweet Baby Ray's don't want you keeping their sauce at all after 4 months. The FDA agrees.

Ketchup, Cocktail or Chili Sauce - Time: 6 months if opened

Yep, we're going into your condiment shelf. All of the above are acidic enough to last if they're left out on your table for a month, but if you don't think you're going to go through it in that time, stick it in the fridge.

Mustard - Time: 1 year if opened

Mustard holds up better than almost any condiment and doesn't really contain ingredients that will spoil. However, even French's warns that mustard eventually loses its tang if it just sits around.

Soy or Teriyaki Sauce - Time: 1 month if opened

You'd think that salt bombs like these wouldn't need refrigeration, and there are plenty of folks who agree with you. This writer keeps his in the pantry and notices no change, but those with attuned palates note that refrigeration preserves the flavor of a freshly opened bottle.

Pickles - Time: 1 to 3 months if opened

Unless you're actually buying pickles out of pickle barrels, you're eating commercially made pickles without all that much brine to them. The vinegar and salt that makes pickling so adept at food preservation shouldn't be relied upon with store-bought products.

Mayonnaise - Time: 2 months if opened

Mayonnaise isn't the sun-stricken egg-and-oil disaster that it once was, but that doesn't mean it won't degrade if you just leave it out on the table. The data-tracking NPD Group noted its emergence on restaurant table tops, but keep it cool if you aren't going to go through it quickly.

Salsa - Time: 1 month if opened

We're talking about jars of salsa packed with preservatives. If it's your homemade salsa or a plastic-packaged salsa from the local market, expect to cut that life expectancy in half or less as your salsa gets fuzzy and acidic.

Guacamole - Time: 3 to 4 days

Guacamole is another item that will let you know its time in the fridge is up. It gets brown on the surface or forms pools of brown liquid that seep beneath the surface. Epicurious has some suggestions for keeping it fresh, but the FDA says your best bet is to keep it frozen for up to 3 to 4 months.

Spaghetti Sauce - Time: 4 days if opened

Once you've opened spaghetti sauce, you've started the clock ticking on one of the most fragile leftovers in the fridge. Despite the jars and slick labeling, pasta sauces have just about no preservatives in them. Instead of letting it grow a mold hairdo, Barilla suggests moving leftover sauce to a freezer-safe container and freezing it for 3 months.

Cooked Pasta - Time: 3 to 5 days

Sometimes, you aren't going to finish a whole pot of linguine or have the stomach to work on it for the rest of the week. The FDA says you're good if you throw it in the freezer for 1 to 2 months, but Better Homes and Gardens suggests limiting freezing to 2 weeks for best results.

Cooked Rice, Vegetables or Potatoes - Time: 3 to 4 days

This is the FDA's blanket advice for cooked items without meat. They won't last a week in the fridge, but they can last 1 to 2 months if frozen.

Pizza - Time: 3 to 4 days

We put this in here just to assure you that the cold pizza from Friday night is a perfectly acceptable Sunday brunch in the FDA's view. It'll last 1 to 2 months if frozen, though.

Lemon or Lime Juice - Time: 2 months

Lemon juice will live forever in any corner of your house because of its high acidity. However, once you open a bottle of it, it can spoil and go south within hours unless you refrigerate it. The same rules apply to lime juice.

Source: <https://blog.cheapism.com/dangerous-foods/#slide=19> | June 2021 ++]

* Finances *



IRS Child Tax Credit

ARP Direct Child Tax Credit to Begin in July 2021

Many veteran households with children may soon become eligible to receive an enhanced child tax credit for 2021. This child tax credit is all part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act that was signed into law on March 11, 2021. While the headlines were primarily focused on the \$1,400 direct cash payments that were issued in March, the plan also includes aid for small businesses, funding for schools, and subsidies for health insurance premiums for plans through the Affordable Care Act.

However, another provision included in the American Rescue Plan Act may have an outsized effect on veteran families. As part of this Act, many veteran households with children under 18 years old may soon become eligible to receive an enhanced 2021 child tax credit, which the IRS plans to begin paying out as direct, advance monthly payments of \$250 or \$300 per month from July through December 2021. Key details of the 2021 child tax credit are as follows:

- Married couples with an adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$150,000 or less, or \$75,000 or less for single filers or 112,500 or less as a head of household qualify for the full amount of the credit. Eligibility is based on the most recent past tax return (2020 if filed by the May 17 deadline, otherwise 2019).
- The total child tax credit per child 5 and under is \$3600, and \$3000 per child 6-17 years old. This new amount replaces the \$2000 per child income tax credit from your 2020 tax return.
- Eligible households will receive half of this credit as monthly payments from July through December 2021 in the amounts of \$300 per child 5 and under, and \$250 per child 6-17 years old.

The other half will be an income tax credit on your 2021 tax return (\$1800 per child 5 and under, and \$1500 per child 6-17 years old).

- Dependent children who are 18 may also qualify for a \$500 one-time payment, along with 19-24 year old full-time college students.
- Taxpayers will have the ability to visit the IRS website to opt-out of the monthly payments (e.g., if you prefer a larger tax return, or if you expect your household income to significantly increase in 2021 and disqualify you from the credit). This system is expected to be available by July. The IRS will update their website here when this system or additional information becomes available: <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/advance-child-tax-credit-payments-in-2021>

All in all, this tax credit has the potential to take the financial pressure off many veteran households. Based on the most recent data from the American Community Survey (2019) we estimate that 25% of children in veteran households are under 5 years old and 75% are over 5 years old. That means the average qualified veteran families with children will receive a child tax credit of \$6000 per household, or \$500 per month between July and December 2021. This will come along with an average income tax credit of \$3000 when filing a 2021 tax return. Veterans and transitioning service members with adult children who are 18, or who are between 19-24 full-time college students, may also qualify for a \$500 one-time payment.

Along with the benefit for veterans with children, this Act – and the direct cash payments that come with it – may also be especially important for transitioning service members and their families. Since the onset of the public health crisis, service members have been working virtually during one of the most stressful and important periods in their lives.

The challenge of military transition in a public health crisis is also manifested in the alarming number of military families facing food insecurity in America. IVMF found nearly 40 percent of American military families are in need of food during the pandemic. In addition, the unemployment rates during COVID-19 were at the highest early in the recession with April-June 2020 having the highest unemployment rates for veterans. That said, veteran married couples with an adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$150,000 or less, or \$75,000 or less for single filers or \$112,500 or less as a head of household will qualify for the full amount of the credit.

This monthly income can potentially offset the challenges presented this past year and allow transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to have more financial flexibility. In addition, with vaccinations rolling out to all Americans over the age of 16 and restrictions being lifted on in-person work and schooling, the enhanced 2021 child tax credit could potentially be a game changer for them and offset the financial challenges that COVID presented.

As with many tax credits, individual circumstances will impact who does and does not qualify for the credit. You can get more information about other details to consider by tracking detailed information on this credit through financial guidance websites such as H&R Block or CNET. You can learn about other economic relief as part of the American Rescue Plan Act on this factsheet from the Treasury Department. The IRS website is expected to provide additional updates, tools, and qualification calculators this summer, after the May 17 extended deadline for 2020 income taxes. [Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | Syracuse University | June 14, 2021 ++]

Military Housing Insurance

USMC Family Billed \$14,000 by Private Military Housing Company



A U.S. Marine and his family have been stuck with a \$14,000 bill from a private military housing company, and they are worried others could face similar burdens even if they have renters insurance. Maj. Richard Salchow and his wife Colleen had been away from their home at Camp Pendleton, California for about five hours on 16 JAN when they returned to find their floors flooded. Their washing machine malfunctioned during a load while they were out and left a quarter-inch of water covering the entire first floor. They immediately started vacuuming up the water and contacted their landlord, Lincoln Military Housing, to report the issue, but by then it was too late: The valve between the washer and the water supply had broken and sent so much water leaking throughout the house that it affected the drywall and led to bubbles under the linoleum floors. “I didn’t even know what a water valve was until I had a repair technician come out,” Richard said.

Lincoln, which owns more than 6,000 homes on the coastal Marine base, secured temporary lodging for the couple within a few hours. And the Salchows were confident things would be taken care of promptly considering the company had outright replaced a faulty dishwasher, stove, and refrigerator in the past. “Anytime you call them they fix it,” Colleen said. Fortunately, repairs began by 21 JAN and the couple was able to move back in before the end of the month. But Lincoln said they’d have to file a liability claim for the flooding since it was caused by a washer owned by the family. “I thought okay we’re good because we have a \$100,000 liability policy so there’s no way the repairs could be more than \$100,000,” said Richard, a logistics officer with the 1st Marine Division who has served more than 11 years.

He asked Lincoln for work invoices and began reaching out to his insurance company USAA. Their renters insurance policy documents said damage to base housing was covered as long as he was on active duty at the time and the house was “government-controlled.” Yet that was the problem. An out-of-control load of laundry led to repairs totaling \$14,377.40 in base housing but the Salchows, like many military families these days, lived in what’s called a public-private venture: The federal government owned the land but the house itself was leased by a private company which then rented to service members in exchange for their military housing allowance.

“The home you rent from Lincoln Military Housing is not considered to be Government housing,” a USAA representative told Richard in February, according to a provided transcript. “While Lincoln and many other entities are located on bases, they are companies which contract with the Government to lease the land, build residences and manage the facilities. ... As the location where you live is not considered Government Housing, that provision does not apply.” A USAA official declined to comment on the

specifics of the Salchows' case, but said the company offers renters insurance that covers damage caused by water.

“USAA is well known for providing outstanding claims service to our members. While we cannot speak to the specifics of this claim, a standard renters policy intends to provide coverage for the insured’s personal property and limited liability,” said Rebekah Nelson, a USAA spokesperson, noting the USAA website had information on what is and is not covered. She could not point to a specific insurance product that could have helped the Salchows or others, however. “I asked the USAA insurance adjustor if I could have elected additional coverage for our policy and he indicated that I did not decline any coverage,” Richard said. “We purchased the full renter’s insurance policy from USAA, with liability.”

Still, USAA was able to give them \$1,000 as part of its “good neighbor policy.” And though Richard brought the issue up to his chain of command, there wasn’t much his fellow Marines could do to help in the confusing world of privatized military housing, insurance, and leasing documents. “Am I just not understanding this correctly?” Richard wondered. He also tried negotiating with the base housing office, which initially scheduled a meeting to discuss the issue on a day Richard could not attend since he was training hundreds of miles away in Twentynine Palms, California. The family finally met on 19 APR with housing director Robert Marshall, according to email records, though Richard said he didn’t hear anything more from Marshall until more than a month later despite making several attempts to contact him.

- “I thought that there would be some sort of informal resolution to minimize that bill as much as possible,” Richard said. Instead, the Salchows said at one point they were told by a Lincoln representative that they should consider letting the bill go to collections where a deal could probably be cut to lower the cost.
- “That’s horrible advice to give to anybody,” said Colleen, who has a financial education background and knows issues like these can negatively affect military security clearances and credit scores. “It just felt like a punch to the gut.”

Lincoln Military Housing spokesperson Ashley Gorski Poole declined to comment on the Salchows’ case, citing residents’ privacy, but said in a statement that “although the Department of Defense eliminated the renter’s insurance component of the Basic Allowance for Housing in 2015, Lincoln Military Housing continues to provide renter’s insurance to residents of the Camp Pendleton military housing community through 2021 for personal property contents coverage. However, the insurance provided is not and was never intended to be a substitute for a proper renter’s insurance policy, including liability coverage. “We understand that unforeseen circumstances can occur,” Poole said, adding that Lincoln and its military partners have encouraged families to have renters insurance at “multiple touchpoints,” including a “plain language briefing” prior to residents moving in.

The commanding general and other Marine leaders at Camp Pendleton have taken notice of the Salchows case. A friend close to the family recently wrote about their predicament in a Facebook group for Marine officer spouses, warning that Lincoln Military Housing “seems to have a \$50,000 deductible, at least on some houses at [Camp Pendleton]. So if something belongs to you in your house [and] causes damage to their property, you can end up owing up to \$50,000 in damages.”

Brig. Gen. Daniel Conley “has monitored and directed the advocacy efforts of the Military Housing Office and ordered an information campaign about renters insurance as a way to protect against unforeseen circumstances caused by environmental or user-related incidents that damage either the person’s belongings

or the physical property itself,” said 1st Lt. Charlotte Dennis, a base spokesperson. There is not much Conley or anyone else can or will do about the Salchows’ bill beyond that. “I can honestly see no way we could have possibly planned for this scenario,” Colleen said of the situation in the Facebook post.

Dennis noted in a lengthy written statement that tenant leases “clearly outline that all residents shall be charged for damages caused by the resident” — which the family did not dispute; in fact, they provided a copy of their lease to Task & Purpose — and “residents shall be charged for all damage to the premises as a result of failure to report a problem in a timely manner,” Dennis said. “In addition, residents shall be charged for repair of drain blockages or stoppages caused by resident misuse.”

The statement went on to explain that families must attend a briefing regarding base housing before they move in and officials strongly recommend the use of comprehensive renters insurance for families living on or off base, since tenants “can be held liable for any damages sustained to their residence dependent on the coverage provided by their existing insurance policy,” said Dennis, with potential costs ranging from a “couple hundred dollars to tens-of-thousands.” Dennis added that a comprehensive information campaign was recently launched to “educate and encourage” tenants on having a robust insurance policy. A public affairs story published on 2 JUN, for example, suggested that renters insurance would have helped in a hypothetical case of a microwave catching on fire. But as the Salchows maintain, renters insurance didn’t help in the real-life case of their washing machine malfunctioning while they were away from home.

“This was not misuse on our behalf,” Richard said. “The water valve broke, and we were not using the washing machine inappropriately. We did have a full renters insurance policy, with liability coverage,” he added, saying that Dennis’ statement that service members should “purchase comprehensive renters insurance” was misleading. But in the middle of moving across the country — the family is heading to a new base on the east coast — and trying to check out of their current home in time, the Salchows have decided to just pay it and get it over with, though they worry that other Marines could face similar bills with little means to pay.

“I’d love to keep fighting this but at the same time we’re in the process of closing on a house and I really want to just get this over with and move on,” said Colleen, who said their biggest fear was Richard’s security clearance being affected in the dispute. They agreed to a payment plan in late May with an upfront \$3,594 payment and subsequent payments of nearly \$1,800 every month until November. The agreement noted the charges were due to “flood damages.”

Even so, they can’t help thinking back to their washing machine from before the flood — the washing machine that worked perfectly until they put in a load, hit start, and it didn’t — because the house they moved into on base didn’t come with one. If Lincoln had supplied the washer and dryer, the company would have been responsible for the property damage. But because the washer was the property of the Salchows, and since the home existed in an insurance grey area — where it was located on base, but not considered government housing — that meant that it was their problem. As was the stress it brought on top of daily military life: months of back-and-forth with base housing officials and the chain of command; phone calls and live chats with insurance agents; and yet another complaint being shared widely on social media about privatized military housing.

The military community has no shortage of base housing horror stories. As a special report from Reuters found in 2018, thousands of military families in privatized military housing had been subjected to “serious

health and safety hazards” that included lead poisoning risk, pest infestations, and rampant mold, prompting the Defense Department to introduce the Tenant Bill of Rights.

Despite base officials’ urging the purchase of renters insurance — which, to be clear, has many benefits and does indeed cover an extensive range of issues — Richard and Colleen believe their experience has exposed a “gap” that military leaders should be aware of and other service members need to know about. “It is imperative that military families have an emergency fund that they can use in such an event, until a policy is offered,” Richard said. [Source: Task & Purpose | Paul Szoldra | June 14, 2021 ++]

Military Malpractice Claims

Update 01: Troops Can Finally File Against the Military

The Defense Department on 17 JUN will officially publish the rules governing how uniformed service members or their representatives can file a claim against the military for malpractice. The new regulation, which will take effect 30 days after its publication in the Federal Register, marks a significant step in service members' or families' ability to seek recourse for malpractice. An advance look was posted online 16 JUN.

For decades, the Feres Doctrine -- named for a plaintiff in a landmark 1950 U.S. Supreme Court case -- has kept active-duty military personnel from suing the government over personal injuries they incurred as a result of their service. This made it difficult for service members to seek recourse from the military when their medical treatment was mishandled. But the National Defense Authorization Act passed by Congress in December 2019 contained provisions to change that. Service members -- or their representatives if they are dead or incapacitated -- became eligible to file claims for personal injury or death caused by a military health provider in certain medical treatment facilities.

Bloomberg Government reported in February that troops had filed 227 malpractice claims that had yet to be adjudicated, with a potential total value of \$2.16 billion. The Pentagon has not yet provided updated statistics. The new claims process is in addition to the compensation provided under the military's compensation system, which also covers combat injuries, training mishaps, motor vehicle accidents, or other deaths or disabilities in the line of duty, according to the Federal Register notice. It is separate from the Military Health System Healthcare Resolutions Program, which helps patients obtain more information about medical treatments that may have gone wrong, but is not an avenue for filing claims or legal matters.

There will be no judicial review of adjudicated claims, the Federal Register notice states, and their settlement will be "final and conclusive." There are some exceptions. Claims that challenge discretionary agency policies, known as the discretionary function exemption, cannot be considered, the notice states. The combatant activities exception also applies, though the notice said that would probably occur only in "extremely unusual circumstances such as an attack on a military hospital." To be considered, medical malpractice claims must be for injuries that were "incident to service," according to the register notice. For active-duty service members, this means "almost any injury or illness" that occurred from medical care received at a military treatment facility from a DoD health care provider would qualify. The rules are stricter for reservists. A claim can be filed for reserve component service members only if it is in connection with personal injury or death that occurred while the member was in a federal duty status.

The new claims process is a last resort for those who have suffered malpractice; the notice states that claims are payable only if they can't be settled or paid under any other law. The Defense Department will pay claims under \$100,000 directly to service members or their estates. But claims valued at more than \$100,000 will be reviewed and then paid out by the Treasury Department. Malpractice claims should be filed with the service member's branch, the notice states.

For the Army, that would be the nearest Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, the center judge advocate of the medical center where the alleged malpractice occurred, or with the tort claims division of the Army Claims Service at Fort Meade, Maryland. Navy and Marine Corps claims should be filed with the tort claims unit of the Office of the Judge Advocate General in Norfolk, Virginia. Air Force and Space Force claims should be presented to the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate of the nearest Air Force base, or mailed to the Air Force Legal Operations Agency, Claims and Tort Litigation Division, at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

The new rules set a strict deadline to make claims. Service members must present their claim to the DoD within two years of when the alleged malpractice occurred, though the NDAA allowed service members whose malpractice occurred in 2017 to file claims in 2020. Any written claim from a service member or authorized representative will suffice as long as it contains the basis for the claim, including the conduct that is alleged malpractice, the dollar amount requested for damages, and is signed by the claimant or their representative. Claims must include an affidavit when filed by an attorney or authorized representative, affirming they are authorized to do so on the service member's behalf. And unless the claim covers something that an ordinary layperson can recognize as malpractice, it must include an affidavit from the claimant saying he or she consulted with a health care professional who believes the military health care provider breached the standard of care and caused the alleged harm, according to the notice.

Because claimants have the burden of substantiating their claims, the notice states, they may also submit whatever information and documentation they think is necessary to support it. However, an expert opinion is not necessarily required at the time of filing, the notice adds. The claimant must prove, by a preponderance of evidence, that the military health care provider on duty "had a professional duty to the patient involved and by act or omission breached that duty in a manner that proximately caused the harm," the notice states. The health care provider is required to exercise for the claimant the same level of skill, care and knowledge -- based on national standards, not those of regions, states or localities -- that are expected of those in their field in comparable clinical settings, it adds.

When calculating economic damages, the government will consider past medical expenses incurred, along with future medical expenses, lost earnings, loss of earning capacity, and compensation paid for someone to provide essential household services and daily living activities that the service member can no longer provide for him or herself, according to the notice. Non-economic damages also include past and future pain and suffering, physical disfigurement, and loss of enjoyment of life, up to a total cap of \$500,000.

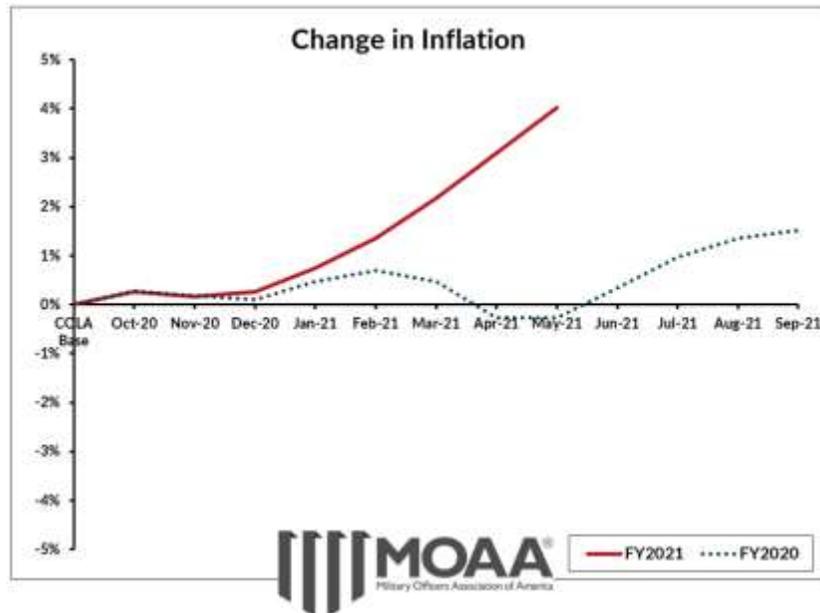
Compensation that the DoD or Veterans Affairs Department has or will pay for the same malpractice harm will be deducted "so that the U.S. does not pay more than once for the injury," the notice states. This could include pay and allowances while on active duty or active status, disability retired or severance pay, incapacitation pay, involuntary and voluntary separation pays and incentives, or death gratuities, among others. The value of Tricare coverage, including Tricare for Life for a disability retiree, family or survivors, also could be deducted from malpractice damage awards. There is no discovery process, the notice said,

but claimants can obtain DoD records that are part of their personnel and medical records. Anyone who wishes to file a comment has 60 days to do so. [Source: Military.com | Stephen Losey | June 16, 2021 ++]

COLA FY 2021

May CPI

The May 2021 CPI is 263.612, 4.0 percent above the FY 2021 COLA baseline. The Consumer Price Index for June is scheduled to be released July 13. The CPI baseline for FY 2021 is 253.412.



The calculation is made by comparing the average CPI from July through September of the current fiscal year to the average for the same months of the year prior. Remember, active duty pay raises are calculated differently. This information is calculated from the non-seasonally adjusted Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Calculation for monthly COLA change: (Monthly CPI-Yearly baseline CPI)/Yearly baseline CPI. Learn more about CPI [on the BLS web page](#). [Source: MOAA Newsletter | June 17, 2021 ++]

RECA

Update 02: Compensation Program Terminates July 10, 2022

The United States conducted nearly 200 atmospheric nuclear weapons development tests from 1945 to 1962. Essential to the nation's nuclear weapons development was uranium mining and processing, which was carried out by tens of thousands of workers. The **Radiation Exposure Compensation Act** (RECA) terminates July 10, 2022. By statute, the RECA Trust Fund terminates 22 years after July 10, 2000. Section 8 of RECA states that claims not filed within 22 years after July 10, 2000 shall be barred. This

unique statute was designed to serve as an expeditious, low-cost alternative to litigation. Significantly, RECA does not require claimants to establish causation. Rather, claimants qualify for compensation by establishing the diagnosis of a listed compensable disease after working or residing in a designated location for a specific period of time.



This legislation provides \$75,000 to the veteran or family with medical documentation of a dozen qualifying diseases. If you know any Vets that served in an atomic area and incurred a compensable disease, during their lifetime, including over 1 dozen cancers (read the below info) and file before July 10, 2022. The application is 25 pages long. Click <https://www.justice.gov/civil/webform/request-reca-claim-form> to request a RECA claim form to be mailed to you. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. You may also request a claim form be mailed to you by contacting the RECA Program at civil.reca@usdoj.gov or calling 1-800-729-7327.

Obtaining the Atomic Veteran Certificate is recommended as part of the submission documentation. The National Cancer Benefits Center is an FL law firm that will research & file on behalf of Vets if interested. You can obtain additional info on this program at the following:

- [Special Benefits to Atomic Veterans Exposed to Radiation - AARP Bulletin](#)
- [Atomic troops' are eligible for benefits | The American Legion](#)
- [IF YOU WERE ONE OF THEM, YOU ARE AN ATOMIC VETERAN! SHOULD YOU BE ON THE VA IONIZING RADIATION REGISTRY?](#)
- [NAAV Atomic Veteran](#)
- [Radiation Exposure Compensation Act](#)
- [Are YOU An Atomic Veteran? - Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Atomic Vets Service Certificate](#)
- Craig S. VandeBerg csvandy9@hotmail.com

[Source: Together We Served | June 2021 ++]

Ultrasounds

The Average Cash Price Of A Hospital Ultrasound In Each State

Florida has the highest average cash price for an ultrasound of the abdomen in a hospital at \$2,295 and New Jersey has the lowest average cash price at \$319, according to a new study from Hospital Pricing Specialists. For the study, Hospital Pricing Specialists analyzed pricing data from 2,078 hospitals that had machine-readable files on their websites. The analysis focused on the cash prices of ultrasounds on the abdomen,

which has the Current Procedural Terminology code 76700. Below is a breakdown of the average cost of a hospital ultrasound of the abdomen in each state:

Alabama — \$860	Kentucky — \$640	Ohio — \$643
Alaska — \$897	Louisiana — \$538	Oklahoma — \$507
Arizona — \$1,125	Maine — \$716	Oregon — \$478
Arkansas — \$388	Maryland — \$434	Pennsylvania — \$548
California — \$1,121	Massachusetts — \$785	Rhode Island — \$386
Colorado — \$899	Michigan — \$548	South Carolina — \$912
Connecticut — \$691	Minnesota — \$556	South Dakota — \$871
Delaware — \$1,155	Mississippi — \$525	Tennessee — \$719
D.C. — \$1,110	Missouri — \$803	Texas — \$1,269
Florida — \$2,295	Montana — \$351	Utah — \$462
Georgia — \$952	Nebraska — \$843	Vermont — \$773
Hawaii — \$365	Nevada — \$1,041	Virginia — \$1,114
Idaho — \$542	New Hampshire — \$565	Washington — \$518
Illinois — \$1,068	New Jersey — \$319	West Virginia — \$385
Indiana — \$678	New Mexico — \$646	Wisconsin — \$679
Iowa — \$736	New York — \$676	Wyoming — \$899
Kansas — \$1,002	North Carolina — \$625	
	North Dakota — \$535	

[Source: Beckers Hospital CFO Report | Alia Paavola | June 16th, 2021 ++]

Concurrent Receipt

Update 58: Join MOAA's Push to End This Unjust Offset



Maj. Richard Star, USAR, here with wife Tonya, died in February after a long fight against lung cancer. Despite his illness, he continued his fight for concurrent receipt. A bill bearing his name now has more than 50 Senate co-sponsors.

A working group of dedicated advocates from The Military Coalition – a consortium of organizations (of which MOAA is a co-chair) representing a combined 5.5 million members – is making progress on concurrent receipt legislation and needs your help with a summer surge. Maj. Richard Star, USAR, namesake of the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S.344), lost his fight with cancer in February of this year. Before the pandemic hit in 2020, he was tenacious – even with terminal lung cancer, he would struggle

down the halls of congressional office buildings, stopping to catch his breath, to make it to the next office to advocate for concurrent receipt.

Military and veterans groups have vowed to continue his work, and have seen some success in recent weeks: The bills recently reached milestones in both chambers, with support from 51 senators and 105 House members, and growing. There are still many lawmakers who would support this legislation if they heard from constituents. Click the links to see whether your [senators](#) or your [House](#) members support this legislation. Need more information? Check out this [Star Act Tracker](#) from Senior Master Sgt. Jeremy Kitzhaber, USAF (Ret), a dedicated volunteer advocate for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

With turmoil over delayed budgets and work on the National Defense Authorization Act, it is impactful to email and call your elected officials asking them to support the Star Act. You can call your lawmaker via MOAA's toll-free Capitol Switchboard at 1-866-272-6622. When you reach out to your lawmaker or their staff, remember these points about the Star Act, and why the incremental approach it represents is so important to make progress. By gaining co-sponsors, we increase awareness and commitment to resolving this inequity for those who were retired early due to combat or combat-related injuries or illnesses.

- ***Two payments, two purposes:*** Retired pay is for vested years of service paid by DoD, while disability compensation is for lifelong injury paid by the VA. To reduce retirement pay because of a disability is an injustice.
- ***An unfair law:*** Title 10 requires a reduction, referred to as an offset, in retirement pay for every dollar of disability received. This cost-saving measure is borne on the back of retirees.
- ***Incremental improvements:*** The VA awards disability in 10% increments. Those who are awarded 50% disability and above who reached 20 years of service were granted concurrent receipt of DoD retired pay and VA disability in 2004.
- ***More work to do:*** Left behind after that 2004 change are those 20-year retirees with a 40% disability rating and below, and those who were medically retired under Chapter 61 with less than 20 years of service.

Lawmakers' main concern with the Star Act is cost. H.R. 1282/S.344 would correct concurrent receipt for the 42,000-plus combat-injured servicemembers under Chapter 61 at an estimated at \$6.9 billion over 10 years. Along with paving the way for further concurrent receipt legislation, this figure is much smaller than those attached to other proposals/groups:

- It would cost \$33 billion over 10 years to grant concurrent receipt for 40% disabled and below and those under Chapter 61, per Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates.
- It would cost \$20 billion over 10 years to grant concurrent receipt for just 40% disabled and below (without helping Chapter 61 retirees), per the CBO.
- The total number of Chapter 61 medical retirees has grown to over 575,000 during GWOT and does not have a cost estimate.

In the year that will see our withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is important to reflect on sacrifice and cost. Our nation's longest war is still ongoing and is expensive, exceeding \$2 trillion. The cost of the war in Iraq is approaching that figure, as brigade combat team rotations there continue. Supporting those injured in a combat zone should be considered part of the cost of war. MOAA and The Military Coalition will continue to advocate for concurrent receipt for all retirees. Addressing those injured in a combat zone is a good step

forward to reaching the concurrent receipt objective; ask your lawmakers to support the Major Richard Star Act today.

At <https://takeaction.moaa.org/moaa/app/write-a-letter?0&engagementId=510849> MOAA has made this easy for you to do by using one of the 3 preformatted editable messages (as appropriate) they have provided to forward to your legislator. [Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Mark Belinsky | June 22, 2021 ++]

Shopping Scams

Prime Day is Coming! Watch For Them

This year, Amazon isn't the only retailer rolling out discounts for Prime Day (June 21-22, 2021). [Walmart](#), [Target](#), and [Kohl's](#), just to name a few, are running competing sales. But more deals mean more chances for scammers to capitalize on the buzz and trick shoppers. Be wary of phishing scams, misleading advertisements, and lookalike websites. Scams to look out for:

- Phishing scams that appear to come from a popular retailer. [Phishing scams increase](#) during busy shopping times, such as Prime Day or Black Friday. When you are making a lot of purchases, it's easy to lose track of exactly what you bought and where you shopped. That makes you more likely to fall for a phishing scam posing as a big name store.
- Look out for unsolicited emails, texts, or phone calls. These messages may claim you have a free gift waiting for you or that there is a problem with a delivery – all you need to do is click on a link or give up your personal information. One recent phishing con claims to be [Amazon calling](#) to fix an issue with your account. This a ruse meant to get your credit card information, account login details, or remote access to your computer.
- Beware of false advertising and phony websites. When searching online or browsing social media, watch out for ads that point to scam websites. Con artists often create lookalike websites that, at first glance, appear to belong to a trusted retailer. But when you look more closely at the URL, you'll noticed that the domain name is slightly different (i.e., Instead of Popularstore.com, the URL might be PopvlarStore.com or PopularStoreOnline.com).
- Always make sure websites use the correct spelling of a business name and have legitimate contact information and customer service numbers. Also, use common sense when evaluating deals. If a company claims to be selling the hottest item of the year at a super low price, it's probably a con.

Protect yourself from Prime Day scams:

- Beware of fake lookalike websites: Check the URL, watch for bad grammar, research the age of the domain, search for contact information, and read online reviews.
- Professional photos do not mean it's a real offer. Scammers often steal photos off other websites, so don't believe what you see.
- Make sure the website is secure. Look for the "https" in the URL (the extra "s" is for "secure") and a small lock icon on the address bar. Never enter payment or personal information into a website with only "http." It is NOT secure.

- Be careful purchasing sought-after products. If something is sold out everywhere, don't be tempted by a seemingly great deal. Scammers often trick shoppers by offering the most popular products at low prices. Here's one example involving [game consoles](#).
- Pay with a credit card. It's always best to make online purchases with your credit card. If any shady charges turn up later, you will be able to contest them through your credit card company. Be very wary of any retailer that asks you to pay by [digital wallet apps](#), prepaid money cards, or other non-traditional payment methods.

For More Information

Learn more about avoiding [scam social media ads](#) when shopping online. Read about scammers' [tracking code trick](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [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](#). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | June 4, 2021 ++]

Pension Poaching Scam

How Can You Avoid It?

Veterans, especially older veterans, are prime targets for "pension poaching," where scammers use any number of methods to either swindle targets out of earned benefits or convince them to apply for benefits they haven't earned ... often after paying fraudulent application fees. A VA blog post [covered the issue last month](#), while the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs sent out a [warning June 15](#). Here's some basic information about pension poaching from those pieces and others.

Warning Signs

Steer clear of individuals or organizations with financial or benefits pitches that include:

- Requesting you move money into different accounts or reallocate investments to qualify for a VA pension payment.
- Asking for money to handle your claim – especially upfront – or charging for application forms. While some attorneys or claims agents may receive compensation for help with a pension claim, they must be accredited and the claim must be approved before that fee can be charged.
- Promising "guaranteed eligibility" for a particular benefit, or a lump-sum payment upon approval for a benefit.
- Seeking personal information over the phone, to include credit card or other billing information.
- Offering to send benefits directly to a caregiver's account.

In some cases, the scammer's main goal may be to solicit an "application fee" without any intent of applying for any benefits, or to obtain your personal information. In others, unaccredited individuals may apply for VA benefits on your behalf ... and per the VA, you may be required to repay those benefits if it's determined you are not eligible.

Filing a Complaint

If you believe you've been targeted by scammers regarding your VA benefits, you can file a complaint via the VA's national call center at (800) 827-1000, or by visiting the department's Office of Inspector General [online](#). For other types of pension fraud, contact the [Federal Trade Commission](#) or find your [state](#)

[attorney general's office](#). Get more information on pension poaching from the VA [at this link \(PDF\)](#).
[Source: MOAA Newsletter | Kevin Lilley | June 22, 2021 ++]

Ticket/Event Scams

Fake Events & Phony Tickets Surprise Festival Goers

With COVID-19 restrictions easing up, many people are looking forward to fun festivals this summer. As usual, scammers are finding ways to take advantage of the building excitement. This time, they are cashing in with phony tickets—and even fake events.

How the Scam Works

- You see an amazing deal on tickets to a summer festival in your area, usually through a link on social media. The event promises live music, all-you-can-eat meals, craft beer or wine, or other fun activities.
- When you click the social media link, it takes you to a professional website with fantastic pictures. You enter your credit card information to buy tickets, and you think you are all set. But before you buy, do a little research. Whether the event is non-existent, merely disappointing, or you just bought phony tickets, the result is the same: someone pockets your hard-earned money!
- BBB Scam Tracker has received numerous reports from people who either purchased fake tickets to real events or bought tickets to events that never materialized.
- One consumer who purchased tickets to a fake beer crawl reported: “Reviews across multiple platforms make it clear that these events are at best extremely misleading or at worst canceled. No refunds are given, even when their inconsistent and mostly-unreachable customer service email address responds to confirm a refund will be provided.”

Protect yourself from festival scams:

- Research before you buy. Search online for the name of the festival and make sure the name advertised matches the website. Scammers often use names that sound similar to those of real festivals.
- Check for (working) contact information. Be sure the festival website has a real phone number and email address.
- Watch out for prices that sound too good to be true. There is no way a festival can offer tickets at extremely low prices without losing money. If the prices are much lower than elsewhere, it's likely a scam.
- Pay with a credit card. You can dispute the charges if the business doesn't come through. Be wary of online sellers that don't accept credit cards.
- Avoid tickets sold on Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, and other free online listings. Scammers are skilled at providing realistic tickets and fake receipts. Check out third-party ticket sites at BBB.org before making purchases.

For More Information

Read [BBB's tips for](#) for buying tickets to an event. For general information on how to avoid scams, visit [BBB.org/AvoidScams](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [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](#). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | June 25, 2021 ++]

Tax Burden on Nebraska Vets

As of JUN 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 ways including sales taxes, excise taxes, license taxes, income taxes, intangible taxes, property taxes, estate taxes and inheritance taxes. Depending on where you live, you may end up paying all of them or just a few. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you move to Nebraska in 2021.

Sales Taxes

The Nebraska state sales tax rate is 5.5%, and the average NE sales tax after local surtaxes is 6.8% which is a lower state sales tax than 50% of states

- Groceries are exempt from the Nebraska sales tax. Nebraska treats both candy and soda as groceries for sales tax purposes. Other items including gasoline, alcohol, and cigarettes are subject to various Nebraska excise taxes in addition to the sales tax.
- Nebraska has 149 [special sales tax jurisdictions](#) with local sales taxes in addition to the state sales tax.
- Counties and cities in Nebraska are allowed to charge an additional local sales tax on top of the state sales tax. The state capitol, Omaha, has a local tax of 2.5% on prepared food and drinks. Prepared food sale tax is allowed up to 9.5%.

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 state government are the fuel tax on gasoline and the so-called "sin tax" collected on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. Nebraska's excise taxes are flat per-unit taxes that must be paid directly to the state 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 merchants pass on the excise tax to the customer through higher prices for the taxed goods. An average of \$350 in yearly excise taxes per capita is collected, lower than 78% of the other 50 states. Unlike the Sales Tax, excise taxes are not generally deductible on Nebraska income tax returns or on your federal tax return. However, the IRS occasionally allows certain excise taxes to be deducted for certain tax years

- **Alcohol:** Beer: \$0.31 per gal | Wine: \$0.95 per gal | Liquor \$3.75 per gal. The excise tax on beer is higher than 60% of the other 50 states and is ranked #20 out of all states. The excise tax on wine is higher than 54% of all states and is ranked #23 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on Spirits is lower than 72% of all states and is ranked #36 out of the 50 states. Note that the IRS also collects a federal excise taxes on alcoholic beverages, which are included separately from this state's alcohol taxes in the final purchase price
- **Cannabis:** none
- **Cellphone:** The average tax collected on cell phone plans in Nebraska is \$18.64 per phone service plan, the highest cellphone taxes in the country. Nebraska's average cellphone tax is ranked #1 out of the 50 states. The Nebraska 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 Nebraska excise tax on cigarettes is \$0.64 per 20 cigarettes, lower than 74% of the other 50 states. North Carolina's excise tax on cigarettes is ranked #37 out of the 50 states. The Nebraska cigarette tax 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 Nebraska excise tax on gasoline is 25.6¢ per gallon, lower than 52% of the other 50 states. Nebraska's excise tax on gasoline is ranked #26 out of the 50 states. The gas tax is included in the pump price at all gas stations in Nebraska and is in addition to the federal excise tax of 18.4¢ per gallon on gasoline and 24.4¢ per gallon, on diesel. The federal tax was last raised in OCT 1993 and is not indexed to inflation, which has increased a total of 77% from 1993 to 2020. Refer to <https://www.salestaxhandbook.com/maine/gasoline-fuel> for all state and federal taxes by type of fuel
- **Vehicle:** Nebraska 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 Nebraska Department of Transportation and receive documentation (registration and title papers) proving the fees were paid.

Personal Income Taxes

The average family pays \$1,361 in income taxes which is ranked 27th of all 51 states.

Tax Rate Range: Low – 2.46%; High – 6.84%

Income Brackets: Four. Single Lowest – \$0 to \$3,229; Highest – 31,160+
 Couple Lowest – \$0 to \$6,439; Highest – \$62,320+

Personal Exemptions: \$140 tax credit for each claimed (yourself/spouse/children)

Standard Deduction: Single \$7,000, Married \$14,000, HOH \$10,300

Medical/Dental Deduction: Federal amount less any state or local income taxes included in those deductions.

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Taxes: Taxes paid on Social Security income will reduce by 5% in 2021, 20% in 2022 and 30% in 2023. The exemption would continue to grow until it hits 100% in 2030

Retired Military Pay: Exempt effective 2022.

Survivor Benefit Plan: Fully taxable

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.

Website: Nebraska Department of Revenue <https://revenue.nebraska.gov>

Tax Forms:

- https://revenue.nebraska.gov/sites/revenue.nebraska.gov/files/doc/tax-forms/2020/f_1040n_booklet.pdf Tax Instruction Booklet
- https://revenue.nebraska.gov/sites/revenue.nebraska.gov/files/doc/tax-forms/2020/f_1040n.pdf Form 1040N Individual Income Tax Return
- <https://revenue.nebraska.gov/about/forms> All Tax forms

Late Penalty. The interest rate for any unpaid tax is 3%, and is calculated from the original due date of the return, even if an extension of time to file is granted.

Property Taxes

The median property tax is \$2,164 per year for a home worth the median value of \$123,300. Counties collect an average of 1.76% of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax per year. Nebraska is ranked number 17 out of the fifty states, in order of the average amount of property taxes collected. The state's median income is \$59,730 per year, so the median yearly property tax paid by residents amounts to approximately 3.62% of their yearly income. North Carolina is ranked 14th highest of the 50 states for property taxes as a percentage of median income.

The exact property tax levied depends on the county in which the property is located in. Sarpy County collects the highest property tax in Nebraska, levying an average of \$3,281.00 (2.07% of median home value) yearly in property taxes, while Grant County has the lowest property tax in the state, collecting an average tax of \$800.00 (1.95% of median home value) per year.

Property taxes are collected on a county level, and each county 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 Nebraska. For more localized property tax rates refer to the county list at <http://www.tax-rates.org/nebraska/property-tax#Counties>. Your county's property tax assessor will send you a bill detailing the exact amount of property tax you owe every year.

The Nebraska Homestead Exemption Program offers a full or partial property tax exemption for eligible Veterans and Surviving Spouses. To qualify the Veteran or Surviving Spouse must own and occupy the homestead January 1 through August 15. The property tax exemption categories are:

- **Veterans totally disabled by a nonservice-connected accident or illness** – Partial exemption based on income limits: This exemption is available only to the Veteran and must meet income levels in the Nebraska Department of Revenue, 2020 Household Income Table.
- **Qualified totally disabled Veterans and their Surviving Spouses** – 100% exempt: This exemption is available to a Veteran receiving compensation from the VA because of a 100%

disability that was service-connected. This homestead is 100% exempt regardless of homestead value and income level. This exemption is also available to the Surviving Spouse of:

- Any Veteran who died because of a service-connected disability
 - A Service member whose death while on active duty was service-connected
 - A Service member who died while on active duty during wartime; or
 - A Veteran who received compensation from the VA because of a 100% disability that was service-connected
 - To remain eligible the Surviving Spouse must not remarry until age 57.
- **Veterans whose home was substantially contributed to by the Department of Veterans Affairs and their Surviving Spouses – 100% exempt.** This exemption is available to a paraplegic Veteran or multiple amputee whose home is substantially contributed to by the VA. This homestead is 100% exempt regardless of homestead value and income level. This exemption is also available to the Surviving Spouse as long as they do not remarry until age 57.

Nebraska Wartime Veteran Homestead Property Tax Exemptions Program? In addition to the requirements above the Veteran must have received an honorable discharge or general discharge under honorable conditions and must be a person who has been on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, or a U.S. citizen at the time of service with military forces of a government allied with the U.S., during the following date ranges:

- World War II, December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946
- Korean War, June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955
- Vietnam War, February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 (in the Republic of Vietnam)
- Vietnam War, August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975
- Lebanon, August 25, 1982 to February 26, 1984
- Grenada, October 23, 1983 to November 23, 1983
- Panama, December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990
- Persian Gulf War beginning August 2, 1990; and
- Global War on Terror beginning September 14, 2001.

To apply applicants must file a Form 458 (for the Veterans totally disabled by a nonservice-connected accident or illness exemption applicants must file a Schedule 1 Income Statement, Form 458 SCH 1). For the first year, include a completed Certification of Disability for Homestead Exemption, *Form 458B, or a certification of disability from the VA. All forms must be filed with the county assessor after February 1 and by June 30 each year.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

Nebraska's inheritance tax, which is collected at the county level, applies to bequests, devises, or transfers of property or any other interest in trust or otherwise having characteristics of annuities, life estates, terms for years, remainders, or reversions. The inheritance tax is 1% of the clear market value of the property over the exempt amount of \$40,000; this applies to parents, siblings, and other relatives of the decedent. However, in some instances, the inheritance tax exemption is \$15,000; this applies to a decedent's distant relatives, including aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. The Nebraska inheritance tax is computed on the fair market value of such annuities, life estates, terms for years, remainders, and reversions. The fair market value is the present value as determined under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended, and its applicable regulations with respect to estate tax. The Nebraska estate tax and generation-

skipping transfer tax have been repealed for decedents dying or transfers made on or after Jan. 1, 2007. For further information, visit the Nebraska Department of Revenue site.

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/statereportcard>

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For further information visit the Nebraska Department of Revenue <https://revenue.nebraska.gov> website.
[Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#NEBRASKA> | June 2021 ++]

*** General Interest ***



Notes of Interest

JUN 16 thru 30, 2021

- **White Castle Hot Dogs.** World War II was as tough on White Castle economically as it was on everyone else. Beef rations limited White Castle's supply, which meant it had to turn to other products to get by. For a brief time, hot dogs and fried eggs were just as important as sliders and sustained the chain until the post-war burger boom.
- **Navy Grooming Standards.** The Navy announced this week that “the authority granted to commanding officers to optionally relax hair grooming standards is rescinded,” according to a Naval administrative message. The policy change takes effect immediately.
- **POW/MIA.** At least 51 unidentified crew members of the USS Oklahoma were returned to Hickam Field on 24 JUN — and while no families were there to rejoice over the identification of a relative, as has been the case for 343 other crew mainly in recent years — the U.S. military gave the Dec. 7, 1941, heroes full honors.
- **USPS.** The Postal Service, in addition to pursuing service changes that would slow 40% of first-class mail, is pursuing a new service standard that would slow delivery of about a third of small, lightweight packages from a three-day service standard to a four or five-day standard.
- **Insulin.** Walmart will offer a less expensive private label version of analog insulin for diabetes patients who struggle to afford their medication, the retail and pharmacy giant said 29 JUN. ReliOn NovoLog will become available at Walmart pharmacies the week of 27 JUN and at Sam's Club

pharmacies in mid-July. A vial of ReliOn NovoLog will cost \$72.88, and a package of prefilled pens will cost \$85.88.

[Source: Various | June 30, 2021 ++]

RP-US Relations

Update 09: RP Again Delays Abrogation of Key Security Pact with U.S.



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on 14 JUN again suspended his decision to terminate a key defense pact with the United States, which he has asked to provide more aid and coronavirus vaccines in exchange for retaining the accord. Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said, without elaborating, that Duterte suspended the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement for another six months to allow both sides to address his concerns. Terminating the pact would be a major blow to one of America's oldest alliances in Asia.

Duterte's administration notified the U.S. government in February last year that it intended to abrogate the 1998 agreement, which allows the entry of large numbers of American forces for joint combat training with Philippine troops and lays down the legal terms for their temporary stay. The maneuvers involved thousands of American and Philippine military personnel in land, sea and air drills that often included live-fire exercises in pre-pandemic times. The pact's termination would have taken effect after 180 days, but Duterte has repeatedly delayed the effectivity of his decision.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana welcomed the president's decision, which he said would give the two governments more time to review the pact. "Our bilateral cooperation with the U.S. is geared toward upholding our national interest and, to the extent necessary, to enhance the Philippines' defense capability," Lorenzana said. Duterte said in February that if the U.S. wants to keep the agreement, "they have to pay." "It's a shared responsibility, but your share of responsibility does not come free," Duterte said then. In December, he warned that he would proceed with the abrogation if the U.S. does not provide at least 20 million doses of vaccine. "If they cannot deliver even a minimum of 20 million vaccine, they better get out. No vaccine, no stay here," Duterte said.

Critics hit Duterte for the remarks, which Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who heads the Senate committee on national defense and generally supports Duterte, said "may have given the impression that the Philippines is a nation of extortionists." Lacson said "one cannot put a price tag on the value" of the Visiting Forces

Agreement. Duterte has often lashed out at U.S. security policies while nurturing relations with China and Russia. But his foreign and defense secretaries have cited the importance of the U.S. alliance.

The U.S. military presence in the region has been seen as a counterbalance to China, which has aggressively asserted claims to vast areas of the disputed South China Sea despite a 2016 international arbitration ruling that invalidated their historic basis. China, the Philippines, Vietnam and three other governments have been locked in the territorial standoff for decades. [Source: The Associated Press| Jim Gomez | June 14, 2021 ++]

U.S. Embassy Manila

Health Alert: Quarantine Update, July 1-31, 2021



June 30, 2021

Below are the current quarantine classifications according to the Philippine government:

Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) through July 15, 2021

- Mindanao - Region 11: Davao Oriental, Davao Occidental, Davao de Oro, Davao del Sur, and Davao del Norte

Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) through July 31, 2021

- Luzon – Region 2: Cagayan; Cordillera Administrative Region: Apayao; Region 3: Bataan; Region 4-A: Lucena City; Region 4-B: Puerto Princesa; Region 5: Naga City
- Visayas – Region 6: Iloilo City, and Iloilo; Region 7: Negros Oriental
- Mindanao – Region 9: Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga del Norte; Region 10: Cagayan de Oro City; Region 11: Davao City; CARAGA – Butuan City, Dinagat Islands, and Surigao del Sur

General Community Quarantine (GCQ) with some restrictions through July 15, 2021

- NCR– Metro Manila, Rizal, and Bulacan

General Community Quarantine (GCQ) with heightened restrictions through July 15, 2021

- Cavite and Laguna

General Community Quarantine (GCQ) through July 15, 2021

- Luzon – Cordillera Administrative Region: Ifugao; Region 2: Santiago City
- Visayas – Region 6: Guimaras, Aklan, Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Antique, and Capiz
- Mindanao – Region 9: Zamboanga Sibugay, and Zamboanga City; CARAGA: Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Norte, and Agusan del Sur

General Community Quarantine (GCQ) through July 31, 2021

- Luzon – Cordillera Administrative Region: Baguio City; Region 2: Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, and Quirino; Region 4-A: Batangas, and Quezon
- Mindanao - Region 10: Iligan City; Region 12: General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, Cotabato, South Cotabato, and Cotabato City

All other areas are under Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ).

For quarantine classification protocols and regulations, visit the [Philippine COVID -19 website](#). The Philippine government mandated all persons to wear full-coverage [face shields together with face masks](#) while in public places. Local governments continue to implement additional requirements to slow the virus’ spread.

On June 10, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) issued [Resolution 120](#) providing regulations on the inbound international travel to any port of the Philippines of all fully vaccinated individuals who have been vaccinated in the Philippines, effective June 16. The Resolution also provides regulations on movement of fully vaccinated seniors in the country.

Actions to Take:

- Monitor the [Philippine Department of Health](#) website and the [Embassy’s COVID-19 webpage](#) for updated information about conditions in the Philippines.
- Consult the [Philippine’s National Task Force Against COVID-19 social media page](#) for information and updates.

Assistance:

- U.S. Embassy in the Philippines: +63(2) 5301-2000 or ACSInfoManila@state.gov
- State Department – Consular Affairs 888-407-4747 or 202-501-4444
- [Philippines Country Information](#)
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) to receive security updates
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

[Source: U.S. Embassy in the Philippines | Veteran Affairs | June 30, 2021 ++]

Philippine Retirement Authority
Update 02: Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV)

The Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV) is issued by the Bureau of Immigration (BI) of the Republic of the Philippines under the Retirement Program of the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) to

foreigners and overseas Filipinos. It entitles the holder to multiple-entry privileges with the right to stay permanently/indefinitely in the Philippines. A retiree who applies for a Special Resident Retiree Visa (SRRV) has the option to enroll to the program based from his retirement status. Retirement Option and their Required Time Deposit are:

1. With Pension - 50 years old and above - the required time deposit is US\$10,000.00 plus a monthly pension of US\$800.00 for a single applicant and US\$1,000 for couple.

2. Without Pension

- 35 to 49 years old - US\$50,000.00 time deposit
- 50 years old and above - US\$20,000.00 time deposit
- Former Filipino Citizens (at least 35 years old, regardless of the number of dependents - US\$1,500.00)
- Ambassadors of Foreign Countries who served and retired in the Philippines, current and former staff members of international organizations including ADB (at least 50 years old) - US\$1,500.00

A resident retiree can bring with him, without additional deposit, his spouse and child who is unmarried and below 21 years old or if the spouse is not joining, two children (provided they are unmarried and under 21 years of age.) Additional children with the same qualifications may also be allowed to join the principal retiree provided there is an additional deposit of US\$15,000.00 per child. The said time deposit however, is subject the same and conditions with that of the principal deposit. This does not apply to former Filipino Citizens.

The holder of the SRRV may reside in the Philippines without securing extensions of his stay from the Bureau of Immigration. PRA members who are holders of valid SRRV are exempted from paying travel tax provided they have not stayed in the Philippines for more than one year from the date of last entry into the country. SRRV holders cannot own real property in the Philippines? However, if he or she is legally married to a Philippine citizen, he or she may construct a residential unit on a parcel of land owned and/or registered in the name of Philippine spouse. Natural-born former Filipinos whose SRRV has been issued may own/acquire a maximum area of 5,000 square meters of urban land and three (3) hectares of agricultural land.

The dollar deposit may be converted into peso after 30 days upon issuance of the Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV). The approval of your application will come from the Bureau of Immigration. The pre-evaluation of the application is made by the Philippine Retirement Authority where applications are filed. Processing time takes seven to ten working days upon receipt of complete requirements. Spouses and unmarried minor children can be granted an indefinite privilege to reside in the Philippines if they are accompanying or joining you soon after your admission into the country as such. There is an additional deposit of US\$15,000.00 or any equivalent acceptable foreign currency for each additional legitimate or legally adopted unmarried child under twenty-one (21) years of age.

SSRV Benefits include:

- Permanent non-immigrant status with multiple-entry privileges through the Special Resident Retiree's Visa;
- Exemption from customs duties and taxes for the importation of personal effects;
- Exemption from Exit Clearance and Re-entry Permits;

- Exemption from payment of travel tax provided the retiree has not stayed in the Philippines for more than one year from date of his last entry into the country;
- Conversion of the requisite deposit into active investments, including purchase of condominium unit;
- Interest on the foreign currency deposit is tax-free and payable to retiree in Philippine Pesos;
- Foreign currency time deposit can be converted into Philippine Pesos deposit, but interest is subject to withholding tax;
- Pension, annuities remitted to the Philippines are tax-free; and
- Guaranteed repatriation of the requisite deposit including invested profits, capital gains and dividends accrued from investments, upon compliance with Bangko Sentral rules and regulations.

Requirements for SRRV

- Completed Philippine Retirement Authority application form which can be downloaded at https://www.philembassy.no/sites/default/files/downloads/philippine_srrv_application_form.pdf
- Valid passport;
- DFA Medical Examination Form No. 11 accomplished by a licensed physician from the applicant's place of origin, including AIDS Test, duly authenticated by the Philippine Embassy/Consulate posted there or PRA Medical Certificate (RSSC Form No. 002) accomplished by a licensed physician in the Philippines;
- Certification by PRA shortlisted bank of the requisite deposit in the following categories;
 - With Pension - 50 years old and above - the required time deposit is US\$10,000.00 plus a monthly pension of US\$800.00 for a single applicant and US\$1,000 for couple.
 - Without Pension
 - 35 to 49 years old - US\$50,000.00 time deposit
 - 50 years old and above - US\$20,000.00 time deposit
 - Former Filipino Citizens (at least 35 years old, regardless of the number of dependents - US\$1,500.00)
 - Ambassadors of Foreign Countries who served and retired in the Philippines, current and former staff members of international organizations including ADB (at least 50 years old) - US\$1,500.00
- Police Clearance, duly authenticated by the Philippine Embassy/Consulate, issued abroad or National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Clearance, issued in the Philippines;
- Photographs, 2.4 cms and 5 cms. six (6) pieces each;
- If the spouse is joining the applicant, Marriage Certificate or Marriage Contract if the applicant's marriage was solemnized in the Philippines or Marriage Certificate duly authenticated by the Philippine Embassy/Consulate nearest the applicant's residence abroad if the marriage was contracted abroad (under PRA rules, should the resident retiree suffer an untimely demise, the surviving spouse who is a holder of SRRV has the option to become the principal retiree using the original principal dollar deposit as his/her qualifying deposit. If he/she chooses not to, the law on succession shall apply);
- If dependent/s is/are joining the applicant, Birth Certificate/s of dependent/s born in the Philippines or Birth Certificate/s or Household Register duly authenticated by the Philippine/Consulate nearest the applicant's residence abroad; and
- Payment 3,600 NOK

[Source: <https://www.philembassy.no/consular-services/visa/special-resident-retirees-visa-srrv> | June 2021 ++]

Afghan War

Update 07: Pentagon Has No Idea How the Afghan Air Force Will Stay In the Air

There's a good chance that most of the Afghan military's planes and helicopters will be unable to fly shortly after all US troops leave the country, and the Pentagon does not yet have a plan for how to keep the Afghan Air Force in the fight against the Taliban. Even though the Defense Department has spent more than \$8.5 billion since 2010 to develop an independent Afghan Air Force, the Afghans rely heavily on civilian contractors to perform most of their aircraft maintenance, according to a recent report from the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

"Contractors provide 100% of the maintenance of Afghan Air Force Black Hawks and C-130s and a significant share of maintenance of its light combat support aircraft," said John F. Sopko, the consistently blunt Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "DOD's Train, Advise, and Assist Command – Air (TAAC-Air) reports that no Afghan airframe can be sustained as combat effective for more than a few months without contractor support. So this is a critical need." But Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters in May that American contractors are leaving Afghanistan by September along with U.S. troops.

With the U.S. withdrawal roughly three months away, defense officials are still coming up with a plan for how contractors could continue to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on 15 JUN. "All of those decisions have not been completed, but rest assured: We're working hard on that, and when we have more discrete solutions to present, we'll do that," Kirby said during a Pentagon news conference. Airpower is the one major advantage that the Afghan security forces have over the Taliban, Bradley Bowman of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank told NBC News. "If we don't help them maintain those aircraft, then the Afghan security forces will be deprived of that advantage, and that could have a decisive impact on the battlefield and ultimately on the state of the Afghan government," Bowman told NBC.

Jack McCain, a former advisor to the Afghan Air Force and son of Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), said that the Taliban knows how important airpower is to the Afghan security forces so they assassinate Afghan pilots and try to shoot down Afghan helicopters, especially the Black Hawks provided by the U.S. government. "The pilots I worked with are brave beyond measure," McCain said. "We often had occasions where those pilots would remain in a landing zone, under fire, so wounded could be loaded. They are asked to fly to the toughest places in Afghanistan, on a regular basis, and do so day in and day out. I've never seen the like."

Austin told reporters in May that the Defense Department plans to support the Afghan military with "over the horizon logistics" following the troop withdrawal. So far, none of the neighboring countries have announced that they have agreed to host US troops for such a purpose. A State Department spokesperson had nothing to announce on 15 JUN when asked whether any countries in the region had agreed to host U.S. troops to support counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Defense Intelligence Agency believes the Taliban appear to be preparing to capture Afghan cities and other urban centers, Wall Street Journal reporter Sune Engel Rasmussen first revealed.

“We’re mindful of the need for good aircraft maintenance, and we’re certainly mindful of how important the Afghan Air Force Special Mission Wing is to their self-defense capabilities,” Kirby said. “I can assure you that we’re working on this very, very hard and when we have more details to provide, we certainly will.” A spokesman for U.S Central Command declined to provide any specific information about what options are under consideration to support the Afghan Air Force. “We continue to explore the options to keep the Afghan Air Force flying but we are not going to disclose details as they have not been finalized,” said Army Maj. John Rigsbee.

The issue now is whether the Afghan government will be able to hire its own contractors to keep its aircraft flying, said Jonathan Schroden, an Afghanistan expert with CNA, a federally funded research and development center. “That’s an open question,” Schroden said. “I have not seen any indications to suggest that the Afghan government has a solution for that – at least, as of yet.” Without contractor support, the only aircraft that the Afghans would possibly still be able to fly would be their fleet of Russian made Mi-17 helicopters because the U.S. military has trained a number of Afghan service members to maintain them, he said.

That means most Afghan troops and police on the ground would have to fight without any sort of close air support, the ability to be resupplied by air, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft, Schroden said. “If the air force is grounded, either entirely or in large part, it would be a game changer for the military balance between the ANDSF and the Taliban,” Schroden said. “Because air dominance is one of the few – if the only – facets where the ANDSF have total overmatch on the Taliban’s fighting force.” [Source: Task & Purpose | Jeff Schogol | June 09, 2021 ++]

Afghan Withdrawal

Update 08: Roughly 650 U.S. Troops Are Expected To Remain

Roughly 650 U.S. troops are expected to remain in Afghanistan to provide security for diplomats after the main American military force completes its withdrawal, which is set to be largely done in the next two weeks, U.S. officials told The Associated Press on 24 JUL In addition, several hundred additional American forces will remain at the Kabul airport, potentially until September, to assist Turkish troops providing security, as a temporary move until a more formal Turkey-led security operation is in place, the officials said. Overall, officials said the U.S. expects to have American and coalition military command, its leadership and most troops out by July Fourth, or shortly after that, meeting an aspirational deadline that commanders developed months ago.

The officials were not authorized to discuss details of the withdrawal and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. The departure of the bulk of the more than 4,000 troops that have been in the country in recent months is unfolding well before President Joe Biden’s 11 SEP deadline for withdrawal. And it comes amid accelerating Taliban battlefield gains, fueling fears that the Afghan government and its military could collapse in a matter of months.

Officials have repeatedly stressed that security at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul is a critical requirement to keeping any U.S. diplomatic staff in Afghanistan. Still, the decision to keep additional troops there for several more months makes it more complicated for the Biden administration to

declare a true end to America’s longest war until later this fall. And it keeps the embattled country near the forefront of U.S. national security challenges, even as the White House tries to put the 20-year-old war behind it and focus more on threats from China and Russia.

Getting most troops out by early July had been in doubt because of complications including an outbreak of COVID-19 at the U.S. Embassy and the push to get Afghan interpreters and others who helped the U.S. out of the country. Officials said U.S. commanders and NATO allies in Afghanistan have been able to overcome logistical hurdles that might have prolonged the withdrawal process. But they also warned that plans in place for the final stages of the U.S. military withdrawal could change if airport security agreements fall through or there are other major, unforeseen developments. As recently as last week, there was discussion of possibly extending the U.S. troop presence at Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul, but officials said the U.S. presence at the base is expected to end in the next several days.

The roughly 650 U.S. troops that are planned to be a more permanent force presence in Afghanistan will provide security for the U.S. Embassy and some ongoing support at the airport. Officials said the U.S. has agreed to leave a C-RAM — or Counter-Rocket, Artillery, Mortar system — at the airport, as well as troops to operate it, as part of an agreement with Turkey. The U.S. also plans to leave aircrew for helicopter support at the airport. According to the officials, Turkey has largely agreed to provide security at the airport as long as it receives support from American forces. U.S. and Turkish military officials are meeting in Ankara this week to finalize arrangements.

On 23 JUN, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said there is not yet a written agreement with Turks on airport security. He said he did not want to speak about specifics before there is a final agreement, but added, “I feel very comfortable that security at the Kabul airport will be maintained and the Turks will be a part of that.” The U.S. troop departure, which began with Biden’s announcement in April that he was ending U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan, is ramping up just as the administration moves ahead with plans to evacuate tens of thousands of interpreters and others who worked with American forces during the war and now fear for their safety.

A senior administration official said 24 JUN that planning has accelerated in recent days to relocate the Afghans and their families to other countries or U.S. territories while their visa applications are processed. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss unannounced plans. The administration intends to carry out the evacuation later this summer, likely in August, according to a second official familiar with the deliberations but not authorized to discuss them publicly. The Pentagon has said the military is prepared to assist the State Department as needed but indicated that charter flights might be adequate to move the Afghan visa applicants, thus not necessarily requiring a military airlift.

Officials said that NATO allies, such as Germany, are also very close to being completely out of the country. Senior Pentagon leaders, including Austin, have been cautious in recent weeks when asked about the troop withdrawal, and they have declined to provide any public details on when the last troops would leave, citing security concerns. On 25 JUN, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, chair of the High Council for National Reconciliation, are meeting with Biden at the White House. The two Afghan leaders also are to meet at the Pentagon with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and possibly other administration officials, the Pentagon announced. [Source: The Associated Press | Lolita Baldor & Robert Burns | June 25, 2021 ++]

Afghan Withdrawal

Update 09: It's imminent: After nearly 20 years U.S. to leave Bagram



An Afghan Army soldier walks at the gate of Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan, June 25, 2021 (left) and A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III cargo aircraft taxis to its parking spot Bagram Airfield (right)

For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the U.S. drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban. In just a matter of days, the last U.S. troops will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy. "Bagram grew into such a massive military installation that, as with few other bases in Afghanistan and even Iraq, it came to symbolize and epitomize the phrase 'mission creep,'" said Andrew Watkins, Afghanistan senior analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

U.S. Central Command said last week that it's well past 50 percent done packing up Bagram, and the rest is going fast. American officials have said the entire pullout of U.S. troops will most likely be completely finished by 4 JUL. The Afghan military will then take over Bagram as part of its continuing fight against the Taliban — and against what many in the country fear will be a new eruption of chaos. The departure is rife with symbolism. Not least, it's the second time that an invader of Afghanistan has come and gone through Bagram.

The Soviet Union built the airfield in the 1950s. When it invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to back a communist government, it turned it into its main base from which it would defend its occupation of the country. For 10 years, the Soviets fought the U.S.-backed mujahedeen, dubbed freedom fighters by President Ronald Reagan, who saw them as a front-line force in one of the last Cold War battles. The Soviet Union negotiated its withdrawal in 1989. Three years later, the pro-Moscow government collapsed, and the mujahedeen took power, only to turn their weapons on each other and kill thousands of civilians. That turmoil brought to power the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996.

When the U.S. and NATO inherited Bagram in 2001, they found it in ruins, a collection of crumbling buildings, gouged by rockets and shells, most of its perimeter fence wrecked. It had been abandoned after being battered in the battles between the Taliban and rival mujahedeen warlords fleeing to their northern enclaves. After dislodging the Taliban from Kabul, the U.S.-led coalition began working with their warlord allies to rebuild Bagram, first with temporary structures that then turned permanent. Its growth was explosive, eventually swallowing up roughly 30 square miles. "The closure of Bagram is a major symbolic and strategic victory for the Taliban," said Bill Roggio, senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of

Democracies. “If the Taliban is able to take control of the base, it will serve as anti-U.S. propaganda fodder for years to come,” said Roggio who is also editor of the foundation’s Long War Journal.

It would also be a military windfall. The enormous base has two runways. The most recent, at 12,000 feet long, was built in 2006 at a cost of \$96 million. There are 110 revetments, which are basically parking spots for aircraft, protected by blast walls. GlobalSecurity, a security think tank, says Bagram includes three large hangars, a control tower and numerous support buildings. The base has a 50-bed hospital with a trauma bay, three operating theaters and a modern dental clinic. There are also fitness centers and fast food restaurants. Another section houses a prison, notorious and feared among Afghans.

Jonathan Schroden, of the U.S.-based research and analysis organization CNA, estimates that well over 100,000 people spent significant time at Bagram over the past two decades. “Bagram formed a foundation for the wartime experience of a large fraction of U.S. military members and contractors who served in Afghanistan,” said Schroden, director of CNA’s Center for Stability and Development. “The departure of the last U.S. troops from there will likely serve as the final turn of the page for many of these folks with respect to their time in that country,” he said.

For Afghans in Bagram district, a region of more than 100 villages supported by orchards and farming fields, the base has been a major supplier of employment. The U.S. withdrawal effects nearly every household, said Darwaish Raufi, district governor. The Americans have been giving the Afghan military some weaponry and other material. Anything else that they are not taking, they are destroying and selling it to scrap dealers around Bagram. U.S. officials say they must ensure nothing usable can ever fall into Taliban hands. Last week, the U.S. Central Command said it had junked 14,790 pieces of equipment and sent 763 C-17 aircraft loaded with material out of Afghanistan. Bagram villagers say they hear explosions from inside the base, apparently the Americans destroying buildings and material.

Raufi said many villagers have complained to him about the U.S. leaving just their junk behind. “There’s something sadly symbolic about how the U.S. has gone about leaving Bagram. The decision to take so much away and destroy so much of what is left speaks to the U.S. urgency to get out quickly,” said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center. “It’s not the kindest parting gift for Afghans, including those taking over the base,” he said. Inevitably, comparisons to the former Soviet Union have arisen.

- Retired Afghan Gen. Saifullah Safi, who worked alongside U.S. forces at Bagram, said the Soviets left all their equipment when they withdrew. They “didn’t take much with them, just the vehicles they needed to transport their soldiers back to Russia,” he said.
- The prison in the base was handed over to the Afghans in 2012, and they will continue to operate it. In the early years of the war, for many Afghans, Bagram became synonymous with fear, next only to Guantanamo Bay. Parents would threaten their crying children with the prison.
- In the early years of the invasion, Afghans often disappeared for months without any reports of their whereabouts until the International Red Committee of the Red Cross located them in Bagram. Some returned home with tales of torture.

“When someone mentions even the word Bagram I hear the screams of pain from the prison,” said Zabihullah, who spent six years in Bagram, accused of belonging to the faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord designated a terrorist by the U.S. At the time of his arrest it was an offense to belong to

Hekmatyar's party. Zabihullah, who goes by one name, was released in 2020, four years after President Ashraf Ghani signed a peace deal with Hekmatyar.

Roggio says the status of the prison is a "major concern," noting that many of its prisoners are known Taliban leaders or members of militant groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. It's believed about 7,000 prisoners are still in the prison. "If the base falls and the prison is overrun, these detainees can bolster the ranks of these terror groups," Roggio said. [Source: The Associated Press | Kathy Gannon | June 29, 2021 ++]

Father's Day

Update 01: The Civil War Veteran and Single Dad Who Inspired It

The sermon that morning must have stung a bit. Sonora Smart Dodd sat in the pews of Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Spokane, Wash., on May 9, 1909, as her pastor extolled the virtues of mothers. Mother's Day had only been invented the year before in Grafton, W.Va., but it had already spread across the nation. Dodd's mother had died in childbirth 11 years before, when Dodd was a teenager. Now pregnant herself, perhaps the sermon brought up difficult emotions. Afterward, she later recounted, she approached the pastor and told him, maybe with a little defensiveness, "I liked everything you said about motherhood, but don't you think father should have a special day, too?"



Sonora Smart Dodd helped launch Father's Day in honor of her dad.

William Jackson Smart was a farmer, an Arkansas native who had fought for the Union during the Civil War. He and his wife Ellen had moved West when Sonora was a child, and they continued growing their family. When she died in 1898, she left William with six kids, ranging in age from 16 to a newborn. In a 1964 interview, she said her dad assumed both the father and mother roles. "This role he performed with courage and selflessness until we were all in homes of our own," she said, according to the Spokesman-Review.

What may have been a passing thought for some, Dodd soon turned into reality. She circulated a petition around town and then got the support of the local YMCA and the Spokane Ministerial Association. On June 19, 1910, the Protestant churches of Spokane observed their first Father's Day. There were fatherhood-themed sermons, and churches awarded bouquets to men who were the oldest men in the congregation, or the father with the most children, or with the youngest child.

There were a number of people around the country in this period who also appear to have independently come up with the idea of a Father's Day alongside Mother's Day. And, of course, the Catholic Church had been commemorating fatherhood on St. Joseph's Day (March 19) for centuries. But Dodd's event is the one for which there is a through-line to the holiday today. Coverage of Spokane's Father's Day went national, and over the next few years, observances popped up around the country. Though it was never as big a deal as Mother's Day, by 1916 it was popular enough that President Woodrow Wilson issued a statement in support of it. But it didn't last. Mother's Day grew and grew every year, but by the 1920s, Father's Day had largely faded away, according to Leigh Eric Schmidt in his book, "Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays." Dodd also seemed to have lost interest; she left Spokane for the Art Institute of Chicago and became a poet, painter, and for a time, a fashion designer for Hollywood films, according to Schmidt.

But by the late 1930s, she had returned to Spokane and resumed promoting Father's Day, and this time she had help. Whereas Anna Jarvis, who started Mother's Day, felt her holiday had been "hijacked by commercial interests," as the BBC put it in 2020, Dodd was perfectly fine with having capitalism as her co-pilot. Dodd partnered with local businesses and eventually the National Council for the Promotion of Father's Day, which was a great name for what was essentially a lobbying group for menswear manufacturers. Tobacco, whiskey and greeting card trade groups were also boosters.

Since its beginnings, most Americans were skeptical of Father's Day, perceiving (correctly, it turned out) that it was commercial money grab. The newspaper ads weren't exactly well-disguised; one full-page ad told the story of "a Spokane woman's" work to "give sons and daughters an opportunity to express their affections for their dad." Above this quaint story, in big bold letters, are the words "Give Dad a Tie." For a long time, it was a laughingstock. One New York Times reader joked that next there would be a "Maiden Aunty's Day" and a "Household Pet Day." Even advertisers got in on it, cannily poking fun at the whole thing while also selling those ties.

It worked. By the 1960s, President Lyndon B. Johnson started annually proclaiming the third Sunday in June as Father's Day, and in 1972, President Richard M. Nixon made it official. Dodd's father died in 1919, so he missed most of the holiday's mega-growth and commercial appeal. But Dodd herself lived well into the 1970s — long enough to lead efforts in Spokane to start a Poetry Day and an Old Age Day. [Source: The Washington Post | Gillian Brockell | June 20, 2021 ++]

Hacks & Gadgets

Update 02: Items that Can Save You Time/Money with Hidden Purposes

There are very common household items, prevalent throughout our everyday lives hiding some very neat tricks and secrets. These items can solve LOADS of pesky little issues around the house when repurposed correctly. After all, most of us are spending plenty of time around the house right about now — so might as well make the most of it! Here are 8 common items, hacks and gadgets that can save you time, money and surprise you with a cool hidden purpose (or re-purposing) you never knew!



Placing a Rubber Band Around Both Door Knobs

Everyone has rubber bands in their messy drawer, but now you'll actually have a use for them besides holding things together. If you have young kids or ever did, then you know nothing is worse than waking them up by accident when they are sleeping. And one of the most common ways to wake them is by going into their room to check on them only to have the sound of the door opening wake them up. To stop the loud noise the lock makes is very easy. Take a rubber band, wrap it around each doorknob, and over the lock/latch. This allows you to open and close the door without ANY noise, letting your sleeping baby stay asleep. Wrapping a rubber band around the door is also a good way to stop a toddler/child from locking a door on purpose or accident.

Hole Next to iPhone Camera

If you have an iPhone, you may have noticed a little hole right next to the camera lens. If you don't have an iPhone, get with the times already! In any event, that tiny hole is not a second secret camera that helps Facebook and the NSA spy on you. It's actually a microphone. Starting with the iPhone 5, there are three microphones on every smartphone. One is under the speaker grill, one is on the bottom edge of the phone, and the third is right next to the camera lens. With the three microphones, it's easier to pick up sounds no matter how you choose to hold your phone, which actually comes in handy if you have voice recognition. That third microphone next to your lens is also important when you shoot video with sound on your iPhone.

Zigzag Side of Bobby Pin

Even if you've never used a bobby pin (looking at you, gentlemen), you've surely noticed that one side is straight and one side is kind of wavy. Usually, the side with the zigzag pattern is facing toward the scalp, so we don't see it. Of course, it might look a little cooler that way. However, the wavy side is what helps keep the pin in place all day by helping to catch the big clump of hair. That's why you only see the wavy side when the bobby pin isn't in use.

Brass Doorknobs

Okay, so no one is expecting you to pay too much attention to door handles, but perhaps you've noticed that all doorknobs are made of brass. This is no accident. Surfaces made of brass are more resistant to bacteria building up, helping to make doorknobs free of germs. Obviously, this is important since people will pick up germs on their hands in countless different ways and then touch doorknobs that are then touched by countless other people. But because we use brass doorknobs, germs don't have a free for all.

Cylinder Toward End of Cable Cord

We've all used cable or power cords of some kind and notice a big cylinder-shaped lump toward the end. Most people don't know that those are actually called chokes or ferrite cores. They are simply magnetic iron oxide that helps to prevent any high-frequency electromagnetic interference. An example of this kind of interference is when your cell phone gets too close to a speaker and you get that weird noise interrupting your call. That's why we have those big cylinders on cable cords.

Sleep With a Bar Of Soap under Your Sheets

It might sound strange, but there's some evidence to back this up. People claim that sleeping with a bar of soap helped cure their leg cramps at night. This trick has gained so much popularity that it even made it to the TV show "The Doctors". When they polled their audience, 40% said this has relieved their leg cramps or restless legs syndrome. Some suggest placing soap near your feet helps ions to go from the soap to your body and eventually your nervous system. It's these ions that help ease your cramps. While there's been no official clinical study on this, anyone who suffers from leg cramps should give this a shot as you have nothing to lose.

Wings on Apple Power Cord

If you own a MacBook, you probably noticed that there are wings you can pull up on the power cord. At first, you were probably confused as to why they exist. Don't worry, all of us were unsure why they were there at first. However, they do have a purpose. If you flip them up, it becomes easier to wrap the cord around the power block so it's not just hanging out there, getting in the way. You don't have to use it, but it's a neat little accessory.

Discs under Bottle Caps

At some point in our lives, we've looked under the cap on a bottle of soda and found a little plastic disc. It seems unnecessary to have it there at first, but that tiny plastic disc actually helps to see in carbonation. Don't ask us to explain the science behind it, but those discs trap carbon dioxide so that the soda doesn't lose their fizz. Without them, we'd all be drinking flat soda, and no one wants to live in a world like that.

[Source: <https://wpa.livestly.com> | Amanda Wagner | November 17, 2020 ++]

Vocabulary

Some Words to Enhance Yours | 210630

- **Aggrandize** [ag-ruhn-dahyz] to make something appear greater.
- **Anfractuous** [an-frak-choo-uhs] characterized by windings and turnings; sinuous; circuitous.
- **Aspergillum** [as-per-jil-uhm] a brush or instrument for sprinkling holy water.
- **Burgeon** [bur-juhn] begin to grow or increase rapidly; flourish.
- **Clerestory** [kleeer-stawr-ee] a portion of an interior rising above adjacent rooftops and having windows admitting daylight to the interior.
- **Comminatory** [kom-uh-ney-tuh-ree] a threat of punishment or vengeance.
- **Concatenate** [kon-kat-n-eyt] link (things) together in a chain or series.
- **Curmudgeon** [ker-muhj-uhn] a bad-tempered, difficult, cantankerous person.
- **Isthmus** [is-muhs] a connecting, usually narrow, part, organ, or passage, especially when joining structures or cavities larger than itself.

- **Milquetoast** [milk-tohst] a very timid, unassertive, spineless person, especially one who is easily dominated or intimidated.
- **Quire** [kwahyuhr] a collection of 24 or sometimes 25 sheets of paper of the same size and quality: one twentieth of a ream.
- **Sepulchral** [suh-puhl-kruhl] gloomy; dismal.
- **Trestle** [tres-uhl] a frame typically composed of a horizontal bar or beam rigidly joined or fitted at each end to the top of a transverse A-frame, used as a barrier, a transverse support for planking.
- **Yarborough** [yahr-bur-oh] a hand in which no card is higher than a nine.

Food Ingredients

Surprising Ingredients in Your Favorite Foods



While consumers are increasingly label- and ingredient-conscious when making food purchases, there are still plenty of items on the market with ingredients most people would find shocking or downright disgusting. Food coloring made from crushed beetles, anyone? Yes, it's a real thing. Here's a closer look at just some of the surprising stuff being used to make popular foods.

Fish Bladders

It may be shocking to wine connoisseurs everywhere (or not) that some vintners use isinglass, a gelatin derived from the swim bladders of sturgeons, during the fining process. In other words, it is used to make the wine clear and to remove particulates — meaning some wines may not be vegan.

Azodicarbonamide

Can't pronounce it? Join the club. Carrie Roberts, founder and chief executive of Sift Food Labels, an app that helps translate food ingredients in simple terms, says azodicarbonamide is a dough conditioner used in breads to make it lighter and fluffier. There are also less appetizing uses for this chemical that may leave you thinking twice. "Azodicarbonamide is also used as a chemical in yoga mats and rubber shoes, and its use is banned in foods across the European Union," Roberts says. Some of the products it can be found in include Wonder's Light Wheat Bread, Sunbeam hot dog buns, and Marie Callender's croissant sandwiches, she says.

Propylene Glycol

A common preservative found in food to maintain moisture, propylene glycol is considered safe in small doses by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Roberts says, though the World Health Organization has suggested that an individual should not have more than 11.4 mg of it per pound of body weight in a day. "It can be toxic in large quantities. It can also be commonly found in antifreeze and sex lubricants," Roberts says. Among the many food items that contain propylene glycol are Betty Crocker chocolate cake mix, Kraft Greek Feta Vinaigrette Dressing, and Entenmann's Little Bites Fudge Brownie Mini Muffins.

Hair or Feathers

L-cysteine is an amino acid found most commonly in bread — and most often synthesized from human hair, duck and goose feathers, or hair from pigs, says Roberts, of Sift Food Labels. Some of the foods that contain L-cysteine include Hot Pockets and Sam's Choice Pizza.

Shellac

Most often used to varnish furniture, shellac also shows up in candy. Possibly even lesser known: Shellac comes from the "resinous exudate" from a female Indian lac bug. Among the many uses (beyond furniture) found for shellac is stiffening hats and creating buttons. As for food, it is often labeled "confectioner's glaze" and provides some favorite sweets — from jelly beans to ice cream cones — with a glossy sheen.

Sheep Wool Grease

The next time you sit down to a bowl of cereal, take a closer look at the ingredients. It may contain a type of vitamin D made from sheep's wool grease. Sourced from lanolin, a substance sheep secrete to help wick water from their coats, it's used in vitamin D-fortified food products. It can also be found in chewing gum.

Bone Char

Sugar seems like a simple enough food product, but few people realize that the process of making table sugar often involves the boiled-down bones of cattle. (Vegans everywhere, take note.) The process begins with sugar cane stalks that are crushed to gather the juice. Next comes heating the juice and filtering and bleaching it, which is where the bone char comes in — the process creates the sugar's blindingly white coloring.

Sand

Also known as silicon dioxide belongs at the beach, not in food, right? It turns out sand can also be a good flow agent in food products, preventing clumping and caking. It has been known to show up in salts, dried soups, and coffee creamer. But manufacturers also use it in glass and cement. While silicone dioxide exists naturally in certain foods — such as dark leafy greens, beets, and alfalfa sprouts, and some grains and cereals — and some studies have shown it to be safe in small doses, other researchers are calling for further investigation and stricter guidelines for its use in food.

Carmine

Crushed beetles, anyone? A common color additive that gives many foods a bright red color, carmine is made from crushing the carcass of a specific South and Central American insect called a cochineal, Roberts says. It can be found in such products as Yoplait strawberry yogurt and Mentos Rainbow Chewy Mints.

Gelatin

The rumors are true: If you're a vegan or vegetarian, avoid Jell-O. The gelatin used for Jell-O and similar products is developed from collagen, which is made typically by boiling animal skin, cartilage, and bones.

While the specific type of animal skin varies, gelatin can be found in everything from gummy candies to frosted cereals and yogurt.

Polydimethylsiloxane

Industrial nonstick chemicals are often used to coat the inside of microwave popcorn bags to stop the grease from leaking. Some using perfluorinated chemicals, however, may not be good for you. A study done by the Journal of the American Medical Association found that PFCs cause immune suppression — and those are the ones the FDA says are already gone or will soon be gone from food packaging. Also known as PDMS, this silicone chemical is basically silly putty. Used typically as an anti-foaming and anti-caking agent, PDMS shows up in fast foods and candy, fruit spreads, chewing gum, chocolate, and canned fruits. It is also used in shampoo and caulk.

Castoreum

Easily one of the most disturbing food items on this list, castoreum is a product derived from the castor sac scent glands of beavers. While it's unclear how the tradition of using excretions from a beaver in food even got started, the resulting food additive is FDA approved. When it's used, which is not often, castoreum might be found in raspberry-flavored foods — often unnoticeable because it is listed as "natural flavoring."

Brominated Vegetable Oil

Long controversial, brominated vegetable oil is a toxic flame retardant often found in carbonated beverages. Otherwise known as BVO, it is banned in Europe but still used to retain citrus flavor in U.S. sodas and other drinks. This ingredient is known to have such effects as irritating skin and mucous membranes, according to Mayo Clinic. At the extreme, long-term exposure can cause more serious neurologic symptoms such as headache, memory loss, and even impaired balance or coordination.

Titanium Dioxide

Ever wonder what makes your vanilla icing or coffee creamer so white? In some cases, the answer may be titanium dioxide. A chemical that also turns up in such items as sunscreen, paint, and plastic, titanium dioxide in food has been the subject of much debate. That's because ultrafine titanium dioxide can be a carcinogen, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — but when you breathe it in, not when you eat it.

Salt Water Injections

While salt water isn't bad for swimming, it may not be something you want (or expect) to find in food. Some manufacturers inject salt water into raw meat to enhance its weight and flavor. How to know if your meat has been injected with salt water? Read the label, which may say the product has been flavored or injected with solution. The amount of solution in the meat can range from about 10% to 35% — not good if you happen to be prone to high blood pressure.

Bacteriophages

Are you a fan of prepackaged deli meats? There's a good chance you're eating bacteriophages, a type of virus that's used to attack bacterial pathogens in foods and is added to an increasing number of them to help prevent food-borne illness, according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information.

Sodium Bisulfite

Created by combining sulfuric acid with salt, sodium bisulfite has various uses — among them as a toilet bowl cleaner, purifying toxic wastewater, and also as a food preservative. It's used to reduce bacteria growth and browning in food, and can be found in potato chips to keep them fresher longer.

Phthalates

Those fresh fruits and vegetables that are an important part of every diet may also be an unexpected source of phthalates. A chemical that makes its way onto food primarily through exposure to packaging items such as cellophane, paper, and paper board, phthalates have been linked to reproductive, developmental, and endocrine-related issues.

BHA

Breakfast food and petroleum products may have something in common, as unsettling as that may be. That commonality is the ingredient BHA, or butylated hydroxyanisole. Though the National Institutes of Health has said it can be a human carcinogen, the chemical has been given the FDA stamp of approval for use in foods. It may be found in potato shreds and desserts made from dry mixes.

Cellulose

Found typically in wood pulp or cotton, cellulose is also sometimes used in shredded cheese to keep it from sticking together, and as an inexpensive filler. It may also be found in some ice creams and drinks, to add fiber content and texture, particularly to low-fat foods. Look for cellulose on ingredient lists under names such as carboxymethylcellulose, microcrystalline cellulose, or MCC. While there are no known harmful side effect to cellulose, which is essentially non-digestible plant fiber, critics are largely concerned with companies using cellulose and improperly labeling it, essentially charging consumers for what amounts to a filler. One solution: Grate your own cheese.

[Source: Cheapism | May 2021 ++]

Airline Logic

What They Think Humans Look Like



News of the Weird

JUN 16 thru 30, 2021

Hand Tossed – On 23 MAY, when the 20-year-old daughter of Vero Beach, Florida, resident Tyler Worden, 41, declined her father's invitation to eat the pizza he had brought to her home, the elder Worden

became angry and "turned around and threw a slice of pizza at her, striking her in the face," according to the arrest affidavit filed by the Indian River Sheriff's Office. After Worden refused to leave, his daughter called the police, who noted the pizza toppings strewn across the entryway, the tomato sauce on the left side of the woman's face and the strong scent of alcohol on Worden's breath. The pizza hurler was placed under arrest on charges of battery. [Latin Times, 5/27/2021]

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Inexplicable – The latest trend in plastic surgery in China, according to Gulf Today, is the pointy ear. The modified ears resemble those of animated characters or fairy tale creatures, and they give the face "a slender shape," the site reported on 17 JUN. Doctors first insert cartilage or an implant in the back of the ear, then fill it in with hyaluronic acid. Plastic surgery clinics in China are experiencing such great demand that patients have to get on waiting lists. [Gulf Today, 6/17/2021]

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Fine Points of the Law – In December 2016, Cletus Snay hit a patch of black ice while driving in Bellevue, Ohio, and slammed into Matthew Burr's mailbox. Doesn't seem all that dramatic, but postal service guidelines specify that mailbox poles be able to break away, which Burr's clearly did not do. Burr had installed an 8-inch metal pole, buried 3 feet in the ground and fortified with rocks and dry cement poured on top, News5Cleveland reported. This immovable fixture caused Snay's truck to roll and left him a quadriplegic. Attorney Kathleen St. John argued on 16 JUN to the Ohio Supreme Court that a property owner "is not justified in inflicting, without warning, bodily harm upon the person of a trespasser," but Burr's attorney, Doug Leak, calls the USPS recommendations "just guidelines" and said Burr was justified in reinforcing his mailbox after years of accidents and vandalism. The court is expected to rule soon. [News5Cleveland, 6/16/2021]

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Crime Report – As 34-year-old Paul Kiyan let himself into the home of Mat and Monica Sabz in Bel Air, California, on 20 JUN, Monica watched on Ring video and alerted her husband, who was at home. Kiyan was naked, KTLA-TV reported, and as he wandered around the house, he helped himself to a shower and a pair of shorts. When Mat Sabz confronted him, Kiyan said the house was his. While he was there, Kiyan killed the couple's two pet birds with his hands; police arrested him on several felony charges. [KTLA, 6/21/2021]

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Lost and Found – When a painting fell off the wall at their country home in Rome in 2016, the owners sent it to an art restorer for repairs. But during the cleaning and restoration process, it became clear that this wasn't just any painting: It was "The Adoration of the Magi" by Rembrandt, painted around 1632-1633 and long considered lost. Guido Talarico, president of the Italian Heritage Foundation, said the family that owns the painting has not expressed an interest in selling it, but that the work will eventually be made available to museums and galleries. [UPI, 6/24/21]

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Ewwwww – The Wellington Correctional Center in New South Wales, Australia, is being evacuated so that crews can clear the prison of dead and decaying mice and repair chewed electrical

wiring, the Associated Press reported. Australia has been overrun with mice for months, which scientists say happens when rain follows several years of drought. Corrective Services Commissioner Peter Severin explained that "the mice have got into wall cavities, into roof spaces. They're dead, but then they start obviously decaying and then the next problem is mites." [Associated Press, 6/22/2021]

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Awesome! – Julia Yonkowski of Largo, Florida, only needed a \$20 bill when she visited the ATM at Chase Bank on June 19, but she decided to check her balance while she was there. What she saw on the paper slip surprised her: a balance of \$995,985,856. "I was horrified," she told WFLA-TV. "I know most people would think they won the lottery, but I was horrified." She's tried several times to contact Chase, but she can't get through to anyone. "I get tied up with their automated system and I can't get a person," she said. "I don't know what to think." [WFLA-TV, 6/21/2021] [Washington Post, 5/25/2021]

[Source: <https://www.uexpress.com/news-of-the-weird> | June 30, 2021 ++]

Have You Heard or Seen?

Comebacks 1 | Riddles 1 | Think Toons

Comebacks 1

1. "Of course I talk like an idiot. How else could you understand me?"
2. "There's no need to repeat yourself. I ignored you just fine the first time."
3. "If I wanted to kill myself, I'd climb up your ego and jump down to your IQ level."
4. "Unless your name is Google, stop acting like you know everything."
5. "If you're gonna be a smartass, first you have to be smart. Otherwise you're just an ass."
6. "I'm sure that 90 percent your 'beauty' could be removed with a Kleenex."
7. "If you have a problem with me than cry me a river and drown yourself in it."
8. Roses are red, violets are blue, I've got five fingers, the middle one is for you."
9. "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realize that you're an expert on my life and how I should live it. Please continue while I take notes."
10. "B****, please move away from the sunlight. I hate the smell of burning plastic."
11. "1 universe, 8 planets, 7 seas, 7 continents, 809 islands, 196 countries, and I had the unfortunate luck of meeting you."
12. "Your birth certificate is an apology letter from the condom factory."
13. "I'd love to insult you but I'm afraid I won't do as well as nature did."

14. "B**** please! You are so fake, even China denied they made you."
15. "When somebody says that you are wrong say, 'You're entitled to your incorrect opinion.'"
16. "Why don't you just slip into something more comfortable like a coma."
17. "If someone calls you boring say, 'Yeah, and what makes you so exciting?'"
18. "No I'm not insulting you — I'm describing you."
19. "Don't hate me because I'm beautiful. Hate me because your boyfriend thinks so."
20. "Is your ass jealous of all that s*** coming out of your mouth?"

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Riddles 1

- 01) Q: What do call someone with no body and no nose?
- 02) Q: What did the buffalo say to his son when he dropped him off at school?
- 03) Q: Take one letter away and I'm above your head, take away two and I'm invisible, take away none and I'm under you. What am i?
- 04) Q: I am a seed with three letters in my name. Take away the last two and I still sound the same. What am I?
- 05) Q: I eat, I live, I breath, I drink, I die. What am I?
- 06) Q: I wiggle and cannot see, sometimes underground and sometimes on a tree. I really don't want to be on a hook and I become a person when combined with book. What am I?
- 07) Q: Rearrange the letters: "nor do we" to make one word?
- 08) Q: What four letter word can be written forward, backward or upside down and can still be read from left to right?
- 09) Q: What word when read from left to right is a ruler but when read from right to left is a companion?
- 10) Q: What can you easily break but never touch?
- 11) Q: What three letters change a girl into a woman?
- 12) Q: Pronounced as one letter and written with three, two letters there are, and two only in me. I'm double, I'm single, I'm brown, blue and gray, I'm read from both ends and the same either way. What am I?

Answers

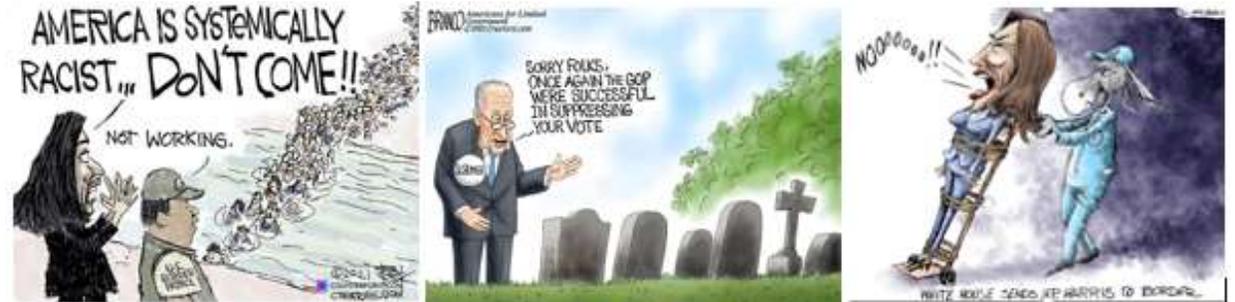
- 12) A: eye
- 11) A: man
- 10) A: heart
- 09) A: god
- 08) A: noon
- 07) A: one word
- 06) A: worm

- 05) A: fire
- 04) A: pea
- 03) A: chair
- 02) A: bye-son (bison)
- 01) A: no one

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Think Toons





Thought of the Week

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.”
 — Dalai Lama

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