

# RAO BULLETIN

## 01 August 2021

### PDF Edition



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1. The page number on which an article can be found is provided to the left of each article's title
2. 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](mailto:raoemo@sbcglobal.net) 'or' [raoemo77@gmail.com](mailto:raoemo77@gmail.com)
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## Nuclear Football

### Update 01: Pentagon Watchdog Examining Its Security

If the president fumbles the nuclear football, is the military prepared to recover it? Pentagon Acting Inspector General Sean O'Donnell is investigating following a number of security lapses in recent years. The *Presidential Emergency Satchel*, also called the nuclear football, the button or just the football, is a briefcase that holds nuclear launch codes, among other secret technology, that enables the president to authorize a nuclear strike. Typically, an aide to the commander in chief carries the satchel and accompanies the president any time he is away from the White House. But the security of the satchel has come into question recently.

- Rioters came within 100 feet of Vice President Mike Pence's backup football during the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection, when a mob supporting President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol to hunt lawmakers and stop the certification of Joe Biden's election win. Pence's football was inactive — the backup only functions when the president is dead or incapacitated — but had the rioters seized the satchel, sensitive equipment used to communicate with the Pentagon would have fallen into their hands.
- In February 2018, a skirmish over the football broke out during Trump's visit to Beijing when Chinese officials blocked the aide carrying the football from joining the rest of the president's staff in an auditorium where Trump was due to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping. According to reporting from Axios, the U.S. officials forced their way through and the scuffle was over "within seconds."
- A year earlier, in February 2017, a member of Trump's exclusive Mar-a-Lago club identified as "Rick" posted a photo of himself on Facebook with the aide who was carrying the football at the time, raising security concerns.

The football, born out of Cold War fears of a nuclear attack against the U.S., has traveled with every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower. According to an announcement from the inspector general, the review will examine procedures should the satchel be lost, stolen or compromised. [Source: Stars & Stripes Mark Satter | July20, 2021 ++]

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## Deputy Secretary of Defense

Dr. Kathleen Hicks | The Right Person at the Right Place



Today, Dr. Kathleen Hicks, the bureaucratically-savvy Deputy Secretary of Defense, is relentlessly shaping the Navy to suit her high-tech vision. With no Navy Secretary in place yet, Hicks' influence guided the notional 30-year naval force structure released earlier this month, setting up a wholesale divestment of older platforms to, ostensibly, invest in newer technology. In short, America is setting sail in Dr. Hicks' Navy. Though Mr. Carlos Del Toro, a former destroyer captain, is being brought aboard to lead the Navy, Mr. Del Toro's expertise in Pentagon management is limited in comparison to the extensive experience offered by President Biden's Army Secretary, Christine Wormuth, and Secretary of the Air Force nominee, Frank Kendall III. As the sailor-turned-contractor finds his feet as the Secretary of the Navy, he will be expected to dance to Dr. Hicks' tune.

But, as Dr. Hicks prepares to fundamentally change the Navy, the strategy backing these efforts is, at best, unclear. At worst, Dr. Hicks is just advancing a largely classified grab-bag of "new and neat-sounding" high-tech tactics. Maritime strategy is the missing link. If Dr. Hicks can manage to cobble together a viable maritime strategy and get both the Congress and the Navy to rally around it, then the capable Deputy Secretary of Defense will be well on her way to becoming the most influential Navy Secretary of our time.

### **But Where's The Beef?**

In an ideal world, a national strategy is the framework that guides naval investments. China, for example, has a wider strategic goal of intimidating weak democracies, annexing Antarctica and grabbing the remaining global maritime commons for itself, potentially using a short, timely war to enhance China's aura of inevitable invincibility. China's monied authoritarians are building out a maritime force to do just that. China's strategic guidance may be classified, but the broader strategic template is open enough that it forces some measure of national and professional buy-in. China's sailors—at all ranks and in all services—know what they need to do, and their performance towards their various strategic goals can be relatively easily measured by China's political leaders.

The situation for the U.S. Navy is far more complicated. U.S. political leaders are hesitant to really get out there and wield the Navy as an engaged component in the messy business of statecraft. So, left with no stated goal other than to "react" when called upon for any and all threats, the Navy has been in the difficult position of sitting and waiting for challenges to manifest, largely leaving the strategic initiative to others. To substitute, the Navy has embraced the hollow rubric of "lethality" and a "warrior ethos", leisurely rummaging through a grab-bag of interesting battlefield priorities, tactics and new technologies that seem to shift with the wind. It hasn't been all bad; but those tactics that do end up working are often too highly

classified for most sailors or political leaders to know about, complicating efforts to measure America's progress towards battlefield mastery.

Things are changing. Now that the Biden Administration's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance instructs America's government to "promote a favorable distribution of power to deter and prevent adversaries from directly threatening the United States and our allies, inhibiting access to the global commons, or dominating key regions," Dr. Hicks would be smart to look up from the good but all-too-consuming work of managing the internal minutia of Pentagon's bureaucracy and start discussing America's national maritime strategy a bit more.

Though the present-day national preference is to keep many of America's strategic goals hidden, going forward, offering some sort of viable, cohesive explanation for the Pentagon's materiel choices would help both Congress and the Navy understand the way ahead. Ideally, Biden's maritime strategy would follow the U.S. Coast Guard's lead, offering a strategic vision robust enough to outlast the current Administration and giving the Navy something to work towards over the longer-term.

### **Strategy Is the Missing Piece**

America has been here before. At the height of the Cold War, President Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of the Navy, the Machiavellian John Lehman, used every bureaucratic tool he could muster to reshape and grow the Navy, confounding and confronting the Soviet Union at sea. Secretary Lehman was ruthless in pursuing his vision, and he was very clear about his goal, presenting the Nation with a robust maritime strategy that both the Navy and Congress understood—and embraced—for years. And while Secretary Lehman left a controversial and complicated legacy, his ultimately unsustainable push towards a 600-ship Navy is now recognized as an important contributor to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Though Dr. Hicks has already broken barriers by becoming the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. Hicks is, for the Navy, the right person at the right place, offering relevant experience, bureaucratic acumen and power to address one of the most important national security challenges of our era. Today, the Navy offers little resistance to motivated change-agents. Mr. Del Toro's efforts to become something more than a figurehead will be hard enough given Dr. Hicks' mastery of the Pentagon. But Del Toro's job will likely be complicated by the fact that Dr. Hicks' spouse, Thomas W. Hicks, after years of experience as Acting Undersecretary of the Navy in the Obama Administration, offers Dr. Hicks ready access to an already trusted and potentially under-estimated influencer on maritime affairs.

The Department of the Navy and Marine Corps itself is weak. After years of fragmented leadership, the Navy has lost control of budgets and future fleet composition, and Dr. Hicks is not going to give that authority back any time soon. And, like Secretary Lehman, Dr. Hicks is clearing the decks of those who might harbor opposing views or pose a bureaucratic obstacle to change. On 4 JUN Acting Navy Secretary Thomas W. Harker raised the alarm, releasing a surprise memo that, given Department of Defense funding choices, "the Navy cannot afford to simultaneously develop the next generation of air, surface, and subsurface platforms." Within the week, Mr. Del Toro's nomination for Secretary of the Navy was advanced to Congress and Mr. Harker was set to head for the exit.

For Dr. Hicks, strategy really is the final piece of the puzzle. Lehman's ruthless bureaucratic legerdemain may have made him a controversial figure, but his ceaseless efforts to grow the fleet were always backstopped by some sort of viable strategy. Armed with a strategy, Congress and the Navy knew what they were to do, and were ready to do their best even as the irascible and bumptious Secretary of the Navy

became a political liability. For Dr. Hicks, strategy really is the missing link, and, until the Navy and Nation know what they are to do in the maritime today, Dr. Hicks will just have to settle with just serving as a Deputy Secretary of Defense instead of also becoming America's most influential—albeit non-nominated—Navy Secretary in decades. [Source: Aerospace & Defense| Craig Hooper (Opinion) | June 28, 2021 ++]

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## **Air Force Secretary**

### **Update 01: Army Vet Frank Kendall Confirmed As New Secretary**



Former Pentagon acquisition chief Frank Kendall was confirmed as Air Force secretary during a Senate voice vote on 26 JUL. The Army veteran will now serve as the top civilian in charge of the Air Force and Space Force and work alongside Air Force veteran and military adviser Gina Ortiz Jones, who was sworn in Monday as undersecretary of the Air Force. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said 27 JUL in a statement that Kendall's "decades of expertise and impact in service to our national security and defense make him an unmatched asset for the challenges we face today Frank has led the department's acquisition efforts to equip our warfighters with the latest capabilities and cutting-edge weaponry for the battlefield, educated our next generation of leaders at [the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.] and served as a human rights lawyer, Frank understands firsthand the commitment and sacrifice our troops give day in and day out." Austin said.

The Senate vote was unanimous after Sens. Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow, both Michigan Democrats, held up Kendall's vote for about a month to secure promises by the Air Force and Pentagon to support their state's Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Defense News reported. Peters and Stabenow were concerned Air Force officials chose Arkansas's Ebbing Air National Guard Base over Selfridge to host an international F-35 Joint Strike Fighter training center, but were assured Selfridge would "remain a hub for the A-10 for at least the next 10 years, as well as future tanker aircraft," Air Force Times reported 27 JUL.

With Kendall's confirmation, Carlos Del Toro — President Joe Biden's pick for Navy secretary — is the only outstanding military branch secretary nomination. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth swore into her job in May. Sen. Kevin Cramer (R-ND) said in a statement that it is "crucial for the United States to have its military leaders in place as we work to fend off rising threats posed by foreign adversaries like China, Russia and Iran." "I look forward to working with Secretary Kendall on North Dakota's Air Force priorities of advancing nuclear modernization, supporting intelligence capabilities and getting our Air

National Guard members the resources they need,” Cramer said. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Caitlin Doornbos | July 27, 2021 ++]

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## **DOD Chemical Program**

### **IG finds DoD Dragged Its Feet on Exposure Prevention and Clean-Up,**



**A senior airman blows a small sea of fire-retardant foam that was unintentionally released in an aircraft hangar.**

Back in 2011, the Defense Department’s [Emerging Chemical Program](#) issued a “risk alert” detailing the hazards of [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances](#), known collectively as PFAS, found in [aqueous film-forming foam](#) used to fight vehicle and aircraft fires. Then nothing happened. Due to a tricky bit of bureaucracy, that risk alert had no muscle behind it, because it wasn’t endorsed by the Pentagon’s Emerging Chemicals of Concern Governance Council, according to an [inspector general report](#) released 23 JUL. In short, they could put out the alert, but there was no accompanying instruction to allow them to do anything about it.

“Therefore, DoD officials were not required to plan, program, and budget for any actions in response to the 2011 risk alert,” according to the IG report. “EC Program officials did not require proactive risk management actions for PFAS-containing AFFF until 2016. The report comes two years after dozens of lawmakers requested a DoD IG review of the use of PFAS on installations and exposure to those living on and around them. The IG announced the evaluation in early 2020. DoD has been aware of the risks of PFAS for decades, including their tendency to build up in the body over time, as well as their links to cancer.

In addition to testing drinking water and installing filtering systems on installations, the military limits the use of aqueous film-forming foam to active firefighting situations. But for much of the 20th century it was also used in training, causing decades of build-up in ground water.

”This Inspector General’s report confirms that the Defense Department must urgently do more to protect service members and their families from PFAS chemicals,” Dan Kildee (D-Mich.), co-chair of the Congressional PFAS Task Force, said in a 27 JUL release from the Environmental Working Group. “Due to the Defense Department’s use of firefighting foam containing PFAS chemicals, many service members, military firefighters and their families are still at risk of exposure.” As of last fall, annual blood testing is required for DoD firefighting personnel, to monitor the levels of PFAS building up their systems.

But there are other potential sources of PFAS exposure, according to the IG report, which the Pentagon has mostly overlooked, setting back any efforts for a more enterprise-wide approach to decontamination



and tracking of health outcomes. “This occurred because DoD officials were focused on AFFF, a major source of potential PFAS exposure, and not on all sources of potential PFAS exposure caused by DoD activities,” the report reads. “As a result, people and the environment may continue to be exposed to preventable risks from other PFAS containing materials.” And despite that focus on AFFF, DoD research has not yielded any candidates for replace it.

It’s not just that there is so much to clean up, the deputy assistant defense secretary for environment and energy resilience said during a House Appropriations Committee hearing. It’s that technology is still trying to catch up to the task. “The rate of progress is defined primarily by the rules that govern our physical world. Physics, chemistry, science,” Richard Kidd, deputy assistant defense secretary for environment and energy resilience, said during a House Appropriations Committee hearing in May. “Based on what we know today — and known technology — frankly, it will be years before we fully define the scope of the problem and with that definition can reflect it in our budget request, and after that, probably decades before cleanup is complete.”

While there have been risk management requirements in place since 2016, there were no central efforts overseen by Pentagon leadership until 2019, when a [PFAS Task Force](#) stood up, charged with reviewing the depth and breadth of the risks and offering recommendations to remedy them. To fill in the gaps, the IG recommended writing down requirements for the Emerging Chemical Program to begin risk management measures, including informing DoD personnel and neighbors of DoD installations of their potential exposures. The acting assistant defense secretary for sustainment agreed with those recommendations, according to the report. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Meghann Myers | July 27, 2021 ++]

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## **DOD Security Contractors**

### **Report Finds DOD Has No Idea Who It’s Hired to Do Private Security**



**\*Two U.S. private security contractors investigate the site where a military armored bus was damaged by a roadside bomb on the highway near Baghdad International Airport in Baghdad, Iraq**

Private security contractors, often referred to as mercenaries, have made a poor reputation for themselves throughout the Global War on Terror. And it turns out the Pentagon isn’t really monitoring whom it’s hired, or verifying their backgrounds and compliance. A Government Accountability Office report released 23 JUL calls on the Pentagon to create an internal definition for security contractors, make them trackable in databases and assign an oversight position for private security contractors. “For example, GAO reviewed data for deployed contractor personnel with the job title of ‘security guard’ and found that

about 12 percent of those individuals were employed by companies not on a DOD list of certified PSC companies.”

This happened for a few reasons, according to the report. To start, contractor oversight is shared between DoD and the companies themselves, with no single entity taking accountability overall. Then, there is no code in personnel databases for security contractors, so it’s impossible to know how many there are and what jobs they’re doing. When GAO searched contractor databases for “security guard,” they found that there were actually eight other job titles that included aspects of what would generally be considered a security position, whether the employee was working in contingency, peace-keeping or other missions. Not only couldn’t GAO get a complete list of DoD’s private security contractors, but what they did find didn’t include “the type of operation or exercise they support, or their functions, activities, and armed or unarmed status,” according to the report.

The most notorious case of security contractor misconduct dates back to 2007, when four Blackwater employees escorting a diplomatic convoy opened fire on a crowded Baghdad square, killing 17 and injuring 20 unarmed Iraqis, claiming they were responding to an ambush. They were convicted of murder in 2014 and sentenced to between a decade in prison to life. Former President Donald Trump pardoned them before leaving office. The Pentagon did try to take a crack at oversight in 2009, setting up a framework that assigns the Pentagon to verify whether contractors are allowed to be armed and to monitor performance, while the contracted companies are required to report incidents and comply with standards.

But because DoD didn’t monitor that implementation, it has no metrics to show whether it has improved contractor oversight. “DOD lacks a single, senior-level position assigned to fully monitor whether DOD and various entities are carrying out their respective PSC oversight roles and functions,” the report found. “Without assigning this position, DOD increases the risk of incidents that its framework aims to prevent.” The Pentagon agreed with the GAO’s findings, resolving to create an oversight position and tighten up its tracking capabilities. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Meghann Myers | July 30, 2021 ++]

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## Cybersecurity

### Update 02: Biden Opens New Cyber Fight with China



President Biden is putting new pressure on China by publicly attributing the wide-ranging Microsoft Exchange Server cyberattack to hackers affiliated with Beijing. The coordinated effort by the United States and its allies on 19 JUL to condemn China’s aggressive behavior in cyberspace marks the first time NATO has formally rebuked Beijing for cyberattacks. White House officials touted the effort as unprecedented given the breadth of nations that joined together. “We’ve crossed the line on what can be tolerated anymore. China is more aggressive when it comes to espionage,” James Lewis, a senior vice president at the Center

for Strategic and International Studies, told The Hill. “This is to make sure that the Chinese don’t think we forgot about them and they had an open door.”

The move comes four months after Microsoft announced that vulnerabilities in its Exchange Server application were being exploited by a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group known as “Hafnium.” The vulnerabilities were used by the hacking group, and later other cyber criminals, to compromise thousands of organizations around the world. The attack came on the heels of the massive SolarWinds hack, which allowed Russian hackers to compromise nine U.S. federal agencies. Both incidents forced Biden to zero in on cybersecurity. The public rebuke of China promises to further escalate tensions between the U.S. and China, which have not eased with the transition from the Trump administration to the Biden administration.

On his first foreign trip last month, Biden urged allies to take a firmer line on calling out China for its human rights abuses and rallied the world’s wealthiest democracies behind a global infrastructure proposal to counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Biden has also framed his domestic agenda as necessary in order to outcompete China. “In the competition against China and other nations of the 21st century, let’s show that American democracy and the American people can truly outcompete anyone,” Biden said earlier this month as he signed a sweeping executive order to crack down on anti-competitive business practices.

The U.S. has not ruled out further actions to punish China over its behavior in cyberspace. Biden indicated to reporters that he would be briefed on the cyberattacks again on 20 JUL. The Biden administration “has placed a premium on showing a united front with allies in condemning the Chinese, rather than slapping on U.S. sanctions,” said Lisa Curtis, who was senior director for South and Central Asia on the National Security Council under the Trump administration. “We will have to see whether the collective naming and shaming has an impact on Chinese cyber activity in the future.”

Some lawmakers are pressing Biden to do more. “The only thing bad guys understand is strength,” House Homeland Security Committee ranking member John Katko (R-N.Y.) said 19 JUL in a statement to The Hill. He said the Chinese Communist Party “is the greatest threat to U.S. interests and economic security for the next 50 years and it’s time the Biden Administration start treating them as such.” Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner (D-VA) praised the administration for its actions but stressed in a statement that “there’s still more work to do to address our cyber vulnerabilities.”

The U.S. has previously called China out for its involvement in cyberattacks, but the number of countries that joined the U.S. in admonishing China on 19 JUL signaled an escalation. The United Kingdom, the European Union and the “Five Eyes” countries all joined the effort. “Biden is reinforcing his effort to create a united front of democracies to stand up to China. This was a pretty broad-based coalition,” said Charles Kupchan, who served as senior director for European affairs on President Obama’s National Security Council. “We’re talking about a broad array of countries that have agreed to speak up, and that makes a difference because, unlike Russia, which in some ways relishes international criticism, China has thin skin.”

The U.S. economic relationship with China would complicate any effort to slap sanctions on Beijing, though the Biden administration has kept Trump-era tariffs on Chinese goods in place. “We are not holding back. We are not allowing any economic circumstance or consideration to prevent us from taking actions where warranted. And also we reserve the option to take additional actions where warranted as well,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters 19 JUL. Officials pointed to the Justice Department’s indictment 19 JUL of four individuals affiliated with China’s Ministry of State Security in a global hacking

operation as evidence of the U.S. taking steps to punish Beijing. Still, those hackers are likely to remain out of reach of U.S. prosecutors so long as they remain in China.

Biden has met with a number of world leaders in recent months, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, but there are no plans for him to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The White House says it is exploring future opportunities for engaging with Chinese officials. The Biden administration has raised concerns about the Microsoft hack as well as other cyber incidents in conversations with senior Chinese officials, a senior Biden official told reporters on 18 JUL. There has long been bipartisan support for a foreign policy that is tough on China, though Republicans in Congress and former President Trump have sought to portray Biden as weak on Beijing. The decision to hit China, and Biden’s ability to get other nations on board, could help Biden push back at such efforts.

“Both of them had the same intent, but the Biden administration has properly organized itself to lead, and it’s appropriately reaching out to allies and partners to lead a coalition,” Mark Montgomery, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said in comparing the Biden and Trump efforts. He stressed that while the Trump administration “had the right intent, the processes are much cleaner and clearer under the Biden administration.”

Cybersecurity is far from the only area of contention, and the Biden administration has taken other steps to push back on what the U.S. views as unacceptable behavior on the part of China. Those steps include barring U.S. imports of a material used in solar panels by a Chinese-based firm accused of engaging in forced labor practices and expanding a Trump-era order prohibiting investments in Chinese defense and surveillance firms that produce or use technology that is used to repress individuals or facilitate human rights abuses. Lewis noted that despite these steps, the administration was still “trying to work out” what pushing back against China looked like, particularly on cybersecurity concerns.

“Everywhere China goes there is a problem, so they are losing fans, and the Biden administration is smart to take advantage of that,” Lewis said. [Source: The Hill | Maggie Miller & Morgan Chalfant | July 19, 2021| ++]

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## National Archives

### Update 01: Lawmakers Urge Record be Digitized to Clear Backlog



Leaders of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform urged the National Archives this week to digitize its records to help with a large backlog of records requests from veterans who need personnel information to secure government benefits. Leaders of the National Archives and Records Administration told lawmakers last month that they were struggling with a backlog of about 500,000 records requests from veterans who need military personnel information from the archives when applying for Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and health care. They estimated the backlog would not be eliminated until the end of 2022. The records requests grew during the coronavirus pandemic when most employees at the National

Personnel Records Center were not permitted to work on site. Workers could not access records while working remotely. The center is working to digitize its records, but it's not happening fast enough, lawmakers said.

In a letter 26 JUL, six members of the House committee urged David Ferriero, the archivist for the United States, to apply for funding through the Technology Modernization Fund to help with the digitization efforts. The fund is intended to help federal agencies with technological challenges. "It is critical that [the National Archives] use any and all available tools to ensure we can uphold our commitments to our nation's veterans," the lawmakers wrote. The letter was led signed by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), chairwoman of the oversight committee, and Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, the committee's ranking Republican, as well as four other Democrats and Republicans.

Ferriero had told lawmakers that he had hired an additional 100 employees to work through the backlog. However, he estimated it would still take about a year and a half to clear the 500,000 requests. To get more employees back to work, the VA announced a partnership in April to offer vaccines to all National Archives staff. At the time, the VA said the employees played a "vital role" in processing veterans' claims for VA benefits and health care. At the National Personnel Records Center, 72 employees working on site contracted the coronavirus during the pandemic, the most recent case of which was this month. With the ongoing effects of the pandemic, oversight committee members asked Ferriero focus on digitizing records and improving telework.

Ferriero acknowledged in a letter to Congress this month that digitizing records was important to eliminate the backlog. He said the agency would begin digitizing records in August. "Mass digitization will ... significantly enhance the [National Personnel Records Center]'s ability to process requests remotely in the unfortunate event of a pandemic resurgence," he wrote. Lawmakers said they believe funding through the Technology Modernization Fund would speed up the process. "[The agency] has identified the need to digitize records as one of the biggest hurdles to addressing the backlog of veterans' requests," lawmakers wrote. "Although [the National Archives] has taken some steps to begin digitization, more significant action is needed to improve the agency's IT infrastructure." [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | July 27, 2021 ++]

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## **Arlington National Cemetery**

### **Update 94: Ask Congress to Preserve Eligibility for 20-Year Retirees**

An extended schedule for the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provides lawmakers an opportunity to intervene on planned eligibility changes at Arlington National Cemetery -- discriminatory changes that will dramatically reduce the benefit of full military honors. Your letters, emails, and phone calls are important to change course on the proposed eligibility changes. Staff members with lawmakers from across the country have reached out to MOAA to better understand the issue and develop a solution.

MOAA recently sent a letter to leadership on both the House and Senate Armed Services committees, asking them to use the NDAA as a vehicle to direct DoD "to designate the next national cemetery that affords full military honors and to leave unchanged the current eligibility requirements earned through military service." If Congress doesn't act, "the change in eligibility puts the burden of a solution on the

currently eligible servicemembers and their families – including those who have long had Arlington as their plan for final rest,” wrote MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret).

Readers are asked to contact their legislators and urge them to designate in the FY 2022 NDAA the next national cemetery as ANC reaches capacity. A sample letter follows:

Dear [Recipients],

I am writing you to request language in the NDAA that will direct the Department of Defense to designate the location for the next national cemetery. Adding this language to the NDAA will ensure current operations and eligibility continue at Arlington National Cemetery as it reaches capacity. This directive will also communicate the intent to continue this mission at the next national cemetery. ANC provides a special service to our military and veteran communities in rendering honors at burials and inurnments. These coveted honors serve to comfort the grieving and instill pride in the families who witness our nation's final respects for their loved ones.

I am concerned the proposed eligibility changes to ANC are discriminatory by service, mission, and gender, and do not account for the void or degradation of military honors for those forced into different cemeteries.

Consider the impact to a Vietnam veteran with Bronze Star for Valor, a Cold War submariner amassing years of duty underway, a bomber or missile crewmember, and many others who also risked their lives for our nation. The changes proposed will render 20-year retirees ineligible for in-ground burial and the caliber of memorable military honors delivered at ANC.

Eligibility changes for burial at ANC constitute more than a solution to a math and geography problem - they will force many to alter their end-of-life plans, or worse, will force families to make decisions counter to previous eligibility without input from their deceased loved ones.

This is a matter of national conscience. I am asking you to intervene on this shortsighted plan that will further reduce a benefit for those military families with the rare propensity to serve.

Sincerely,

\* Your Name

MOAA will continue to engage Congress on Arlington National Cemetery, and needs your voice as constituents. Reach out to your lawmakers and ask them to include language in the FY 2022 NDAA that would require DoD to designate the next national cemetery. If in doubt as to who your legislators are or their online contact info, click on:

- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%7D> -- House
- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%2C%22chamber%22%3A%22Senate%22%7D> -- Senate

[Source: Military Officers Association of America | Dana T. Atkins | July 29, 2021 ++]

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## Tricare/CHAMPUS Fraud

### Update 25: Pharmacist Pleads Guilty to \$180M+ Health Care Fraud Scheme

**Bolton, Miss** - A Mississippi pharmacist pleaded guilty 20 JUL for his role in a multimillion-dollar scheme to defraud TRICARE and private insurance companies by paying kickbacks to distributors for the referral of medically unnecessary compounded prescription medications that were ultimately dispensed by his pharmacies. The conduct allegedly resulted in more than \$180 million in fraudulent billings, including more than \$50 million paid by federal healthcare programs.

According to court documents, **David “Jason” Rutland**, 42, of Bolton, a pharmacist and co-owner of various compounding pharmacies, admitted that he participated in a scheme to defraud TRICARE and other health care benefit programs by distributing medically unnecessary compounded medications by, among other things: adjusting prescription formulas to ensure the highest reimbursement without regard to efficacy; soliciting recruiters to procure prescriptions for high-margin compounded medications and paying those recruiters commissions based on the percentage of reimbursements paid by pharmacy benefit managers and health care benefit programs, including commissions on claims reimbursed by TRICARE; and routinely and systematically waiving and/or reducing copayments to be paid by beneficiaries and members, including utilizing a purported copayment assistance program to falsely make it appear as if Rutland’s pharmacy and its affiliate compounding pharmacies had been collecting copayments.

Rutland pleaded guilty to conspiracy to defraud the United States and solicit, receive, offer and pay illegal kickbacks, and faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison. Sentencing has been scheduled for Nov. 30. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. Rutland must also pay restitution and forfeit all assets traced to the ill-gotten gains. [Source: DoJ Office of Public Affairs | July 2, 2021 ++]

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## Marijuana

### Update 06: What Legalization Would Mean For Troops, Clearance Holders



You might have read recent comments by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas regarding the legalization of marijuana. His comments were likely an indication of what justices might be thinking regarding this hotly debated issue. Currently, as many as 38 states have legalized marijuana for one purpose or another. The federal government, despite their inaction in enforcing federal law, has refused to legalize marijuana, which makes this issue confusing and difficult for any gun owner, service member, or security clearance holder to know if and when they can use marijuana or invest in marijuana companies.

### **How would legalizing marijuana affect security clearance holders, military?**

Some assume that the legalization of marijuana will mean that everybody holding a clearance or serving in the military would be permitted to use. This might be true, but it is possible that the federal government still limits use under certain circumstances. It's reasonable to assume that the federal government will continue to stand by their position that marijuana is mind-altering and that an individual under the influence of marijuana is less trustworthy with a firearm. Similarly, the federal government will almost definitely have concerns about individuals in possession of classified information being under the influence of marijuana.

As many military and clearance holders are always on call, the federal government will need to figure out what rules to put into place to limit use and to ensure that people are not under the influence of marijuana in the workplace and while possessing a firearm or working in a classified setting. The next big hurdle will be figuring out how to test whether an individual is under the influence of marijuana at any given time.

There is a reasonable expectation that security clearance adjudications will change if marijuana is legalized. While most applications ask about illegal drug use in the past seven years, admitting to marijuana use will not result in a definite denial. If marijuana is legalized, the drug could be dropped from the application. It is more likely that there will still be a marijuana question, just as there are questions related to alcohol. The adjudicator will likely still consider frequency and recency, but the standard will be much friendlier than it currently is.

### **The use of the word piecemeal**

It should be significant to any military or security clearance attorney to hear a Supreme Court Justice use the word piecemeal when describing the policy of the federal government. Often, a security clearance attorney will argue on appeal that the lower decision in a security clearance matter was reached using a piecemeal approach. Given the use of the "whole-person" concept, a finding that the process was piecemeal is a finding that the decision was arbitrary and capricious and will often result in a reversal. A Supreme Court Justice does not use such a word without meaning behind it.

### **Why is marijuana still illegal?**

There are a number of reasons why marijuana is still illegal. When considering gun rights and marijuana, the government is likely concerned that the drug is mind-altering. They are of the well-supported position that nobody should be in possession of a firearm while under the influence of a mind-altering drug of any type. If this is their position, then it is logical to believe that the federal government will never allow marijuana use within the military ranks. Legalizing marijuana does not necessarily mean they have to allow service members to use it. There would likely still be a strictly enforced ban given the difficulty in tracking use and the effects that use might have on a service member. Of course, there is a possibility that medicinal use becomes permissible if studies continue to show positive effects.

It will be interesting to see if marijuana use remains an issue for individuals applying for or holding approved access to classified information. While it is unclear if and when the federal government will allow security clearance holders to use recreational marijuana in the future, it is entirely possible that security clearance holders might soon be permitted to be involved in the sale and distribution of marijuana. There is also a good possibility that prescription medicinal use might be permissible in the not-to-distant future, assuming the applicant clears all Guideline I (Psychological Conditions) concerns during the application process and beyond. Marijuana might be as effective as and safer than some current prescription medications being used by a security clearance holder.



Maybe money is driving the delay. The federal government is likely searching for a way to profit from the legalization. Much like cigarettes and arguably-more-dangerous alcohol, the federal government will heavily regulate and tax marijuana when it is eventually legalized. This point alone almost guarantees its legalization. They will use this money for a series of efforts, including drug and alcohol prevention and training. As you might know, the federal government still considers marijuana to be a Schedule 1 highly addictive drug.

Whatever the federal government is considering, Justice Thomas might have given us a brief look into the window of the Supreme Court. While the Supreme Court does not create laws, they will occasionally determine the constitutionality of laws that make it to their court. It is certainly not a secret that the Supreme Court attempts to avoid difficult and highly controversial topics if they are able to do so. No single person or small body of judges wants to appear to be dictating laws for the nation. That said, the recent comments and the use of the word piecemeal certainly lead me to believe that the Supreme Court is asking the federal government to figure out what side of the marijuana issue they want to be on.

The federal government cannot continue to say marijuana is illegal while taking no action against the wide-scale marijuana manufacturing and distribution that has recently occurred across the country. Considering that no fewer than 38 states have legalized marijuana in some capacity, it should be easy to determine what side of the issue the federal government will likely end up on, but what is taking so long? [Source: MilitaryTimes | Anthony Kuhn, Esq. (Opinion) | July 24, 2021 ++]

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## **DoD Surveys**

### **All Active Duty Military Spouse Launched 28 JUL**

For the first time, all active-duty military spouses will be able to participate in the Department of Defense Active Duty Spouse Survey, which was launched 28 JUL. The survey is available in two tracks: DoD's traditional, randomly and scientifically selected group of active duty spouses; and an opportunity for all other active-duty spouses to take part in an open, online survey. Officials use the survey results to consider ways to adjust family policy and programs. The survey gathers data on issues such as satisfaction with the military lifestyle, support services and other military benefits, spouse employment, child care, financial stability, and the overall health and well-being of spouses, children and families.

DoD is still sending a survey invitation by email or mail to the scientifically selected sample, with a code to enter online. So spouses should watch their mail boxes and email in-boxes. But this year, officials are soliciting input from all active duty spouses on key issues, challenges and concerns. Spouses can visit DoD's survey portal to complete the short survey. The survey portal is the same for each track of the survey, but information was not immediately available about whether the surveys are the same for both tracks. Those in the broader group enter their DoD ID number and day of birth, which verifies they are an active-duty spouse before they gain access to the survey. The responses remain confidential, and their personal information will not be linked to any survey responses.

Several organizations conduct open online surveys of the military community, which are not scientific samplings. But this new, additional level of DoD survey — an addition to their traditional scientific sampling — opens up the opportunity for more input that is verified as coming from active duty spouses.

Patricia Montes Barron, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy, told Military Times in April that one of her goals is to bring more voices of military spouses into DoD. The surveys will help DoD officials “to engage in deeper dialogue” with spouses, “and help us prioritize solutions that meet their most pressing needs,” Barron said, in an announcement of the survey launch. “We’re proud of the progress we have made on important spouse issues, especially around stress, relationship support and employment. We know there is more to do, and these survey results will help guide our next steps.”

The last survey of active duty spouses, conducted by DoD in 2019 before the pandemic, showed increased signs of stress and distress among spouses, with fewer active duty spouses reporting satisfaction with the military lifestyle, and fewer supporting their service member staying in the military. Researchers randomly selected 65,207 active duty spouses to participate in the 2019 survey; more than 10,000 spouses responded, for a response rate of 16.5 percent. In December, 2020, when the results of the 2019 survey were released, a DoD official said the 2021 spouse survey will include questions that address the impact of the pandemic. Information was not immediately available about how long the survey will be available online. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 28, 2021 ++]

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

**Reported JUL 16 thru 31, 2021 | Ten**

“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>

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### **LOOK FOR**

-- **Air Force 1st Lt. Alva R. "Ray" Krogman, 25**, of Worland, Wyoming, was a pilot assigned to the 504th Tactical Air Support Group, 7th Air Force, on temporary duty with the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron operating out of Nakhon Royal Phanom Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. On Jan. 17, 1967, he was flying an O1-F Birddog aircraft on a reconnaissance mission in Savannakhet Province, Laos. Krogman's aircraft was hit by enemy fire and went down. Search and rescue operations began immediately, but were shut down within a few hours after one of the search and rescue aircraft was also shot down. Krogman was never recovered and was declared killed in action on Jan. 31, 1967. He was buried July 21, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Krogman.](#)

-- **Air Force Maj. Paul A. Avolese, 35**, of Jamaica, New York, was a radar navigator assigned to the 4133rd Bombardment Wing. On July 7, 1967, Avolese was part of the crew of a B-52D Stratofortress bomber conducting a bombing mission from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, to a target in Vietnam. During a maneuver over the South China Sea, Avolese's bomber collided with another B-52, causing both aircraft to fall into the sea. Four of the crew members from his aircraft were rescued, but Avolese was never recovered. He was declared dead on July 24, 1967. He was buried July 24, 2021, in Springfield, Oregon. [Read about Avolese.](#)

-- **Army 1st Lt. James E. Wright, 25**, was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division. On the morning of Sept. 8, 1944, Wright's unit was part of a larger force ordered to cross the river and take up a position in the woods on the east side. The force held their position against relentless German attack, taking heavy losses. During the night of Sept. 10 and into the morning of Sept. 11 most of the soldiers were able to retreat across the river. However, Wright was among the soldiers reported missing that night. His body was unable to be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Wright.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Alan E. Petersen, 23**, was assigned to the 345th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Petersen was serving as a bombardier crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave, north of Bucharest, Romania. His remains were not identified following the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Petersen.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Berton J. McQueen, 20**, was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division. In August 1944, his unit landed on the southern coast of France as part of Operation Dragoon. He was mortally wounded by German artillery shrapnel and taken to an aid station where he died

Nov. 23, 1944. German troops withdrew from the area several days later, but McQueen's body was not found. Interment services are pending. [Read about McQueen.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Bill Morrison, 29**, was assigned to Company G, 2nd Battalion, 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces in the Raffelsbrand sector of the Hürtgen Forest, near Hürtgen, Germany, when he was reported killed in action on Nov. 8, 1944. His body was not able to be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Morrison.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Louis N. Crosby, 18**, of Orangeburg, South Carolina, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Crosby will be buried Aug. 18, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Crosby.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Stephen C. Mason, 21**, was assigned to Headquarters Co., 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. He was reported missing in action during Operation Market Garden after his patrol failed to return from a mission to the enemy lines near Beek, Netherlands, on Nov. 3, 1944. His body was unable to be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mason.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Warren G.H. DeVault, 24**, of Rhea, Tennessee, was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Hürtgen, Germany, when he was reportedly killed in action on Nov. 20, 1944. DeVault could not be recovered because of the ongoing fighting, and his remains were not recovered or identified. DeVault will be buried Aug. 14, 2021, in Dayton, Tennessee. [Read about DeVault.](#)

-- **Navy Metalsmith 1st Class Leonard F. Smith, 29**, of Albany, New York, 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 Smith. He will be cremated on Sept. 1, 2021. The family has elected to not hold a funeral service. [Read about Smith.](#)

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

\* VA \*



## VR&E Program

### Update 04: May Be Better Than the GI Bill for Disabled Vets

Hundreds of thousands of veterans use their GI Bill benefits annually to earn a college degree, but thousands may be better served bypassing the well-known education program in favor of another Veterans Affairs program aimed at employment help for disabled veterans, according to a new report released this week.

Officials from the Government Accountability Office said the [Veteran Readiness and Employment program](#) was used by about 123,000 veterans last year but has the potential to benefit even more, if VA leaders step up efforts to promote it.

- “Most school and [veterans service organization] officials we interviewed said veterans with disabilities often choose the GI Bill for education benefits because they are unaware that the VR&E program exists,” the report states
- “The officials attributed this lack of awareness to VA’s relatively limited promotion of VR&E and because of the prominence of the GI Bill as an education benefit program.”

The GI Bill education program dates back almost 80 years and is among the most well-known veterans benefits in the country. Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits which went into effect in 2009, veterans or eligible dependents can receive full tuition payments at state universities, plus a monthly housing stipend and other financial assistance. According to VA statistics, about 658,000 veterans used the benefit in 2020, at a cost of about \$10.1 billion. The VR&E program had about one-fifth the enrollment and about one-tenth the price tag of the GI Bill last year. To be eligible, veterans must be at least 10-percent disabled with a service-connected injury.

GAO officials said it may be more beneficial for many disabled veterans because of the flexibility of the program, and the focus not just on degree completion but also job training and independent living. Unlike the GI Bill, VR&E participants work with an assigned vocational rehabilitation counselor, who helps the veteran identify a suitable employment goal and draft an employment plan,” the report states. “To develop the plan, the counselor and veteran review labor market information for jobs, taking into consideration the veteran’s identified abilities, aptitudes, and interests.” That can include college classes, internships or apprenticeships. If participants opt to take classes, they can receive payouts on par with the post-9/11 GI Bill, and later switch to that program to complete degrees under certain circumstances. Under current rules, individuals who use GI Bill benefits first cannot switch back to the VR&E program.

Veterans groups have lauded the VR&E in Capitol Hill testimony in recent years, and lobbied for lawmakers to expand funding and resources for the efforts. Researchers noted that not everyone who uses the GI Bill is eligible for the VR&E program, and that close work with a counselor or a focus on a specific job field may make the vocational rehabilitation program less attractive than the open-ended GI Bill for others. But the GAO findings say that thousands of veterans may prefer it, if they are made more aware of the program. They say that department officials should do a better job explaining the differences and benefits of both the GI Bill program and VR&E program to eligible veterans.

“[More communication] would help better position veterans with disabilities to take the greatest advantage of the benefits these programs can offer,” the report states. VA officials said they are working on that. In a statement to GAO, department Chief of Staff Tanya Bradsher said staff are already revamping materials on the two programs with an eye towards better promoting the VR&E benefits. New online information pages and print handouts on the program are due this fall. The department’s current fact sheets and eligibility guidelines are available through the Veterans Benefits Administration web site. <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab>.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 29, 2021 ++]

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## VA My Health eVet Website

### Update 03: My HealthVet Advanced Accounts Will Be Discontinued



[My HealthVet](#), VA's online patient portal, gives you access to your VA health information so you can understand and manage your VA care. Beginning in September 2021, My HealthVet Advanced accounts **will be discontinued**. If you have an Advanced account today and do not upgrade to a Premium account, your account will revert to a Basic account. If that occurs, you will lose access to the pharmacy features, including the ability to request and track your VA prescription refills. That means... it's time to upgrade to a Premium account. With a free Premium account, you can securely access your VA health information, 24/7.

#### **Using your My HealthVet Premium account, you will be able to:**

- Request VA prescription refills, track your VA medications, and access your current VA prescriptions and prescription history.
- View, download and print your VA health information, reports and images from your VA medical record.
- Send online secure messages to your VA care team to ask them non-urgent health questions; ask to renew your medications; and send updates on your condition.
- View, schedule, reschedule and cancel VA appointments.

#### **How to get started**

If you are new to My HealthVet, create an account by visiting the [My HealthVet website](#), selecting Register, and filling out the required fields. Make sure to check the boxes verifying that you are a VA patient and Veteran. If you are already a user, you may have a Premium account. If you do, there will be a "P" icon next to your name. Also, if you currently use secure messaging on My HealthVet, you're all set. Patients who use secure messaging already have a Premium account.

#### **Three ways to upgrade to Premium level**

If you have an Advanced account, there are three ways to upgrade to Premium level: in person, online or through a video appointment. Upgrading your account is free. If you want to upgrade in person or through a video appointment, contact the My HealthVet coordinator in your local VA facility. Ask about upgrading to a Premium account. You can locate your VA facility's contact information through [VA's facility locator tool](#). To upgrade online, you'll need to use your DS Logon Premium or ID.me secure sign-in credentials. You can learn more about the online upgrading process on the [My HealthVet blog](#) post.

#### **Now is the time to upgrade your My HealthVet account**

With a Premium account, you'll still be able to request refills of your VA prescriptions. You'll also gain access to all the tools, including secure messaging, access to your VA medical record online and more. To learn more, visit the [My HealthVet website](#), watch the [My HealthVet Premium video](#), or contact your VA facility's My HealthVet coordinator. [Source: Vantage Point | July 12, 2021 ++]

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## VA Cancer Care

### Update 03: VA Oncology Program Brings Care to Over 50,000 Veterans



The Department of Veterans Affairs National Precision Oncology Program was launched in 2016 to bring targeted, personalized cancer care to veterans. Additionally, the program standardizes precision oncology in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Precision oncology assesses genetic and molecular information to diagnose and treat cancers. This information is then used to personalize treatment and medicine tailored to a patient's individual cancer. Precision oncology improves patient outcomes while reducing side effects from cancer-treating medications and overall improves the quality of life for cancer patients.

As the largest integrated provider of oncology services in the United States, VHA diagnoses more than 200 new cases of cancer each day and provides cancer-related care to more than 50,000 veterans annually. Another effort by VA to help close the care gap for veterans is the expansion of VA's National Oncology Program teleoncology access. In 2020, VA announced it is working with the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation to build new programs that enable VA oncology specialists to provide veterans access to precision cancer care regardless of where they live. Bristol Myers Squibb committed to providing VA \$4.5 million in grant funds over three years to develop a national teleoncology center that would enable VHA to better reach veterans living in rural communities, providing all veterans access to precision oncology care.

“By developing, implementing and standardizing workflow processes, this project will expedite the expansion of a model for delivering specialized oncology care in a virtual setting — and help cancer care teams provide the utmost patient experience in a virtual care environment,” Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation President John L. Damonti said in a release. Veterans with questions about the oncology services offered by VHA should consult with their VA health-care team. [Source: The American Legion | July 15, 2021 ++]

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## Veterans Living Overseas

### Benefits and Services Entitlements



If you're a Veteran who lives overseas, you remain entitled to the benefits and services you earned through your military service. Most VA benefits are payable regardless of your place of residence or nationality. VA benefits include [disability compensation](#), [pension](#), [education and training](#), [health care](#), [home loans](#), [insurance](#), [vocational rehabilitation and employment](#) and [burial](#).

#### What you should know

- ***Direct Deposit:*** Once benefit payments are sent from the United States, your international direct deposit arrival depends on your foreign financial institution's processing time.
- ***Currency Conversion:*** [International Treasury Services](#) will not charge you a currency conversion fee for payments sent overseas; however, your foreign financial institution may charge fees as applicable.
- ***Foreign Schools:*** [Education benefits](#) are offered to eligible Veterans to attend approved programs at foreign schools. Visit our [Foreign School Information for Students](#) page to learn more. You can use our [WEAMS Institution Search tool](#) to find foreign schools with approved programs.
- ***Specially Adaptive Housing:*** If you are a disabled Veteran, you may be eligible for a Specially Adaptive Housing grant to accommodate your disability. You must have a substantial ownership interest in the home to be adapted or built. It's also important to know that any improvements or modifications must be first approved by VA. Visit our [Specially Adaptive Housing page](#) for information on eligibility, how to apply, and how to contact VA for assistance.

#### Getting healthcare overseas

As a Veteran living or traveling abroad, you can receive medical care for VA service-connected disabilities through our VA Foreign Medical Program. Under this program, we assume payment responsibility for the necessary treatment of service-connected disabilities. You can visit our [Foreign Medical Program](#) page for more information. There are regional toll-free phone numbers on this page that you can call for additional assistance.

#### How to get an eBenefits account

You can manage and apply for benefits online using [eBenefits](#). If you don't already have an eBenefits account, you can register on the [DS Logon Registration page](#). Instead of using your APO address for registering on eBenefits, use your last recorded United States address. For dependents of Veterans without a social security number, you must do the following:

- Contact the [Defense Manpower Data Center](#) (DMDC) at 1-800-538-9552.
  - Provide your dependent's Foreign ID number.



- Obtain a generated social security number provided by DMDC.
- Use the generated social security number for registration in eBenefits.

You can visit the [eBenefits help page](#) for assistance with registering for an account or you can call 1-800 372-7437.

### How to get assistance

- For general benefit questions and assistance:
  - Call us at (412) 395-6272 from 8:00am to 9:00pm, Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday.
  - Send us an email using the [VA Inquiry Routing and Information System](#).
- For questions related to education benefits:
  - Call us at (918) 781-5678 from 8:00am to 7:00pm, Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday.
- For help related to international direct deposit and currency conversion:
  - Call us at (918) 781-7550 from 9:00am to 5:30pm, Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday.
  - Send us an email at [DIRECTD.VBAMUS@VA.GOV](mailto:DIRECTD.VBAMUS@VA.GOV).
- To speak to a benefits representative at an American embassy or American Consulate:
  - Visit [Social Security's Foreign Country Service Information page](#). This page provides a list of Federal Benefits Units who have specially trained staff who can provide a full range of VA benefits assistance to include claim submissions.
- To speak to a VA Overseas Military Services Coordinator:
  - Visit [Overseas Military Services Coordinators page](#). This page provides the email contact information for VA Overseas Military Services Coordinators who provide a full range of VA benefits assistance.
- To appoint an accredited representative to help you manage and apply for benefits:
  - Use the [Manage Your Representative for VA Claims tool](#) to locate and appoint a recognized representative from a [Veterans Service Organization](#), attorney, or claims agent by state/territory, zip code, or by the organization's name.

### Veterans who live in the Philippines

If you live in the Philippines, visit our [Philippines overseas page](#) that provides special information about residing in this country.

[Source: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-abroad.asp> | July 15, 2021 ++]

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## GI Bill

### Update 313: Reforms on Track for Fall Semester



Veterans Affairs officials expect to have 27 congressionally mandated reforms to GI Bill benefits in place by 1 AUG, but many of those changes may not be immediately visible to all students. That’s because the bulk of the changes, included in the Johnny Isakson and Phil Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, deal with specific programs and eligibility requirements that individually don’t affect a large number of veterans. When combined, however, these small changes amount to significant updates across the breadth of the benefit.

“These provisions greatly assist VA in providing benefits more efficiently and effectively ... [including] improved oversight and accountability and expanded opportunities for service members, veterans and eligible family members,” said Charmain Bouge, executive director of the Veterans Benefits Administration’s Education Service. Bouge faced questioning 20 JUL from House Veterans’ Affairs Committee members regarding the progress of the changes.

Several provisions have been in place since the start of the summer, including the extension of protections for beneficiaries attending colleges whose schedules were upended by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

- Students forced out of classes due to changes to class meetings or availability can retain their GI Bill eligibility under the measure, on-campus jobs and apprenticeship stipends were extended through the end of the pandemic, and payouts for hybrid classes will be adjusted under language approved last fall.
- The bill also expanded the popular *Veteran Employment through Technology Education Courses* earlier this year and expanded VA’s Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship program.
- It also, for the first time, made foster children of servicemembers eligible for GI Bill benefits transfer, in alignment with Defense Department rules regarding dependents.

Upcoming changes include:

- Expansion of the Fry Scholarship to include spouses and children of service members — including reservists — who died in non-combat events, and new requirements for schools to provide cost estimates to potential students ahead of enrollment.
- Students will be required to “electronically verify” their enrollment status with VA monthly. Bouge said officials are testing the technology for that now, with a plan to require the check-ins to launch next month for students enrolled in non-college degree programs and for other students at the end of the year. “We want to make sure that we have the latest and greatest mobile information for our students, and that they understand the process and how it’s important for them to reach out to VA to notify us of any issues,” she said.

Lawmakers promised continued oversight on the reforms in the months to come. “The devil is in the details and Congress’ work doesn’t end with just a final stroke of the president’s pen,” said Rep. Barry Moore (R-AL).

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 20, 2021 ++]

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## **VA EHR**

### **Update 30: VA ‘Reimaging Approach’ To Costly Electronic Health Record Project**

The Department of Veterans Affairs promised a new approach 14 JUL for the major project to overhaul its electronic health record system, following concerns from federal watchdogs and employees who used the program when it first went live in Spokane, Wash. VA Secretary Denis McDonough testified that day before the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee about the challenges and the department’s plan moving forward. Shortly after becoming secretary in February, McDonough paused the project and ordered a 12-week internal review. The review revealed patient safety problems, escalating costs, a lack of productivity and ineffective training on the new system for health care providers, among other issues.

In some cases, veterans received duplicate medications in the mail when the new system did not automatically cancel old prescriptions, McDonough said. Some staff in Spokane complained that they were not introduced to the system until the day it went live and didn’t know how to use it. McDonough vowed there would be a “surge of activity” in the coming weeks and months to correct the problems. The department was supposed to deploy the new system at a second site in Columbus, Ohio, but the agency said Wednesday it would not go live in Columbus until patient safety issues were addressed. “As a result of the strategic review, we’re reimaging our approach to this system,” McDonough said. “We can and will get this effort back on track.”

In 2017, the VA started to overhaul its electronic health record system. It awarded a contract to Cerner Corp., a technology company in Kansas City, Mo. The new system is supposed to be capable of sharing patient data seamlessly with the Defense Department, which could limit problems when a service member transitions out of the military. The new system went live at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane in October. At the time, former VA Secretary Robert Wilkie described it as a “historic step toward creating a seamless health care experience for veterans.” Health care workers in Spokane did not receive enough training on the new system before it launched, the VA Inspector General found.

One VA employee told the IG that there was a “high anxiety level” after training with Cerner. Nearly two-thirds of staff said they had difficulty navigating the new software, and only 5% felt fully prepared to use all functions of it. The IG also discovered that the VA underestimated the cost of the project. The department’s contract with Cerner started at \$10 billion but increased to \$16.1 billion. The VA underestimated the cost of necessary upgrades to both its physical infrastructure and its information technology, the IG reported. It would likely need \$2.5 billion to \$5.1 billion more for the project, the report states.

“I, for one, am fed up with the amount of taxpayer dollars being spent on this program without any demonstrated benefits to veterans or VA medical staff,” said Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT), the committee chairman. “This simply cannot continue.” McDonough described Wednesday the agency’s plans to invest

in infrastructure, improve training and testing and be more transparent with Congress as the new system rolls out. He committed to Cerner’s technology, saying that the issues were with the management of the project, rather than the software.

McDonough and Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS), the ranking Republican on the committee, said that if the system is implemented correctly, it has the potential to simplify the patient experience and move the health care industry forward. “It’s exasperating because the potential benefits that could accrue from this effort are tremendous,” Moran said. “It’s the ability for the VA to care for veterans, for service men and women to more easily transition from active duty to becoming a veteran. And the longer we delay and the longer we have challenges, the less likely that the veterans who are living today are going to benefit from this.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | July 15, 2021 ++]

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## **VA Covid-19 Vaccines**

### **Update 06: VA Health Care Workers Will Be Required To Get To Keep Their Jobs**

Department of Veterans Affairs leaders will require all health care employees to receive the coronavirus vaccine by mid-September or lose their jobs under a new policy announced Monday. Officials said the move is designed “to keep the veterans [VA] serves safe.” The mandate has been discussed as a possibility in recent weeks, but the recent nationwide surges in the Delta variant of the virus pushed leaders to enact the change now.

All Title 38 employees — including physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, expanded-function dental auxiliaries and chiropractors — who work in Veterans Health Administration facilities or provide direct care to veterans on VA’s behalf will have eight weeks to be fully vaccinated. “Whenever a veteran or VA employee sets foot in a VA facility, they deserve to know that we have done everything in our power to protect them from COVID-19,” VA Secretary Denis McDonough said in a statement. “With this mandate, we can once again make and keep that fundamental promise.” President Joe Biden also confirmed the move during a press conference on 26 JUL, saying that “all doctors working at VA facilities are going to have to be vaccinated.”

The move is likely to be met with fierce opposition — including possible legal challenges — from groups who view vaccine mandates as an infringement on their personal rights. Critics have also noted that the vaccines are still likely months away from full approval by the Food and Drug Administration. The most commonly used vaccines in America, manufactured by Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, have been approved for emergency use. Federal officials estimate about half of all adults and teenagers in the United States are vaccinated.

VA officials said earlier this month about 300,000 employees have been fully vaccinated against coronavirus, roughly 70 percent of the department’s employee total. But they also acknowledged that figure fluctuates from location to location. Around 115,000 VA workers fall under then Title 38 classification. At the New Orleans VA Medical Center — which last year had among the highest numbers of patient cases and deaths from the virus — nearly 85 percent of staff was fully vaccinated at the start of July. The St. Cloud VA Health Care System in Minnesota hadn’t reached 60 percent by that date.

At least four VA employees have died from coronavirus-related illnesses since mid-June. VA officials confirmed that all four were unvaccinated, and that three died as a result of the Delta variant. In addition, the VA Law Enforcement Training Center located in Little Rock, Ark., has seen a recent outbreak in coronavirus cases, the third such surge at the location since the pandemic began in early 2020. Department officials noted that all VA employees are eligible to be vaccinated for free at any VA vaccination site, and may receive up to four hours of paid administrative leave to complete the vaccinations. Veterans, their spouses and their caregivers are also eligible for the free vaccines through VA.

Earlier in the day, when asked about vaccine mandates, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that administration officials are willing to take whatever steps necessary to keep Americans safe. “We’re not going to judge our success here by whether we score political points,” she said. “We’re going to judge it by whether we are able to save more lives. And if the health and medical experts suggest those are the right way to go, then we will support that.” VA officials said the American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American College of Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, Association of American Medical Colleges, and National Association for Home Care and Hospice have endorsed mandating COVID-19 vaccination for health care workers.

In a statement, officials from AMVETS also praised the move. “Mandating all patient-facing staff in VA medical facilities to be fully vaccinated in order to continue serving veterans is the right thing to do,” said Joe Chenelly, AMETS national executive director. “Every VA employee coming into contact with a veteran should be expected to take every measure possible to ensure they are not endangering veterans who are in VA facilities.” As of 26 JUL, at least 12,679 VA patients have died from Covid-related complications, a rate of about 25 a day since the start of the pandemic. Active cases among VA patients have risen sharply in the last month, up more than 170 percent from late-June levels. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 26, 2021 ++]

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## **VA Mortgages**

### **Update 01: Two New Relief Programs for Those Impacted by COVID**



The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering two new programs for veterans experiencing financial hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programs are designed to help VA-guaranteed home loan holders bring their mortgages current and resume making regular payments to avoid foreclosure. While these new programs will be offered only as a last resort and under limited circumstances, the VA has several other options to help keep veterans from losing their homes to foreclosure if you don't qualify for these

new, limited time, programs. Check with the VA or your lender for more details. Both of the new programs come with requirements and limitations:

- You must currently live in the property,
- You must have been up to date, or less than 30 days overdue, on any mortgage payments as of March 1, 2020.
- You must have missed at least one payment after that date.
- You must have entered into a forbearance agreement with the lender. Basically, a forbearance is a modification of the original loan terms, or a suspension of payments, because of hardship.
- You must have recovered from any COVID-related financial hardship.
- You cannot be delinquent on more than 30% of the property's appraised value

There is limited time to apply for the programs, so if you are close to having problems making mortgage payments, you should contact your lender or the VA as soon as possible. The two new programs include:

### **The VA Partial Claim Payment Program**

This is a temporary program that begins on July 27, 2021, and runs through Oct. 28, 2022. Under this program, the VA will make any overdue mortgage payments to the lender and then create a second mortgage on the property. The second mortgage is interest free, and no payments are due until the veteran sells the home or pays off the original mortgage. At that time, the borrower must repay the VA any money received under this program before they own the house free and clear. The borrower can pay the money back early with no penalty, and they are relieved of having any overdue payments affecting their credit or continuing to accrue interest or penalties.

### **The COVID-19 Refund Modification Program**

This can give borrowers up to a 20% reduction in their monthly mortgage payments. Like the Partial Claim Payment Program discussed above, the VA makes any overdue payments to the lender and creates a second mortgage on the property. However, under this program, the lender is encouraged to modify the existing mortgage to make it easier for the veteran to resume making payments. The lender can modify the original mortgage by adding up to 10 years to the repayment schedule; that means a 30-year mortgage can become a 40-year mortgage.

By adding this additional time to the mortgage and reducing the loan principal by taking into consideration any payments already made by the borrower -- plus any overdue payments that are made by the VA under this program -- a borrower can see a large reduction in their monthly payments. Contact your lender or a VA loan technician at 877-827-3702 for more details.

[Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | July 26, 2021 ++]

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

**Reported 16 thru 31 JUL 2021**

**Albuquerque, N.M.** —**Susan K. Harris**, 74, and **William S. Harris**, 60, both of Albuquerque, were sentenced 15 JUL in federal court for conspiracy to defraud the United States and other financial crimes committed in connection with the operation of Ayudando Guardians, Inc., a non-profit corporation that

previously provided guardianship, conservatorship and financial management to hundreds of people with special needs. Susan Harris was sentenced to 47 years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. William Harris was sentenced to 15 years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. Both will be required to pay the entire amount of stolen funds as restitution to the victims. A superseding indictment filed on Dec. 5, 2017, charged Susan Harris, William Harris, **Sharon A. Moore**, 64, and Susan Harris' son, **Craig M. Young**, 53, with various financial crimes, including conspiracy to defraud the United States, mail fraud, aggravated identity theft and money laundering.

According to their plea agreements and other court records, Susan Harris acted as president and was the 95-percent owner of Ayudando, while Moore acted as chief financial officer and was a five-percent owner. They engaged in a pattern of criminal conduct from November 2006 to July 2017 that included unlawfully transferring money from client accounts to a comingled account without any client-based justification. They wrote and endorsed numerous checks, often of more than \$10,000, from these comingled accounts to themselves, family members, cash and other parties where payment would benefit their families.

William Harris, who worked as a guardian, admitted that he knew that Moore was siphoning payments to clients from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Social Security Administration and using the money to benefit herself, Harris, and their co-conspirators. Harris specifically admitted receiving, endorsing, and depositing dozens of checks drawn on Ayudando accounts for his own personal benefit. Harris admitted to his involvement in a money laundering scheme, using an Ayudando corporate credit card for personal expenses, knowing that it would be paid for with client money. He also admitted his role in a loan application for the stated purpose of expanding the Ayudando business with the actual intent of using the money to “pay back” clients whose money had been taken without authorization.

The stolen funds were used to fund an extravagant lifestyle, including the purchases of homes, vehicles, luxury RVs and cruises, as well as a private box at “the Pit” at the University of New Mexico. The stolen funds were also used to pay for more than \$4.4 million in American Express charges incurred by the defendants and their families. Young pleaded guilty on Nov. 12, 2019, and was sentenced on June 11, 2020, to five years and 11 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. Young was ordered to pay approximately \$6.8 million in restitution to the victims of the fraud scheme. Moore pleaded guilty on July 11, 2019, and was sentenced on March 2, 2020, to 20 years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. Moore was ordered to pay the entire amount of stolen funds as restitution to the victims. [Source: DoJ District of New Mexico| U.S. Attorney’s Office | July 15, 2021 ++]

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**Boston, Mass.** — The former supervisory pharmacist of the now-defunct New England Compounding Center (NECC) was resentenced 21 JUL in federal court in Boston in connection with the 2012 nationwide fungal meningitis outbreak. The defendant was resentenced after the First Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed his criminal convictions but vacated his sentence and forfeiture order. **Glenn Chin**, 53, previously of Canton, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns to 126 months in prison and three years of supervised release. Chin was also ordered to pay forfeiture of approximately \$473,584 and restitution of \$82 million.

Chin was sentenced in January 2018 to eight years in prison, two years of supervised release and ordered to pay forfeiture of \$175,000 and restitution in an amount to be determined. In October 2017, Chin was convicted by a federal jury of all 77 counts, including racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, mail

fraud and introduction of misbranded drugs into interstate commerce with the intent to defraud and mislead.

On July 7, 2021, co-defendant Barry Cadden, a former owner of NECC, was resentenced by Judge Stearns to 174 months in prison and ordered to pay forfeiture of \$1.4 million and restitution of \$82 million. Cadden was previously sentenced in June 2017 by Judge Stearns to nine years in prison and three years of supervised release after being convicted by a federal jury in March 2017 of racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, mail fraud and introduction of misbranded drugs into interstate commerce with the intent to defraud and mislead.

In 2017, the government appealed the defendants' sentences. In July 2020, the First Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the defendants' sentences, finding that the Court failed to impose applicable sentencing enhancements and erred in its forfeiture rulings. Significantly, the First Circuit held that the patients who were injected with NECC's contaminated preservative-free methylprednisolone acetate (MPA) may be considered victims of the fraud. According to court documents, more than 100 patients died and approximately 800 patients were sickened as a result of contaminated MPA injections. As a result of the First Circuit's decision, the defendants' convictions were affirmed, and their sentences and forfeiture orders were vacated and remanded to the District Court for re-sentencing.

In 2012, 753 patients in 20 states were diagnosed with a fungal infection after receiving injections of MPA manufactured by NECC, and more than 100 patients died as a result. The outbreak was the largest public health crisis ever caused by a contaminated pharmaceutical drug. Chin manufactured and oversaw the manufacturing of contaminated MPA. In doing so, Chin ignored pharmacy regulations and NECC's own drug formulation worksheets and standard operating procedures. Specifically, he improperly sterilized the MPA, failed to verify the sterilization process and improperly tested it to ensure sterility. Despite knowing these deficiencies, Chin directed the MPA to be filled into tens of thousands of vials and shipped to NECC customers nationwide. During the fungal meningitis outbreak, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control identified 18 different types of fungi from MPA vials and patient samples.

Chin directed the shipping of drugs prior to receiving test results confirming their sterility, and he directed NECC staff to mislabel drugs to conceal this practice. He also directed the compounding of drugs with expired ingredients, including chemotherapy drugs that had expired several years prior. Chin prioritized drug production over cleaning, directed the forging of cleaning logs and routinely ignored mold and bacteria found inside the clean rooms. [Source: DoJ District of Massachusetts | U.S. Attorney's Office | July 21, 2021 ++]

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**Newark, NJ** — A Monmouth County, New Jersey, man on 21 JUL admitted he defrauded the Department of Veterans Affairs of over \$200,0000 in survivor's pension benefits over 12 years, Acting U.S. Attorney Rachael A. Honig announced. **Melvin Greenspan**, 72, of Perrineville, New Jersey, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Brian R. Martinotti in Newark federal court to an information charging him with conversion of government funds.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court: The Department of Veteran's Affairs provided survivor's pension benefits to Greenspan's mother because of Greenspan's father's prior military service. Those benefits, intended only for surviving spouses of military members, were made through electronic funds transfers into Greenspan's mother's bank account beginning in September 1971



and continuing after that date. After Greenspan's mother died in 2006, Greenspan did not notify the Department of Veterans Affairs about his mother's death and made withdrawals of the survivor's pension benefits from his mother's bank account between 2006 and 2018, totaling \$201,166.

The charge of conversion of government funds carries a maximum sentence of up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss from the offense, whichever is greatest. Sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 22, 2021. [Source: DoJ District of New Jersey | U.S. Attorney's Office | July 21, 2021 ++]

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**Los Angeles, Calif.** — A New York man is scheduled to be in federal court the afternoon of 20 JUL after being arrested 19 JUL on a kidnapping charge stemming from his alleged abduction of a 68-year-old woman with dementia at the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center. **Johnny Ray Gasca**, 51, of Bronx, New York, was charged in a federal criminal complaint filed today with one count of kidnapping, an offense that carries a statutory maximum penalty of life in federal prison. The FBI arrested Gasca on outside a Hollywood motel. The victim was rescued at the same time.

According to the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint, the victim was kidnapped at approximately 8:30 a.m. on Monday after attempting to obtain a medical appointment at the VA facility. The victim was accompanied by a long-time friend, and as the two of them "approached their car, Gasca appeared unexpectedly," the affidavit states. "Gasca put his arms around [the victim] and pushed her toward a gold-colored pickup truck that was parked nearby. Gasca then picked [the victim] up and threw her into the rear portion of the truck's passenger compartment."

After the Department of Veteran Affairs Police Department contacted the FBI later in the morning, the victim's friend told agents she recognized Gasca, believed he previously was in some kind of relationship with the victim, and suspected Gasca may have taken some of [the victim's] money from her bank and retirement accounts, according to the affidavit. The witness also reported that the victim previously noted she was missing some of her credit cards, and when the two went to the victim's bank to review her accounts, bank records showed a \$35,000 withdrawal from the victim's retirement account, followed by a number of Venmo, MoneyGram and PayPal transactions that the friend believed the victim did not have "the knowledge or wherewithal" to conduct, the affidavit states.

Within hours of beginning its investigation, the FBI located the victim's phone at The Dixie Hollywood Hotel on Hollywood Boulevard, where agents converged. Soon after, Gasca and the victim exited the hotel, leading to Gasca's arrest. During an interview recounted in the affidavit, Gasca described the victim as his girlfriend and told agents that, after leaving the VA facility, they stopped at a bank where the victim made a \$15,000 withdrawal. A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. [Source: DoJ Central District of California| U.S. Attorney's Office | July 20, 2021 ++]

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**Sheville, N.C.** — Acting U.S. Attorney William T. Stetzer announced that **John Paul Cook**, 57, of Alexander, N.C. appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge W. Carleton Metcalf on Monday, July 19, 2021, and pleaded guilty to defrauding the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) by receiving nearly \$1 million in veteran benefits based on fraudulent claims of service-connected disabilities.

According to the criminal indictment, filed plea documents and admissions made in court, Cook enlisted in the United States Army (the Army) in November 1985. Court documents show that six months later Cook sustained an accidental injury while on duty. Following the incident, Cook complained that as a result of the accident and injuries he sustained, a preexisting eye condition had worsened. In 1987, following a medical evaluation, Cook was discharged, placed on the retired list, and began receiving VA disability-based compensation at a rate of 60%. Over the next 30 years, Cook’s disability-based compensation increased, following Cook’s repeated false claims of increased visual impairment and unemployability due to “severe visual deficit.” As Cook admitted in court, in 2005, based on his claims of severe visual impairment, the VA declared Cook legally blind and he began receiving disability-based compensation at the maximum rate. Cook also began to receive additional benefits, including Special Monthly Compensation (an extra monetary allowance paid to a qualifying veteran due to the severity of his disability), Specially Adapted Housing (a grant that goes toward paying for adaptations in a new home), and Special Housing Adaptation (a grant that goes toward remodeling an existing home).

According to court records, Cook’s monthly VA disability payments in 1987 were \$1,411 per month. With the incremental increases in his disability rating, as well as cost-of-living adjustments and his Special Monthly Compensation, these payments steadily increased over the years. By 2016, the monthly payment had risen to \$3,990. In total, from 1987 through 2017, Cook received approximately \$978,138 in VA disability payments due to his claimed blindness, to which he was not lawfully entitled.

According to admissions reflected in plea documents, contrary to Cook’s filed claims with the VA for additional disability claims and his complaints of increased visual impairment, Cook repeatedly passed vision screening tests to renew or obtain a driver’s license in North and South Carolina. Furthermore, during the relevant time period, court documents show that Cook purchased and registered over 30 different motor vehicles which Cook routinely drove, including on long-distance trips and to perform errands. Court records further show that, from 2010 to 2016, during a time period that Cook was receiving maximum VA disability benefits for his visual impairment, Cook was actively involved with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), including serving as a Den Leader and a Cubmaster. Among the courses the defendant completed with the BSA were courses qualifying him to be a range officer for BB guns and for archery. He was also certified for land navigation, which involves reading maps and using a compass.

The charge of stealing from the VA carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. A sentencing date for Cook has not been set. [Source: DoJ Western District of North Carolina | U.S. Attorney’s Office | July 20, 2021 ++]

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**Florida** — **Richard Davidson**, a former doctor from Delray Beach, Florida, was sentenced to six years in federal prison for conspiracy to commit health care fraud. In 2018, Davidson and his conspirators established several durable medical equipment supply companies in the names of straw owners. By concealing the companies’ true ownership, the conspirators were able to submit high volumes of illegal claims, resulting in more than \$10 million in payments from Medicare and CHAMPVA. [Source: VA OIG Press Release | July 27, 2021 ++]

**\* Vets \***



## Vet Employment Opportunities

### Listings from Companies Looking For Vets as of 31 JUL

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.

#### JUL 31

##### Correctional Officer (PRN)

CoreCivic is currently seeking a Correctional Officer (PRN) who has a passion for providing the highest quality care in an institutional, secure setting.

- **Qualifications:**
  - High school diploma, GED certification or equivalent.
  - Must complete pre-service correctional officer training and, where applicable, be a non-commissioned security officer licensed by the state of employment.
  - A valid driver's license is required.
  - Demonstrate ability to complete any required training.
  - Must be available to work any hours, any shift.
  - Minimum age requirement: Must be at least 21 years of age.
- CoreCivic Eloy, AZ, United States

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Job Board | July 31, 2021 ++]

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## Vet Business Program

### Lawmakers Push Proposal to Use GI Bill Benefits to Start Business's

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers are again pushing to allow some recently separated service members to use their GI Bill benefits to start a new business instead of attending college classes. The proposal, which has failed to gain legislative traction in recent years, would establish a three-year pilot program for up to 250 veterans to pursue “educational entrepreneurial training” and receive their education payouts in the form of start-up capital instead of the traditional tuition payments.

“Higher education is essential for many [veterans], but some have a different calling,” said Rep Ben Cline, R-Va. and a sponsor of the measure. “Veterans are seeking more options and want the choice to use their GI Bill benefit to start their own business. “It’s common sense to offer veterans a choice in accessing resources, training, and support to pursue the American dream to start a small business, create jobs, and

generate growth in our economy.” Under the current Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits program, eligible veterans receive 36 months of tuition payouts, housing stipends and other financial assistance. In certain cases, service members can also transfer that benefit to a spouse or dependents for their college classes.

According to 2019 U.S. Census Bureau data, more than 2.5 million businesses in America are veteran-owned, making up just under 10 percent of all American small businesses. Supporters of the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act say that individuals interested in pursuing that path after military service should not be shut out from using their earned benefits. “By helping veterans start businesses, we are investing in America’s best and brightest,” co-sponsor Rep. Lou Correa (D-CA) said in a statement. “When our service members transition into civilian life, they bring considerable skills and experiences with them. Veterans know how to manage risk on the battlefield. And that’s what a successful entrepreneur does — manage risk.”

But the idea has faced resistance in the past in part because of already existing federal programs aimed at helping promote veteran entrepreneurship and employment, and in part because of concerns that misuse of the college benefit could result in long-term financial disadvantages for veterans. Lawmakers behind the pilot program proposal countered that by saying all applicants could be required to complete an approved entrepreneurial training program, such as one run by the Small Business Administration or an accredited university.

Following that, participants would have to develop a business plan and submit it to program officials. Payouts would be made in the form of a grant “provided through installments determined by the milestones a veteran may be required to meet within their approved business plan.” Versions of the idea have made some progress in both the House and Senate in recent years, but have not reached final approval from both chambers. No timeline has been set for a hearing or vote on the new proposal. [Source: MilitaryTimes| Leo Shane III | July 16, 2021 ++]

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

### **Update 16: Off-duty DEA Agent/Veteran Mark Ibrahim Charged**



An off-duty Drug Enforcement Administration agent and U.S. Army veteran posed for photographs in which he flashed his DEA badge and firearm outside the U.S. Capitol during the 6 JAN riot, according to a court filing 20 JUL following the agent’s arrest. A video posted on the internet also showed Mark Sami Ibrahim carrying a flag bearing the words “Liberty or Death” outside the Capitol, about 12 minutes before a mob of people pulled apart a nearby set of barricades, authorities said.

Ibrahim, of Orange County, California, was a probationary employee of the DEA and was on personal leave from the agency when he traveled to Washington on 6 JAN. Several weeks before the riot, he had given notice of his intention to resign. Also on 20 JUL, a third person pleaded guilty to participating in a plot for members of the anti-government Oath Keepers group to storm the Capitol on 6 JAN. The judge who accepted Caleb Berry's guilty plea didn't immediately schedule his sentencing hearing.

The presence of law enforcement at the riot has been troubling for the police who were attacked and beaten. The DEA agent is among at least 30 officers in 12 states who are being scrutinized for their behavior in the District of Columbia or face criminal charges for participating in the riot. Ex-military participated, too. Ibrahim wasn't working as a law-enforcement officer at the Capitol on 6 JAN, but he told investigators after the riot that he was there to help a friend who had been asked to document the event for the FBI.

The friend denied that, however, and told investigators that Ibrahim had concocted the false story to "cover his ass," according to a case summary signed by senior special agent with the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General. "According to Ibrahim's friend, Ibrahim went to the rally in order to promote himself," the OIG agent wrote. "Ibrahim had been thinking about his next move after leaving the DEA and wanted the protests to be his stage for launching a 'Liberty Tavern' political podcast and cigar brand." Ibrahim acknowledged that he was at the Capitol on 6 JAN but denied that he displayed or exposed his DEA badge and firearm there despite the photographic evidence to the contrary, authorities say.

Ibrahim was arrested 20 JUL in Washington on charges that included entering or remaining in a restricted building or grounds with a firearm and making a false statement when he denied displayed his badge or firearm. Defense attorney Darren Richie said Ibrahim didn't participate in the riot, engage in any violence or try to enter the Capitol that day. He also remained "honest and voluntarily cooperative" with authorities, Richie added. "This indictment results from conjecture, political pressure and a flawed attempt to paint a specific narrative through pictures taken wholly out of context. Mr. Ibrahim firmly believes the truth shall always prevail," Richie said in a statement. He is scheduled to make his initial court appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Zia Faruqui.

A DEA spokeswoman didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. The DEA had declined for months to say whether any of its agents attended the rally, saying it could not comment on "specific personnel matters." "If we receive information indicating an employee engaged in misconduct, DEA's policy is to promptly refer the case to the appropriate authorities for review," the agency told AP in January.

Ibrahim has denied breaking any laws, telling Fox News in March that he "never even set foot on the stairs of the Capitol building." He said he went to the rally with his brother, an FBI agent, who faced "no adverse action" for attending. "When the crowd began to be hostile toward law enforcement, me being law enforcement myself I started to document everything," Ibrahim told host Tucker Carlson, adding he later gave the materials to the FBI "so those criminals could face justice." "I wanted to aid law enforcement that day as best I could. I really didn't think anything of it," he said.

After flying back to Los Angeles, Ibrahim said, he was stripped of his badge and gun and "fired after being suspended for two months for performance issues." "They got it wrong," he said of his termination. "Me and my brother both served in the Army. I followed him into federal law enforcement. My sister is a

Navy veteran. My mom was in the Pentagon on 9/11.” “The saddest part about this,” Ibrahim added, “is I can’t serve my country anymore.”

In a WhatsApp group chat with at least five other law-enforcement officers, Ibrahim posted a photo of himself standing near barricades that had been pulled apart by the mob several minutes earlier, the OIG agent wrote. He also posted video in the chat that showed Ashli Babbitt, a woman fatally shot inside the Capitol, being taken from the building to an ambulance by emergency workers, the agent said. [Source: Associated Press | Michael Kunzelman & Jim Mustian | July 20, 2021 ++]

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## WWII Vets 266

### Raymond Lambert | Thrice Wounded Medic



Raymond Lambert enlisted in the Army in 1940 because “he wanted action” and to be “a part of a fighting unit,” he said during an American Veterans Center interview. Lambert completed Army Basic Training at Fort Benning, Georgia. After graduating, he received specialized medical training with the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Medical Detachment at Fort Riley, Kansas. Lambert described training as a first-line medic; his job was to give first aid to the wounded, save their life, give morphine for their pain and send wounded soldiers back to hospitals for more care.

He partook in the invasion of North Africa in 1943 and received injuries. Later in 1943, Lambert was a part of the Sicily invasion, again receiving injuries. In 1944, Lambert landed on Omaha Beach with the first wave of the D-Day invasion. According to the Department of Defense, only seven of the 31 soldiers in his boat survived the day. The Germans killed the other 24 before reaching the shore. Lambert received another wound on his right elbow as he assisted fellow soldiers to reach the shore.

Despite his personal injuries, he quickly established a treatment zone. He treated wounded soldiers and comforted the dying behind a slab of concrete. The concrete slab is now referred to as “Ray’s Rock,” according to The Pilot. Lambert lost consciousness while dragging wounded men ashore. A doctor spotted him, and a landing craft picked him up. His brother, Bill, also received wounds in the invasion. The two went to an American field hospital in England for medical treatment, according to The American Homefront Project. As noted by the Smithsonian Magazine, Lambert received one Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and three Purple Hearts for his bravery during World War II.

After World War II, Lambert returned to the United States and took classes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the GI Bill. After college, he founded electrical contracting companies. In 2019, he wrote

the book Every Man a Hero detailing his firsthand account of the D-Day invasion. In June of the same year, Lambert was one of only a handful of living D-Day Veterans who attended the 75th anniversary commemoration of the Normandy Invasion. Lambert passed away in April 2021. We honor his service. To listen to him discuss his service refer to the 50 minute video at <https://youtu.be/GEXWJ3Jk4x4>. [Source: Vantage Point | Alec Zimmerman | June 6, 2021 ++]

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## WWII Vets 267

### Morton Katz | Served from Start to Finish and More



Before the U.S. became involved in World War II, Morton N. Katz commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve. Over the course of his service, Katz saw action in foreign places quite different from his native Connecticut. Katz completed further infantry training at Fort Benning, Georgia, in July 1941 and earned his jump wings from parachute school on Aug. 15, 1942. Katz served in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, where he fought on the Anzio Beachhead. Although trained as paratroopers, Katz and his men assaulted the beachhead amphibiously, with Katz on the lead landing craft of his battalion alongside [Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough](#).

In Italy, Katz found a camera at a local German headquarters with which he would document the soldiers, civilians and sights he encountered throughout the war. Following that, he went to Italy, then to Southern France. His men helped clear out enemy positions in the mountains. It was there that Katz had one of his most memorable experiences of the war, taking a U.S. Army M8 armored car for a joyride in the French countryside.

During the Battle of the Bulge, Katz's unit attached to the Third Armored Division and went to stop the German advance. Katz's men engaged in heavy fighting around St. Vith, Belgium, with his unit suffering heavy casualties. In April 1945, Katz participated in the Elbe River crossing as part of the American advance into Germany. Shortly after, Katz helped liberate Wobbelin Concentration Camp in Ludwigslust. After the German surrender, Katz started occupation duty in Berlin. After, Katz returned to the U.S. and attended law school on the GI Bill. He decided to remain in the service and was assigned to the 411th Civil Affairs Company (CAC). Katz worked there for 17 years, becoming the commanding officer for his final eight years. In 1968, Katz received an assignment at the Pentagon working with the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Katz retired from the service in 1972, with the rank of colonel. He went on to pursue a successful career in law, still serving as a special assistant public defender. During his service, Katz received a Legion of Merit, a Bronze Star Medal with V device and oak leaf cluster, an Army Commendation Medal, a European–African–Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with nine campaign stars and invasion arrowhead, and a French Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. We honor his service. [Source: Vantage Point | Tahmin Khan | June 16, 2021 ++]

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

**As of 31 JUL 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](http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.html).
- PDF: [http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs\\_and\\_Other\\_Retiree-Veterans\\_Events.pdf](http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.pdf).
- Word: [http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs\\_and\\_Other\\_Retiree-Veterans\\_Events.doc](http://www.hostmtb.org/RADs_and_Other_Retiree-Veterans_Events.doc).

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

[Source: Retiree\veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | July 31, 2021 ++]

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## **Vet Hiring Fairs**

**Scheduled As of 31 JUL 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 | July 31, 2021 ++]

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## **State Veterans' Benefits**

### **Maryland 2021**

The state of Maryland 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 – MD**” 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://www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/statereportcard) & <https://veterans.maryland.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/maryland-state-veterans-benefits.html> | July 2021 ++]



## **VA Health Care Billing**

### **Update 02: H.R.3432 | Veterans Preventative Health Coverage Fairness Act**

While service-connected disabled veterans rated higher than 50% do not incur costs for medications, those with lower ratings using VA for their health care are currently forced to pay out-of-pocket for many of the prescription drugs, preventative health medications and health screenings they require. H.R. 3452—the **Veterans Preventative Health Coverage Fairness Act**—would add preventative medications and services to the list of no-fee treatments that VA covers and eliminate copayments for such items and services.

This includes immunizations, cancer screenings, vitamin supplements and tobacco cessation products, well-woman visits and other potentially life-saving assessments recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. In contrast, these same medications and services are provided to servicemembers, military retirees and many civilians receive for free through military and private health insurance providers.

DAV believes that asking veterans to pay for part of the benefits they earned in service to the nation is fundamentally contrary to the spirit and principles underlying those benefits. Therefore, they strongly supports H.R. 3452, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 365, which calls for the elimination or reduction of co-payments for service-disabled veterans within the VA.

They are calling on all DAV members and supporters to contact their Representatives and urge them to co-sponsor this legislation to provide better support for less than 50% VA rated vets. To expedite this, DAV has provided an editable preformatted letter at <https://dav.quorum.us/campaign/34276> for readers to forward to their legislators. If in doubt as to who your legislators are or their online contact info click on:

- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%7D> -- House
- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%2C%22chamber%22%3A%22Senate%22%7D> -- Senate

The above sites provide all legislators names and websites with contact info with which you can substitute you legislator's name on the letter and then copy and paste it to your legislator's medium for communicating with him/her. [Source: DAV National Commander | Stephen Whitehead | July 16, 2021  
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## VA Leadership

### Update 03: H.R.4528 | VA Hospital Director Pilot Program

A congressman from Florida wants active-duty military officers to take charge of Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, arguing the hospitals are plagued by crises and need a new leadership approach. Rep. Brian Mast (R-FL), an Afghanistan war veteran and double amputee, introduced legislation H.R.4528 that would require the VA and Defense Department to develop plans for a pilot program in which senior military officers would serve as directors of VA hospitals. The VA operates 152 medical centers nationwide. “At the end of the day, no one is better prepared to oversee veteran care than those who will one day be veterans themselves. That’s what this bill is all about,” Mast’s office said in a statement accompanying the bill.

The measure was one of three bills that Mast introduced this week regarding the VA. Another bill H.R.4471 would allow members of the House and Senate to open congressional offices inside VA facilities. Mast opened an office at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center in 2017 to be more accessible to constituents. Five Florida lawmakers followed his lead and opened their own offices at the West Palm Beach and Orlando VA hospitals. The VA evicted them from the facilities in 2019, arguing the space inside VA facilities should Mast said last year that he and the West Palm Beach VA had reached an agreement for him to reopen an office. The congressman has argued that the offices allow easier access to veteran constituents. “It does something good for our veterans while not hurting anybody,” he said in a 2019 interview. “If you really want to understand a problem ... you have to get your eyes on it and witness it yourself.”

The third bill (H.R.4527) that Mast introduced this week would request departing service members sign an “Oath of Exit” not to harm themselves. Mast said he believes the oath could help deter veteran suicides. Mast said service members are known for honoring their commitments — and if they commit to contacting fellow veterans before harming themselves, they’d do it. Mast previously introduced an Oath of Exit bill in 2017, but it failed to pass through Congress. At the time, some experts on veteran suicide said the oath could backfire. When struggling with suicidal thoughts, veterans who sign the commitment could feel an increased sense of shame and guilt, they said. Caitlin Thompson, the former director of suicide prevention programs at the VA, said experts in suicide prevention have been discouraging these types of contracts for the past 10 years. “It isn’t just that it didn’t work. It actually had the opposite effect,” Thompson said in 2017. “It made it so that the person who signed it wouldn’t talk with their provider about feeling suicidal because of this fear of, ‘I signed this promise.’ ”

Mast said in a statement that all three bills were potential fixes to longstanding issues within the VA. “Hardly a day goes by when I don’t receive a call from a veteran who needs help navigating the red tape of the VA,” he said. “We owe it to them to explore creative solutions to ensure that they have the care that they need, which is why I’m introducing these bills.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## VA Mammograms

### Update 01: S.2102 | SERVICE Act of 2021

S. 2102, the **Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environments (SERVICE) Act of 2021** would revise the VA’s standards for mammography screenings to include those veterans who have served in locations known to have been associated with toxic exposures. The bill would expand eligibility for these life-saving screenings beyond the commonly-advised age and risk scope to encompass those who have served in specific locations and timeframes, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and areas of Southwest Asia, as well as other areas where U.S. military forces utilized burn pits. It also requires a report to Congress comparing the rates of breast cancer among troops deployed to areas with known exposures with service members not deployed to those locations and to the civilian population.

Defense Department research reports have indicated that women who have served in the military have an elevated risk for breast cancer compared to their non-veteran peers. Nearly half of the growing demographic of women veterans is under age 45, and after nearly two decades of war many will have had exposure to various airborne or other toxic hazards during service including a milieu of toxins associated with exposure to burn pits. While VA historically outperforms the private sector in providing breast health screenings for women, this bill will bolster those efforts even further. Better screening and early detection, especially among those with known risk factors, can help save lives.

DAV believes it is imperative these veterans have access to early breast cancer detection services that align with their history of toxic exposures during military service and strongly supports the SERVICE Act of 2021, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 20, which calls for enhanced medical services for women veterans. They are calling on all DAV members and supporters to contact their Representatives and urge them to co-sponsor this legislation to provide better support for women vets.

To expedite this, at <https://dav.quorum.us/campaign/34294> DAV has provided an editable preformatted letter for readers to forward to their legislators. If in doubt as to who your legislators are or their online contact info click on:

- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%7D> -- House
- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%2C%22chamber%22%3A%22Senate%22%7D> -- Senate

The above sites provide all legislators names and websites with contact info with which you can substitute you legislator’s name on the letter and then copy and paste it to your legislator’s medium for communicating with him/her. [Source: DAV National Commander | Stephen Whitehead | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## Social Security Proposals

### Update 01: H.R.0000 | Social Security for Future Generations Act

Rep. Al Lawson (D-FL) has reintroduced his bill, the **Social Security for Future Generations Act** which he first introduced his bill in 2019. This legislation would make targeted benefits increases to students and widow(ers), update the cost-of-living adjustments formula (COLAs) to all beneficiaries, and will close a

tax loophole that allows the wealthiest Americans to pay a lower Social Security tax rate. It includes the following provisions:

- **Extension of Student Benefit to Age 22:** Social Security provides benefits directly to about 3 million dependents under age 18 who have lost parental support because of death, disability, or retirement. Originally, this benefit was extended to dependents up to age 22, but that ceased after April 1985. This provision will reinstate benefits for dependents enrolled in college, up to age 22 so that they can afford skyrocketing tuition and college costs.
- **Updated Benefit Formula for Widow and Widowers:** Under the current benefit formula, Social Security benefits at widow(er)hood will be one-third to one-half less than the combined benefits to the couple. This provision would ensure that benefits are directed toward a vulnerable group of women (and men), so that they receive a minimum amount of Social Security retirement in the case of spousal death.
- **COLA Adjustment:** CPI-E is a more accurate measure of spending that is produced by the Department of Labor. This measure is projected to increase the annual COLA benefit by ~0.2 percentage points, on average. An average senior at the age of 80 could see a \$43 a month increase, while the average senior at age 90 could see a \$73 a month increase in benefits.
- **Apply Payroll Tax to Wages above \$250K:** Currently, there is a maximum amount of earnings (\$127,200 in 2017) that can be taxed; any earnings above this taxable maximum are not subject to the payroll tax. According to the Center for Economic Policy Research, subjecting all income over \$250,000 to the Social Security payroll tax would impact only an estimated top 1.5 percent of wage earners.
- **Special Minimum Benefit:** This is alternative benefit formula increases benefits paid to workers who had low earnings and who have worked long enough to secure Social Security retirement. This provision will ensure low-income workers qualify for benefits.

TSCL has once again endorsed this important legislation and is grateful to the Congressman for his authorship of the bill. [Source: TSCL Weekly Update | July 24, 2021 ++]

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## VA Individual Unemployability

### Update 08: H.R.0000 | Protecting Benefits for Disabled Veterans Act

A new House proposal would make the Department of Veterans Affairs Individual Unemployability program permanent even for elderly veterans, following attempts in recent years to pare back the benefit. On 27 JUL, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) and chairwoman of the House Committee on Financial Services, introduced the **Protecting Benefits for Disabled Veterans Act**, arguing the change is needed to provide assured financial support for veterans who depend on the program.

Codifying the program is needed “so that we can ensure all veterans who are unable to secure a job due to a service-related disability receive benefits,” Waters said in a statement. “It also ensures that veterans are not kicked out of the program simply because they’ve earned other benefits, like retiree benefits.” That was a major friction point between veterans advocates and President Donald Trump’s administration, which proposed cutting back on the benefit for veterans after they reach retirement age. Under current rules, the Individual Unemployability program awards payouts at the 100 percent disabled rate to veterans who cannot find work due to service-connected injuries, even if actual rating is less than that. That financial support can top \$20,000 a year for some individuals.

The program is aimed largely at working-age veterans, but VA officials said in 2018 that about 225,000 veterans over the age of 60 were also enrolled in the program. At the time, the Trump administration argued that unemployment benefits for those individuals didn't make sense, since many were collecting retirement or Social Security benefits not available to working-age vets. Cutting off the benefits for veterans eligible for Social Security payouts would save about \$3 billion a year. But lawmakers rejected the plan after veterans groups argued that the money provides a critical safety net for those elderly veterans, and removing it would create significant hardship.

Waters' plan would go further, ensuring that future administrations can't revisit the idea. The IU program has been in operation since 1934 but is not authorized in statute, meaning it can be altered or ended without first getting congressional approval. The legislation would change that, and insert language guaranteeing that "veterans applying for the IU program will not be denied based on their age or eligibility for retirement benefits." The bill has several Democratic co-sponsors who sit on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, but faces a long legislative path before becoming law.

It was one of two veteran themed-bills introduced by Waters on Tuesday. The other, the Veterans Service Organization Modernization Act, would create a \$10 million program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development to award grants to veterans service organizations for maintenance and upgrades to local community facilities. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 28, 2021 ++]

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## Medicaid Fraud

### H.R.0000 | Protecting Patients from Medicaid Fraud Act

On 27 JUL, Reps. Jack Bergman (MI-01) and Cindy Axne (IA-03) reintroduced the **Protecting Patients from Medicaid Fraud Act**, a bipartisan bill to improve oversight of Medicaid, prevent improper payments and waste, and protect patients from fraud. This legislation is based on recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), a nonpartisan agency that works to improve the operations and fiscal responsibility of the federal government.

"While states are required by law to screen health providers enrolled in Medicaid, we have no system in place today to check if states are following through," said Rep. Jack Bergman. "This means billions of dollars every year may be going to providers that defraud patients, fail to meet health and safety standards, or operate without medical licenses. With nearly \$500 billion of federal spending going towards Medicaid annually, our current level of oversight and accountability is unacceptable. I am proud to introduce this important bill with Representative Axne to improve Medicaid and protect patients nationwide."

"The oversight of health care providers in Medicaid is so inefficient and convoluted that its allowed more than \$35 billion in improper payments in just one year. As health care costs continue to rise, we need to crack down on providers that are defrauding patients and unlicensed professionals lining their pockets at the expense of American taxpayers who're paying higher and higher costs for care," said Rep. Cindy Axne. "After fighting to make government more efficient and accountable at the state level for nearly a decade, I've been working in Congress to find commonsense solutions that will reduce waste, cut red tape, and save taxpayers money. This bipartisan bill is one such solution — and would help save billions of taxpayer dollars through simple enforcement of the laws already on the books."

Under federal law, states must screen health providers before and every five years after enrolling them in Medicaid. This ensures providers are properly certified and ultimately protects patients from fraud.

However, the agency that administers the Medicaid program, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) does not conduct any nationwide screenings to certify compliance with these eligibility requirements, instead relying on optional consultations with states. This patchwork of data makes it impossible to check compliance and prevent improper payments.

The Protecting Patients from Medicaid Fraud Act would expand CMS’s review of provider eligibility compliance to include all states, not just those participating in optional consultations. It would also give CMS the tools needed to monitor the progress of states currently working to become compliant. [Source: Radio Results Network | Jack Hall | Jul 27, 202| ++]

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**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 \***



## **Military Pay & Benefits**

### **Update 09: Proposal to Guarantee Minimum-Wage Salaries for All Troops Fizzles**

House appropriators won’t guarantee minimum wage salaries for all service members, but they are looking into 13 JUL, during the House Appropriations Committee’s mark-up of the fiscal 2022 defense budget bill, Rep. Mike Garcia (R-CA) proposed adding language to the measure that would ensure all troops receive a base pay of at least \$31,200 a year, roughly the equivalent of \$15 an hour. “It’s an insult to our military members and their families that they have to serve approximately three years and gain the rank of E4 before they’re at or above what many states consider to be minimum wage,” Garcia said. “And that assumes they’re working 40 hours a week, which we know most of our junior enlisted members are actually not. They’re usually working anywhere from 50 to 60 hours a week.”

Currently, the most junior enlisted troops earn about \$20,000 in base pay. An E3 with less than three years’ experience brings home about \$27,000 a year, still under that \$15 an hour mark. But those base pay totals don’t factor in other military stipends such as housing allowances, specialty pays and subsistence (food) assistance. Depending on where troops are stationed, the housing and food payouts combined can effectively double younger troops’ total military compensation. Still, Garcia said that many young military families face financial hardship for their initial years in the ranks. Past studies from the Government

Accountability Office have indicated that more than 20,000 active-duty service members annually may qualify for food stamp assistance programs.

“If the government is paying for these servicemembers to be on food stamps, we may as well be paying for them through the base pay or sustenance allowance on the front end,” Garcia said. Appropriators included in their defense bill language to require Defense Department contractors to pay at least \$15 per hour to employees, and a 2.7 percent pay raise for all troops and civilian department employees. But Garcia’s proposal was withdrawn because of financial and jurisdictional conflicts regarding the idea.

Instead, Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) and chairwoman of the committee’s defense panel, pledged to hold future hearings on the issue, and work with members of the House Armed Services Committee on possible pay changes. “I’m working together with you and with the authorizers here, because we don’t want to do a tweak here and cause another problem there,” she told Garcia during the hearing. “This needs to be a whole of the Department of Defense approach when we’re dealing with this. “I wanted to fulfill an expectation that when somebody raises their hand and says that they’re going to serve in our military, they do so with pride and they do so with the dignity that befits them and their family.”

No timeline has been set for when those discussions or hearings may occur. The full House is expected to vote on the \$706 billion defense funding proposal later this month, although a final compromise version with the Senate on the spending level is not expected until sometime this fall. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 14, 2021 ++]

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## Army Armor

### How Army Scientists Are Developing the Next Tank That’s Not a Tank



**Soldier (left) moves down a road while controlling an unmanned vehicle and (right) demonstrator, rear, and two Robotic Combat Vehicles maneuver through a Fort Carson, Colorado, training area at the control of soldiers**

Though the current main battle tank, the M1 Abrams, is expected to hum along in the center of the armored formation for decades to come, some kind replacement is on its way. But rather than swapping a tank for a tank, most experts in the field are looking to a family of vehicles option that will take tank-like capabilities and spread them across crewed and crewless platforms for better survivability. “If you think of a tank, you’re thinking in the wrong direction. Think of what a tank provides,” Jeff Zabinski, the Army Research Lab’s director of weapons and material research, told Army Times. “We can’t just think in terms of, ‘oh, I’m just going to put a chunk of armor out there.’”

The Army is doing more than simply upgrading existing vehicles and fueling the next steps in ground fighting over the coming decade. Scientists at ARL such as Zabinski and Dr. Scott Schoenfeld, senior scientist for terminal ballistics, are envisioning how to do the work of armor without armor. The key to that



is distributing the functions of a tank, from sensing and firepower to protection. Some of that does still involve heavy metal moving around the battlefield — sometimes with a crew; sometimes without. But protection can also mean not being seen, or even being seen as something else. That’s where electronic warfare, masking and hiding in plain sight of sensors can play a role. “Armament can be totally different than what we were [historically] constrained with,” Zabinski said.

Armor went from monolithic steel to spaced plates and then explosive-driven plates to respond to advancing, anti-armor threats, Zabinski said. Armor also moved from strong metals to ceramics or composite materials that are lighter and designed to absorb impact differently at the molecular level. More powerful computers and algorithms are helping scientists at ARL and elsewhere factor in massive numbers of interactions that can be used to “bend, break and destroy penetrators on contact,” hitting the projectile before it ever reaches an Army vehicle, Zabinski said. And with advances in autonomy and remote controlling, new approaches are now possible that were previously not.

“If there is no human in proximity to the weapon, we can develop much higher performance once humans are stood off,” Schoenfeld said. Space onboard, now designed for humans, can be shrunk or gotten rid of, making smaller machines that can do similar or new tasks. And rather than simply taking a hit to heavy armor and surviving, the future of armor’s function and protection could be pushing, deflecting, coaxing or turning an adversary’s attack rather than absorbing it, Schoenfeld said. Regardless of the defense, some strikes will get through. That’s where “intelligent, sacrificial robots” can put themselves between humans and harm, Schoenfeld said. That’s in a scenario where humans are still on the battlefield, likely in a tank-like vehicle. “These platforms are still made of material that will encounter bullets and bombs but made of material enough that the robots are damaged without residual harm to humans,” Schoenfeld said.

But those cannot necessarily be one-and-done bots. They may still need to function after being hit, because even expendable platforms cost money. Those same future robots can be made with cutting edge materials being researched now that can either “degrade gracefully” or “self-heal,” Schoenfeld said. “Think about the fact that body armor does not just stop a bullet but must do so with limited deformation and limited mortality for the human in the rear,” Schoenfeld said. “If that material could stretch without limit, the armor would be much lighter and much more flexible.” Some future robot armor could even have materials that allow bullets to pass through.

Schoenfeld painted a picture: imagine a robot that looks like the coronavirus, a central ball or sphere with many “arms” protruding from it. Say this robot could both roll and crawl around the terrain. If it takes a hit, the arms might be made of materials built to deflect those strikes from the center, where the valuable components that control, communicate or explode, reside. All of these advances may not look like the diesel-driven behemoths of the battlefield today, but at their core, they’ll do what armor has always done — protect soldiers while delivering firepower. “It may not look like the ‘heavy’ armor on a tank, but it will be armor nonetheless,” Schoenfeld said. [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | July 15, 2021 ++]

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## **Navy IDSS**

### **USN Looking at Fitting Its Future Attack Submarines with Inflatable Sails**

The U.S. Navy is investigating the possibility of having its future nuclear attack submarines fitted with sails — the tower-like structures on their forward upper-hulls — that are inflatable, popping up when required, but otherwise concealed to preserve the sub’s speed, maneuverability, and acoustic stealth. The Inflatable Deployable Sail System (IDSS) is ultimately hoped to result in technology that will allow the Next-Generation Attack Submarine, or SSN(X), to be able to “operate submerged without the impediments of a sail.”

In a document published earlier this year on the website of the Navy’s Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program, under which the service seeks to provide funding for start-ups and small businesses, Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) outlines its initial requirements for the IDSS initiative. The outlined objective: to “Develop technology that will advance traditional submarine design toward accommodating an Inflatable Deployable Sail System (IDSS) for future submarines.” While the IDSS could represent potentially cutting-edge technology for the Navy, it’s also worth noting that China has unveiled a sail-less submarine design in recent years.



In 2019, in a surprise development, China unveiled a new submarine, roughly 150 feet long, with no apparent sail, and just a small fairing in its place. A photo of this unique submarine is provided above. Initially, there was speculation this was an unmanned design, but the consensus is now that it’s likely a testbed for advanced new technologies likely to be found in future Chinese submarine designs. Clearly one of these concepts is a submarine without a sail. In the United States, too, there has already been some developmental work on exotic new sail designs, albeit using sub-scale submarines. This has included work at the Large Scale Vehicle Range (LSVR), part of the Navy’s Acoustic Research Detachment (ARD), around 375 miles from the ocean at Bayview, Idaho.

The NAVSEA document notes that speed, maneuverability, and stealth are the primary drivers behind the IDSS concept but identifies the key challenge that will have to be overcome to ensure it will actually work — how to safely navigate a submarine without a sail. Traditionally the sail is used as an observation and conning platform when operating on the surface of the water, as well as providing one potential entry/exit route for the crew. Projecting well clear of the water, a traditional sail can also be used to help conduct vertical replenishment (VERTREP) operations. It also provides a position from which to provide force protection, too, and has an important function of breaking through the ice and providing initial access outside of the sub when operating in Polar Regions.

Above all else, the sail is normally used to house important sensors like periscopes, communication antenna masts, as well as electromagnetic and radar sensor systems. In the past, when submarines spent much of their time surfaced when engaged in combat, the sail also incorporated a physical command center, but more modern designs primarily have their critical functions contained within the main hull. The mast can even be used as a storage locker of sorts for special operations forces. Finally, the sail can sometimes serve as a location for diving planes, although this is becoming less of a common design element, evidenced by their relocation to the hull on the Los Angeles class SSNs starting with the improved 688i standard. Sail-

mounted diving planes remain a characteristic of the Navy's ballistic missile submarines, possibly including the forthcoming Columbia class.

Now, however, technological developments could mean that the Navy is able to make at least trial use of "Advances in inflatable structures [that] can provide the freeboard needed for surface transit with a temporary and reusable structure." Above all, the challenge will be to find a way of retaining something akin to the functionality of the sail's bridge area while the submarine is running on the surface, and allowing members of the crew to keep an eye out for maritime traffic or other potential hazards. The IDSS is not expected to carry any sensor systems, which will instead have to be incorporated into the hull.

The specific requirements from NAVSEA for an inflatable sail include a minimum 16-foot freeboard (the distance from the waterline to the top of the sail), capacity for at least two crew at the front of the bridge hatch, and another two behind them, plus all the required power, lighting and communications, flip-up windshield, storage lockers, and more. Of course, there also needs to be a means to access or escape the main pressure hull, via a ladder system, and the entire bridge module should not weigh more than 4,000 pounds. The structure will have to be resilient, too, capable of operating in icy waters and providing ballistic protection against small arms fire.

A range of minimum operational constraints are outlined, including the requirement for 10,000 operational cycles, ability to maintain shape at periscope depth, in operations in Sea State 6, and at temperatures ranging from -60°F to 150°F. "A generally soft or soft/rigid hybrid inflatable structure with a rigid or hybrid rigid/inflatable bridge," the IDSS is expected to deploy or retract, in the space of just one minute, with pressurization achieved using seawater and/or air. "The structural loadings, deployment/retrieval operations, and stability mechanisms required present significant design and material challenges for an inflatable and deployable sail," NAVSEA notes.

The command suggests that industry might look at some of the kinds of inflatable soft structures now being used elsewhere in the Pentagon, as well as by NASA, which is looking at designs for inflatable space habitats, for example. In particular, these technologies include "inflatable control surfaces, deployable energy absorbers, and temporary on-demand structures." The document then goes on to note many of the advanced manmade fibers that are used in these kinds of soft inflatable structures, of which Kevlar is probably the most familiar but also including Vectran, DSP (dimensionally stable polyester), PEN (polyethylene naphthalate), and Spectra, a type of ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene.

"The soft structures considered for use in developing the IDSS may include, but are not limited to, control volumes constructed of inflated membranes, 3-D woven preforms, flexible bladders, coated fabrics, and hybrid (soft/rigid) material systems, and hard goods-to-soft goods connections," the document continues. "Hybrid inflatables may include inflatable elements with semi- or fully-rigid reinforcements serving as deployment shaping controls and abrasion-resistant contact surfaces." Ultimately, NAVSEA may call upon interested parties to produce full-scale IDSS prototypes of their virtual design concepts that will be able to test inflation/deflation, and resistance to wave slap and impact loadings.

That, of course, is still some way off and although the document doesn't provide any kind of timeline and the Congressional Research Service's latest report on SSN(X) doesn't envisage a first example of the new submarine even being procured until Fiscal Year 2031. It's also possible that the IDSS, if it does prove successful, might only be introduced on later blocks of the SSN(X) design. The Navy has been examining whether SSN(X) should be a follow-on to the current Virginia class design, a design based on the Columbia

class SSBN, or an all-new design. Last December, The War Zone reported that the vessel would be significantly wider than the current Virginia class, making it closer to the dimensions of the advanced Seawolf class, while also utilizing technology being developed for the Columbia class.

If IDSS is successful and is adopted as part of the SSN(X) program, a further phase of the development, as envisaged by NAVSEA, would see it adapted for other potential applications, namely “future underwater weapons, unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), unmanned surface vehicles (USVs), and commercial/industrial dual use.” The latter category is notably broad, encompassing lighter-than-air (LTA) vehicles, space vehicle structures and habitats, “chemical/biological containment systems for internal use aboard aircraft and mass transit ground vehicles,” and others.

It’s clear that the U.S. Navy is now looking seriously at operating future nuclear attack submarines with inflatable constructions in place of their traditional sails. While this proposal sounds like it would offer considerable advantages, on paper, actually developing a reliable technology is likely to be a much more challenging proposition. After all, if the inflatable sail fails to properly retract, for example, it would render the submarine highly vulnerable and at the very least end its mission. However, if NAVSEA’s initiative is a success, it could permanently change the way advanced attack submarines look while making them even more effective fighting machines. [Source: The Drive | Thomas Newdick | July 20, 2021 ++]

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## **Military Mental Health Disorders**

### **Update 03: Another Mishandling of Issues by the Service**



A Marine general’s decision not to suspend Cpl. Thae Ohu’s bad conduct discharge could jeopardize her mental health care, despite a diagnosis that led a judge to recommend the suspension earlier this year. Ohu was the subject of a complicated and high-profile assault case in which the man she attempted to stab in April 2020, her then-boyfriend, had called on the Corps not to punish her, but to help her get treatment for issues stemming from a rape she reported years earlier in Japan. Advocates highlighted it as emblematic of the military’s mishandling of sexual assault and mental health issues.

“This whole situation has been disparaging towards my service, my assault, my care and now my future,” Ohu said in a statement issued on the website <https://justiceforthaeohu.org> 15 JUL. “I still cannot fathom the contemptuous behavior of the Corps towards me from the moment I reported, along the way when I sought care and now a final infliction to hinder my care post service.” Maj. Gen. Julian D. Alford, commanding general of Marine Corps Training Command, suspended any brig time beyond Ohu’s 328 days of “time served” before trial, the service said in a statement. But he imposed the remainder of the sentence, including reduction to private and the discharge, “as adjudged without suspension.”

Ohu was released in May from the Navy Consolidated Brig in Chesapeake, Va., after pleading guilty to several charges, including aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon, which stemmed from the 2020 attack. Both she and the victim have said the attack came during a mental breakdown. Ohu's case made headlines last year after her family called on the Marine Corps to release her into mental health treatment. It was one of a series of cases that gained widespread attention in the wake of the killing and disappearance of Spc. Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood, and as lawmakers pushed for reform to the military's handling of sexual assault cases.

Ohu's victim, Michael Hinesley, never wanted the service to prosecute her, he wrote in a statement to the court earlier this year. "It is like you are leaving a wounded Marine on the battlefield" if she were convicted, he wrote. Judge Lt. Col. Michael Zimmerman cited her mental health history in recommending Alford hold off on the punitive discharge for a probationary period.

Thae Ohu was born at the Thai-Burma border in a refugee camp that her family was placed in until their political asylum was approved. Thae's father, Ahr Yu, was a Burmese Freedom Fighter during the student rebellion that fought against the military dictatorship. He participated in the nationwide demonstrations during the summer of 1988, and was a member of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF). As a result of his political involvement, her father moved into the jungle, and lived there for seven years while fighting Burma's military regime. He applied for political asylum so that his three daughters could have a future built on freedom. The family was granted asylum. Two of his three children that resides stateside served in the U.S. Military—Ohu, and her older sister, Pan Phyu (currently serving as Active Duty in the Navy).

Ohu's difficult upbringing contributed to a history of mental illness before joining the service. She began having mental health challenges after arriving at her first duty station in Japan in 2014, the nonprofit investigative news site The War Horse reported. A counselor she saw there recommended to two senior Marines that she be separated, calling her "an accident waiting to happen," one of those Marines, Sgt. Maj. Jerry Bates, told the news site. But Bates felt that she just needed to talk to someone and seemed to be a "squared-away Marine" after doing so.

Hinesley said her condition worsened after another Marine raped her in Okinawa in 2015, and that locking her up for assaulting him "stripped away" any progress she'd made in treatment. Her advocates say she suffered severe post-traumatic stress disorder and other issues after the rape in which she awoke naked, confused, and scared in addition to having abdominal pain, tasseled hair and swollen eyes. She documented the rape in her journal years later but didn't report the assault for fear of retaliation by her rapist. Not only did she work directly with her rapist, but he also made previous lewd comments, and feared ostracism if she spoke out publicly. A decision she later regretted, as written in a personal statement made to a medical review board.

During the April 2020 attack on Hinesley, she'd initially grabbed the knife with suicidal intentions, but then confused her boyfriend for the man who raped her in Okinawa. She became enraged, she said in court testimony reported by Marine Corps Times.

A bad conduct discharge would make her ineligible for guaranteed veteran benefits. Her attorneys had sought a medical discharge instead that would have allowed her to seek treatment through the Department of Veterans Affairs. A veteran with a "bad paper" discharge may only qualify for VA benefits under certain circumstances, after an agency determination about specifics of their case, the VA website states. Under a

suspended sentence, the bad conduct discharge would be canceled if Ohu didn't violate conditions Alford would have set. But the general approved the discharge without suspension "based on the totality of the circumstances of the case," he wrote in a letter to the VA, Marine Corps Times reported.

Her conviction "should not prevent her from receiving necessary treatment" from the VA, Alford wrote. Ohu's case is being reviewed by the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals and her discharge will not be complete until the review is finalized, marine spokesman Capt. Sam Stephenson told Task and Purpose. The bad conduct discharge likely won't affect Ohu's access to VA health care because she received an honorable discharge for a prior four-year period, and because of the agency review process, said Sherman Gillums, Jr., a retired Marine chief warrant officer 2 who has worked in veterans advocacy for many years and is in regular contact with Ohu.

But her care could be hampered while she remains in the "administrative nightmare" of the legal process awaiting discharge, said Gillums, now chief strategy and operations officer at the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She may face obstacles with Tricare and within the military bureaucracy she would not face on the outside, he said. Ohu described her feelings 15 JUL as "overwhelmed and worried, I dare say discouraged" and said she was "failed physically, morally, and ethically" after seeking care and reporting the 2015 rape. "This is not justice," she said in the statement, but she said she could say little more for the time being. Ohu's sister Pan Phyu, one of her most vocal advocates, has pledged to continue fighting. "It'll be a cold day in hell until I stop asking for #JusticeForThaeOhu," she wrote 15 JUL on Facebook. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Chad Garland | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## **USNS John Lewis**

### **First Of the Navy's New Replenishment Oilers Christened**



In a ceremony in San Diego, CA on 17 JUL the Navy christened the future USNS John Lewis (T-AO-205), the first ship in the service's new class of oilers. "Leaders like Representative Lewis taught us that diversity of backgrounds and experiences help contribute to the strength of our nation. There is no doubt that the future Sailors aboard this ship will be galvanized by Lewis' legacy," Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker said in a Pentagon news release. Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) died last July after serving in Congress for more than 30 years. Today's commissioning ceremony took place on the anniversary of his passing, the Pentagon noted.



The official party pose for a photograph at the commissioning ceremony

House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA.) was the ceremony’s main speaker, while several Navy officials – including U.S. 10th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Ross Myers, Military Sealift Command chief Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, and James Geurts, who is currently performing the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy and previously was the service’s acquisition chief – also spoke at the event, according to the Defense Department release.

General Dynamics-National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO) builds the oilers in its San Diego yard. The ships will fall under Military Sealift Command. “The John Lewis-class ships are based on commercial design standards and will recapitalize the current T-AO 187-class fleet replenishment oilers to provide underway replenishment of fuel to U.S. Navy ships at sea. These ships are part of the Navy’s Combat Logistics Force,” the Pentagon news release reads. [Source: USNI | Mallory Shelbourne | July 18, 2021 |++]

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## **Military Overseas Taxation**

### **Update 01: DODEA Teacher Faces \$150,000 Tax Bill As Talk Drag On**



Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his German counterpart Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

While U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his German counterpart toasted improved relations between their countries over beers in Berlin last month, U.S. military school teacher Sierra Eberhardt was contemplating financial ruin at the hands of local German tax collectors. “I’m just kind of fighting this on my own,” said Eberhardt, a teacher at Vogelweh Elementary in Kaiserslautern, who was recently forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars in German income tax and faces additional bills despite a military treaty designed to put her pay — which is also taxed by U.S. authorities — off limits.

Nearly one year after the U.S. government lodged a formal complaint with Germany over efforts by its local finance offices to impose tax penalties on scores of Defense Department civilians and service members, Eberhardt and hundreds of others remain targets. The situation got the attention of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who during a 30 JUN meeting at the Pentagon raised the issue directly with German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. “Secretary Austin conveyed his gratitude for Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer’s personal engagement on the issue and requested her continued involvement to resolve the issue,” Lt. Col. Anton Semelroth, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement last week. “Secretary Austin expressed the United States’ eagerness to see the long-standing issue resolved.”

The financial toll for those snared in the German tax system has been devastating: bills reaching into six figure sums, threats of imprisonment, frozen bank accounts and court battles. The U.S. contends the situation amounts to a treaty violation, but so far American officials have been powerless to stop it. It’s been happening for years, even while U.S. taxpayer dollars inject billions annually into the German economy through the military community’s spending. But despite U.S. objections, and even indications from Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and other senior German officials that they want the matter resolved, the situation is at a standstill. It’s unclear what authority the federal German government has over localities or how it could force tax officials at the state level to back off.

The U.S. Embassy in Germany, which is leading negotiations with the German government, said it couldn’t get into details about the current state of play. “While we do not comment on diplomatic exchanges, the Embassy and the military commands are aware of this long-standing issue and working closely in concert to address what we believe to be a misinterpretation of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement,” said Scott Robinson, a U.S. Embassy spokesman in Berlin. “The Department of Defense and Department of State are engaged to try and reach a resolution.” At issue is a dispute over how the agreement should be interpreted.

In Germany, unlike any other allied country where U.S. forces are based around the world, troops and civilian personnel are exposed to liabilities if local tax offices decide that a military member has motives for being in the country beyond just their job. Last year, there were nearly 400 cases involved SOFA status personnel in the greater Kaiserslautern area alone, tax officials said at the time. They included Air Force Master Sgt. Matthew Larsen, who was targeted for extending a tour and being married to a German woman. Being a teacher at a U.S. base school for long periods of time or sending kids to a German school also have put people on the tax collector’s radar.

In the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan and South Korea, all countries that host large numbers of service members, DOD personnel routinely marry locals or have extended tours without threat of income taxation, according to commands that oversee SOFA matters in those countries. The Pentagon, which is now reviewing its force posture around the world, including in Germany, declined to say if the tax risk troops face would factor into decisions on how to adjust where service members are stationed. “The Department considers a wide range of factors in reviewing and providing recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on U.S. overseas force posture,” Semelroth said. “As the Global Posture Review is still ongoing, we have no additional details on specific criteria being used to assess U.S. force posture in a particular country or region.”

## FRUSTRATIONS MOUNT



The lack of progress with Germany on the tax issue has caused exasperation among many U.S. military personnel who say they have been left to fend off increasingly aggressive collection efforts on their own. They contend that tax officials have become emboldened after facing little pushback from the U.S. government when the first cases emerged in previous years. “Personally, I continue to be outraged at our government’s silence,” said Mike Goff, an Air Force retiree in Germany who has become an advocate for military personnel in the country. “I don’t expect an update on where this is or when the last communiqué was sent, but give us something to show you give a damn that our very own NATO ally continues to ignore the issue as Americans are still paying ill-gotten tax money.”

Most of the cases center around the Ramstein Air Base area, the major hub for U.S. personnel in Germany. But DOD staff in other places, including U.S. Army Europe and Africa’s headquarters home in Wiesbaden, have been affected. For Eberhardt, who lives in Kaiserslautern, the first bill she received was for 76,000 euros, or about \$90,000, in back taxes for the years 2013-2018. As a federal employee, Eberhardt already pays U.S. income tax on her salary.

Eberhardt said she paid the back taxes after she and her husband, a German, faced threats of criminal charges, imprisonment and frozen bank accounts. In May, she received a bill for nearly 50,000 euros in additional penalties. “I have no idea how we are going to pay it,” she said. Eberhardt said it wasn’t clear how authorities came up with such a high sum. “They told me they can charge 13,000 euros off the bat just for possessing a (military) ID card because of the tax benefits related to it,” she said.

While sending a child to a German school has been cited as one of the factors that could cause tax collectors to decide that a military member is in Germany for reasons other than their job, Eberhardt said German finance officials told her she was fortunate that she had her kids in German school. “They told me that it’s good because if they were in the American school it is considered a tax privilege. Then they would have charged us more,” Eberhardt said.

The tax penalties, adding up to roughly 126,000 euros, equivalent to almost \$150,000. Eberhardt said she also is required to pay 3,000 euros every three months on her teacher’s salary just to stay up to date on annual German taxes. Eberhardt said she is hoping to get a green card for her husband so they can leave the country. Still, that doesn’t mean escape from the German tax collectors. Tax advisers have told Stars and Stripes that the German revenue service is known to pursue military personnel long after they’ve left the country.

#### CALLS FOR COOPERATION

While former President Donald Trump had a tense relationship with Germany, particularly when it came to Berlin’s defense spending, President Joe Biden has taken a more diplomatic approach. Whether that will pay dividends on the tax matter, or how much effort the administration is willing to put into solving it, isn’t yet clear. For Maas, the change in tone out of Washington was cause for celebration when he hosted Blinken. But neither he nor Blinken mentioned the tax matter in their public remarks at a beer garden in Berlin, where Maas talked up his eagerness for better cooperation. “We have so many things in common,” Maas said. “And I think there is such a great degree of readiness and willingness on both sides of the Atlantic to cooperate. So I look forward to that.”

[Source: Stars & Stripes | J ohn Vandiver | July 20, 2021 ++]

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## Navy Discipline

### Update 01: Officer Calls Enlisted Sailors Hatchet-Wielding Perverts

The Navy has disciplined an officer after an investigation determined he wrote a letter complaining about being forced to live with enlisted sailors that he described as “deviants” and “perverts” who posed a risk to his family. Task & Purpose obtained a copy of the letter that was signed by **Lt. Nathanael Allison**, PhD, who wrote that he had received orders to live in Yokosuka, Japan, for the next three years and he was willing to pay for his family to live in hotel rather than being billeted in enlisted housing.

In the typo-ridden letter, Allison alleged that the enlisted quarters were unsafe for his family due to rampant drug use, alcoholism, sexual assaults, “and other perverts.” “I personally had to deal with an enlisted child molester as my subordinate,” wrote Allison, who added that the sailors who hung out in enlisted housing were “often drunk and hostile.” “I have a good-looking family, a wife and two daughters age 3 and 4,” Allison wrote. “They are prime targets to be victims for these enlisted deviant activities. My family should be safe in housing that is with officers. Officers are more respectable and theses [sic.] type of deviant activities are incredibly rare compared to deviant activities of enlisted being common place. [sic.]”

Allison also complained that living with enlisted sailors meant he and his family would be isolated from other officers, who would not want to visit them. Moreover, Allison argued that if he were forced to live among the enlisted sailors, he would be duty-bound as an officer to report any instances of drug use – placing his family in danger of being retaliated against – and he would constantly have to break up brawls among the ruffians. “A few tours ago, an enlisted housing unit had two gangs attacking each other with hatchets and other weapons over competing drug turf,” Allison wrote in the letter. He did not specify where the axe-laden drug gang rumble went down.

A command investigation determined that Allison, who is assigned to Naval Hospital Yokosuka, was the author of the letter, said Regena Kowitz, a spokeswoman for Naval Medical Forces Pacific. “The command’s investigation into this matter has concluded and been adjudicated, with appropriate disciplinary measures taken,” Kowitz said. “The command cannot release or discuss the details of administrative actions for misconduct due to privacy regulations.” “Behavior that is not in keeping with good order and discipline, with our Navy’s core values, or that does not treat others with respect and dignity, will not be tolerated,” she continued.

Allison was pilloried on social media after Erica Earl of Stars and Stripes first reported the news of the letter on Monday. The official Terminal Lance Twitter account, run by Marine veteran, cartoonist, and author Maximilian Uriarte, offered the most concise commentary about Allison allegations that enlisted sailors are deviants and perverts: “I mean he’s not wrong.” You can read the entire letter below:

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*Good Morning Housing Professionals,*

*I just reached out to my Commander about this huge issue trying to force me to live with enlisted You will likely here from them soon. Several officers just told us that there are 2 townhomes available right now where they live at Fourth Avenue and Vandergrift and also Sakura Heights. My family and I have orders for 3 years here in Yokosuka and will likely be extended to 4 years as this happened to the last officers in*

*my position before me. I have many valid objections to living in a building of almost all enlisted and even many lower enlisted being an officer. I am prepared to pay for a hotel for my family and I until actual officer housing can be found for us. I am even prepared to pay for my housing the whole tour if I have to. I have serious concerns for Safety, support and integrity.*

*Safety: I have been an investigative officer and superior officer to many deviant enlisted sailors. There is a lot of crime, violent actions, drug use and alcoholism that happens in enlisted housing. There are also sexual assaults and other perverts. I personally had to deal with an enlisted child molester as my subordinate. I also have had to deal with man drug and alcohol related problems. There are often drunk and often hostile sailors hanging around enlisted housing. Housing with enlisted greatly increases the risk to my family. I want to feel safe for my family every time I leave to work. This will greatly affect my mental state at work to always be worrying about my family. I have a good-looking family, a wife and two daughters age 3 and 4. They are prime targets to be victims for these enlisted deviant activities. My family should be safe in housing that is with officers. Officers are much more respectable and these type of deviant activities are incredibly rare compared to deviant activities of enlisted being common place. Safety has huge psychological impact on quality of life. This enlisted housing will increase the risk to my family and mentally cause my family and I to be worried and unhappy due to safety.*

*Support: It is important when overseas to have support from your community. This is even more important with COVID. The almost entire enlisted building that was proposed is in the back of Ikego isolated away from any support for me and my family. Its's away from all the other officers at my command that could support me. As an officer I cannot fraternize with the enlisted. My family and I will be isolated in the building that I am living in. We will not have the support that a normal officer family should have to succeed. Other officer families will not want to visit us because our family lives in enlisted housing. This proposed housing assignment is cutting of the support that my family needs during this overseas assignment and with COVID. My children need to make friends with other officer children. My wife needs to make friends with other officers' wives. I need to make friends with other officers. This proposed housing is isolating our family during a vulnerable time when we are transitioning overseas and don't have any support. We need to be in actual officer housing surrounded by other officer families so my family and I get actual support and are not completely isolated and trapped by ourselves.*

*Integrity: As a Naval officer, I have integrity. If I see the enlisted breaking the law or acting in an inappropriate way, I am required at all times to react and correct the problem or situation. Living with enlisted puts my family and myself in a compromising position. A few tours ago, an enlisted housing unit had two gangs attacking each other with hatchets and other weapons over competing drug turf. As an officer, if I see drug use or other illegal activity in enlisted housing, I have to report it. This put me and my family at risk of retaliation because I will have to live right next to them with this proposed housing. I am not willing to compromise between integrity and safety and I shouldn't have to. Officers shouldn't live in housing with almost all enlisted personnel. This doesn't even factor in the situation where I may have to demote or penalize enlisted personnel I work with, and then come back home where they also live right by me. This creates an awful living arrangement and my family and I in many compromising situations. I will choose to keep my integrity and will probably make many enemies in the housing complex, creating more problems and further isolation of my family.*

*Forcing an officer to live in a large apartment building with almost with enlisted is unethical. Factor in the fact that it is far away from work and far away from other officer housing even on Ikego and this is*

*just wrong in every way. I am prepared to pay to stay in a hotel or temporary lodging for however long is necessary to get actual officer housing with other officers. I am also prepared to pay for housing the whole tour if I have to. Please help me find housing that is acceptable for my family so we can be safe, supported and maintain our integrity.*

*Very Respectfully,*

*LT Nathanael Allison, PhD*

[Source: Task & Purpose | Jeff Schogol | April 08, 2021 ++]

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## **USAF Security Policy**

### **The Air Force Is Ditching Security Force Body Cams**



A tool that has become key in civilian law enforcement — generating visual evidence in high-profile cases such as the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis — will no longer be used by the Air Force. The Air Force is ordering all installations whose security forces use body-worn cameras to stop using and dispose of the equipment. The order was issued by the Air Force Security Forces Directorate on 21 JUL, Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek told Air Force Times. “The decision was made because there is no current Department of Defense direction regarding body-worn cameras or an existing program of record that would provide servicewide funding or guidance on the appropriate use of the body-worn cameras or the storage of the footage acquired,” she said.

Only 13 of 176 Air Force installations have security forces that use body-worn cameras, said Stefanek. Those installations began to purchase and use the equipment in the past few years using local unit funds, said Sarah Fiocco, another Air Force spokeswoman. Air Force officials could not immediately say which installations were using the body-worn cameras. The policy change was first reported by the [Air Force amn/nco/snco](#) Facebook page on 22 JUL. There was no specific incident that caused the new policy, Fiocco said.

However, as questions began to arise about how to use funds and the equipment and store the data, higher headquarters began to look into the issue, Air Force officials said. It ultimately was determined there was no DoD-wide policy on body-worn cameras, no clear need justifying the use of them and numerous policy complications created by their use. As a result, the Air Force decided that those installations using them would have to stop and get rid of the equipment. Such devices have been instrumental in some civilian criminal justice cases, especially those regarding use-of-force as in the case of Floyd. Video obtained from

the body-worn cameras of Minneapolis police played a key role in the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former police officer convicted of murder and manslaughter in the killing of Floyd.

Body-worn cameras “are both beneficial and cost effective,” NPR reported, citing a recent study by public safety experts and world economists. Those findings were published in a [research paper released](#) by the University of Chicago Crime Lab and the Council on Criminal Justice’s Task Force on Policing. The findings “[show the key benefit of body-worn cameras is the reduced use of police force](#),” Jens Ludwig, professor and head of the Crime Lab, told NPR. “For example, among the police departments studied, complaints against police dropped by 17 percent and the use of force by police, during fatal and non-fatal encounters, fell by nearly 10 percent.”

The support of police body-worn cameras is mixed, however, with some cons pointing to issues of privacy and storage of evidence. Air Force officials say no similar reduce of force need exists in the flying branch. “We service a gated military community with an extremely low rate of law enforcement incidents that does not currently present a need for a non-DoD required or resourced body camera system,” Stefanek said. “However, Department of the Air Force installations have cameras at key and critical locations that serve multiple purposes.”

At the moment, there is no specific plan for how to dispose of the equipment and footage, Stefanek said. “All body camera equipment will be disposed of in accordance with Defense Logistics Agency military equipment disposition procedures,” she said. “We’re currently looking into the appropriate disposal method for the footage.” In some cases, other federal agencies or even local law enforcement may take the equipment, Stefanek said. [Source: AirForceTimes | Howard Altman & Rachel Cohen| July23, 2021 ++]

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## **USAF Leave Accrual**

### **Air Force Offers 2 Months of Extra Leave Valid For Three Years**

The Air Force is encouraging airmen and guardians to take a vacation by allowing them to accrue additional time off in the next two months, then spend those days anytime in the next three years. Over the last 18 months, the coronavirus pandemic wrecked travel and other personal plans for many who — out of caution or necessity — opted to stay home and continue working. Now the military wants to give people more opportunities to take a break after a stressful and unusual year. “Rest and recuperation are vital to morale, unit and personal performance, and overall motivation for airmen and guardians,” acting Air Force Secretary John Roth said in a July 21 memo. “The [Department of the Air Force] recognizes the importance to provide opportunities for its service members to use their earned leave in the year it was earned and provide respite from the work environment.”

Active-duty airmen and guardians may accrue 60 to 120 days of leave by the end of September, and spend it by Sept. 30, 2024. If a service member was already allowed to build up more than 60 days of leave, this new flexibility will not apply to them, Roth said. The policy also applies to Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve members who would roll over leave from one active-duty tour to the next. They can accrue up to 120 days of leave by Sept. 30 and carry that balance until September 2024 as well.

Airmen and guardians typically have until the end of a fiscal year to use or lose as many as 60 days off. But the Air Force wanted to offer a few years’ worth of leeway so leave wouldn’t expire while travel

restrictions are still in place, or while job requirements could keep someone from taking time off in the remaining two months of fiscal 2021. DOD let service secretaries craft their own updates to the special leave accrual policy first set in April 2020, and Roth's change goes further than Pentagon officials were mulling earlier this summer.

The Air Force and Space Force's decision is not limited to service members in certain units or areas with travel restrictions, such as Japan and Europe, and allows troops to carry over leave for one year longer than previously allowed under pandemic-era rules. "It is important members manage their leave balances throughout the year," Roth said. "Commanders will continue to encourage and provide members with opportunities to use leave in the year it is earned." The Air Force said it will release more details on the issue later. [Source: AirForceTimes | Rachel Cohen | July 26, 2021 ++]

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## **Military Fraud & Abuse**

### **Update 05: Towing Company Caught Illegally Selling Troop's Vehicles**

A Dallas towing company has agreed to pay \$50,000 as part of a settlement reached with the Justice Department regarding allegations the company illegally sold five service members' vehicles, Justice announced today. Justice officials filed the initial complaint Sept. 28, 2020 alleging **United Tows, LLC**, auctioned off the vehicles without obtaining court orders, in violation of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA). One vehicle belonged to now-Senior Airman Fassil Mekete, who was attending Air Force basic training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, in 2017.

According to Justice Officials, when Mekete found out his vehicle had been towed, he contacted United Tows and told them he was out of town on active duty. However, the owner told him she didn't believe he was in the military; and the company sold his 1998 Toyota Corolla at auction. Before leaving for basic training, Mekete had received permission from the owner of a martial arts studio to leave his car and some personal belongings in the studio's parking lot, since he no longer had a lease in Dallas. A subsequent investigation revealed that United Tows allegedly illegally sold at least four other vehicles belonging to service members between Oct. 4, 2014 and April 26, 2019.

Under the proposed settlement, which was filed 23 JUL in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, United Tows must pay Mekete \$20,000. The settlement must be approved by the court. The four other service members will share an additional \$20,000 from United Tows, and the company will pay a \$10,000 civil penalty to the U.S. Treasury. Officials at United Tows, LLC and their attorneys didn't immediately answer Military Times' requests for comment. However, the proposed settlement states, "The parties agree that, to avoid costly and protracted litigation, the claims against Defendant should be resolved without further proceedings or an evidentiary hearing."

As part of the negotiated settlement, United Tows has developed SCRA policies and procedures for vehicle sales and disposal, to comply with the SCRA. Among other things, the company is reviewing any information received from the owners or others, for evidence of military service, and examining the vehicle and its contents for evidence of military service such as military paperwork, uniforms or equipment; and searching the Defense Manpower Data Center to identify whether the person is eligible for SCRA protections. If it's determined the owner is military, the owner can't sell the vehicle without first obtaining

a court order. United Tows has also developed SCRA training materials for its employees, and provided those materials to Justice Officials for review.

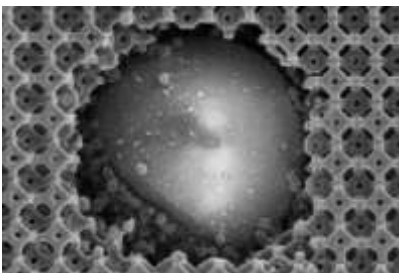
United Tows “not only disregarded the legal rights of service members, it made hurtful and dismissive comments about a member’s military service,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, in an announcement on 23 JUL. “We were appalled to learn that this airman came home from basic training to find his car sold at auction,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Prerak Shah, for the Northern District of Texas, in the announcement. Since 2011, the Justice Department has obtained over \$474 million in monetary relief for more than 120,000 service members in its enforcement of the SCRA. The SCRA enforcement is conducted by the Civil Rights Division’s Housing and Civil Enforcement Section and U.S. attorneys around the country.

Military members and their dependents who believe their SCRA rights have been violated should contact their nearest Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program office. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 23, 2021 ++]

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## **Body Armor**

### **Update 04: Nanotech-built Armor Could Replace Kevlar, Steel**



A recent breakthrough by Army-funded researchers may lead to a new material that could yield lightweight body armor, blast shields and more for future soldiers. Testing at the Institute for Soldier Nanotechnologies, an Army-sponsored research center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, showed a polymer patterned in a “lattice-like” structure using nanotechnologies could withstand more force than Kevlar or steel. The paper, recently published in the scientific journal, Nature Materials, showed that the nanotechnology-built material prevented objects from tearing through and was “more efficient” at stopping penetration than traditional materials.

Army Times spoke with the program manager for ISN, who explained that the lightweight material that’s been lab tested to take on high impacts may work better than traditional armor or protective materials because there are more layers of material in a smaller space. The paper on nanotech use was co-authored by scientists and engineers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the California Institute of Technology and ETH Zürich, a university in Switzerland.

Dr. James Burgess, ISN program manager, gave the example of a motorcycle helmet’s protection to help break down the process. The helmet’s shell is hard on the outside and can take a high impact, to a point, before it cracks. But if that same shell contained within it many tiny layers of shell, each layer and space between would provide even greater resistance. That can’t be done as easily with materials such as steel, or

even Kevlar. But microscopic nanotechnology procedures are allowing for new approaches to building these structures, he said.

Dr. Carlos Portela shared with Army Times how that work is done using light-sensitive material known as “photoresist” that conforms its shape based on light exposure, such as lasers. “This technique is effectively 3D-printing at the nanoscale, where a tightly-focused laser is traced within a drop of photoresist—in three dimensions—locally solidifying material in the process until the full structure is printed,” Portela said.

What’s key to this new process that researchers have tested is it allows designers to “fabricate virtually any imaginable 3D shape” at levels never before reached, he said. That means that the material they can build can be stiffer and stronger than using traditional manufacturing methods. While current research is lightening helmets and body armor through the use of new materials, configurations and other means, this approach could provide even greater protection in an even lighter package, Burgess said. “Increasing protection while simultaneously decreasing the weight that soldiers carry is an overreaching theme in our research,” he said.

While the newly-created technique isn’t quite ready for prime time and fielding, the lab-level research gives scientists and designers a lot to work with moving forward. “The knowledge from this work...could provide design principles for ultra-lightweight, impact-resistant materials [for use in] efficient armor materials, protective coatings, and blast-resistant shields desirable in defense and space applications,” said co-author Dr. Julia R. Greer, a professor of materials science, mechanics, and medical engineering at Caltech, whose lab fabricated the material.

One hurdle, Burgess said, will be scaling up the production. These are microscopic amounts of material that would need to be produced in larger quantities to be useful in field applications. But this first step does hold promise. “Nano-architected materials truly are promising as impact-mitigating materials,” Portela said. “There’s a lot we don’t know about them yet, and we’re starting this path to answering these questions and opening the door to their widespread applications.” [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | July 26, 2021 ++]

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

### **‘Tickler’ thru ‘Toe Rail’**

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

**Tickler** - (RN) Tobacco, especially naval issue.



**Tiddly suit** - (RN) Best uniform.

**Tiff** - (RN) Artificer. Usually used with the rate, e.g. 'Chief Tiffy'.

**Tilly** - (1) (USN) A wheeled aircraft crash and salvage crane on an aircraft carrier. It is typically parked aft of the island. (2) (RN) Crew bus or other transport.

**Tincan** – Also seen as "Tin Can," a common nickname for a destroyer. The nickname arose because in World Wars One and Two, the hull plating of this ship type was so thin the sailors claimed they were made from tin cans. In fact, a .45 pistol bullet would penetrate it. Modern destroyers have much thicker hull plating, but the nickname persists. This nickname is sometimes abbreviated as "Can", although to a radioman a 'can' is a set of headphones.

**TINS** - "This Is No Shit." The opening line to a sea story.

**Titivate** – Clean up, or make shipshape.

**Titless Wave** - A (male) Yeoman. Can also be used to refer to PN's (Personnelman).

**Tits Duty** - Easy or sweet duty.

**Tits Up** - Inoperative, or broken. "It's dead, Jim." Polite forms: 'sneakers up', 'belly up'.

**TLD** - Thermo-Luminescent Dosimeter. Found in nuclear vessels, used to determine exposure to radiation.

**TMOW** - Torpedoman Of (the) Watch. Responsible for all onboard weapons systems of a submarine. This includes the safe shipping and storage of torpedoes and torpedo-tube launchable missiles. Considered by some to be a KNUCKLE-DRAGGER.

**Toasts** – In the British Empire, toasts were drunk at dinner to the reigning monarch (also known as 'the loyal toast'). The Navy eventually received special permission to drink the loyal toast while seated (due to the lack of headroom common to ships of the day). In addition, traditional toasts were drunk on specific days of the week. They were:

- Monday – "Our ships at sea."
- Tuesday – "Our native land."
- Wednesday – "Ourselves and no one like us."
- Thursday – "A bloody war or a sickly season" (and therefore more-rapid promotion).
- A variant was "A bloody war and quick promotion."
- Friday – "A willing foe and searoom."
- Saturday – "Sweethearts and wives." (someone would usually pipe up "and may they never meet!")
- Sunday – "Absent friends."

**Toe Rail** – On weather decks, the raised lip at the deck edge. An aid to keeping one's feet inboard.

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

**\* Military History \***



## Army Aviation First Airplane

The Wright brothers developed their first successful powered airplane in 1903, and it didn't take long for the U.S. military to know it wanted in on the action. A few years later, that became reality. By 1907, the Army Signal Corps was preparing itself for flight — although it wasn't yet sure by what means. It created an Aeronautical Division that consisted of three first lieutenants willing to work in the budding field of aviation. The Wrights first contacted the U.S. government as a customer in 1905. Because they were reluctant to share any details of their airplane, and because the government had had bad experiences with earlier would-be aircraft inventors, initial discussions went nowhere. Two years later, on Aug. 2, 1909 the military began its grand aviation adventure when the Wright brothers delivered their first plane to the Signal Corps. The Army paid \$30,000 for the aircraft, a Wright A Flyer. It was given the name Signal Corps No. 1, but was generally just known as the Wright Military Flyer.



The Wright brothers and some Army Signal Corps soldiers (left) work on the Wright Military Flyer as they test it out at Fort Myer, Virginia in 1909. Medical personnel (right) tend to either Orville Wright or his airplane passenger, Army 1st Lt. Thomas Selfridge, after an early version of the Wright Military Flyer crashed at Fort Myer, Va., in August 1908.

Leading up to that, though, they needed to make sure the plane worked. In August 1908, Orville Wright brought an aircraft to the parade grounds at Fort Myer, Virginia, near Arlington National Cemetery, for flight trials. But there were some failures with that plane, which led to the death of one of the Aeronautical Division's first lieutenants, Thomas Selfridge. He became the first powered airplane casualty. After that, the Wrights took their plane back home to North Carolina and returned to Fort Myer in June 1909 with a new and improved version: the Wright Military Flyer.

According to Air Force Magazine, the plane carried two people and had skids instead of wheels. It was launched from a monorail track and was powered along by propellers, sometimes with the help of a catapult on days where there was no wind. When it reached takeoff speed, the pilot pulled back on the elevator lever, and the plane would rise into the air. Records show there were no instruments other than an eight-inch piece of string tied to the crossbar between the two skids. The string served as a crude turn-and-bank indicator, depending on which direction it blew.

In late July 1909, Orville Wright and another first lieutenant from the Aeronautical Division, Benjamin Foulois, took the plane for a speed test on its final qualifying flight. It successfully flew south

about 5 miles before turning back. The craft reached an altitude of 400 feet. The contract stipulated that they would receive a 10 percent bonus for every full mile per hour above 40. Their average speed was 42.5 miles per hour, which rewarded them with a \$5,000 bonus and brought the final purchase price of the airplane to \$30,000. Three days later, the plane belonged to the U.S. Army. Soon thereafter, the flying program moved to a field in College Park, Maryland, and it resumed in October 1909, with the Wright brothers training a few more men on how to fly. On 26 OCT, 2nd Lt. Fred Humphreys became the first Army officer to fly solo.

The Army used it to train pilots in the fall of 1909 and in 1910, then donated it to the Smithsonian Institution in 1911 after acquiring other aircraft. Also interested in aviation, the U.S. Navy purchased a Wright Model B airplane in 1911 and modified it for water takeoff. However, the Navy preferred the aircraft produced by Glenn Curtiss, who had designed airplanes specifically for operating off water..

It's been a wild ride in the 112 years since that first purchase. By 1914, the Army and Navy operated aviation squads. Nowadays, in the age of the fighter jet, the B-2 stealth bomber, planes that can refuel other planes in the air, and cargo planes like the LC-130 Hercules with its missions to Antarctica, military aviation has grown exponentially. Just imagine where we'll be in another 100 years! Check out the video at [https://cdn.dvidshub.net/media/video/1907/DOD\\_107068307/DOD\\_107068307-1280x720-2765k.mp4](https://cdn.dvidshub.net/media/video/1907/DOD_107068307/DOD_107068307-1280x720-2765k.mp4). [Source: U.S. Dept. of Defense | Katie Lange | Aug. 1, 2019 ++]

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## Crusades

### Top 5 Combat Diseases That Would Kill You



The Crusades was the name given to the waves of European knights and peasants who tried to conquer, keep and reconquer the holy city of Jerusalem and the Middle-East between the 11th and the 13th centuries. Although it has been romanticized and turned into a time of heroic deeds through various works of fiction, the reality was much less glamorous than modern depictions.

The Crusades were used as an excuse for violence, cruelty and massacres beyond imagination. Cities were sacked and burnt to the ground, people were tortured and slaughtered for sport or for wearing the wrong symbol around their neck by both sides. Although the death toll is in discussion among historians, some specialists estimate it around 9 million people. Battle was not the only cause of death: thirst, starvation and diseases ravaged the ranks of the Crusaders as surely as combat. As a knight, riding toward the defense of Christendom, these were the diseases that would kill you in the Crusades.

### Leprosy

Leprosy is a slow and ugly disease that causes deformities, sores and much suffering, before eventually leading to death. In the 12th century, an epidemic of leprosy ravaged Europe and followed the Crusaders in the Holy Land. It was the downfall of Baldwin IV, the “Leper King,” who ruled over the kingdom of Jerusalem from 1174 until 1185. The disease was believed by many to be a punishment of God; cast upon entire families, thus causing lepers to be isolated and ostracized. They were seen as morally corrupt and were forced to wear identifying clothing ‘R’ and to carry a bell announcing their approach.

### **Dysentery**

Dysentery is a potentially fatal, parasite-induced diarrhea. Probably not the best way to die for a noble knight in quest of glory in the Holy Land. Yet, it proved the undoing of King John, younger brother of Richard the Lionheart, and it affected Saint Louis so badly that he had the bottom of his breeches cut off so he wouldn’t have to constantly pull them up and down. It was originally believed that dysentery killed Saint Louis, but it was later proven that scurvy got him first. Dysentery was often contracted from water contaminated by human wastes. With poor hygiene measures and the rarity of water leading soldiers to make unsafe compromises of the quality of their beverage, dysentery was frightfully common during the Crusades.

### **Scurvy**

Malnutrition was an all-too-common issue in medieval times, and even more so during the Crusades. Due to the aridity of the Middle-East, food sources were jealously protected and not widely available. During marches, soldiers only had access to meager rations and often went hungry. During sieges, food was even scarcer. Even when encamped, they lacked some important variety in their diet. Meat was believed to be the only important source of energy, neglecting fruits and vegetables, which are the main source of vitamin C. Scurvy, a consequence of extreme vitamin C deficiency, killed a sixth of the French army during the Fifth Crusade and even took Saint Louis, king of France, during the Seventh Crusade. It would cause gums to swell, teeth to fall off, feet to hurt violently, and bones to rot. For most soldiers suffering from the scurvy, death was a welcomed mercy.

### **STDs**

Sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis, ran rampant in those times. Hygiene was less than basic and protection such as condoms did not exist. Knowledge regarding the cause and the cure for these diseases was also uncommon or non-existent. The prostitutes accompanying the armies were rarely in perfect health and served a great number of clients. Thus allowing a single strain of a particular disease to infect a great number of soldiers. Moreover, mass sexual assault during the conquest of a city was not only common practice, it also was used as a weapon of war. The conquerors then caught whatever bacteria and viruses infected the local population and brought them back to their own side.

### **Common infections**

Medicine was almost barbaric in this era. The knowledge was vague and sparse, particularly regarding bacteria and viruses. When it was necessary to perform an amputation, usually done by a butcher or a barber. Alcohol was the only form of anesthesia given to the patient. The instruments were not sterilized, leading to a very high probability of fatal infection. Hygiene principles were primitive at best. The smallest cut or injury a potential nest for bacteria that could easily lead to death.

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Other diseases, such as smallpox, lice-borne trench fever and tuberculosis, also deserve a mention on the list of common cause of death during the Crusades. Under the guise of good intentions, the Crusades

brought about a time of incredible violence, repression, and intolerance. They lead both to the decline of the Muslim world and that of the Byzantine Empire, also known as the Eastern Roman Empire, a Christian nation that was not spared from greed and war crimes. In the end, many people died from diseases. It was not a great time to be alive. [Source: We Are The Mighty | Ruddy Cano | June 7, 2021 ++]

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## First Battle of Bull Run

### How the Union Blew It

Confederate Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard was sitting down to breakfast in the Virginia house of Wilmer McLean in 1861 when a cannonball burst into the room via the chimney. The destruction of the fireplace ruined the morning meal. Beauregard was using McLean's house as his headquarters for the First Battle of Bull Run. Three months had passed since the Confederate shelled Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and booted the Union garrison out of the state. The Federal army was making a play for the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia. It would not go the way the Union leadership hoped, nor would it go the way anyone expected. For the north, everything was wrong from the start.



In the days that followed the attack on Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln's call to arms saw the Union Army grow to a force of 200,000. Placed in command of the army in the field was a major suddenly promoted three grades to brigadier general, Irvin McDowell. Gen. McDowell had limited experience, but the Army's senior-most commander, Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, was too old to go on campaign. Irvin McDowell did not feel comfortable rising to command the Union Army so fast, but Lincoln was assured he would do well because the other side was inexperienced too. Scott had devised a multifaceted war plan designed to strangle the Confederacy's ability to make war, dubbed the "Anaconda Plan." The northern press thought the plan was ridiculous, believing an all-out assault on Richmond would crush the rebels right away.

At the start of the Civil War, the Union Army had ignored its most experienced commander's plans for the war, recruited thousands of untrained volunteers, and placed them in command of an officer who spent most of his time in a mid-level staff office. The battle to come would be a stark lesson in hubris. Still, by the time the federal army met the rebels, no one was expecting the war to be the long, drawn-out bloodletting we remember today. It was an evenly-matched fight, one the Union was expected to win easily. In fact, civilians from Washington even made the trek to Manassas to watch the battle, bringing picnic baskets to watch a spectacle. Many of them would have to make a run for safety by the end of the day.

The fighting at Bull Run was supposed to be a feint, while the bulk of the northern force marched around the Confederates and cut their supply lines, relieving the pressure on Washington. They had to move fast

because Confederate reinforcements from Gen. Joseph Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah were on their way to the area. Gen. McDowell devised a plan to attack the Confederate left flank at Bull Run with the bulk of his force, then swing around the enemy lines and get into its rear before reinforcements could be dispatched. Success was possible with this plan, but it took him so long to devise it that rebel reinforcements were already on the way, and his army was too inexperienced to pull it off anyway.

The fighting on July 21, 1861, started with the artillery barrage that ruined Gen. Beauregard's breakfast at Wilmer McLean's house. The Union had the initiative and by noon had begun to turn the Confederate left flank as planned. But Confederate reinforcements soon arrived in the form of Gen. Thomas Jackson, Col. Wade Hampton, and Col. J.E.B. Stuart. Union troops managed to cross Bull Run in the morning, but the inexperienced McDowell didn't press his early advantage. Confederate reinforcements allowed time for the retreating defenders to fortify their positions on Henry House Hill. Jackson's line would not move against repeated Union attacks (earning Jackson his famous nickname, "Stonewall"). Union officers tried to spur their men on, but many would not follow. The fighting for Henry House Hill was another example of McDowell's inexperience. At this part of the battle, he had a numerically superior force but never engaged the full force of the army against the hill's defenders. This allowed the Confederates to fight on even ground, despite being outnumbered two-to-one.

To the south of the fighting, Union artillery was overrun by Confederates wearing blue uniforms. The federal guns were captured and recaptured many times throughout the battle. Losing these guns was the turning point for the battle. More Confederate reinforcements from the Army of the Shenandoah arrived, and the whole force began to advance. Union troops broke and ran. As they crossed to the other side of Bull Run, disorder turned into panic. Guns and small arms were tossed aside in an effort to escape capture, but many Union troops were captured anyway. It was a total rout. The Union wouldn't be able to reform a rearguard, let alone the entire army.

The Washingtonian civilians who made the trek to watch the battle clogged the road alongside the retreating Union soldiers, overturned wagons, and discarded weapons. Even Confederate President Jefferson Davis was able to watch the Union retreat. With hundreds of federal and rebel troops killed, both sides poorly managed their respective commands before, during, and after the battle. Everyone learned lessons from the first battle of the Civil War, but the most important one was that this war was going to last much longer than anyone expected.

As for Wilmer McLean, whose house was used as the Confederate headquarters, he eventually got sick of living so close to the fighting and moved his family further south to Appomattox Court House - where the Confederate army's surrender would be signed in his living room. [Source: Together We Served | Newsletter | July 2021 ++]

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## **Navy's Ice Cream Barge**

### **Retrofitted Concrete Barge Borrowed from the Army**



**In 1943, U.S. Marines polish off generous portions of freshly-made ice cream before lunch.**

For sailors during World War I, ice cream was a delectable dessert that took the place of alcohol aboard ships during Prohibition. In 1914, General Order No. 99 banned liquor aboard naval vessels, and it was shortly followed by the 18th Amendment making alcohol illegal across the entire United States. As a result, ice cream became the de facto staple for boosting morale. Even though Prohibition only lasted six years, sailors' love for ice cream extended well after. In 1942, the aircraft carrier USS Lexington sustained damage from a Japanese torpedo and began sinking. As sailors abandoned ship, they grabbed containers of ice cream from the freezers and began chowing down. "Survivors describe scooping ice cream into their helmets and licking them clean before lowering themselves into the Pacific," wrote Matt Siegel in an Atlantic essay.

That fierce dedication to frosted sugar dairy led the Navy to spend \$1 million on an ice cream barge. The branch, which borrowed the concrete barge from the Army, retrofitted it as an at-sea ice cream factory and parlor. The ship, which was stationed in the Western Pacific, carted ice cream around to ships smaller than a destroyer that did not have their own ice cream-making facilities aboard. The floating factory was able to make ten gallons of ice cream in just seven minutes, meaning one shift on the barge could produce approximately 500 gallons of frozen dessert for sailors. To accommodate the large amount of ice cream made, the barge could hold 2,000 gallons at a time.

The barge was not the most practical ship in the Navy. The concrete boat had no engine of its own and had to be pulled around by tug boats. Regardless of any difficulty this provided, it was a sailor-favorite because it brought them a pretty good reward for service. Unfortunately, the unnamed ship no longer delivers ice cream to deployed sailors. The fate of the ice cream barge is unknown, but some think it may rest in a bay with other bygone ships of the era. [Source: MilitaryTimes Observation Post | Caitlin O'Brien | July 21 2021 ++]

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## **Super Glue**

### **How World War II Led To Its Invention**



Ah, super glue — the greatest-of-all-time fast-acting adhesive for all of your stuck-together needs. Chances are, you have a tube of this in that kitchen drawer, you know, the one with all the takeout menus, rubber bands and random keys to who knows what doors (you should probably clean that out by the way), because it’s an undeniable necessity. But before it occupied space in our junk drawers, and our hearts, it was accidentally developed for the U.S. military.

In 1942, companies across the country were looking to support the war effort, including the Eastman Kodak Company. One of its inventors, Dr. Harry Wesley Coover, accidentally created a new compound while attempting to make clear plastic gun sights for Allied soldiers. The compound, cyanoacrylate, was incredibly durable but way too sticky to use. (Imagine getting Krazy Glue anywhere near your eye. No thanks!) So Coover and his team abandoned the substance, not wanting to get stuck, literally or figuratively, on it.

Over a decade later, Coover, who would become known as “Mr. Super Glue,” rediscovered the adhesive compound while researching heat-resistant polymers for jet canopies. Cyanoacrylate adhesives required no heat or pressure to stick items together and hold them permanently. Thus, in 1956, the patent for “Alcohol-Catalyzed Cyanoacrylate Adhesive Compositions/Superglue” was born. Coover and the Eastman team took the patent and repackaged it for commercial sale as “Eastman 910” – which was later changed to “Super Glue.” This name stuck and still is used for a number of similarly adhesive products today. A savior for soldiers in sticky situations

Even though the glue was discovered during World War II, military doctors during the Vietnam War capitalized on the product’s adhesive properties to save lives. Many soldiers suffered injuries off-base, often bleeding out before getting proper care. Thanks to Coover’s invention, medics were able to spray super glue directly on skin to stop bleeding until the patient could make it to a hospital for treatment. “This was very powerful. That’s something I’m very proud of – the number of lives that were saved,” Coover said in an interview with the Kingsport Times-News.

At this time, the chemical was not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration because it had the potential to cause skin irritation. A derivative from the same chemical (2-octyl-cyanoacrylate) was approved in 1998 and functioned as a liquid bandage. Marketed under the names Dermabond and Traumaseal, these products pose less danger of irritation and bacterial infection and are available for civilian use. So the next time you break your mom’s favorite vase and need to glue it back together, give thanks to Mr. Super Glue for finding something that was too sticky for the Army to use. [Source: MilitaryTimes Observation Post | Caitlin O’Brien | July 30, 2021 ++]

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## Medal of Honor Awardees



## Milton Lee | Vietnam



*The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the  
MEDAL OF HONOR posthumously*

*To*

**Private 1st Class Milton Arthur Lee**

**Organization:** Army, 3d Platoon, Company B, 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry, 1st Brigade,  
101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)

**Place and date:** near Phu Bai, Thua Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam April 26, 1968

**Entered service:** Summer 1967

**Born:** Feb. 28, 1949, in Shreveport, Louisiana



Army Private 1st Class Milton Arthur Lee joined the service during the height of the Vietnam conflict when he was only 18. He didn't make it home, but his bravery and dedication saved the lives of several men in his platoon. For that, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Lee was born Feb. 28, 1949, in Shreveport, Louisiana, where his parents lived. However, for reasons that are unclear, he and his brother, Ken, grew up with his grandparents in San Antonio. Lee was a member of the Youth for Christ, Harlandale Christian Church and the Young Republicans. After graduating from Harlandale High School in 1967, Lee enlisted in the Army. He trained at Fort Campbell with the 101st Airborne Division and was eventually assigned to Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, 1st Brigade.

Lee arrived in Vietnam in January 1968 as the Tet Offensive was beginning. His unit was one that saw extensive combat during the war. On April 26, 1968, Lee was with Company C near Phu Bai, an Army and Marine Corps base near the Central Vietnam coast. He was serving as the radio telephone operator with 3rd Platoon, the company's lead element, when they were fired on by North Vietnamese soldiers hidden in well-concealed bunkers. The attack killed or wounded about 50% of the platoon, so the

remaining men quickly moved to find cover to help the wounded and reorganize. Lee, however, pushed through the heavy gunfire to reach wounded soldiers who were trapped and needed first aid.

Once his unit reorganized, they pushed forward to assault the enemy bunkers. Lee stayed in close radio contact with the company commander to relay clear, precise orders to his platoon leader. As Lee was moving forward toward the bunkers, he saw four enemy soldiers preparing to ambush his platoon's lead element, which hadn't noticed them. Without hesitating, Lee handed off his radio and charged toward the concealed enemy soldiers. Single-handedly, he overran their position, killing all of the enemy soldiers while capturing four automatic weapons and a rocket launcher. Lee pushed on to attack another enemy position despite a heavy barrage of gunfire. The 18-year-old suffered serious injuries, but he continued his attack, crawling forward so he could provide accurate cover fire for his platoon, which was able to get into place and overrun that second position. It wasn't until they were in the clear that Lee stopped firing. Soon after, he died from his injuries.

Lee's actions saved the lives of the lead element of his platoon, which couldn't have taken out those key enemy defensive positions without him. For that, he was quickly nominated and approved for the Medal of Honor. Lee's body was returned home and buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. On April 7, 1970, less than a year after his death, Lee's grandmother accepted the nation's highest honor on his behalf. President Richard M. Nixon presented it to her during a White House ceremony. Lee's name is well-known at Fort Campbell, the home of the 101st Airborne Division for which he fought. A post recreation center was dedicated to him in the early 1970s. More recently, in 2013, a center that helps soldiers transition back to civilian life was named in his honor. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | April 26, 2021 ++]

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## Medal of Honor Awardees

**Richard DeWert | Korea**



*The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the  
MEDAL OF HONOR posthumously*

*To*

**Corpsman Richard D. DeWert**

**Organization:** U.S. Navy, Hospital corpsman attached to Marine Infantry Company,  
1st Marine Division

**Place and date:** April 5, 1951 in Korea

**Entered service:** December 1948

**Born:** Nov. 17, 1931 in Taunton, Massachusetts



There are people who try to help, and then there are extraordinary people who selflessly give everything for someone else. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Richard D. DeWert, a hospital corpsman, is the latter. DeWert was born on Nov. 17, 1931, in Taunton, Massachusetts. His mother, Evelyn, raised him on her own after her husband left before he was born. DeWert came of age during World War II. He was eager to serve, so when he became old enough, he enlisted in the Navy in December 1948 when he was only 17. After basic training, he joined the Hospital Corps and worked for about a year at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, Virginia.

When he became a hospital corpsman in April 1950, he was eligible to serve alongside Marines in the field. So, when conflict on the Korean Peninsula grew inevitable, DeWert volunteered to join the 1st Medical Battalion of the 1st Marine Division, which deployed to the peninsula in August 1950. He was still in Korea in early 1951 when he received orders to transfer to the 7th Marine Regiment, a unit known for its major engagements, sustaining more casualties than just about any other Marine unit during the Korean War. The sergeant in charge of DeWert, Gonzarolo Garza, told the *Star-Gazette* of Elmira, New York, in 1984, that the corpsman was conscientious and checked on the health of his Marines every night. Garza said one day, when he complained out loud about how cold it was, DeWert, who had been within earshot, took off his sweater. "He gave it to me so I was warm," Garza remembered. "He was that kind of guy."

Some members of DeWert's platoon said they spent much of the spring of 1951 crossing swollen rivers and climbing steep mountains, pushing against the 117th Division of the Chinese Communists. It was in battle with these men that DeWert gave his life. On April 5, 1951, DeWert was part of a unit headed to meet a few other friendly units near Kunchon, just across the 38th parallel in North Korea. As they headed up a rocky hillside, they came under fire by an entrenched enemy force. The first four-man team up the hill was hit by a burst of machine gun fire coming from a trench at the top of the hill. The men were wounded and pinned down. While other members of the unit scattered to find cover, DeWert rushed to the injured men. While he was dragging a seriously wounded Marine to safety, DeWert was shot in the leg, but he refused to stop until the injured man was out of the line of fire. He then went back into the fray, where he managed to drag out yet another injured Marine.

DeWert's comrades tried to get medical help for his injuries, but he refused. Despite their objections, he went back into the line of fire to continue the rescue. As he tried to get to another injured Marine, he

was shot in the shoulder. When he noticed the Marine was dead, he set out for the fourth after hearing a cry for help. Unfortunately, his luck had run out. As DeWert crossed a field to help that fourth Marine, he was shot by the enemy, killing him instantly. The 19-year-old had been with the battalion for less than a month. "I remember him saying one day he wanted to be a doctor," Fred Frankville, a squad leader, told the Star-Gazette in 1984. "I wish I got to know him better."

On May 27, 1952, Navy Secretary Dan Kimball presented DeWert's mother with the Medal of Honor on her son's behalf. The young corpsman was the second sailor to have earned the medal for actions in the Korean campaign. DeWert was initially buried in a makeshift grave in Korea, but within a few months, his remains were reinterred at Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira, New York. It wasn't until Memorial Day of 1976 that his grave received an official marker identifying him as a Medal of Honor recipient. In 1987, at his family's request, DeWert's grave was moved to the Massachusetts National Cemetery, where he remains interred.

In honor of his bravery and sacrifice, the DeWert Naval Ambulatory Care Center in Newport, Rhode Island, and the USS DeWert were named in his honor. Several other buildings in his Massachusetts hometown also bear his name, as does a street. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | April 5, 2021 ++]

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## WWII Bomber Nose Art

[79] Lucky Eleven



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## Every Picture Tells A Story

RAF Handley Page Hampden



A nice portrait of a navigator aboard a Handley Page Hampden medium bomber of the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command early in the war. The Hampden, along with the Vickers Wellington and the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley, was a mainstay of the RAF's Bomber Command in the early months of the war. Though Hampdens were involved in the first night raid of Berlin and the first 1,000-plane raid in Cologne, they proved to be the least capable of the three bombers and increasingly unsuited for modern bomber operations. It was withdrawn from Bomber Command service in late 1942. One can imagine the frightening view afforded this fellow on a night raid over Berlin, sitting at a table in essentially a glass dome while flak bursts all around him.

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## Military History Anniversaries

01 thru 15 AUG

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 AUG**". [Source: This Day in History [www.history.com/this-day-in-history](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history) | July 2021 ++]

\* Health Care \*



## Health Care Legislation

Senior's Legislation Unveiled in the Senate/House

Last week **Senate** Democrats reached an agreement on a \$3.5 trillion legislative package that would, among other things:

- Create dental, vision and hearing benefits in the Medicare program.
- Expand long-term care benefits to help people getting home- and community-based services.
- Reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

Senate Democratic leaders plan to pass their agenda using a process known as reconciliation, a move that only requires only 51 votes to pass as opposed to the 60 votes needed to pass controversial legislation in the Senate because of its filibuster rule. That means Democrats will need all 50 of their members to vote for a final bill because total Republican opposition to the bill is expected. If that is the case it would require a tie-breaking vote by Vice President Kamila Harris to pass the bill.

One of the big sticking points is paying for the program but Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), one of the centrist lawmakers involved in the crafting of the package said the budget measure would be fully financed. Democrats previously have said they planned to pay for much of their package using tax increases on wealthy Americans and corporations. Otherwise, the plan will not raise taxes on people making less than \$400,000 per year, nor small businesses, in keeping with Biden’s prior commitments. How the bill is paid for will be critical because one of the obstacles in passing the legislation will be its price tag. With inflation having raised its ugly head the past few weeks there is real concern mounting among Congressional lawmakers over how much more spending the federal government can afford. That fear could force major changes in whatever bill might finally be passed.

The Democratic majority in the **House of Representatives** has previously introduced its own legislative package that would include vision, dental and hearing coverage in Medicare. The legislation would initially add preventive dental, hearing and vision care to Medicare’s “Part B” program and later expand the benefits to cover basic impairments. The House bill would reduce what seniors would need to pay out of pocket to access the new services. It treats dental, vision and hearing care the same as existing services covered by Medicare, with no co-pays for preventive care and no more than a 20 percent co-pay for other services — an approach that would lead to higher costs for the government.

The bill would also expand the Medicare eligibility age to those between 60 and 65. However, that part of the bill will be the hardest to pass because of its cost and given the growing concerns about inflation most observers are very skeptical that proposal will be part of the final bill. In a recent interview with Kaiser Health News, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra was asked what health care measures the Biden Administration would like to see passed. His response was very simple: “Our preference is to get it done. What’s the ‘it’? We’ll take everything we can get.”

However, he urged Congress to pass legislation to bring down drug prices, including allowing importation from such countries as Canada that have lower prices and giving Medicare the ability to negotiate prices. Since the health care legislation in the House and Senate contain provisions for coverage of dental, hearing and vision by Medicare that TSCL has long championed, we are pleased that these have been included in the proposals. However, unlike the Biden Administration, we will carefully track the legislation as it works its way through both Houses and reserve judgement until we see the final result. [Source: The Senior Citizens League | Weekly Update | July 19, 2021 ++]

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## Health Care Legislation

### Update 01: Congress Still Trying to Find a Way to Pass It

the Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress have laid out the parameters of whatever new health care legislation is passed by Congress this year. Democratic proposals because they hold the majorities in Congress (although very narrow majorities) and therefore they set the agenda just as Republicans did when they held the majorities. According to Bloomberg News, the Democrats' ambitious plans to add new benefits to Medicare and improve other health care benefits this year hinge on delivering a major drug pricing package.

Democrats in the Senate are working on passing a \$3.5 trillion legislative package that includes their main health care priorities through a budget process known as "reconciliation" that will allow them to pass it without Republican support since they don't expect any Republicans to support the legislation. The multi-trillion-dollar legislative package could include expanding Medicare and Medicaid as well as extending enhanced insurance subsidies for people on the Affordable Care Act's exchanges.

To offset at least some of the cost, lawmakers have proposed authorizing the government to negotiate with drug makers, as well as other changes to lower the price of medicines. But a failure to win big on drug pricing means Democrats won't deliver much of their promised health agenda, lawmakers say. However, their first problem is coming up with legislation that all Democrats will support, and they are not there yet. Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) has said that in discussions with colleagues he's made clear he'll judge any drug pricing legislation by what it saves consumers, not by what it could potentially buy lawmakers. "My whole focus on the question of prescription drugs has been: how do we ensure that the consumer pays lower prices," he said. "Saving the government is one thing, but that does nothing at the end of the day to help the consumer at the counter."

Menendez, who represents a state that's home to pharmaceutical giants, has voted against drug price negotiation legislation in the past but didn't rule out supporting it in the future. He recently introduced a bill with Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) to cap what seniors in Medicare pay for medicines each year. That legislation would alter how Medicare, insurers, and drug makers split the cost of paying for drugs once beneficiaries hit their annual limit, putting more of the cost onto industry. This shift is meant to encourage insurers to pressure drug makers to lower their prices overall.

CBO estimated that a similar redesign of Medicare's prescription drug benefit, where out-of-pocket costs are capped and insurers are pushed to negotiate for better deals, would save the government \$3.39 billion. Meanwhile Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said he wants to pass a government negotiation bill that includes a slate of other drug pricing items. His job this summer is to win over his colleagues and find common ground. "I'm going to spend day after day this summer working on these discussions," Wyden said. [Source: TSCL Weekly Update | July 24, 2021 ++]

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## TRICARE Pharmacy

### Out-Of-Stocks Issue

MOAA recognizes one of the most valuable aspects of your military health care benefit is the TRICARE pharmacy program, so protecting the pharmacy benefit is a top priority. Our recent advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill and with the Defense Health Agency (DHA) have focused on securing an appeals process for TRICARE Tier 4 or non-covered drugs.

MOAA also works regularly with Express Scripts, the pharmacy benefits manager for TRICARE, to address beneficiary issues and seek program improvements. One issue we have been busy working is TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery out-of-stocks: Mail order program out-of-stocks mean higher copays and a hassle for beneficiaries who are forced to transfer their out-of-stock prescriptions to a retail pharmacy, at least temporarily, to get their medications filled.

Why are some medications out-of-stock for mail order yet still available at retail outlets? Military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacies and the TRICARE home delivery program obtain medications via a contract administered by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). These medications must meet sourcing requirements outlined in federal law. The DLA contract also provides DoD with prescription drugs at favorable pricing, but it sometimes encounters supply problems that retail pharmacies don't experience. You can learn more about the procurement process for MTF pharmacies/the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy program at <https://militaryrx.express-scripts.com/news/did-you-know-medication-stock-information>.

Based on feedback from MOAA members and other TRICARE beneficiaries frustrated with mail order program out-of-stocks, Express Scripts, DHA, and DLA have worked together to improve out-of-stock rates. Since MOAA began working with Express Scripts on this issue, the TRICARE mail order prescription out-of-stock rate has been reduced by two-thirds. This has been reflected in far fewer calls to MOAA's Member Service Center about prescription out-of-stocks. MOAA has also taken this issue to the Hill – it would require legislation to reduce TRICARE retail pharmacy copays for mail order prescriptions that are out-of-stock, and we are pursuing this fix. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | July 15, 2021 ++]

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## Coronavirus Vaccine Concerns

### Update 06: What to Know About Blood Clots, Anaphylaxis and Other Vaccine Fears



Covid vaccines are designed to prevent a disease that has so far killed nearly 4 million people worldwide. No pharmaceutical, however, is completely benign. The goal is to ensure the benefits outweigh the risks. So far, the vaccines have been connected to a relatively small number of cases of heart inflammation, blood clots, a rare immune-system disorder and serious, but treatable allergic reactions called anaphylaxis. A concern that vaccinations could be linked to temporary facial paralysis has not proven justified.

#### 1. What happened with the cases of heart inflammation?



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 23 JUN that about 1,200 cases of heart inflammation had been reported in people, mostly young men and adolescents, who received vaccines developed by the Pfizer-BioNTech partnership and Moderna. More than 130 million Americans have been fully vaccinated with these shots, which use an innovative technology called messenger RNA that temporarily turns the body's cells into tiny vaccine-making factories. Weeks before, Israeli health officials said they'd found a probable link between the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and cases of heart inflammation in young men. In the U.S., top health officials, regulators and doctors said that the risk potentially posed by shots is extremely low, and that Covid poses a greater threat to people's health. Officials said for the young people who do suffer the side effect, most cases are mild and that individuals often recover on their own with minimal treatment.

## **2. What about the blood clots?**

Very rare reports of an unusual clotting syndrome have been associated especially with two vaccines, one from Johnson & Johnson and another from AstraZeneca, although some cases have been seen after administration of the shot from Pfizer-BioNTech. The syndrome, seen more often in young people, is atypical because it occurs alongside low levels of blood platelets -- the key element in formation of blood clots. Several countries, mainly in Europe, suspended use of the AstraZeneca vaccine or restricted its administration in younger people. U.K. health authorities advised that those younger than 30 be offered an alternative vaccine, if available. In the U.S., health officials paused use of the J&J vaccine to assess the side effect and raise doctors' awareness of how to recognize and treat it. Use of the vaccine resumed in April, and the U.K. authorized it in May.

## **3. What's the risk?**

Regulators in the U.K. put the overall risk of the clots at about 4 in a million people who receive the vaccine. In the U.S., officials calculated it at 7 per 1 million vaccinations with the J&J shot among women ages 18 through 49. People have died. The U.K., as of June 16, reported 389 cases, 68 of which were fatal, following vaccination with the AstraZeneca shot, and 12 cases, including one fatality, following use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. In the U.S., there were three deaths through 21 APR; Australia had reported one as of 27 MAY, and Norway reported seven as of 22 JUN..

## **4. What are signs to watch for?**

People who have received the shots two to four weeks earlier should watch for symptoms that may prefigure the onset of clotting. These include shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, persistent belly pain, severe headaches, blurred vision and tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the vaccine injection site.

## **5. What's causing the clots?**

U.K. health officials described the syndrome as similar to a rare side effect of treatment with heparin, an anticoagulant, in which the body forms antibodies against platelets. How or why the vaccine might be involved in such a process is still under investigation. Researchers are looking at whether the side effect is related to a harmless version of an adenovirus, a cold virus, that's included in both the J&J and AstraZeneca shots, although that wouldn't explain the cases after use of the Pfizer-BioNTech shot. The adenovirus delivers a gene that instructs cells to make the spike protein that gives the coronavirus that causes Covid its crown-like appearance. This, in turn, stimulates the body to mount immune responses to the virus, so that it is primed for a fight if it ever encounters the real thing. Russia's Sputnik V vaccine and another from China's CanSino Biologics also use an adenovirus platform.

## **6. What about the allergic reactions?**

The body fights foreign invaders through a variety of mechanisms that include making protective proteins called antibodies, releasing toxins that kill microbes, and marshaling guardian cells to battle the infection. As in any conflict, sometimes the effort to repel an infection can itself be damaging. In rare cases, it can produce runaway inflammation and swelling of tissues in a serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. As much as 5% of the U.S. population has had such a reaction in response to something, including drugs, foods and insect stings. It can be fatal if, for example, the person's airway swells shut, though deaths are rare.

## **7. How often have Covid vaccines triggered cases?**

In the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it occurs in just 2 to 5 people for every million receiving a Covid vaccine. The risk of contracting Covid outweighs that posed by the vaccines, officials and clinicians say. Anaphylaxis is a known risk of vaccination. Such reactions occur about 1.3 times per million doses of flu vaccine administered. With other vaccines they have been seen at rates of 12 to 25 per million doses, though the studies were small. When anaphylaxis occurs, it is almost always within half an hour of administering the vaccine, according to the CDC.

## **8. What's being done to manage the risk?**

The U.K. and U.S. have advised people who have allergies to any component of a Covid vaccine not to receive it. Anaphylaxis can be quickly countered with antihistamines in tandem with adrenaline injectors like Mylan's Epi-Pen that slow or halt immune reactions, and health workers giving the vaccine are keeping such items at the ready. These treatments don't cancel out the beneficial effects of vaccines. In the U.S., health workers are observing everyone who receives the vaccine for at least 15 minutes post-injection to watch for signs of a reaction; those with a worrying history of allergic reaction are monitored for twice as long. People who have had reactions to a first dose of vaccine shouldn't receive a second, according to the CDC.

## **9. Do we know what in the shots is causing anaphylactic reactions?**

That isn't clear. Two leading candidates are polyethylene glycol -- a chemical found in many foods, cosmetics and medications -- and lipid nanoparticles that encapsulate the messenger RNA in the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, according to Eric Topol, a clinical trials expert and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute. Polyethylene glycol has been previously linked to a handful of anaphylaxis cases. Once a cause has been narrowed down, it may be possible to make Covid vaccines even safer than they are now, Topol said.

## **10. What about the immune system disorder?**

The fact sheet for J&J's vaccine was revised in July to warn of the risk of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a rare condition in which the immune system attacks the nerves, after reports of 100 cases. The CDC said they were seen mostly in men over the age of 50 about two weeks after being immunized. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said between 3,000 and 6,000 people a year develop the disorder, which can result in muscle weakness or paralysis, and most people fully recover from it.

## **11. What about temporary facial paralysis?**

In studies testing the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech inoculations, more people developed Bell's palsy, an episode of muscle weakness or paralysis that typically affects just one side of the face, after receiving vaccine doses than placebo shots. The imbalance turned out not to be substantiated, however, based on the massive safety database the CDC has collected on millions of people vaccinated since the drugs were

authorized for the general public. Also, the drugs regulator in the U.K., where the Pfizer-BioNTech formulation is in use, noted that as of 16 JUN, the number of reports of Bell's palsy among those vaccinated does not suggest an increased risk.

### **12. What's known about other deaths after vaccinations?**

With roughly 43 million Covid shots administered each day, it's inevitable that some people will die soon after they receive immunizations; the question is, did the vaccine cause it? Determining that can be very difficult, particularly in cases where the deceased had one or more underlying illness, was aged, frail or all three. In the U.S. and the U.K., apart from fatalities from the clotting syndrome, authorities have reported that the evidence does not suggest that vaccines played a role in post-vaccination deaths.

In Norway, an expert group of geriatric specialists studied the first 100 deaths among nursing home residents following receipt of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and concluded that a causal link to the inoculation was "likely," though not certain, in ten cases. The group recommended that in cases where life expectancy is short, the risks and benefits of vaccination should be carefully assessed. It suggested that the risk of death from vaccine reactions could be reduced using measures such as good hydration.

### **13. Have other new vaccines had safety issues?**

Before regulatory authorities authorize a new vaccine, it must be tested both for safety and efficacy in thousands of human volunteers. Still, there have been cases where safety issues have arisen after authorization. European regulators in 2011 recommended restricting the use of a new swine-flu vaccine from GlaxoSmithKline after it was linked to rare cases of narcolepsy. A vaccine against Lyme disease developed by the same company, then called SmithKline Beecham, was pulled in 2002 amid concerns about links to arthritis.

Some vaccines have been shown to do the opposite of what they're designed to do by inducing unwanted immune responses. In recent years, Sanofi's vaccine against dengue, which a person can get multiple times, was found to cause more severe disease in those who become infected for the first time after getting the inoculation. Documented reports of unexpected side effects from novel vaccines are different from the persistent and incorrect belief that well-established vaccines against childhood diseases carry significant risks.

[Source: Jewish World Review | John Lauerman & Jason Gal | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## **U.S. Embassy Manila**

### **Health Alert: Quarantine Update, Aug 1-15, 2021**

The Government of the Philippines recently announced quarantine classifications for the month of August. Other quarantine classifications are still in effect through July 31, 2021.

Following the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-EID) to prevent the spread of the more infectious Delta coronavirus variant, Metro Manila will be placed

under the most restrictive enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) from August 6 to 20. From July 30 to August 5, the heightened restrictions for NCR are more stringent compared to the GCQ with heightened restrictions of other areas.

The Philippine government's travel ban on travelers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand is extended through August 15, 2021.

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

**Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) July 21-August 7, 2021**

- Visayas - Region VI: Iloilo Province and Iloilo City
- Mindanao - Region X: Cagayan de Oro and City of Gingoog, Misamis Oriental

**Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) August 6-20, 2021**

- NCR – Metro Manila

**Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) beginning July 23 until further notice**

- Luzon - Ilocos Norte: City of Batac and the towns of Bangui, Dingras, Dumalneg, Marcos, Pagudpud, Paoay, Pasuquin and Solsona

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

- Luzon – Region III: Bataan
- Mindanao – Region X: Cagayan de Oro City; Region XI: Davao Occidental; and Region XIII (CARAGA): Butuan City

**Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) August 1-15, 2021**

- Luzon - Region I: Ilocos Norte; Region III: Bataan
- Visayas – Region VII: Cebu Province, Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, and Mandaue

**General Community Quarantine (GCQ) with heightened restrictions through July 31, 2021**

- Luzon – Region I: Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte; Region II: Cagayan; Region IV-A: Laguna and Lucena City; Region V: Naga City
- Visayas – Region VII: Negros Oriental;
- Mindanao – Region IX: Zamboanga Del Sur; Region XI: Davao City, Davao De Oro and Davao Del Norte

**General Community Quarantine (GCQ) with additional heightened restrictions July 30-August 5, 2021**

- NCR – Metro Manila

**General Community Quarantine (GCQ) with heightened restrictions August 1-15, 2021**

- Luzon - Region I: Ilocos Sur; Region II: Cagayan; Region III: Bulacan; Region IV-A: Lucena City, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal; Region V: Naga City

- Visayas - Region VI: Aklan, Bacolod City, Capiz; Region VII: Negros Oriental
- Mindanao - Region IX: Zamboanga del Sur; Region X: Misamis Oriental; Region XI: Davao City, Davao del Norte, Davao de Oro, Davao Occidental; and Region XIII: Butuan City General

#### **Community Quarantine (GCQ) through July 31, 2021**

- Luzon – Cordillera Administrative Region: Baguio City and Apayao; Region II: Santiago City, Quirino, Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya; Region III: Bulacan; Region IV-A: Cavite, Rizal, Batangas and Quezon; Region IV-B: Puerto Princesa
- Visayas – Region VI: Guimaras and Negros Occidental
- Mindanao – Region IX: Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga City and Zamboanga Del Norte; Region XI: Davao Oriental and Davao Del Sur; Region XII: Gen. Santos City, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, Cotabato and South Cotabato; Region XIII (CARAGA): Agusan Del Norte, Agusan Del Sur, Surigao Del Norte; Surigao Del Sur, and Dinagat Islands; and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM): Cotabato City

#### **General Community Quarantine (GCQ) August 1-31, 2021**

- Luzon - Cordillera Administrative Region: Baguio City, Apayao; Region II: City of Santiago, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino; Region IV-A: Quezon, Batangas; Region IV-B: Puerto Princesa
- Visayas - Region VI: Guimaras, Negros Occidental
- Mindanao - Region IX: Zamboanga Sibugay, City of Zamboanga, Zamboanga del Norte; Region XI: Davao Oriental, and Davao del Sur; Region XII: General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, North Cotabato, South Cotabato; Region XIII: Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Sur; and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao: Cotabato City

#### **All other areas are under Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) through August 31, 2021.**

The above quarantine classifications are subject to change, according to the Government of the Philippines.

#### **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 [Philippines' 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](mailto: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 | July 30, 2021 ++]

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## Junk Food

### The 20 Least Unhealthy



Everyone craves junk food. Sometimes you go all in and eat a pint of ice cream, even when you know you shouldn't. However, there are snacks and even fast-food meals that are less unhealthy than most options out there; you just have to know which to choose. Next time you're hankering for munchies — or to celebrate National Junk Food Day, on July 21, 2020 — grab one of these not-so-junky foods. Heck, you might even try your hand at making healthier snacks at home.

#### **Tortilla Chips**

Tortilla chips tend to have less fat and calories per ounce than potato chips. That includes Doritos, which have 140 calories and 8 grams of fat per serving (about 11 chips). So next time you need a salty, crunchy snack, opt for the tortilla chips. (If you're feeling ambitious, tortilla chips and other snacks can be made at home.)

#### **Salsa**

Chips and salsa have become ubiquitous since the 1980s. Salsa is full of vegetables, making it a healthier dip than its creamy counterparts. Plus, you'll get a huge boost of lycopene, an antioxidant, from the tomatoes.

#### **Beef Jerky**

A high-protein snack will help you feel full for a long time compared to foods full of simple carbohydrates. Beef jerky is made by trimming as much fat from the meat as possible, seasoning it, then drying it. It's about as packed full of protein as you can get. If sodium is a concern for you, stick to the recommended serving.

#### **Pretzel M&M's**

When you're staring at the break room vending machine at 3 p.m. on a Tuesday, you can do a lot worse than to choose Pretzel M&M's. That salty crunch is always satisfying, and pretzels are much lower in fat and calories than chocolate, making the entire bag only 150 calories. Regular milk chocolate M&M's check in at 240 calories.

#### **Pretzels**

Crunchy pretzels are well-known for being a low-fat, salty snack. There are many flavored versions to choose from now, like honey-mustard or spicy buffalo wing, which run about 140 calories per serving, depending on the variety.

### **Popsicles**

While fruit popsicles have sugar, they generally have no fat. They also come prepackaged in single servings, so you're less likely to eat more than the recommended amount. Popsicle brand ice pops have only 40 calories apiece and come in many flavors. Or you can save money and make your own.

### **Wendy's Chicken Nuggets**

A 4-piece Wendy's chicken nugget order is only 170 calories with 9 grams of protein and may satisfy just as well as a higher calorie chicken sandwich. Stick to non-creamy dipping sauces like barbecue or sweet and sour, which add only 45 to 50 calories.

### **Dark Chocolate**

When that chocolate craving hits, reach for dark chocolate. It's got less sugar than milk chocolate, and it's high in iron and fiber. It also contains polyphenols, catechins, and flavanols, which all act as antioxidants. If you treat yourself to a fancy, high quality dark chocolate bar — with at least 65% cacao — you'll be more inclined to savor it slowly instead of eating it in one sitting.

### **Popcorn**

This is a whole grain, and it's bulky so you'll feel like you're eating more than you really are. Buy popcorn kernels in bulk and pop it yourself on the stove. You'll control how much butter or oil goes in it, plus you can experiment with your favorite seasonings. Chili powder, Parmesan cheese, and cinnamon sugar all make excellent toppings.

### **Pork Rinds**

Yes, pork rinds are deep fried, but compared to potato chips, they're practically health food, depending on your dietary needs. There's little to no carbohydrates in them, and they're full of protein.

### **Pretzels**

Crunchy pretzels are well-known for being a low-fat, salty snack. There are many flavored versions to choose from now, like honey-mustard or spicy buffalo wing, which run about 140 calories per serving, depending on the variety.

### **McDonald's Egg McMuffin**

If you're on the go and need a quick drive-thru meal, it's hard to beat McDonald's Egg McMuffin, especially now that it's available all day. The egg is freshly cooked, the Canadian bacon slice is lean, and the muffin is always toasty. It's 300 calories, but it's packed with 17 grams of protein.

freestar

### **Dove Bar Raspberry Sorbet**

Sorbet is always a good option when it comes to frozen treats. Dove makes a raspberry sorbet bar covered in dark chocolate that has only 150 calories. It never hurts to have a box in the freezer when a dessert craving hits.

### **Angel Food Cake**

Ideal for entertaining, angel food cake is an impressive dessert. There also happens to be no fat in it, since it's made primarily with whipped egg whites. Top a slice with a sauce made from fresh berries, and you won't even miss that 3-layer cake with ice cream.

### **Taco Bell Crunchy Taco**

A crunchy beef taco from Taco Bell has 170 calories and is a substantial snack. Lower the calorie count even more by making it "fresco style." That will remove the cheese and add fresh pico de gallo, bringing the calories down to 140 and the fat to 7 grams from 9 grams. Not near a Taco Bell? There are plenty of other places to grab a taco across the country.

### **Lifesavers Candy**

It's never a bad idea to keep some hard candy like Lifesavers around. Since you suck on them, at least for a little while, they last longer, and you tend to eat less than candy you chew immediately and swallow. There are only 60 calories in four candies, which can last a long time, and they are available virtually everywhere, including many specialty shops.

### **Sweet Potato Fries**

If there's an option to choose sweet potato in place of regular white potato, always go for it, especially in french fries. You'll likely get just as many carbs and calories, but sweet potatoes have more fiber and a massive amount of vitamin A.

### **Oatmeal Cookies**

If you must have a cookie, an oatmeal cookie is the best bet for healthfulness. Whole grain oats contain lots of fiber and minerals like calcium and iron. When dried fruit or nuts are added, as they often are, the vitamin, fiber, and protein counts go up even more.

### **Cheese**

Snacking on an ounce or two of cheese will give you a boost of calcium and protein. A little bit of a hard, aged cheese like sharp cheddar or Parmesan will go a long way. Pair cheese with fruit or nuts for extra vitamins.

### **Fig Newtons**

If you're craving something sweet, Fig Newtons are a classic treat. There are 110 calories in two cookies, and because they're full of soft fruit, two cookies are quite filling. They're also made with whole grain flour, which is always a plus.

### **Zucchini Bread**

Instead of donuts for breakfast, reach for zucchini bread. The squash is a good source of vitamins C and B-6, as well as potassium. Look for recipes that use buttermilk or yogurt for moisture instead of oil to keep the amount of fat under control.

[Source: Cheapism | Lacey Muszynski | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## **Constipation**

### **Update 01: Home Remedies for Those with Less Than 3 Bowel Movements a Week**



If a person is having fewer than three bowel movements per week, they have constipation. Only one movement per week is severe constipation. This ailment causes discomfort and sometimes pain while going to the bathroom. Anyone experiencing constipation that does not resolve should see a doctor. Prescription medications exist, but a doctor may recommend trying some of the following home remedies.

### **1. Water**

Stay hydrated throughout the day to optimize digestion and muscle function. Drinking enough water keeps the body and all the systems that contribute to bowel movements healthy and hydrated. Increasing fluid intake can help resolve constipation.

### **2. Prunes**

People have long turned to prunes and prune juice to relieve constipation. Prunes are full of fiber and sorbitol, a carbohydrate digested slowly by the body. As it moves through the intestines, prunes collect water, helping to soften fecal matter. Drinking a glass of prune juice in the morning and then again at night or including a few prunes in one's daily diet can maintain bowel regularity. Eating too many, however, can cause other digestive issues, such as gas and diarrhea

### **3. Coffee**

Caffeine is a natural stimulant for the digestive system, so enjoying a morning coffee can help prompt a bowel movement. However, coffee is also a diuretic and can increase urination, which removes water that would help soften stools. While a cup or two of coffee each day can ease constipation, any more could exacerbate the issue.

### **4. Oils and Gels**

Oil stimulates the digestive system and lines the walls of the intestine for smoother bowel movements. Olive oil taken on an empty stomach can help constipation. Mixing a teaspoon of flaxseed oil or aloe vera gel into orange juice with pulp (for extra fiber) can also encourage this process. Two tablespoons of oil in the morning and again later in the day can ensure continued relief.

### **5. Probiotics**

Probiotics encourage a healthy bowel and good gut flora, which encourages regular bowel movements. Found in yogurt and kefir, probiotics contain good bacteria that can help prevent constipation. A person already experiencing this ailment can try eating more yogurt or turn to a probiotic supplement



### **6. Baking Soda**

Another home remedy for constipation is baking soda mixed with water. Drinking the mixture neutralizes stomach acid, helping things pass through the gut more easily. Baking soda is made up of bicarbonate, which relieves pain and pressure and encourages the release of air. One teaspoon of baking soda in a quarter cup of warm water can also ease heartburn and indigestion. Note that, in rare cases, ingesting baking soda can have side effects. It also contains a lot of sodium and should be avoided by people on a low-sodium diet.

### **7. Magnesium**

Eating magnesium-rich foods facilitates the movement of food through the digestive tract by relaxing the muscles and drawing water into the intestines. Green leafy vegetables are a great source of magnesium, and so are beans, lentils, avocados, bananas, seeds, nuts, and oily fish, such as mackerel. Like caffeine, too much magnesium can have an opposite effect, but moderate amounts may help

### **8. Fiber**

Fiber helps keep digestion regular so consistent consumption of fiber-rich foods helps prevent and ease constipation. Refined or artificial foods are harder to process than natural ones, in part because they generally contain less fiber. Replacing them with beans, whole grains, and fruits such as plums, pears, apples, and apricots, and berries can improve digestion.

### **9. Epsom Salt**

Epsom salt or magnesium sulfate helps fight constipation. Two teaspoons of Epsom salts mixed with one cup of water or juice typically causes a bowel movement within four hours. The salt draws the water from its surroundings and makes stools softer, while the magnesium helps the bowel muscles contract.

### **10. Exercise**

Gentle exercises can retrain the way the body processes food. Physical activity benefits the muscles and joints and stimulates the colon, encouraging the bowels to start moving again. Ideally, avoid eating any significant amount of food an hour before or after a workout.

### **11. Herbal Laxatives with Glycosides**

Herbal laxatives with glycosides stimulate colon activity and encourage fluid secretion, which can ease constipation. Glycosides send more electrolytes into the colon to assist digestive system function. [After an oral dose](#), a bowel movement usually occurs within six to eight hours. These natural laxatives come from plants such as ascaris, aloe, frangula, and senna and are available over the counter at pharmacies and health stores. It is best to talk to a doctor before trying this herbal remedy. A common side effect is abdominal cramping.

### **12. Low-FODMAP Diet**

The low-FODMAP diet is low in fermentable carbs that often contribute to stomach pain and digestive problems. Choosing low-FODMAP foods with high dietary fiber can curb constipation and prompt healthy, frequent bowel movements. Fresh fish, seafood, rice, wheat pasta, eggs, and yogurt fall into this category. Many fruits and vegetables make the list, too; broccoli, corn, sweet potatoes, blueberries, grapes, and oranges are some of the healthy options to consider for reducing constipation.

### **13. Avoid Dairy**

Studies show an allergy to cow's milk can lead to chronic constipation, particularly in children. Cheese and milk also commonly cause digestive system issues. People with lactose intolerance benefit from reducing their dairy intake, as can those with regular constipation. It may not be necessary to completely stop eating dairy, as there are valuable nutrients and probiotics in cheese and yogurt. People who eat multiple servings of dairy a day can try cutting back until symptoms stop.

### **14. Enemas and Suppositories**

Enemas and suppositories encourage easier bowel movements. Homemade enemas are water-based and may contain sodium-phosphate, milk sugars, molasses, or soap to push fluid into the digestive tract and soften the stool. Health care professionals often use enemas made of a dilute saline solution. Suppositories have a similar result but work by irritating the intestine, causing it to contract and expel the stool. Some

suppositories promote salt and water secretion to free up blocked stool, as well. Again, it is important to ask a doctor about the safety of these options for your constitution before trying them

## 15. Ginger Tea

Ginger tea is a natural wonder; the warm beverage boosts immunity, reduces stress, and battles respiratory infections while also protecting the digestive system. Ginger's anti-inflammatory effects and natural warming quality are beneficial for digestive health. A dose of ginger also stimulates the release of gastric and pancreatic enzymes that speed up stomach emptying. Doctors recommend drinking ginger tea two or three times a day if the bowels have been sluggish.

[Source: <https://factly.com/ailments/constipation/10-home-remedies-for-constipation/15> | Jennifer Trimbee | March 1, 2021 ++]

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## Virtual Care

### How Telehealth Costs, Offerings Compare: CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Amazon

From therapy to a sprained ankle, retail giants are offering on-demand virtual care for as little as \$15 without insurance. Here is how the cost, accessibility and offerings compare at CVS, Walgreens, and Amazon:

#### 1. CVS

- Cost: \$59 without insurance
- Accessibility: 24/7
- Offerings: Can seek patients for health conditions such as skin conditions, flu, minor injuries such as a sprained ankle and more.

#### 2. Walgreens

- Cost: \$79 without insurance
- Accessibility: Patients can see a healthcare provider within minutes.
- Offerings: Can assist patients with health concerns such as back pain, eye irritation, back pain and more.

#### 3. Walmart

- Cost: \$15 without insurance
- Accessibility: 24/7
- Offerings: Can assist patients with health conditions, such as high blood pressure, anxiety, sinus infections and more.

#### 4. Amazon

- Cost: Only available to patients covered by Amazon Care through their employer.
- Accessibility: 24/7

[Source: Becker's Hospital Review | Hannah Mitchell | July 23, 2021 ++]

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## TRICARE Recall Alert

### FDA Announces Recall of Certain Sleep and Respiratory Devices

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has directed Philips Respironics to recall millions of sleep and respiratory devices following concerns that foam in the devices, which is used to reduce sound and vibration, may break into particles and enter the air hose of the device and be inhaled by the user. In response, the Military Health System (MHS) has notified all TRICARE-authorized [durable medical equipment](#) providers of the recall. And it's asking prescribing physicians to help notify patients of the recall and determine if they were issued a medical device on the Philips recall list.

#### Which devices does the recall affect?

The recall affects [certain medical devices](#) that were produced before April 26, 2021. They include:

- Philips Constant Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) devices
- Bi-Level Airway Pressure (BiPAP) devices

Health care providers often prescribe these devices for home use to treat sleep apnea. The recall also includes some ventilators. However, military hospitals and clinics have begun taking separate actions to identify and defer use of the recalled ventilators.

#### What are the possible health risks of the CPAP and BiPAP devices?

The [sound-reducing foam](#) found in these medical devices may break into potentially harmful particles. These particles may enter the device's air hose and cause the user to inhale them. If that happens, the user could experience mild to severe symptoms. These symptoms could be an inflammatory response, headache, irritation in the eyes or nose, respiratory issues, or possible toxic effects. The FDA is closely monitoring reports of adverse health effects. To date, there have been a small number of symptomatic complaints. But there have been no reports of death as a result of these issues.

#### What should you do if you own a recalled device?

You should check the [Philips Respironics patient portal](#) or call 1-877-907-7508 to see if your device is on the recall list. If so, make sure you register your device on the patient portal. Philips Respironics is working towards a solution to replace or repair all affected BiPAP or CPAP devices. Keep in mind, there could be some time before you receive a new device. So, it's important to consider the risks and benefits of continued use of your current device while you wait. Be sure to talk to your provider if you have any concerns about continuing use of your device. Your provider can determine if the benefit of using the device outweighs the risk outlined in the recall.

If you continue to use your Philips device, the MHS recommends that you use it as prescribed. You should also clean it as described in the manufacturer's owner's manual. Don't use products that contain ozone or ultra-violet light to clean, sanitize, or disinfect your device.

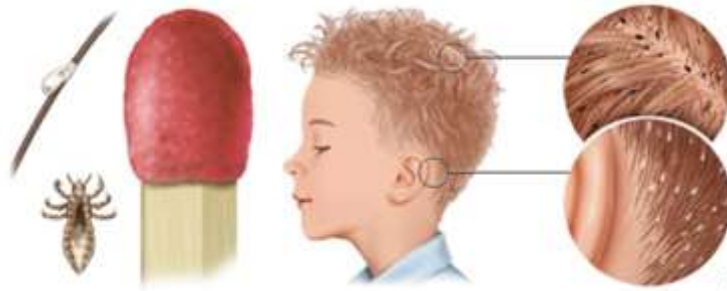
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Do you have more questions about the recall? If so, be sure to contact the provider you received the device from. Philips Respironics is working to replace or repair affected devices. Go to the [FDA website](#) or [Philips Respironics website](#) to learn more. [Source: TRICARE Communication | July 23, 2021 ++]

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## Head Lice

### Update 01: How to Deal with Them



Adult louse and nit (left) and head lice and nits in hair (right)

Head lice are tiny parasites that live in our hair and feed on blood from our scalp. Their bites can itch and some people find them quite repulsive. But they're fairly harmless otherwise, and don't carry any diseases. Their eggs (also known as nits) are stuck to the roots of the hair, close to the scalp. The next generation hatches within about one week. Head lice multiply and spread quickly. They are often unwelcome visitors at day care centers, kindergartens and schools. Various treatments can get rid of them quickly. They aren't always immediately noticeable. They may cause the following symptoms, though:

- Tingling on your scalp or the feeling that something is moving in your hair
- Itching where the lice have bitten, and sore areas of skin from scratching
- Trouble sleeping due to the itching because lice are nocturnal (active at night)

Head lice are most common in children between the ages of 3 and 12 years. It is quite common for there to be outbreaks at kindergartens, day care centers and schools. The lice typically appear in the first few months following the summer break – that is, late summer and early fall. They nearly always spread through direct body contact, for instance when children huddle together while playing or snuggling. Although some people think head lice are a sign of uncleanliness, the lice don't care whether your hair is clean or dirty. They feed on blood. So anyone can get head lice. Girls are somewhat more likely to be affected than boys. It is thought that girls do more activities with their heads close together than boys do. Hair length doesn't have any effect on your risk of getting head lice – but it's more difficult to find the parasites in long, thick and curly hair.

When there's a head lice outbreak at a day care center or school, parents are often asked to carefully check their child's hair for lice using a special lice comb. There is no need to go to the doctor. Lice combs are available at pharmacies, drugstores or medical supply stores. It is best to first wet the hair and then carefully comb it strand by strand from the roots to the tips of the hair, at least twice. It is easier to find the lice if you wipe the comb on a sheet of paper towel or a cloth after each strand of hair. Full-grown head lice are 2 to 3 mm long. Their bodies are flat, wingless and grayish-brown. Unlike fleas, lice can't jump. But their six legs give them the ability to hold on tight to human hair and crawl along it. Because head lice are so small, it's difficult to see them in thicker areas of hair. A magnifying glass can help you find smaller lice.

Head lice usually lay their eggs (nits) on the nape of the neck or behind the ears. These stick firmly to your hair, usually close to the scalp (less than one centimeter away). Other small objects found in hair, like dandruff or scabs, can be mistaken for lice. But dandruff and other small, loose objects don't stick to the hair and will fall out when shaken. There is no surefire way to prevent head lice. But there are some

things you can do to stop head lice from spreading if a child has them. The lice are almost always passed on to other children through direct head-to-head contact.

Because head lice need to feed on blood every 2 to 4 hours, they generally can't survive very long away from the scalp. Lice that fall off your head will dry out and die within a few hours. The eggs also have to be close to the scalp because they need warm temperatures to be able to hatch into nymphs. So you are unlikely to get lice through contact with objects. It can't be ruled out completely, though – if you want to be on the safe side, you can make sure that children don't share things like hats, scarves or hairbrushes. Pets don't need to be treated: Head lice only live on humans, not on animals. It's also not necessary to disinfect your home or to use any insecticides. You can also:

- Thoroughly clean combs, brushes and hair accessories with hot water and soap and set them aside for a few days,
- Wash used bedding, sleeping bags, clothing and towels at 60 degrees celsius (140 degrees fahrenheit) or put them in the dryer,
- Put clothing and objects like stuffed animals that can't be washed at over 60 degrees celsius in a sealed plastic bag for three days.

Treatment is needed only if you find live lice or eggs that are capable of living. Then it's important to act quickly, though, to stop them from spreading further. Treatments for head lice include:

- Insecticide-based treatments
- Silicone-based products (dimeticone or dimethicone)
- Plant-based treatments (for example coconut oil) are also available. There's a lack of good research on the effectiveness of these kinds of treatments, and on that of home remedies such as olive oil or mayonnaise.

Head lice have now built up a resistance to some insecticides, so these products are less effective than they used to be. Treatments with silicone oil are becoming more popular. They don't contain insecticides, so there are no problems related to resistance. Silicone-based treatments cover the lice with a layer of oil, causing them to suffocate. Most of these treatments need to be re-applied after about 7 to 10 days. To find out exactly how to use the product you have, you can read the package insert. Combing out the hair with a lice comb is not enough when used as the only treatment. But it's important to use the comb in order to check whether the treatment has been successful. Experts recommend re-combing the hair every three days for at least two weeks after applying a head lice treatment.

If your child still has a few nits after being treated for head lice, but you have not found any lice for a while, the parasites are probably gone. Nits or parts of nits may stick to hair for weeks after having head lice. You can tell roughly how old the nits are based on their distance from the scalp. Hair grows at a rate of about one centimeter per month. So any nits that are more than one centimeter away from the scalp are probably older eggs that won't live. A lot of people still think that lice prefer dirty hair – so it can be uncomfortable or embarrassing for parents and children. But in fact there is no link between personal hygiene and head lice.

Because head lice can spread so quickly, the parents or guardians of a child with head lice are required by law to tell public institutions like the kindergarten or school that their child has head lice. You may feel a bit awkward about calling, but there's no reason to be embarrassed. Head lice are a frequent problem at most day care centers and schools. It's also important to tell family members and friends who recently had contact with the child.

Normally a child who has been given a treatment proven to be effective may return to kindergarten or school the next day. You can ask a pediatrician or pharmacist about which products qualify and which are paid for by statutory health insurers. Many institutions only ask for a statement from the parents confirming that the child has been treated. Others ask to see a note from the doctor. [Source: <https://www.informedhealth.org/head-lice.html> | July 29, 2021 ++]

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## **Covid-19 Fraud & Abuse**

**July 16 thru 31, 2021**

**San Diego, CA – Jennings Ryan Staley**, a physician who attempted to profit from the pandemic by marketing a “miracle cure” for COVID-19, pleaded guilty in federal court today, admitting that he tried to smuggle hydroxychloroquine into the United States to sell in his coronavirus “treatment kits.” Staley, the former operator of Skinny Beach Med Spas in and around San Diego, also admitted in his plea agreement that he abused his position of trust as a physician in making the extreme claims, and that he lied to the FBI when confronted about it.

The doctor pleaded guilty to one count of importation contrary to law, admitting that he worked with a Chinese supplier to try to smuggle into the United States a barrel that he believed contained over 26 pounds of hydroxychloroquine powder by mislabeling it as “yam extract.” Staley admitted that he intended to sell the hydroxychloroquine powder in capsules as part of his 2020 business venture selling the COVID-19 “treatment kits.” In his plea agreement, Staley also admitted that he wrote a prescription for hydroxychloroquine for one of his employees and then misused the employee’s name and personal identifying information and answered questions as though he were the employee to fill the prescription, all without the employee’s knowledge or consent. Staley agreed that he engaged in this conduct in order to obtain more of the drug for his enterprise.

In late March and early April 2020, Staley marketed and sold his treatment kits to Skinny Beach customers. According to the plea agreement, he described his products—which included hydroxychloroquine—as a “one hundred percent” cure, a “magic bullet,” an “amazing weapon,” and “almost too good to be true,” and stated that the products would provide at least six weeks of immunity. Staley admitted that these statements were material to his potential customers, and that as a doctor he abused a position of public trust. An undercover agent purchased six of Staley’s treatment packs for \$4,000.

Staley also admitted that he willfully impeded and sought to obstruct the federal investigation into his conduct by lying to federal agents. Specifically, he falsely denied ever claiming that his treatment packages were a “one hundred percent effective cure,” adding “that would be foolish.” Staley likewise falsely claimed that his medical practice would “absolutely” get all relevant information about each family member when sending out medications for a family treatment pack, when just a week earlier, he had dispensed a “family pack” of hydroxychloroquine, chloroquine, generic Viagra, Xanax, and azithromycin to the undercover agent without collecting any medical information from the agent or his five supposed family members. Staley’s next court date is October 8, 2021 before U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel.

“While healthcare workers around the world selflessly labored on the frontlines of an international pandemic, this doctor used his position of trust to cash in on COVID-19 fears,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman. “We are committed to protecting the American people from such scams and holding the

scammers accountable.” Grossman commended the federal agents from FBI and FDA-OCI, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nicholas Pilchak and Jaclyn Stahl, who worked hard pursuing justice in this case. He also commended U.S. Customs and Border Protection for its assistance with the investigation.

On May 17, 2021, Attorney General Merrick Garland established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force, led by the Deputy Attorney General, to bring together the full resources of the federal government to bolster fraud enforcement efforts. If you think you are a victim of COVID-19 fraud, immediately report it to the FBI (visit [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov) , <https://tips.fbi.gov>, or call 1-800-CALL-FBI or the San Diego FBI at 858-320-1800). The public is also urged to report suspected fraud schemes related to COVID-19 by calling the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline (1-866-720-5721) or by e-mailing the NCDF at [disaster@leo.gov](mailto:disaster@leo.gov). [Source: DoJ Southern District of California | U.S. Attorney’s Office | July 16, 2021 ++]

## \* Finances \*



## Hospital Charges

### Update 03: 94% of Hospitals Still Noncompliant With Price Transparency Rule

The Hospital Price Transparency Rule requires hospitals to disclose on their website and make public all standard charge information for all hospital items and services. This consists of two price lists (see below) of consumer-friendly displays of common shoppable services that are easily accessible and in a comprehensive machine-readable format.

1. Hospital standard charges for all items and services -- This list is primarily meant for data analysts to track pricing over time, for employers to choose the best plan, and for tech innovators to create tools to help patients shop (e.g. price aggregator tools like Google Flights or Amazon). This list is more complicated, not easily readable, and includes codes that may be confusing for the general public just trying to shop.

To be compliant, this list must have a description of each item and service, and any relevant codes for billing or accounting purposes. It also must include five standard charges for each item and service (gross charge, discounted cash price, payer-specific negotiated charge, de-identified minimum and maximum negotiated charge).

2. 300 shoppable services in a consumer-friendly manner -- The second requirement is a list of the hospital’s 300 shoppable services with the five standard charges to allow consumers to shop based on price and quality. Unfortunately, hospitals can avoid this consumer-friendly requirement by implementing a “cost estimator” tool which only gives an estimate, not a real price and does not include all of the five standard charges.



Of all U.S. hospitals, just 5.6 percent are fully compliant with CMS' price disclosure rule, according to a PatientRightsAdvocate.org study reported by The Washington Post on 16 JUL. The rule, which took effect 1 JAN aiming to make hospital pricing information readily available to patients to compare costs and make more informed healthcare decisions. To aid with this, hospitals in the U.S. are required to post items 1 and 2 above. However, from 15 MAY to 8 JUL, PatientRightsAdvocate.org analyzed a random sample of 500 hospital websites of the 6,002 hospitals subject to the rule. Below are five of the study's other notable findings.

- Eighty percent of hospitals did not publish payer-specific negotiated charges.
- Forty percent of hospitals published discounted cash prices.
- Fifty-two percent of hospitals did not publish any negotiated rates.
- Nineteen percent of hospitals presented 300 shoppable services in a consumer-friendly format, but a significant number of these presented incomplete data fields, making them ultimately noncompliant.
- Seventy-six percent of hospitals published a price estimator tool. Out of these hospitals, 11 percent of them did not allow users to see the discounted cash price.

If you are one of the many who can't find the hospital price transparency information you're looking for online, you should report noncompliance with hospital price transparency requirements to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) using the following 4 steps:

### **Step 1: Contact your Hospital**

Before filing a complaint with CMS, strongly recommend you contact the hospital first to ensure the information you are looking for is applicable to that hospital. For example, many hospitals participate with a wide range of insurance plans but not necessarily all. If you do not find your particular insurer accounted for, verify that the hospital does indeed accept that insurance before filing a complaint of noncompliance with CMS.

### **Step 2: Assess your Concern:**

If you are unable to find the information after contacting the hospital, make sure your complaint is something that is addressed through the hospital price transparency rule. Complaints related to non-price transparency issues (such as a concern with a hospital bill) should be pursued through different avenues (reference the table below for resources for non-price transparency related issues). Some examples of complaints CMS will review include:

- No hospital price transparency information is available online - No machine readable file and/or display of shoppable services/price estimator tool.
- There is a barrier to accessing hospital pricing information such as requiring a user account, password, or charging a fee.
- One of the [70 CMS specified services \(p.190: Table 3\)](#) are missing and it has been verified that the hospital does offer the service.
- Could not find any negotiated rates for an insurer in the hospital's price transparency information after confirming the hospital accepts the insurance.

### **Step 3: Gather Information**

When you provide as much information as possible, CMS can better evaluate your submission. Please share all relevant information in the complaint form, such as:

- Hospital website and hospital contact information
- Description of your concern(s): Specific information about how you were unable to locate information related to price transparency requirements.
- Record of correspondence: Provide dates, contact information, and outcome for any contact you've had with the hospital.
- Digital evidence of your concern: Supporting evidence of your concern such as screen shots or photographs of the website or copies of correspondence with hospital.

#### **Step 4: Submit Complaint**

Submit your complaint to CMS at 7500 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21244 or [karen.jackson1@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:karen.jackson1@cms.hhs.gov). CMA will review your submission for relevance and completeness. If you have identified yourself, they may contact you for further information. They appreciate your efforts to help ensure hospitals are complying with this policy.

**Note:** *For complaints that do not pertain to Hospital Price Transparency, please reference the following resources:*

1. Issues about Medicare policy, coverage, billing claims or appeals or lost or stolen Medicare card - [Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov) or **1-800-MEDICARE**
2. Concern with a hospital bill - Your Insurance Company, the Hospital, or State Insurance Commissioner's Office
3. Fraud, Waste, and Abuse of HHS Programs - [HHS Office of Inspector General](http://www.HHS.OIG.gov)
4. Fraud, Waste, and Abuse of Medicaid - [State Medicaid Agency - Program Integrity](http://www.State.Medicaid.Agency.gov)

[Source: <https://www.patientrightsadvocate.org> | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## **Surprise Medical Bills**

### **HHS Announces Rule to Protect Consumers from Them Next Year**

On 1 JUL, the Biden-Harris Administration, through the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor, and Treasury, and the Office of Personnel Management, issued "**Requirements Related to Surprise Billing: Part I**," an interim final rule that will restrict excessive out of pocket costs to consumers from surprise billing and balance billing. Surprise billing happens when people unknowingly get care from providers that are outside of their health plan's network and can happen for both emergency and non-emergency care. Balance billing, when a provider charges a patient the remainder of what their insurance does not pay, is currently prohibited in both Medicare and Medicaid.

This rule will extend similar protections to Americans insured through employer-sponsored and commercial health plans. "No patient should forgo care for fear of surprise billing," said HHS Secretary

Becerra. "Health insurance should offer patients peace of mind that they won't be saddled with unexpected costs. The Biden-Harris Administration remains committed to ensuring transparency and affordable care, and with this rule, Americans will get the assurance of no surprises." Among other provisions, today's interim final rule:

- Bans surprise billing for emergency services. Emergency services, regardless of where they are provided, must be treated on an in-network basis without requirements for prior authorization.
- Bans high out-of-network cost-sharing for emergency and non-emergency services. Patient cost-sharing, such as co-insurance or a deductible, cannot be higher than if such services were provided by an in-network doctor, and any coinsurance or deductible must be based on in-network provider rates.
- Bans out-of-network charges for ancillary care (like an anesthesiologist or assistant surgeon) at an in-network facility in all circumstances.
- Bans other out-of-network charges without advance notice. Health care providers and facilities must provide patients with a plain-language consumer notice explaining that patient consent is required to receive care on an out-of-network basis before that provider can bill at the higher out-of-network rate.

These provisions will provide patients with financial peace of mind while seeking emergency care as well as safeguard them from unknowingly accepting out-of-network care and subsequently incurring surprise billing expenses.

Tackling surprise billing is critically important, as it often has devastating financial consequences for individuals and their families. Two-thirds exit disclaimer icon of all bankruptcies filed in the United States are tied to medical expenses. Researchers estimate that 1 of every 6 emergency room visits and inpatient hospital stays involve care from at least one out-of-network provider, resulting in surprise medical bills. And a 2019 study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) - PDF, found that the median price charged by air ambulance providers ranged from \$36,400 to more than \$40,000, and over 70% of these transports were furnished out-of-network, meaning most or all costs fell to the insured individual alone.

Thanks to the Biden-Harris Administration and bipartisan congressional support, HHS, Labor, Treasury, and OPM are promulgating rules that will protect consumers from financial ruin simply because they could not ask for an in-network provider during their treatment. "No one should ever be threatened with financial ruin simply for seeking needed medical care," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh. "Today's Interim Final Rule is a major step in implementing the bipartisan No Surprises Act that will protect Americans from exorbitant health costs for unknowingly receiving care from out-of-network providers."

"Facing a difficult medical situation is challenging enough – no one should then face a surprise medical bill when they get home," said OPM Director Kiran Ahuja. "This interim rule helps to protect Americans from financial ruin and honors federal employees, retirees, their covered family members and other enrollees who receive healthcare through the FEHB Program, the largest employer-sponsored plan, by giving them new protections from unexpected medical bills."

Today's interim final rule with request for comments implements the first of several requirements passed with bipartisan support in title I (the "No Surprises Act") of division BB of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The regulations issued 1 JUL will take effect for health care providers and facilities January 1, 2022. For group health plans, health insurance issuers, and Federal Employees Health Benefits Program carriers, the provisions will take effect for plan, policy, or contract years beginning on or after January 1,

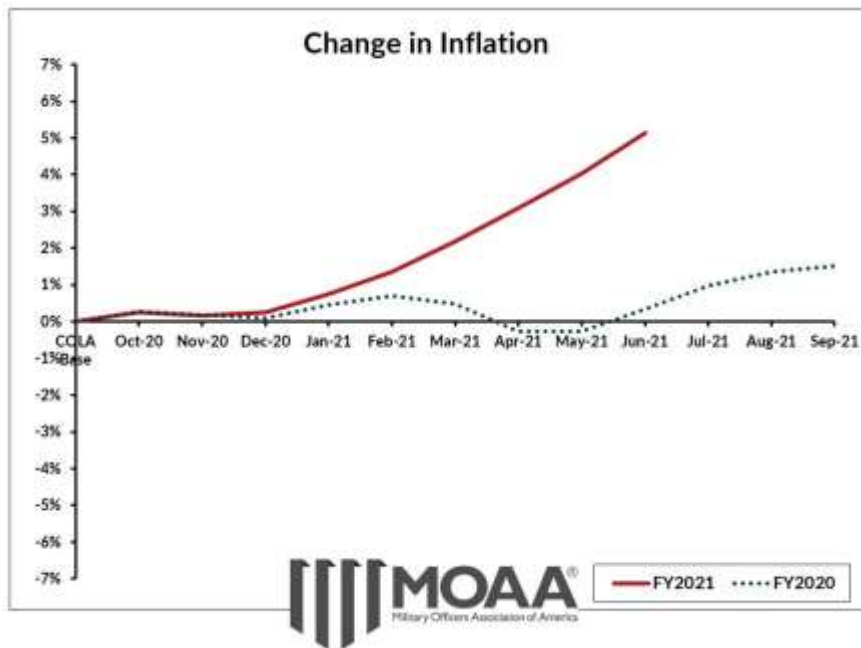
2022. Fact sheets on this interim final rule can be found [here](#) and [here](#). The interim final rule with comment period can be accessed [here - PDF](#).

All health care providers must make information on patients' rights with respect to balance billing publicly available. Health plans are expected to share more information on their websites explaining surprise billing (when a patient is responsible for an amount over what a health plan pays). Plus, health plan ID cards will show deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums. It is assumed these new changes will also apply to Medicare. [Source: <https://seniorsleague.org/changes-designed-to-stop-surprise-billing-coming-next-year/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=ae1e07cb-3852-4bbb-97bd-e30bb2ed5478> & TSCL | July 1 & 26, 2021 ++]

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## COLA FY 2021 JUN CPI

The June 2021 CPI is 266.412, 5.1 percent above the FY 2021 COLA baseline. The Consumer Price Index for July is scheduled to be released Aug. 11. 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 | July 15, 2021 ++]

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## American Forces Travel

### Another 16M Vets Now Eligible for These DOD Travel Deals

An additional 16 million veterans are now eligible to use the Defense Department's discount travel site, under an expansion announced 16 JUL by DoD's [American Forces Travel](#) and Priceline. Those eligible can find discounts of 40 to 60 percent off popular hotels, flights, car rentals, travel packages and cruise brands, according to DoD and Priceline officials. There are more than 1 million hotel deals at more than 71,000 destinations around the world, for example.

All honorably discharged veterans will be eligible to use the leisure travel site, which was launched in 2019 for active-duty, Reserve and Guard members, retired, and their family members, and certain others. This increases the number of eligible people to about 22 million. First-time visitors to [AmericanForcesTravel.com](#) will be asked to verify their eligibility with DoD through the site, and once verified, will be able to use the site to book discounted travel around the world. These newly eligible veterans use a similar process for verification as they use for their military exchange shopping privileges. The site is connected to the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS, for authentication.

The site is a joint initiative among the service branches, to include the Coast Guard, and the National Guard, DoD and Priceline, which operates the platform at no cost to DoD. Over the past few months, as regular travel has resumed, Priceline officials have seen bookings increase on American Forces Travel, compared to pre-pandemic levels. Warm weather locales are the most popular destinations for those using the site, and the most popular cities booked are Las Vegas, Orlando and San Diego. American Forces Travel offers privately negotiated deals on travel. Vendors must have a military exclusive price to be part of the website, but there are other additional properties and deals listed, too, so it pays to do some comparison shopping. There's also a price match policy — if you find a lower price within 24 hours of booking, they'll refund the difference. There are some exclusions to the policy.

In addition to offering deals to the military and veteran community, every booking generates revenue for the services' morale, welfare and recreation programs to support quality of life for service members and families. "While we can't disclose exact numbers, [American Forces Travel] has saved millions of dollars on travel for the military community and will reinvest millions into MWR programs," according to Priceline officials, in response to Military Times' questions.

In January 2020, about 4.1 million veterans became [eligible to use](#) the travel site, along with certain other morale, welfare and recreation programs, and to shop at commissaries and exchanges on installations. There were some initial technology problems for some of those veterans trying to access the travel website. Those benefits were authorized by law for all veterans with VA service-connected disabilities; Purple Heart recipients; veterans who are former prisoners of war; and primary family caregivers of eligible veterans under the VA caregiver program. Now another 16 million will be eligible for the travel discount site as long as they have the qualifying discharge status of honorable or general under honorable conditions. Here's who is eligible:

- Active duty who serve in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard
- Members of the reserve components and National Guard
- Coast Guard Auxiliary active duty

- Active duty and retired U.S. Public Health Service
- Retired military, including those in the reserve and National Guard components who are retirement eligible
- Eligible family members who are ID card holders and sponsored by authorized patrons in the above categories
- Medal of Honor recipients
- Veterans with a discharge status of honorable or general under honorable conditions
- Veterans with VA service-connected disabilities; Purple Heart recipients; veterans who are former prisoners of war; and primary family caregivers of eligible veterans under the VA caregiver program
- DoD and Coast Guard civilians, including appropriated fund (APF) employees and non-appropriated fund (NAF) employees
- Full-time, paid employees of the American Red Cross and USO hired in the United States and serving at DoD installations overseas

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## Plumbing Problem Fixes

### How to Prevent Pricey Ones



**Drain Screen**



**Drippy Faucets**



**Toilet Flapper Chain**

The last thing anyone wants is a plumbing emergency to clog an already busy day. A little due diligence and simple maintenance can keep things running smoothly, though. Taking care of a home’s plumbing can also keep energy bills lower in general, help conserve water, and prevent a surprisingly huge water bill resulting from a crisis.

#### **First Things First: Get a Drain Screen**

Rule No. 1 is to watch what goes down any drain, including hair, razor clippings, lotion, dental floss, and other cloggers. “Just like other homeowners, plumbers have to take measures to protect our drainage systems,” says Tim Daley, general manager at Wolfer’s Home Services in Portland, Oregon. “For me, I regularly clean my drains to ensure there are no major blockages that could require a massive repair. I also use a drain guard in the bottom of my shower to prevent hair from going into the plumbing system and causing a clog.” A screen is less than \$10 and when it gets gross, can just be tapped clear into the trash.

#### **Prevent and Clear Clogs**

If your bathroom sink drains slowly or you notice bubbles, you’re probably developing a clog. Don’t call the plumber immediately, though. The best way to prevent build-up (including of soap scum and other debris or chemicals that inevitably go down the drain) is to pour boiling water down the drains once a week

or so. Skip drain cleaner chemicals, which can be toxic and cause more problems in the long run. Instead use a plunger — yes, even in the sink — or pick up a \$5 flexible drain snake to pull clogs out. It's so gross, but somehow so satisfying!

### **Do a Regular Inspection**

Once a month or so, take a close look at faucets and toilets. Is the faucet dripping? Is the floor wet behind the toilet when you flush? Is the cupboard under the kitchen sink getting wet? Catching these problems early can prevent future floor or ceiling damage.

### **Don't Pour Anything down the Drain**

Plumbers don't pour cooking grease, food scraps, or anything else down the drain. Dump that in the compost pail and save the sink for just what gets rinsed off plates.

### **Watch What Goes in the Garbage Disposal**

"I make sure my drains remain clear to avoid any major blockages, as well," Daley said. "I don't put grease or coffee grounds down my drains. I also don't dispose of any stringy or starchy food such as potato peels, banana peels or eggshells in my garbage disposal. These items are not easily broken down and can clog your drain as well as damage your garbage disposal."

### **Run the Water**

After using the garbage disposal, flush everything out by running water for about 15 seconds. That will help eliminate foul smells.

### **Don't Flush Anything but Toilet Paper**

Like the drain, your toilet isn't a garbage can. "Toilet paper is the only item that should be flushed," Daley said. "Never flush paper towels, cat litter, or sanitary products. Even wet wipes, including those that claim to be flushable, can cause clogs in the system. These items do not dissolve easily and can get stuck in your pipes, requiring a repair or replacement if the damage is extensive."

### **Leaky Faucet? Replace the O-Ring**

Overtime, the rubber ring that helps hold the faucet handle in place gets worn. When you notice a small leak at the base of the handle, get a new one for about \$3.

### **Put Some Dye in the Toilet**

Leaky toilets waste thousands of gallons of water each year. To see if yours is leaking, put a few drops of food coloring in the toilet tank and come back a few hours later. If you find the color in the bowl, replace the flush valve, which costs less than \$15. The water should be one inch below the overflow tube, which is normally in the center of the toilet tank. If it's higher than that, you're wasting water.

### **Check Your Bolts**

If you're noticing water on the floor behind the toilet, there's a good chance the bolts or gaskets holding the tank on are probably worn. Reach below the toilet tank and feel the bolts. Are they wet? If so, they're worn. You can also feel the rubber gaskets inside the toilet. They're usually black. If you rub your finger over them and your finger gets a black streak on it, it's worn out.

### **Turn off the Water If You'll Be Away**

When you leave for a trip of more than a week, consider turning off the water to the house to prevent mishaps while you're away. This is usually on the street side of the lowest level of the home. Don't turn off the water heater; just the cold-water valve to the house.

### **Look at Your Water Heater**

Water heaters don't go out frequently, but when they do, they can do some expensive damage. Look for signs of rust or leaks seasonally. If you see anything, check with a licensed plumber. You can also get a water detection monitor that will alert you of a leak before the floor and surrounding walls are damaged.

### **Prepare for Winter**

Insulating pipes can save you money and get your shower warmer faster, according to the Department of Energy. "As plumbers, we know the importance of keeping pipes in working condition throughout the entire year," Daley said. "When it's winter, I make sure that my pipes are properly insulated to protect them from harsh winter weather and cold temperatures. A frozen pipe can easily burst and cause major water damage and troubles for the plumbing system as a whole." In the winter months when you aren't watering the garden or lawn, disconnect the hoses and shut off the outdoor water valves to prevent freezing.

### **Check Water Heater Settings**

If you hear a pounding noise in your water heater, the heat might be set too hot. A quick test is to put your hand under the hot water running in your sink. If it's too hot to keep your hand there, the water heater is set too high. This will also save you money on energy bills.

### **Reset the Toilet Flapper Chain**

This is a two-minute fix. Check the chain on the flapper in the tank. It should be relaxed. If it's too tight, adjust the chain to give it some slack. If the flapper is worn out, you might also hear the water running. You can pick up a new one for less than \$10.

[Source: Cheapism | Candace Nelson | May 25, 2021 ++]

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## **Organic vs. Conventional** **When Is It Worth Buying Organic?**



Unlike food labels such as "natural" and "free range," use of the word "organic" is strictly regulated. The U.S. Department of Agriculture certifies products as organic if they meet a set of standards, including, but not limited to, using 100 percent organic feed for animals and zero use of synthetic fertilizers, certain pesticides, and genetically modified organisms for fruits and vegetables. Organic proponents generally tout benefits such as higher nutritional value and better taste; less contamination from toxins, chemicals, and antibiotic-resistant bacteria; and less damage to the environment. These claims are hard to verify and are subject to much debate. One factor about which there is no doubt: Organic products typically cost more. Is organic worth it?

### **Dirty Dozen**



The Environmental Working Group lists a "Dirty Dozen" of fruits and vegetables for which organic really matters in terms of pesticide exposure. Apples are usually named as the No. 1 food to buy organic, followed by peaches, nectarines, strawberries, grapes, celery, spinach, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, imported snap peas, and potatoes. These 12 fruits and vegetables test consistently — and alarmingly — high for pesticide residue. If you want to only buy a few organic items, choose from this list. The "Clean Fifteen," on the other hand, are fruits and vegetables that test lowest for pesticide residue, and include avocados, onions, pineapples, eggplant, grapefruit, broccoli, and mushrooms. There's little benefit to spending more on organic versions of these.

### **Baby Food**

The organic label on baby food matters because the condensed ingredients can mean higher concentrations of pesticide residue. Organic farming reduces those risks significantly. Earth's Best, Gerber's Organics, and Plum Organics are three moderately priced brands; stock up during sales to stretch the food budget. Alternatively, use a blender or food processor to make DIY baby food with organic ingredients. Organic produce is available at many farmers markets and increasingly at local supermarkets, big-box stores, and discount clubs.

### **Olive Oil**

Growing olives doesn't require many synthetic inputs (chemicals, pesticides), so buying organic olive oil doesn't make financial sense. Moreover, the organic version is far more expensive than regular (e.g., a 25.5-ounce bottle of the Walmart store brand is 28 cents cheaper than 17 ounces of Filippo Berio organic olive oil) and any health or safety benefits are unproven.

### **Coffee**

Non-organic coffee beans are washed in chemicals, such as ammonia, that you probably don't want to consume. And the crop is grown using ample pesticides. Figure on paying about 25 percent more for a pound of organic coffee, but it's probably worth the tab.

### **Maple Syrup**

Sugar maples grow well on their own, almost always in forests, without help from pesticides or chemical fertilizers. The production process is just as basic: Farmers tap the trees, collect the xylem sap, boil it, and bottle it. Although you can't be 100 percent sure without the organic label, chances are very high that a non-organic buy is pure.

### **Beef**

Many health professionals recommend choosing organic meat products whenever possible despite the extra cost. The primary concern about conventional meats is antibiotic use in livestock, which some research has linked to the development of drug-resistant bacteria in humans. Moreover, organic meat comes from animals that have been fed diets free of pesticides, fertilizers, and animal by-products.

### **Quinoa**

American consumers have gone quinoa crazy in recent years. The grain crop is highly nutritious, gluten-free, and a complete protein. There's no need to buy organic quinoa because farmers don't use pesticides to grow it. Quinoa plants naturally produce saponins, which help defend against pests. They also leave a bitter coating on the seeds, so be sure to rinse before cooking. Save your pennies for other products that are best in their organic state.

### **Microwave Popcorn**

Pesticides are commonly used when growing corn, and residue remains on the kernels. The microwave variety piles on with preservatives as well as chemicals used to coat the bag. Instead, opt for packs of organic microwave popcorn despite the substantial price difference. Cheaper (and safer) still, buy organic kernels and pop them yourself; scoop into a brown paper bag and microwave until they stop popping

[Source: Cheapism | Gina Martinez | June 10, 2021 ++]

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## **Parking Lot Repair Scams**

### **Watch Out for Pushy Parking Lot Car Repair**

Dent repair scams have been around for years, but that doesn't mean people have stopped falling for them. BBB Scam Tracker is getting reports of persuasive strangers claiming to "fix" dents in your car. Stay alert to the following tactics and avoid falling prey to this scam.

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

- A person approaches you in the parking lot of a store stating they noticed dents on your car. It just so happens that they work at a body shop and can fix them for you! They promise to charge much less than what a shop would, and they can make the repairs on the spot while you are shopping. The "repair person" may try to appeal to your altruistic side by claiming that you'd be supporting their small business.
- If you agree to the repairs, you could end up with a ruined car exterior. One victim told [BBB Scam Tracker](#): "He was 'fixing' my car while I was in the store shopping. When I came out, he had drilled a bunch of holes into the body of my car. He told me it was standard procedure to drill holes in order to pull out the dent. Then, he put a black putty thing all over the holes and told me not to take off the putty until 24 hours later. When I tried to take off the putty, it looked worse than before."
- If you question the work or the cost of the repairs, the "repair person" may get aggressive and try to intimidate you.

#### **Spot a repair scam:**

- Be wary of unsolicited offers. This kind of scam starts with someone who just happened to drive by and notice the car needed a repair. If you are approached by a stranger in a parking lot offering repair services of any kind, be careful, ask questions, and if they have a business card to check out if the company they say they're representing is in fact legitimate.
- Don't fall for high pressure sales tactics. Scammers will often pressure you to accept their offer, demand full payment upfront with a statement you'll never get a better price anywhere else. In addition, they only have time to do the repairs at that moment. High pressure, now-or-never sales tactics are a hallmark of scams.
- Research repairmen and repair shops before you do business. Look up reviews and business ratings of any repair person or company before agreeing to any service. If you are dealing with an individual repairman, ask for references to call and verify the quality of the work. If a person can't wait for you to do the necessary research, find someone else to do the job.

#### **For More Information**

Find valuable information to protect yourself from scams at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](https://www.bbb.org/avoid-scams). For help finding a car repair service, see [these tips from BBB](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/scam-tracker). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](https://www.bbb.org/avoid-scams). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | July 16, 2021 ++]

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## QR Code Scams

### Look Before You Scan!

Companies [use QR codes](#) to point consumers to their apps, track packages, or view menus. But because these codes can't be read by the human eye, they have become a way for scammers to disguise malicious links. As QR codes get more popular, BBB Scam Tracker is seeing more reports of con artists using them to mislead consumers.

#### How the Scam Works

- You receive an email, a direct message on social media, a text message, a flyer, or a piece of mail that includes a QR code. You are supposed to scan the code with your phone's camera, and it will open a link. In some scams, the QR code takes you to [a phishing website](#), where you are prompted to enter your personal information or login credentials for scammers to steal. Other times, con artists [use QR codes](#) to automatically launch payment apps or follow a malicious social media account.
- These scams differ greatly, but they all have one thing in common. Scammers hope you will scan the code right away, without taking a closer look. QR codes often appear to come from legitimate sources, so make sure any correspondence is legitimate before you scan the code.
- For example, one victim told [BBB Scam Tracker](#) that they received a fraudulent letter about student loan consolidation. It contained a QR code that appeared to link to the official Studentaid.gov website. The QR code helped the program, [which was a fraud](#), appear official.

#### How to avoid QR code scams:

- If someone you know sends you a QR code, confirm before scanning it. Whether you receive a text message from a friend or a message on social media from your workmate, contact that person directly before you scan the QR code to make sure they haven't been hacked.
- Don't open links from strangers. If you receive an unsolicited message from a stranger, don't scan the QR code, even if they promise you exciting gifts or investment opportunities.
- Verify the source. If a QR code appears to come from a reputable source, it's wise to double check. If the correspondence appears to come from a government agency, call or visit their official website to confirm.
- Be wary of short links. If a URL-shortened link appears when you scan a QR code, understand that you can't know where the code is directing you. It could be hiding a malicious URL.
- Watch out for advertising materials that have been tampered with. Some scammers attempt to mislead consumers by altering legitimate business ads by placing stickers or the QR code. Keep an eye out for signs of tampering.

- Install a QR scanner with added security. Some antivirus companies have QR scanner apps that check the safety of a scanned link before you open it. They can identify phishing scams, forced app downloads, and other dangerous links.

**For More Information:**

To learn more about protecting your information online, read BBB's [tips on data privacy](#) and [cyber security](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](http://BBB.org/ScamTracker). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](http://BBB.org/AvoidScams). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | July 30, 2021 ++]

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**Tax Burden on New Jersey Vets**  
As of JUL 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 New Jersey in 2021.

**Sales Taxes**

The state sales tax rate is 7%, and the average NJ sales tax after local surtaxes is 6.97% which is lower than 55.8% of states.

- Groceries and new clothing are exempt from the New Jersey sales tax. Prescription drugs are exempt or charged at a lower sales tax rate. Gasoline purchases are not subject to the New Jersey Sales Tax but is for excise taxes
- Some items may not be eligible for these reduced sales tax rates, such as expensive clothing, unhealthy food or drinks like soda, and certain non-essential pharmaceuticals. New Jersey does not treat candy or soda as groceries, which means they are not subject to reduced grocery sales tax rates. Alcohol, and cigarettes are subject to various New Jersey excise taxes in addition to the sales tax.
- Unlike a Value Added Tax (VAT), the New Jersey sales tax only applies to end consumers of the product. Individuals and companies who are purchasing goods for resale, improvement, or as raw materials can use a New Jersey Sales Tax Exemption Form to buy these goods tax-free.
- Counties and cities are not allowed to collect local sales taxes however, certain businesses located within "Urban Enterprise Zones", including Salem County, are required to only collect a reduced sales tax of 50% the state sales tax rate (3.50%). A full list of these Enterprise Zones can be found on the New Jersey Division of Taxation's website.
- New Jersey has no special sales tax jurisdictions with local sales taxes in addition to the state sales tax

**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 New Jersey state government are the fuel tax on gasoline and the so-called "sin tax" collected on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. An excise tax is not the same thing as the New Jersey Sales Tax. The New Jersey Sales Tax is collected as a percentage of the final purchase price of all qualifying sales, and is collected directly from the end consumer of the product. New Jersey's excise taxes, on the other hand, are flat per-unit taxes that must be paid directly to the New Jersey 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 New Jersey merchants pass on the excise tax to the customer through higher prices for the taxed goods. An average of \$419 in yearly excise taxes per capita is collected, lower than 58% of the other 50 states. Unlike the Sales Tax, excise taxes are not generally deductible on state 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: \$0.12 per gal | Wine: \$0.88 per gal | Liquor \$5.50 per gal. The excise tax on beer is one of the lowest beer taxes in the country and is ranked #41 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on Wine is higher than 52% of the other 50 states and is ranked #24 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on liquor is then 52% of the other 50 states and is ranked #26 out of the 50 states. All excise taxes are included in the price of the beverage when bought in New Jersey.
- **Cannabis:** None
- **Cellphone:** The average tax collected on cell phone plans in New Jersey is \$8.87 per phone service plan, lower than 56% of the other 50 states. New Jersey's average cellphone tax is ranked #28 out of the 50 states. The New Jersey 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 New Jersey excise tax on cigarettes is \$2.70 per 20 cigarettes, one of the highest cigarettes taxes in the country. New Jersey's excise tax on cigarettes is ranked #9 out of the 50 states. The New Jersey cigarette tax of \$2.70 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 New Jersey excise tax on gasoline is 10.50¢ per gallon, one of the lowest gas taxes in the country. New Jersey's excise tax on gasoline is ranked #49 out of the 50 states. The gas tax is included in the pump price at all gas stations in the state 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:** New Jersey 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 New Jersey Department of Transportation and receive documentation (registration and title papers) proving the fees were paid.

### **Personal Income Taxes**

The average family pays \$718 in income taxes which is ranked 41<sup>st</sup> of all 51 states.

**Tax Rate Range:** Low – 1.4%; High – 10.75%

**Income Brackets: Four.** Single Lowest – \$0 to \$19,999; Highest – \$1,000,000+  
Couple/HOH Lowest – \$0 to \$19,999; Highest – \$1,000,000+

**Personal Exemptions:** \$1000 each for: both spouses, over 65, and blind/handicapped.  
\$1500 for each qualified child or other dependent.  
\$6,000 for each veteran.

**Standard Deduction:** None. If property taxes were paid (directly or through rent) on your principal residence (main home) you may qualify for either a Property Tax Deduction that reduces your taxable income, or a refundable Property Tax Credit.

**Medical/Dental Deduction:** None

**Federal Income Tax Deduction:** None

**Retirement Income Taxes:** Social Security not taxable. As of 2020 you can now exclude up to \$100,000 of pension, annuity, or IRA income.

**Retired Military Pay:** Retired pay and SBP Exempt. Military pay, including combat pay, is taxable to a resident of New Jersey

**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:** New Jersey Department of the Treasury <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury>

#### **Tax Forms:**

- <https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/pdf/current/1040i.pdf> Tax Instruction Booklet
- <https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/pdf/current/1040.pdf> Form NJ-1040 Individual Income Tax Return
- <https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/prntgit.shtml> All Tax forms

**Late Penalty.** When you file a return after the original or extended due date, we will assess a penalty of 5% per month (or part of a month) up to a maximum of 25% on the outstanding tax balance. You may also be charged a \$100 penalty for each month the return is late. When you pay after the filing deadline, you may be charged a 5% penalty on the outstanding balance. They will assess interest at an annual rate of 3% above the prime rate each month (or part of a month) the tax is unpaid. At the end of each calendar year, any tax, penalties, and interest remaining unpaid will become part of the balance on which interest is charged.

#### **Property Taxes**

The median property tax is \$6,579 per year for a home worth the median value of \$348,300. Counties collect an average of 1.89% of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax per year. New Jersey has one of the highest average property tax rates in the country, with only a few states levying higher property taxes. The state's median income is \$88,343 per year, so the median yearly property tax paid by residents amounts to approximately 7.45% of their yearly income making it the highest in the country.

Hunterdon County collects the highest property tax, levying an average of \$8,523.00 (1.91% of median home value) yearly in property taxes, while Cumberland County has the lowest property tax in the state, collecting an average tax of \$3,744.00 (2.13% 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 the state. For more localized property tax rates refer to the county list at [http://www.tax-rates.org/new\\_jersey/property-tax#Counties](http://www.tax-rates.org/new_jersey/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.

New Jersey's real property tax is an "ad valorem tax," or a tax according to value. All real property is assessed according to the same standard of value except for qualified agricultural or horticultural land. The standard measure of property value is "true value" or market value, that is, what a willing, knowledgeable buyer would pay a willing, knowledgeable seller on the open market at a bona fide sale as of the statutory 1 OCT pretax year assessment date. The value of qualified farmland is based upon its productive capabilities when devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses. Property shall be assessed under general law and by uniform rules. Real property is required to be assessed at some percentage of true value established by the county board of taxation in each county. All 21 counties in New Jersey have chosen 100%.

### **Property Tax Relief Programs**

Refer to <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/relief.shtml> for information on:

- Senior Freeze Program (Property Tax Reimbursement)
- Homestead Benefit Program
- Deductions, Exemptions, and Abatements
- Appeal My Property's Assessment

New Jersey residents who owned and occupied a home in New Jersey that was their principal residence on October 1, 2011, may be eligible for a homestead benefit provided the 2011 property taxes were paid and they meet certain income limits. The homestead benefit application for homeowners is not included in the NJ-1040 booklet. Information about the 2011 homestead benefit will be posted on the state site as it becomes available.

**Homestead Rebate Program.** This program establishes a system of homestead credits for homeowners and residential tenants. This program previously included residential tenants. The credit program provides taxpayers with benefits calculated as a percentage of the property tax (up to a maximum of \$10,000 tax) that they paid during the previous year. The percentages used to calculate this benefit are based on income levels, with higher percentage benefits allowed for the lower income levels, and with no benefit allowed for those whose income exceeds \$250,000. The act also imposes a 4% property tax levy cap on school districts and county and local governments, subject to limited exceptions and adjustments. The tax levy cap provisions will apply to budget years beginning on or after July 1, 2007, but not to years beginning after June 30, 2012. The homestead credit provisions will begin to apply to claims for rebates and credits for property tax paid for the year 2006. For more information, [click here](#).

### **Property Tax Reimbursement Program**

Reimburses eligible senior citizens and disabled persons for property tax increases. The amount of the reimbursement is the difference between the amount of property taxes that were due and paid in the "base year" (the first year that you met all the eligibility requirements) and the amount due and paid in the current year for which you are claiming the reimbursement, provided the amount paid in the current year was greater. You must meet all the eligibility requirements for the base year and for each succeeding year, up to and including the current year to qualify for the reimbursement.

### **Property Tax Deduction/Credit**

A credit is available to eligible homeowners and tenants who pay property taxes, either directly or through rent, on their principal residence in New Jersey. They are eligible for either a deduction or a refundable credit on their New Jersey resident income tax return. Homeowners and tenants may be eligible for a deduction or credit even if they are not eligible for a homestead rebate. Qualified residents may deduct 100% of their property taxes due and paid or \$10,000, whichever is less. For tenants, 18% of rent paid during the year is considered property taxes paid. The minimum benefit is a refundable credit of \$50. Those eligible must be 65 years of age or older or blind or disabled and are not required to file a return because their income is below the minimum filing threshold. For more information, go to <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/njit35.shtml>. For senior citizens and disabled persons there is a \$250 tax deduction from real property taxes provided for a dwelling of a qualified senior citizen. You must be age 65 or older, or a permanently and totally disabled individual, or the unmarried surviving spouse, age 55 or more, of such person. This benefit is administered by the local municipality.

### **Tax Treatment of NJ Property Tax Benefit Payments**

Refer to [www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/treatment03.shtml](http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/treatment03.shtml). To calculate the correct amount of property taxes paid on their New Jersey principal residence homeowners must know whether they received a homestead benefit during 2011, the amount of the benefit, and whether the benefit was paid as a credit on their 2011 property tax bill or in the form of a check. For tenants, 18% of the rent paid during the year is considered property taxes paid. Qualified residents should review the instructions in the NJ 1040 booklet for determining the amount of property taxes due and paid for 2011.

### **Inheritance and Estate Taxes**

New Jersey has had an Inheritance Tax since 1892, when a tax was imposed on property transferred from a deceased person to a beneficiary. Inheritance Tax is based on who specifically will receive or has received a decedent's assets, and how much each beneficiary is entitled to receive. When someone dies, the assets he/she owns must go somewhere or to someone. When these assets are transferred from the name of the person who died ("the decedent") to someone else ("the beneficiary"), the State of New Jersey may impose a tax on this "transfer" of ownership. The amount of tax imposed depends on several factors:

- Who the beneficiaries are and how they are related to the decedent;
- The date of death value of the assets (and debts) that the decedent owned;
- What kind of assets the decedent owned;
- Whether the decedent lived in New Jersey or another state.

Where the beneficiaries lived is not a factor. There are two types of Inheritance Tax, resident and non-resident. This is based on where the person legally lived when he/she passed away. On January 1, 2018, under current law, the New Jersey Estate Tax will no longer be imposed for individuals who die on or after that date. Refer to [https://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/pdf/other\\_forms/inheritance/o10c.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/pdf/other_forms/inheritance/o10c.pdf) for information pertaining to the estate and inheritance tax or call 609-292-5033.

### **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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Visit the New Jersey Department of Taxation site <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/index.shtml> for more information. [Source: <https://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#NEWJERSEY> | July 2021 ++]

**\* General Interest \***



## Notes of Interest

**JUL 16 thru 31, 2021**

- **Ransomware Website.** The departments of Homeland Security and Justice launched [www.StopRansomware.gov](http://www.StopRansomware.gov) to combat ransomware after a scourge of attacks this year, as a “one-stop hub” for resources from the FBI, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and other federal organizations. The website includes guidance on reporting attacks, ransomware alerts, and announcements about actions against hacking groups.
- **New VA Deputy Secretary.** DVA at last has a permanent deputy secretary. The Senate confirmed Donald Remy with a 91-8 vote. VA hasn’t had a permanent deputy secretary for the last year-and-a-half. Some senators were especially anxious to confirm Remy because he is supposed to be the top official in charge of VA’s troubled electronic health record modernization. Remy is an Army veteran and the former chief operating officer of the NCAA.
- **Postal Rates.** The Postal Service is moving ahead with plans to raise rates this summer, even after lawmakers asked the agency to postpone the increase. Once the new rates go into effect, USPS projects mail volume will decrease annually by about 2%, but will bring in \$1.7 billion in additional revenue. That is more than a 4% increase in what the agency currently brings in.
- **China Hotline.** The Biden administration is examining the possibility of setting up an emergency hotline with the Chinese government similar to the so-called "red phone" established between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which allowed for direct communication with the Kremlin as a way to avert nuclear war.
- **VA Appeals.** [Learn more](#) about VA’s modernized appeals process or check your appeal status. If you filed an appeal before Feb. 19, 2019, visit [VA’s legacy appeals webpage](#) for more information or to check the status of your appeal. Watch the hearing which begins at the 2:20 mark. If you filed an appeal before Feb. 19, 2019, visit [VA’s legacy appeals webpage](#) for more information or to check the status of your appeal.
- **Pony Tails.** The Coast Guard announced on 15 JUL that women would be permitted to wear their hair in a ponytail, a braid, or two braids making the Maine Corps the only service that will not permit it.

- **Covid-19 Vaccines.** Active-duty service members now can get COVID-19 vaccines anywhere they are available without needing pre-authorizations, according to an update published 19 JUL to the manual that dictates military health services.
- **TDP.** At [file:///C:/Users/User/AppData/Local/Temp/TDP\\_HB.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/AppData/Local/Temp/TDP_HB.pdf) can be found the *TRICARE Dental Program Benefit* Brochure. This is a quick and convenient guide to help you and your family take command of their dental health.
- **Mortgage Refinancing.** The Federal Housing Finance Agency has announced that they are eliminating the Adverse Market Refinance Fee for all future home refinances. This extra fee was added on to refinances during COVID last year and it increased interest rates by about .125%.

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

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## **Afghan Withdrawal**

### **Update 11: China Criticized the War. Now It Worries About the Withdrawal**

The Chinese government rarely passes up a chance to accuse the United States of military adventurism and hegemony. In the case of Afghanistan, though, it has changed its tone, warning that Washington now bears the responsibility for the hasty end to its two-decade war there. “The United States, which created the Afghan issue in the first place, should act responsibly to ensure a smooth transition in Afghanistan,” China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, said this month at a forum in Beijing. “It should not simply shift the burden onto others and withdraw from the country with the mess left behind unattended.” While China has not called on President Biden to reverse the military withdrawal he ordered, statements by senior officials made it clear that they would blame the United States for any insecurity that spreads in the region.

China’s leader, Xi Jinping, and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia — neither of them close friends of the American president — raised concerns about the withdrawal in a call the two leaders had in late June, citing “the increasingly complicated and severe security situation,” according to the state news agency Xinhua. An [explosion and vehicle crash](#) that killed nine Chinese workers in Pakistan on 14 JUL has punctuated China’s fears of regional instability in the wake of the final American military withdrawal from Afghanistan and the chaos that is now spreading across the country. China was quick to describe the explosion as an act of terrorism. Pakistan later described it as an accident, but the details remain murky, and China has previously found itself the target of threats from those opposed to its growing economic and diplomatic influence in the region.

Pakistan’s information minister, Fawad Chaudhry, said on 15 JUL that investigators had found traces of explosives, presumably on the bus carrying the Chinese workers. “Terrorism cannot be ruled out,” he wrote on Twitter. “They’re certainly feeling nervous,” said Barnett R. Rubin, a former State Department official and United Nations adviser on Afghanistan who is a senior fellow at New York University’s Center on International Cooperation.

With only a residual military contingent left to protect the American Embassy in Kabul, the [Taliban have been steadily expanding](#) their political control as Afghan government forces crumble or retreat. This month, Taliban forces seized Badakhshan, the province that reaches the mountainous Chinese border through the [Wakhan Corridor](#). While that narrow territory poses little direct security threat, China fears that the [breakdown of order](#) in Afghanistan could spill out of the country to other neighbors, including

Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Pakistan. Mr. Wang is traveling through Central Asia this week with the Afghan situation high on the agenda. “We don’t want to see a turbulent country around us that becomes such a soil for terrorist activities,” said Li Wei, an analyst at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, a research organization in Beijing affiliated with the Ministry of State Security.

The Taliban, when they governed Afghanistan before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, gave haven to some Uyghur fighters resisting Chinese rule in Xinjiang, the predominantly Muslim province in western China that the fighters call East Turkestan. Twenty-two of those fighters ended up in American custody in the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, only to be released slowly to several other countries, including Albania, Slovakia, Bermuda and Palau. Uyghur militants have also fought in Syria’s civil war, and there are reports that some have returned to Afghanistan. “If there’s more disorder in Afghanistan, the Uyghurs could get a foothold again, or a bigger one,” Mr. Rubin said.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States designated the East Turkestan Islamic Movement as a terrorist organization, in part to cultivate China’s support for American efforts in the “war on terror.” The Trump administration revoked the designation last year, saying that there was no evidence that the group continued to carry out attacks. China has cited the threat of Uyghur extremism as a reason for its [mass detention camps in Xinjiang](#). According to the United Nations, the Uyghur group once maintained links to Al Qaeda and organized attacks on targets inside and outside of China, including ones in Xinjiang that killed 140 people in 1998.

Liu Yunfeng, the director of the Counter-Terrorism Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security, said this week at a news conference that while there had been no major terrorist attack in China in the past four years, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement continued to promote terrorism from abroad and train fighters “to sneak into our territory.” “We still need to maintain a high degree of vigilance,” he said, according to a transcript posted by the ministry. With the American withdrawal on the horizon, China has sought to keep channels open to both the Taliban and Afghan forces, appealing for a peaceful resolution to decades of conflict that predated the American intervention. It has been a delicate diplomatic balance.

China has praised the current Afghan government, including what it says are efforts to fight the East Turkestan militants. It also played host to a delegation of Taliban leaders in 2019. While China has said little about the nature of its discussions with the group, it has muted its criticism as the American-led military presence winds down. In recent [statements](#), Taliban representatives have also sought to assuage China’s concerns about its past support for enemies of Chinese rule, saying a restored Taliban government would pose no threat to the country. In fact, it would welcome Chinese investments.

As the Taliban have [steadily gained ground](#), China has left its diplomatic options open. The Global Times, a Communist Party newspaper that generally reflects the government’s hawkish side, suggested this week that fears about the collapse of the current Afghan government were overstated. “With the evolving Afghanistan situation, the Taliban is quietly transforming itself to improve its international image, easing the concerns of and befriending neighboring countries,” the newspaper wrote on 17 JUL. Such views also reflect China’s close relationship with Pakistan, which provided support for the Taliban leadership during the long American involvement in Afghanistan.

After Chinese officials initially denounced Wednesday’s deaths in Pakistan as a terrorist attack, they tempered their remarks when the Pakistani Foreign Ministry released a statement saying that the explosion that sent a truck tumbling into a ravine was caused by a mechanical malfunction. Exactly what happened

remains unclear, however. At least two Pakistani paramilitary soldiers and two other civilians died, while more than 40 people were injured. It was not clear if the soldiers were guarding the workers as they traveled to a Chinese-built hydroelectric project at Dasu, a city in the country's rural northwest, about 100 miles from the capital, Islamabad.

China has faced terrorist threats in Pakistan before. In 2018, three suicide attackers stormed the Chinese Consulate in Karachi, killing two police officers and two civilians before being killed themselves. The group that claimed responsibility for that attack, the Baluchistan Liberation Army, attacked a luxury hotel in Gwadar a year later, saying they were targeting Chinese guests. In April, a different group attacked a hotel in Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan, only moments before China's ambassador was scheduled to arrive. Although it was not clear if the attackers knew of the ambassador's arrival, the group that claimed responsibility, the Pakistani Taliban, or Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, said its intended targets were "locals and foreigners" staying at the hotel.

After speaking with Pakistan's foreign minister about the explosion on 14 JUL, Mr. Wang, the foreign minister, called for greater security measures for Chinese construction projects in Pakistan, many of them being built under China's "belt and road" initiative. Chinese officials have offered to extend those projects to Afghanistan, but have made little progress. Previous Chinese projects there failed to live up to expectations, most prominently a copper mine concession that Chinese companies acquired in 2007. "If it is a terrorist attack," Mr. Wang said of the episode on 14 JUL, "the perpetrators must be arrested immediately, and the perpetrators must be severely punished."

[Source: New York Times | Steven Lee Myers | July 15 & 17, 2021 ++]

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## Afghan Withdrawal

### Update 12: Bagram Airfield's Pat Tillman's Jersey

The murals that once celebrated U.S. military units have been painted over and the settings that memorialized the fallen are now empty spaces. Most of Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. base in Afghanistan for much of the past 20 years, is a ghost town. But in the days before coalition troops left on 2 JUL, some of the last to leave scrambled to safeguard war mementos or make sure that what stayed behind wouldn't be left to whatever comes next in a country still at war. Many of the cavernous, empty structures the U.S. vacated were left open, but one in particular remained locked during a recent visit: a squat wooden lodge near the base's airport terminal, once known as the USO Pat Tillman center.



Pat Tillman USO Center (left) and Airmen pose with the jersey of Pat Tillman (right), a former NFL player who joined the Army Rangers, after a memorial run April 23, 2021 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

It's where Rebecca Medeiros, former USO country director in Afghanistan, spent the last year cataloguing mementos. "It's important those things came back to the U.S., instead of being left behind in Bagram, where we don't know the future of that location," Medeiros said. "We don't know if those items would be taken care of, or their meaning would be understood." The USO center, named after the former NFL player and Army Ranger who died in Afghanistan, hosted some 2 million troops, contractors and civilians waiting for flights over 16 years, allowing them to watch movies, play video games and connect to Wi-Fi.

The USO kept employees at Bagram as long as possible, in part to ensure that the mementos soldiers left there could be brought home, said Alan Reyes, the organization's chief operating officer. "We do our best to preserve artifacts of historical or symbolic significance to us," Reyes said. The centerpiece was a framed Tillman jersey, "which means a lot to people," Medeiros said. Elsewhere around the sprawling base:

- Troops saved a memorial to five soldiers and contractors killed in a 2016 suicide bombing. It's in transit to Fort Hood, Texas, where it will be re-dedicated, said Michael Garrett, spokesman for the 1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade.
- A plaque for troops from the Czech Republic has been taken to Prague, where it will become part of the Military History Institute's collection, said spokeswoman Lt. Col. Vlastimila Cyprisová.
- A steel beam from the World Trade Center, donated to Bagram as a memorial, became a concern after no one could initially remember where it went. They eventually learned it had been relocated in 2015 to Fort Drum, N.Y.



- A T-wall mural at Bagram Airfield (left), Afghanistan honors Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Chapman on Aug. 27, 2018. Chapman posthumously received the Medal of Honor for actions in Afghanistan in 2002. The mural was painted over prior to U.S. troops transferring the base to Afghan security forces. (J.P. Lawrence/Stars and Stripes)
- A memorial to Georgian troops killed in Afghanistan stands in Bagram Airfield (Center), Afghanistan in an undated photo.
- A memorial to coalition troops killed in Afghanistan stands on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan (right) in an undated photo.

Much of the work done by several people during the final stretch was "sanitizing" Bagram. "We pulled off stickers, signs went down," said Kimberly Culverhouse-Steadman, who came to Bagram in February to close the USO and bring back its mementos. "They just didn't want anything reminiscent of American presence." This effort was to "ensure consistency in appearance," said Col. Jennifer Spahn, spokeswoman for U.S. Forces – Afghanistan, in a statement 16 JUL. Some objected to painting over the murals at Bagram, including James Von Holland, a contractor at Bagram who has photographed hundreds of murals during his time at U.S. bases in the Middle East. "I didn't like it at all," Von Holland said. "It's like going into the Louvre and destroying the Mona Lisa."

Von Holland and some contractors at the base said they were frustrated due to the pace of the drawdown and what seemed like endless, sometimes contradictory orders. Several contractors and civilians said they went on vacation and were surprised to find they weren't allowed to return. All U.S. troops, contractors and civilians were supposed to leave Afghanistan by 1 MAY, the deadline that the Trump administration agreed to with the Taliban last year. But the Biden administration moved that deadline back to Sept. 11. As 1 MAY neared, those on Bagram were "on edge," fearing the Taliban would retaliate against U.S. troops staying past the original deadline, Culverhouse-Steadman said.

She recalled the days when Bagram was bustling with thousands of troops, contractors and civilians. Upon arriving in late February this year, she was struck by the emptiness. The base's large main post exchange had been reduced to one row of goods, she said. At one point during the drawdown, a building housing U.S. Special Forces in Kandahar burned down, leaving 25 troops without shelter. The USO sent bedding, pillows and blankets, she said. Cafeterias at Bagram began closing in mid-June, leaving many of the last Americans there stuck with Meals, Ready to Eat. Cookies, beef jerky and 700 pounds of instant ramen noodles were sent to the remaining troops who secured the base, the medical staff, Air Force investigators, and the personnel who handled the shipping yard and customs.

Culverhouse-Steadman flew out 25 MAY with two black suitcases – one with her personal effects, and the other with the Tillman jersey and other keepsakes. Right before boarding the packed government-chartered flight, she was told she'd have to choose between the bags in order to board. She chose to leave her personal effects behind. Fortunately, a friend from the post office agreed to mail her that suitcase. The Tillman jersey is now at USO headquarters in Arlington, Va. It may be sent later to Arizona, where his family and foundation are based, the USO said. [Source: Stars and Stripes | J.P. Lawrence | July 19, 2021 ++]

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## **China Hotline**

### **Biden Administration Looks to Set Up 'Red Phone' to China for Emergency Comms**

The Biden administration is examining the possibility of setting up an emergency hotline with the Chinese government similar to the so-called "red phone" established between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which allowed for direct communication with the Kremlin as a way to avert nuclear war. While the concept is still in its infancy and has yet to be formally raised with the Chinese, the Biden administration wants to develop a rapid communication tool that could be folded into a broader effort to reduce the risk of conflict between the US and China, according to a US official and another source familiar with early conversations about the device.

A hotline to Beijing would let President Joe Biden, or top officials on his national security team, immediately send encrypted phone calls or messages to President Xi Jinping or those around him, according to the two sources. For example, urgent information could be shared about sudden military movements or warning messages sent about cyber hacks. The idea of setting up a hotline with Beijing dates back to at least the Obama administration, though the concept wasn't codified into a classified national security memo until the final year of the Trump administration, according to a source familiar with the memo.

Biden administration officials have continued to pursue the idea, sources said, but there remain numerous details to work out, including whether the Chinese would even agree to use the device. There have long been issues with securing rapid responses from Beijing when it comes to urgent matters, current and former US officials told CNN. The top-down nature of the Chinese political system means that most contact beyond leader-level engagement is disincentivized. A similar hotline to China already exists at the Pentagon and is supposed to be used exclusively for military matters but rarely is. "We do have a hotline. It's known to have, the couple of times we've used it, just rung in an empty room for hours upon hours," said Kurt Campbell, the senior National Security Council Indo-Pacific coordinator, earlier this year during a conversation about US-China diplomacy and Taiwan.

The issues with the current system coupled with China's increasingly offensive military have led to mounting concerns among US national security officials about the potential of miscalculation with China, and a feeling that more needs to be done to increase communication. "There is a worrisome shortage of tools for incident management in the US-China relationship. It is pretty urgent that the US government pursues working lines of communication which allow them to respond to a crisis or to prevent a crisis. We need a 911 operator so to speak," said Danny Russel, a former assistant secretary at the State Department. Russel added that it is imperative to also consider tools "that can be integrated into a wider crisis communication strategy, with the focus on broad risk reduction."

A senior administration official declined to discuss the device when asked about it but did say that "generally speaking, of course we have an interest in ensuring that competition with China is managed in a responsible way. We have been clear this relationship will be defined by competition and we welcome that stiff competition, but we will also continue to work to ensure this competition doesn't veer into conflict."

Officials at the State Department and the National Security Council are still working on how the device would technically work, sources told CNN. The next step would be developing the overall concept and working it into the Biden administration's plan for engagement with China. Then the device would need approval from the White House and from Chinese officials before being implemented.

While the "red phone" between the US and Russia was viewed as a useful tool that increased communication during the Cold War, its recent effectiveness is questionable. For example, the Obama administration used the hotline to the Kremlin to warn Russia not to interfere in the 2016 US elections, a warning that was not heeded. The efficacy of a new hotline with China would be highly dependent on Beijing's commitment to using it and placing it in a position where Xi would have regular access to it. "There would be advantages to setting up this kind of tool for high-level messaging with China on strategic cyber concerns, but you have to make sure it is connected to the right place in the chain to connect with leadership effortlessly and quickly," said Chris Painter, former State Department coordinator for cyber issues under President Barack Obama. "You may not get information back that you want, but it could be used to send messages back and forth to put people on notice."

### **Trouble with timely responses from China**

In recent years the US and other countries have been unable to secure timely responses from China on pressing issues. For example, in the last year it has been challenging to get answers from China surrounding Covid-19, US officials said. "There are challenges when it comes to reaching Chinese officials during times of difficulty. That is largely because the way their system works is top down. During the early days of the Covid-19 outbreak, we often did not get any response to critical questions," said a former US official

who served in Beijing. In 2014, China's state-owned oil company dispatched an oil rig to a contested area of the South China Sea and they would not respond to calls from Vietnam to discuss the matter.

The idea of connecting the White House and Beijing has been loosely discussed for years, but implementation had always seemed far off. "We discussed the idea of a cyber messaging system with Chinese officials during the Obama administration. It was brought up in the context of our cyber discussions, but we did not make much progress. It was not clear where it was going to be placed in China, and China did not have the same history of confidence-building measures with the US that Russia did, so they viewed it in a more suspicious way," said Painter. "But I think now they understand more about how it could be used. It is not a silver bullet, by any means, but it does give you a useful tool."

On the whole, the Biden administration has said it plans to keep open lines of communication with China, though the early encounters have been tense. During the Biden administration's first face-to-face with Chinese officials earlier this year, the two sides traded diplomatic barbs rarely seen in front of the cameras. While national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Biden's "priorities and intentions" were clearly laid out, both sides walked away without scheduling follow-up meetings or setting up any working groups. When asked about a future meeting between Biden and Xi, the White House has not given any details.

"The administration is doing some hard thinking about what it is they really would want to pursue and how they foresee making headway on engagement with China. They have been careful and smart not to prematurely rush into full-scale engagement with China," Russel said. And as the administration develops its diplomatic approach, former US officials say that merely setting up a new hotline won't be enough. "Strategic risk reduction can be good, but up to a point, akin to basic hygiene. The central issue is that Beijing is hostile, predatory and highly capable, so the US must organize to defend and push back across the board. The Biden administration has said that they plan to do that. So while setting up a phone line can be useful, we shouldn't sink too much significant into it," said David Feith, a former State Department official who worked on China during the Trump administration.

As the China challenge mounts, Biden officials have publicly recognized the difficult nature of that challenge, and how much work it will take to address it. "Do I think it's possible that the United States and China can coexist and live in peace? Yes, I do. But I do think the challenge is going to be enormously difficult for this generation and the next," said Campbell at an event last week.

[Source: CNN | Kylie Atwood | July 14++]

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## **Afghan War**

### **Update 08: Afghan Military Advances Disappear With Forces Stretched Thin**





**An elite Special Forces unit conducts a clearing operation in an area under Taliban control in Kunduz**

In Kunduz, a city besieged by the Taliban, occurred an argument between Afghan security forces which erupted two miles inside Taliban-controlled territory, piercing the near-complete silence and threatening to unravel a night of modest gains in a city under siege. Around 3 a.m., a small team of elite Special Forces were halfway through an operation to retake a sliver of territory along the city's northern edge when a police unit that was ordered to establish checkpoints along the way refused to advance. "Who are you from Kabul to give us orders?" a police commander said to a Special Forces officer. "This is your territory, your city, if you don't protect it who will?" the officer replied. A compromise was eventually brokered: The operation would go no further, but the police unit would establish an outpost at the stopping point to hold the gains.

Hours later, the police fled, abandoning their checkpoint and ceding the territory back to the Taliban. An elite Special Forces unit conducts a clearing operation in an area under Taliban control in Kunduz, Afghanistan, in July 2021. For weeks, the Afghan military has struggled to hold provincial capitals such as Kunduz after losing huge swaths of the country's rural territory in a surge of Taliban attacks that came as U.S. forces withdrew and U.S. air support dropped. The Afghan air force can only provide a fraction of the coverage American warplanes once gave, so Afghan ground forces are used to fill the void.

But the capabilities of those ground forces are uneven, resulting in government advances that often rapidly evaporate. Experienced and motivated elite units are leading the battle to retake territory, but the troops called up to secure those gains - the army, police and irregular fighters - have intermediate to no training and inconsistent support, and they are generally less inclined to fight. The elite special forces unit, known as the KKA or Afghan Special Unit, that leads many of the clearing operations in Kunduz includes some of the country's most capable and motivated soldiers. The United States and NATO trained the unit to conduct important, dangerous missions: night raids against specific targets such as suspected Taliban commanders, weapons depots or supply chains.

These are the fighters that most closely reflect President Joe Biden's characterization of the country's military, equipped with "all the tools, training and equipment of any modern military." Yet Afghanistan's Special Forces represent less than a fifth of the country's security forces. Before the dispute put a stop to their advance, the Afghan Special Forces' operation earlier this month moved quickly and with precision. First Lt. Abdullah Ansari, 30, led the team retaking territory house by house. His small unit set out on foot, slipping through the darkness in silence, motioning commands only visible through the night-vision goggles attached to their helmets. As they moved, they scanned alleyways and gardens covered in grape trellises, and climbed through abandoned buildings.

"What's happening, what's up there?" Ansari called out. In one of the houses, the soldiers found a family, some of the few civilians who remained in the area. "Please don't, please don't," a woman pleaded. "You, young boy, come over here!" Ansari called. One of the other soldiers said the young man

was old enough to be a member of the Taliban. “He’s so young,” the mother said, begging. “My heart would ache, I’m a mother, don’t you have a mother?” Ansari called intelligence officers to the house to interrogate the family before moving on. As the operation progressed, Ansari marked each block as cleared on a satellite mapping app on his phone, the screen brightness as low as possible to protect against Taliban snipers. When he found out the next morning that the police had fled their checkpoint, he said he “felt like everything was for nothing.”

At checkpoints marking Kunduz’s front line, police units rejected accusations that they often run from Taliban attacks. But the city’s police chief was blunter. “We are being asked to perform a job that we were not trained to do,” Zabardast Safi said. “My men have been pulled into fighting a war. This is not their responsibility. That is for the Afghan army.” Ansari said the debacle on Kunduz’s northern edge made him miss working with U.S. troops, when his missions felt meaningful. “Now everything is just messy,” he said.

For residents of Kunduz and other contested provinces, “messy” Afghan military operations have meant a drawn-out conflict that has caused civilian casualties to spike, according to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, and forced tens of thousands of Afghans to flee their homes. “The fighting was quick before,” said Ghusuldin Muhammadi, 62, who fled into the city from his home on the outskirts when the Taliban overran Kunduz city in 2016 and again in 2018. Both times, a heavy barrage of U.S. airstrikes helped Afghan forces push back the militants in a matter of days. This time, the battle has stretched into its fourth week.

- “We don’t know when our neighborhood will become secure,” Muhammadi said. For the past three weeks, he and his family have been living in a shelter made of tree branches and worn cloth.
- “For both sides, we are just like wood to keep the fire burning,” he said when asked whom he holds responsible for the massive displacement in his province and elsewhere in the country.

This new phase of the Afghan conflict, which comes as U.S. officials say the withdrawal is 95 percent complete, has also seen an increase in the use of artillery in urban areas, according to civilians and security officials in Kunduz.

The central hospital in Kunduz has been flooded by victims of the violence, at times overwhelming the staffing and equipment. Abdulrahman, a 14-year-old who goes by a single name, lost his left hand at the wrist when a mortar he claimed was from a nearby Afghan army base landed beside him earlier this month. Weeks later he was still confined to a hospital bed, being treated for shrapnel wounds to his head and stomach. “I didn’t hear any sound or explosion, I just remember opening my eyes and seeing dust and smoke,” Abdulrahman said. He said he was gathering wheat when the blasts hit. “I realized my head was hurt and my hand was gone. That’s when the second mortar hit.”

Abdulrahman has grown up in Kunduz and is accustomed to the sound of gunfire and other clashes, but he said mortar fire never landed so close to his home. Unable to eat for days, Abdulrahman grew faint as he spoke. “The Taliban say they are trying to capture the city, but for what?” he said. Tears streamed down his face as he shifted from anger to sadness. “All of this is just killing people.” The province’s central health department has recorded nearly 700 injured civilians since Taliban fighters began their push on Kunduz. The majority suffered from gunshot and shrapnel wounds, according to health department records.

A few days after the night mission, government forces prepared for a second operation on the city’s edge. The goal was the same - strengthen the provincial capital’s security perimeter - but the scope larger. Multiple police, army, intelligence and local militia units would take part, dividing into two teams

operating at the same time in different neighborhoods. A day of planning secured air support and lines of communication and allowed the different security force branches to swap coordinates. At a final meeting, half a dozen commanders met in the garden of small police outpost to compare satellite maps on smartphones over cigarettes, tea and energy drinks.

Ansari radioed to his commanding officer. Everyone was sweating from the sudden sprint and adrenaline rush. “It was friendly fire,” Ansari said, muttering a string of expletives. Ansari said Afghan army soldiers at a nearby base mistook them for Taliban and opened fire. “This is a cancer! There is no coordination!” Ansari said, exasperated. The one injury was minor: A soldier’s left arm had been grazed by a bullet. After holding in place as another argument erupted over the radio, the entire operation was called off. A local spokesman for the Afghan army in Kunduz, Abdul Hadi Nazari, said he was unaware of the incident. “There is no discipline, no support, so it feels like nobody cares about us,” Ansari said. “It’s like everything is just for nothing.” [Source: The Washington Post | Susannah George | July 24, 2021 ++]

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## Will

### Update 06: Which Type Is Right for You?



Coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic, wills are on the minds of many people. Just among 18- to 34-year-olds, the number of [wills increased 63%](#) last year, according to [Caring.com](#), and for the first time, that group is even more likely to have one than 35- to 54-year-olds. “Everyone should have a will, even in the simple form. It avoids confusion and can specify who you want to take care of a pet, for example, if you should die,” says Karen Bussen, founder and chief executive at [Farewelling](#). But what type is needed varies — married couples can file a joint will, a mutual will, or mirror wills, for instance. How do you know which is right? “It really depends on your assets, whether you have children, and a few other factors,” Bussen says.

#### Simple Will

For most single people without a lot of assets, beneficiaries, or other complications, this is the go-to. “By far the most common type of will,” Bussen calls it. “This is a typewritten document that is signed by witnesses and often notarized — not always required. It can be changed or rewritten at any point. One reason for its popularity is that it’s just the most well-known option. You can create this type of will simply, even online, and in some cases for free.”

#### Joint Will

A joint will is shared by a married couple, and is best for spouses whose wishes align so well that neither will want something different in the event one dies long before the other. Typically, joint wills are set up so when one spouse dies, everything goes to the other; when that spouse dies, everything gets carried out in the way they had agreed. These are simple and cheap, but “the downside is their inflexibility — it can be impossible to make changes to this type of will, even after one of the partners dies,” Bussen says. Due to their binding, irrevocable nature, states such as Florida and Wisconsin don’t allow these for residents.

### **Mutual Will**

A mutual will is similar to a joint will, but with identical documents — one for each spouse and a third signed by both parties committing their estate to their spouse. They’re often used by couples in their later years who agree on what to do with their assets even when there are children or other beneficiaries from a previous marriage. “Generally, there is a second agreement where [partners] agree not to revoke them without the agreement of the other,” says [Sherri M. Stinson](#), a lawyer in Palm Harbor, Florida, referring to the separate copies of a mutual will.

### **Mirror Will**

The best solution for a married couple is a mirror will — though these can also be used by siblings, business partners, or other pairs. So called because they mirror each other, these documents still allow each party to change their will without the other person’s permission. Often this happens if a couple splits up and remarries, or if one spouse dies first and the other remarries, Stinson says.

### **Holographic Will**

Some people still like handwritten documents. If this is you, check this out: a holographic will is simply a handwritten will. “If they are prepared in accordance with locally applicable law, then they are entitled to the same legal statute as any other will,” says Patrick Schmitt, co-founder and co-CEO of [FreeWill](#), of the holographic approach. While they sound cheaper and easier than bringing in a lawyer, holographic wills are generally discouraged by experts. “It’s easy to make mistakes or leave contradictory and ambiguous wishes. Additionally, holographic wills are not legal in roughly half of the country,” Schmitt says.

### **Nuncupative Will**

This is an oral will, generally used when someone is too sick or injured to put something in writing but wants to assign property to someone else. However, watch out with this one. “The majority of states do not recognize these, and those that do only allow them in certain circumstances,” such as an active emergency, Stinson says. (Schmitt expands on that: “Nuncupative wills are often created by soldiers in active combat or sailors on the high seas.”) Wills composed under stress make it more likely there will be a mistake or oversight, resulting in legal confusion. In some cases, they “won’t even be admitted for consideration” by a court, Bussen says.

### **Deathbed Will**

A deathbed will can be oral or written, but — being holographic or nuncupative in nature — are rife with potential problems. “They may or may not meet the requirements for a valid will and are often challenged by family members if the will is a substantial departure from a prior estate plan,” Stinson says.

### **Digital Will**

The forward-thinking who expect to have time to redo their wills can keep their eyes on the all-digital approach. It’s not an officially recognized form yet in most states, but is predicted to be within the next few

years. Digital wills are "created, executed, and witnessed electronically, then stored in a digital format," Schmitt says.

### **Trusts**

For singles with enough assets, beneficiaries, and other financial complications that a simple will won't do, or married people for whom those issues may be doubled, many wills operate in conjunction with a trust — an estate planning tool designed to protect assets and ensure they get to the right people.

Wills go into effect only when you die; a trust is active while you're alive. "A major advantage of using a living trust is that the property it holds doesn't have to pass through [the legal probate process] before your beneficiaries receive it. This may save your loved one time and money because probate can sometimes last many months, or even years, and involve significant court and attorney's fees," Schmitt says. Trusts take some maintenance: You have to transfer assets into them as you gain more throughout your life, so any property you own at the time of your death that didn't make it in will have to go through probate after all "and be distributed according to your will."

### **Pour-Over Will**

If you have a trust, you may have to look into one of these as well. Did some assets not make it into a trust before a death? A pour-over will cleans up those assets — called "pour-over" assets — and so are never used without a trust. Schmitt suggests it's just as useful to think of this form of will as a safety net.

### **Living Will**

A living will has nothing to do with property. "It's about your wishes if you should become medically incapacitated while you're alive. It may include or be attached to a health care proxy, which designates someone to make decisions on your behalf," Bussen says. Take note: Each state has different regulations around living wills.

[Source: Cheapism | Raechel Conover | June 29, 2021 ++]

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## **Confederate Monument Controversy**

### **Update 02: Bust to Be Removed From Tennessee Capitol**



A decades long effort to remove a bust of a Confederate general and early Ku Klux Klan leader from the Tennessee Capitol cleared its final hurdle Thursday, with state leaders approving the final vote needed to allow the statue to be relocated to a museum. The seven-member State Building Commission voted 5-2 to remove the Nathan Bedford Forrest bust as well as the busts of two other Tennessee military leaders.

The Forrest bust was first installed at the Capitol in 1978 and has sparked protests and demonstrations ever since. Some have called for adding more historical context to the bust, but others, including Gov. Bill Lee recently, fought to have it moved to the state's history museum. Tennessee's Black legislative caucus has been particularly vocal about how painful it has been to walk by the bust, displayed prominently between the House and Senate chamber, as they carry out their work each day.

"Much like this bust symbolizes the pain and suffering of slavery and terror, removing the likeness of Nathan Bedford Forrest from a place of honor in Tennessee's Capitol is a symbol for much needed reconciliation," said Sen. Raamesh Akbari, a Black lawmaker from Memphis and the Senate's Democratic caucus chairwoman. "No doubt we have work to do to achieve equality and justice for all people, but today's vote shows that progress is possible," she said. Forrest was a Confederate cavalry general who amassed a fortune before the Civil War as a plantation owner and slave trader in Memphis. After the war, he was a leader of the Klan, which terrorized Black people as it sought to reverse Reconstruction efforts and restore white supremacy.

Earlier this year, Tennessee's Historical Commission voted 25-1 to move the three busts just north of the Capitol building to the state's museum, noting it was better equipped to furnish the appropriate historical context. However, the Statehouse's top Republican leaders argued that the bust could not be removed without approval from the State Building Commission. House Speaker Cameron Sexton and Senate Speaker Randy McNally both expressed disappointment with Thursday's outcome. "No one is arguing that Forrest is not a problematic figure. He is. But there is more to his story. His life eventually followed a redemptive arc which I hope is outlined in great detail in our state museum," McNally said in a statement, adding that the vote signaled that some advocates will likely find another monument to "demand that we again kneel at the altar of political correctness."

The GOP-controlled General Assembly has refused for years to advance legislation calling for the bust's removal. However, momentum shifted when Lee changed positions and called for moving the bust out of the Capitol in 2020 amid national outcry over the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minnesota. Floyd's death sparked a new push to remove Confederate symbols, including the Forrest bust. Lee's position was markedly different than when he first came into elected office in 2018, arguing that "the Ku Klux Klan is a part of our history that we're not proud of in Tennessee, and we need to be reminded of that and make certain that we don't forget it. So I wouldn't advocate to remove" the bust. [Source: Associated Press | Kimberlee Kruesi | July 22, 2021 ++]

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## **Women Rights**

### **Things a Woman Couldn't Do In 1971**

For those who turn up their noses at the words feminists and feminism or scoff that feminism is a dirty and utterly pointless word please read this and realize the following list is of NINE things a woman couldn't do in 1971 – yes the date is correct 1971. In 1971 a woman could not:



1. **Get a Credit Card in her own name** – it wasn't until 1974 that a law forced credit card companies to issue cards to women without their husband's signature.
2. **Be guaranteed that they wouldn't be unceremoniously fired for the offense of getting pregnant** – that changed with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978.
3. **Serve on a jury** - It varied by state (Utah deemed women fit for jury duty way back in 1879), but the main reason women were kept out of jury pools was that they were considered the center of the home, which was their primary responsibility as caregivers. They were also thought to be too fragile to hear the grisly details of crimes and too sympathetic by nature to be able to remain objective about those accused of offenses. In 1961, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a Florida law that exempted women from serving on juries. It wasn't until 1973 that women could serve on juries in all 50 states.
4. **Fight on the front lines** – admitted into military academies in 1976 it wasn't until 2013 that the military ban on women in combat was lifted. Prior to 1973 women were only allowed in the military as nurses or support staff.
5. **Get an Ivy League education** - Yale and Princeton didn't accept female students until 1969. Harvard didn't admit women until 1977 (when it merged with the all-female Radcliffe College). Brown (which merged with women's college Pembroke), Dartmouth and Columbia did not offer admission to women until 1971, 1972 and 1981, respectively. Other case-specific instances allowed some women to take certain classes at Ivy League institutions (such as Barnard women taking classes at Columbia), but by and large, women in the '60s who harbored Ivy League dreams had to put them on hold.
6. **Take legal action against workplace sexual harassment.** Indeed the first time a court recognized office sexual harassment as grounds for any legal action was in 1977.
7. **Decide not to have sex if their husband wanted to** – spousal rape wasn't criminalized in all 50 states until 1993. Read that again...1993.
8. **Obtain health insurance at the same monetary rate as a man.** Sex discrimination wasn't outlawed in health insurance until 2010 and today many, including sitting elected officials at the Federal level, feel women don't mind paying a little more. Again, that date was 2010.
9. **Also, take the birth control pill:** Issues like reproductive freedom and a woman's right to decide when and whether to have children were only just beginning to be openly discussed in the 1960s. In 1957, the FDA approved of the birth control pill but only for "severe menstrual distress." In 1960, the pill was approved for use as a contraceptive. Even so, the pill was illegal in some states and could be prescribed

only to married women for purposes of family planning, and not all pharmacies stocked it. Some of those opposed said oral contraceptives were immoral, promoted prostitution and were tantamount to abortion. It wasn't until several years later that birth control was approved for use by all women, regardless of marital status. In short, birth control meant a woman could complete her education, enter the work force and plan her own life.

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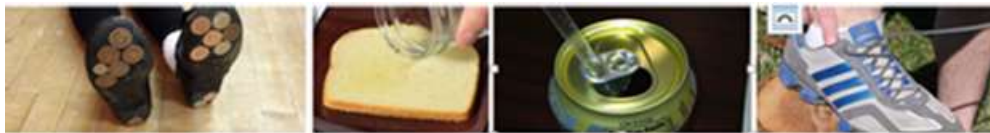
Oh, and one more thing, prior to 1880 which is just a few years before the above photo of this very proud lady was taken, the age of consent for sex was set at 10 or 12 in more states, with the exception of Delaware – where it was 7 YEARS OLD! [Source: Chico Women's Club | June 23, 2019 ++]

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## Hacks & Gadgets

### Update 04: 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!



#### Keep Your Kids Entertained By Gluing Coins To Their Shoes

Parenting is the hardest but most rewarding job in the world. Knowing how tough it can be, especially in times like we are living in, it can never hurt to try new things. They are calling his life hack “pennies for entertainment”. We all know how restless kids can be, especially when they are stuck inside all day. Next time you find yourself with some crazy kids and no idea what to do, glue some coins to their shoes. This will have them tapping away and having fun (for a little while at least). You can also use this to help keep your child focused on getting ready. The sound of the pennies will keep their focus on the task at hand while keeping it fun.

#### Pom-Poms on Winter Hats

For those in cold-weather climates and those without hair, winter hats are a necessity. But have you ever wondered why so many of them have a fluffy ball or pom-pom on top? Naturally, the origin of this fashion feature can be traced back to Scandinavia, where it's practically winter year round. Anyway, the pom-pom may have been put there initially as a way to gather the seams together during a time before knitting was common. Over the past several centuries, many types of headgear have had pom-poms or similar features. For whatever reason, having a pom-pom at the top of a hat has been popular throughout history. One generation after another, people seem to take a liking to it.

#### Use Bread Soaked In Vinegar as a Deodorizer



We have all dealt with this problem before, you go to throw out some garbage and as soon as you lift the lid you are hit with a wall of terrible smells. Disgusting! Then you try and clean it with sprays you can buy from the supermarket, but those don't really help. Now your garbage will smell like chemicals and rotting food. Luckily, there's a better solution and you likely have the items in your house already. All you need to do is take a piece of bread (stale one is even better) and soak it in some plain old distilled vinegar. Throw it in the bottom of any garbage can overnight, then in the morning toss it away. All the nasty smells will be gone!

### **Dish Soap Used In the Toilet**

With endless products claiming they can make your toilet look brand new, it can be hard to sift through them all and figure out which one to buy. Rather than spending money and time wasted, there's something in your house already that you can use. And it's not what you might think. Dish soap is the answer you've been looking for. And it couldn't be any simpler to use. Take 1/4 cup of dish soap + 1/4 cup of baking soda + 1/4 cup of water. Mix them together, then pour them into the toilet. Stir the solution, then let it sit overnight. The next morning, do a light scrub and your toilet will look brand new! You can also use dish soap to unclog a toilet without a plunger. Simply put 1 cup of soap into your toilet, let it sit for 30 mins. Then take hot water and pour it into the bowl. The clog will be gone.

### **Soda Can Tab**

If you've ever popped open a can of soda, you're surely familiar with the tab at the top of the can. Also, if you're like most people, this tab has probably annoyed you at one point or another, especially if it becomes detached and then falls into the can with the rest of the liquid. As it turns out, you haven't been using the tab properly. As it turns out, the tab on soda cans was designed to be flipped over again and used as a holder for your straw. Who knew, right? Obviously, most of us don't use straws to drink from cans because they're usually so flimsy inside the can. Isn't that why they started giving cans a wider mouth a few years back? But if you think about it, using the tab to hold your straw in place makes perfect sense.

### **Black Grating in Microwave**

Let's be honest, how many people have ever taken a close up look at their microwave? Probably not too many of us. If you have, you may have noticed the black grating on the microwave door. This is called a Faraday shield, and it's not an aesthetic choice, it's super important. The Faraday shield is in place to prevent electromagnetic fields from leaving the microwave and causing harm to people who are waiting for their hot pocket to heat up. Without it, not only would your safety be at risk, but the microwave wouldn't be effective in cooking your food. So, next time you complain about not being able to see inside the microwave, remember that there's an important reason why that's the case.

### **Extra Holes in Sneakers**

Unless someone else ties your shoelaces for you, there's no way you haven't noticed the extra unused holes at the top of your shoes. It's not a design flaw; in fact, the extra holes are there for your benefit. People who get blisters on their feet or can feel their feet moving around inside their shoe can place their shoelaces in those extra holes but in the opposite direction. This creates a loop on each side, allowing you to cross your laces inside each loop. Then you pull down on the laces to create a much tighter lock before tying your laces normally. This maneuver is called the "lace lock" or "heel lock" and it helps ensure that your shoes remain tight to your feet.

### **Golf Ball Dimples**

The term golf ball is actually misleading because they technically aren't round. If you've ever seen one up close, you'll notice that the outside of golf balls are filled with dozens of little dimples. This wasn't always the case, but over time, savvy golfers noticed that older balls with bumps and nicks would travel further. These imperfections actually create turbulence in the air surrounding the ball, which helps to reduce drag. Eventually, golf balls were designed with these dimples as a way to manufacture this turbulence so that balls get more lift and reach greater distances. Unfortunately, if your game is putt-putt, the dimples on a golf ball aren't going to do much to help you. But they are a big reason why professional players these days can hit the ball so much further than players of past generations.

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

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## Food Leftovers

### Update 01: 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 are 18 more items you should keep an eye on once you've placed them in the fridge. For additional items check out [www.eatbydate.com](http://www.eatbydate.com).

**Orange Juice in Cartons** - Time: 7 to 10 days; 8 to 12 months frozen

Tropicana wants to sell you a whole lot of orange juice. That said, it also wants you to enjoy the orange juice you buy, and therefore suggests refrigerating its carton products and further suggests not leaving it unrefrigerated for more than 3 hours.

**Fruit Punch/Juice in Cartons** - Time: 8 to 12 days

Not every fruit punch or juice needs refrigeration, according to the FDA app. Some can be kept in the pantry for 3 weeks before opening and even 7 to 12 days after opening, and 8 to 12 days if refrigerated. Consumers should check the container labels for "Refrigerate After Opening" or "Keep Refrigerated" to know which products need to be refrigerated.

**Butter** - Time: 1 to 2 months

Foodies say don't refrigerate butter because it hardens it, deadens the flavor, and because the Europeans don't do it that way. Plus, it's mostly fat, pasteurized milk and, in most cases, salt. That said, if you leave out more butter than you can reasonably use in a week, it still runs the risk of contamination. Leave out what you'll use, but know that it can freeze for 6 to 9 months.

**Hard Cheeses** - Time: 6 months sealed, 3 to 4 weeks opened

Does it need to be refrigerated? No, they'll actually travel well without refrigeration and will freeze for 6 to 9 months. But they'll last longer if refrigerated, so your timetable for devouring the cheese will determine just how long it requires refrigeration.

**Shredded Cheese** - Time: 1 month; freeze for 3 to 4 months

Pasteurization and salt again come into play here and provide for a lengthy life in the fridge. This FDA guideline applies to mozzarella, cheddar, and other shredded cheeses.

**Soft Cheese** - Time: 1 to 2 weeks

Folks who love brie and camembert know that they'll get maybe a week in the fridge before they start to grey and get a distinct whiff of ammonia. Cream cheese, meanwhile, will sprout all sorts of lovely mold if it isn't used within a week or so. If you won't get to use either for a while, the FDA says they'll freeze for 6 months.

**Yogurt** - Time: 1 to 2 weeks

Unless you're using a tub of it, yogurt is typically kept in small servings that you shouldn't have to keep as leftovers. Once you open a small yogurt, though, Stonyfield Farm notes you have about 1 day to eat it even if refrigerated. That jumps to about a week if it's a large tub. If you need to keep yogurt longer, don't open it. Instead freeze it for 1 to 2 months.

**Fresh Eggs** - Time: 3 to 5 weeks

Some NPR listener will tell you that the U.S. is one of the few countries in the world that refrigerate eggs. Then again, most countries vaccinate their chickens against salmonella and don't wash a protective cuticle that would otherwise ward off bacteria. Meanwhile, this is one of the few foods that will keep in your fridge for more than a month.

**Egg Yolks or Whites** - Time: 2 to 4 days

The Canadians suggest placing both in an airtight container for later use. However, the FDA notes that the best solution for long-term storage is either to beat yolks and whites together to freeze them or ditching the yolks, which don't freeze well, and freezing the whites.

**Cooked Eggs** - Time: 3 to 4 days

We aren't talking about hard-cooked eggs, which get about a week in the fridge and don't freeze. Here, we mean egg dishes like casseroles or quiches. Those same dishes will last up to 3 months frozen.

**Opened Liquid Eggs/Egg Substitute** - Time: 3 days

Unopened, egg substitute can last 10 days, or freeze for up to a year. Once opened, however, that clock ticks down quickly and the carton can't be refrozen.

**Egg, Chicken, Tuna, Ham, or Macaroni Salads** - Time: 3 to 5 days

Leaving any of the above out for more than 2 hours in hot weather is courting food poisoning. However, if you handle any of the above well and refrigerate right after serving, you should be fine.

**Milk** - Time: 7 to 10 days

While there are several techniques used in other countries and still in development here that can extend the life of milk, common pasteurized milk is good for about a week. That extends to 3 months if that same milk is frozen.

**Pre-Stuffed Pork & Lamb Chops, Chicken Breasts** - Time: 1 day

If you have a meal of pre-stuffed meat that was prepared at the store, you'd best eat the rest for lunch the next day. The FDA says it's about the least-stable refrigerated leftover you can have.

**Store-Cooked Meals** - Time: 3 to 4 days

Just about any take-home meal you buy from a supermarket deli counter falls into this category. Approach those sandwiches with caution.

**Raw Hamburger** - Time: 1 to 2 days

If you're using raw hamburger to make a meal and have some left over, don't stick it in the fridge unless you plan to use it the next day. As the FDA notes, you're better off putting it in the freezer, where it will last for 3 to 4 months.

**Ground Turkey, Veal, Pork, or Lamb** - Time: 1 to 2 days

The type of animal doesn't matter: Ground meat keeps best when you freeze it. These get the same 3 to 4 months as raw hamburger.

**Cooked Ham** - Time: 7 days whole, 3 to 5 days half or sliced

You could turn that into nearly a week of ham sandwiches, or the FDA notes that you can freeze any of the above for 1 to 2 months and take it out as you make ham omelets, pea soup with ham, etc.

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

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## Vocabulary

### Some Words to Enhance Yours | 210801

- **Aggrandize** [ ag-ruhn-dahyz ] to make something appear greater,
- **Bombastic** [ bom-bas-tik ] high-sounding; high-flown; inflated; pretentious.
- **Brusque** [ bruhs-k ] abrupt in manner; blunt; rough.
- **Burgeon** [ bur-juhn ] begin to grow or increase rapidly; flourish.
- **Cavil** [ kav-uhl ] to raise irritating and trivial objections; find fault with unnecessarily
- **Eucatastrophe** [ yoo-kuh-ta-struh-fee ] a sudden and favorable resolution of events in a story; a happy ending.
- **Gloaming** [ gloh-ming ] twilight; dusk.
- **Monocracy** [ moh-nok-ruh-see ] government by only one person; autocracy.
- **Morass** [ muh-ras ] a complicated or confused situation.
- **Rapprochement** [ rap-rohsh-mahn ] an establishment or resumption of harmonious relations.
- **Rigmarole** [ rig-muh-rohl ] confused, incoherent, foolish, or meaningless talk
- **Sashay** [ sa-shey ] to glide, move, or proceed easily or nonchalantly.
- **Sepulchral** [ suh-puhl-kruhl ] gloomy; dismal.
- **Soliloquy** [ suh-lil-uh-kwee ] an utterance or discourse by a person who is talking to himself or herself or is disregarding or oblivious to any hearers present.
- **Venial** [ veen-l ] willing to sell one's influence, especially in return for a bribe; open to bribery; mercenary.

- Which word best matches this example sentence? The group huddled together as they walked through the old graveyard, noting the \_\_\_\_\_ atmosphere.

*Eldritch – Lethargic – Roust – Galimatias*

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## Airline Logic

### Baggage



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## News of the Weird

**JUL 16 thru 31, 2021**

**You Talk Too Much** – Long-shot candidate for U.S. Congress William Braddock perhaps overshared on a 30-minute phone call with a conservative activist before he became a candidate, Politico reported on June 17. Braddock, vying to represent the Tampa Bay, Florida, area, told Erin Olszewski that fellow candidate Anna Paulina Luna wouldn't be a problem because he would send "a Russian and Ukrainian hit squad" to make her "disappear." "I really don't want to have to end anybody's life for the good of the people of the United States of America," Braddock said, adding "... if the poll says Luna's gonna win, she's gonna be gone. For the good of our country, we have to sacrifice the few."

Braddock described his hit squad as "No snipers. Up close and personal. So they know that the target is gone." Olszewski turned the recordings over to police, saying, "Normal people don't say those things." [Politico, 6/17/2021]

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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 June 17. 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]

**o-o-O-o-o-**

**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 June 16 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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**Creme de la Weird** – An arrest warrant was issued 8 JUL in Little Rock, Arkansas, for Brian Dale Reams, 32, in connection with several incidents where he allegedly approached women and asked if he could touch their feet -- with a curious twist, KATV reported. In Conway, Arkansas, a woman said a man with no arms followed her into a Walmart last September, telling her she had pretty feet and asking if she liked having people touch them. Later he began harassing her on Facebook. In June, a second woman said a man matching the same description (but wearing a face mask with "Brian" written on it) followed her around the same Walmart and wondered if she'd let him give her a foot massage. He apparently didn't explain how that might work. A third woman identified Reams after viewing screenshots of his Facebook account; he approached her in a Kroger store. [KATV, 7/15/2021]

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**Smooth Reaction** – When Fort Worth, Texas, code compliance officers arrived at a home at around 8:30 a.m. on July 16 to issue a violation for too-high grass, the homeowner did not answer the door. But when mowers hired by the city showed up and started cutting the grass, the person inside began shooting at them, KDFW-TV reported. The police officers who had accompanied the compliance team took cover and waited for backup; the person inside continued shooting until SWAT units arrived and shot tear gas into the home. The shooter was taken into custody at about 1 p.m.; the citation was his seventh in two years. "Being shot at for trying to make the community look better?" said Fort Worth officer Jimmy Pollozani. "That just proves the dangers of this job." The man was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. [KDFW, 7/17/2021]

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**Say What?** – The Guardian reported on 19 JUL about a phenomenon among American preschoolers called the Peppa Effect. The hypothesis is that children who watched a lot of "Peppa Pig" during the pandemic lockdown have developed British accents and started using British terms like "mummy" (mommy), "give it a go" (try it) and "satnav" (GPS). Wall Street Journal reporter Preetika Rana tweeted that her niece "had an American accent before the pandemic. Now she has a posh English accent." One responder agreed: "And for Christmas I had to put out a freaking mince pie for Father Christmas, or, as we call him here in the States, Santa Claus." [Guardian, 7/19/2021]

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**Florida** – Parents of students who attend Sallie Jones Elementary School in Punta Gorda, Florida, are considering taking matters into their own hands after police have failed to stop a man from standing outside

the school, waving swastika flags and screaming profanities as they pick up and drop off their kids. "I think it's inappropriate, and I want to put an end to it," said parent Adam Ackerman. WINK News reported that Punta Gorda police can't arrest the man because he hasn't broken the law; a city ordinance prohibits signs with obscene language or symbols, but apparently swastikas aren't considered obscene by law. "I think the people that can get it done [are] the people right here," Ackerman said. "Let's put an end to it in some way, shape or form." Stay tuned. [WINK News, 7/21/2021]

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

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## Have You Heard or Seen?

### Rules of Combat 1 | Freedom Isn't Free | Think Toons

#### Rules of Combat/Survival - 1

Following are 20 of the ones they never taught you:

1. All five-second grenade fuses are three seconds.
2. Anything you do can get you shot, including doing nothing.
3. Beer math means that 2 beers times 37 soldiers equals 49 cases.
4. Don't look conspicuous, it draws fire.
5. Friendly fire isn't.
6. Guided missiles aren't.
7. If it's stupid but it works, it's not stupid.
8. If the enemy is within range, so are you.
9. If you are forward of your position, your artillery will be short.
10. If you are short of everything except the enemy, you are in combat.
11. If you can't remember, the claymore mine is pointed towards you.
12. If you have a secured area, don't forget to tell the enemy.
13. If you make it too tough for the enemy to get in, you can't get out.
14. If you take more than your share of objectives you will be assigned more objectives to take.
15. Incoming fire has the right of way.
16. Never draw fire; it irritates everyone around you.
17. Never share a foxhole with anyone braver than you are.
18. No combat-ready unit has ever passed inspection.
19. No inspection ready unit has survived combat.
20. No operation plan survives the first contact intact.

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#### Freedom Isn't Free

Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

- Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died.
- Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.
- Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured.

- Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.
- They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

What kind of men were they?

- Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists.
- Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners; men of means, well-educated, but they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.
- Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in rags.
- Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.
- Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.
- At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.
- Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.
- John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his grist-mill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished.

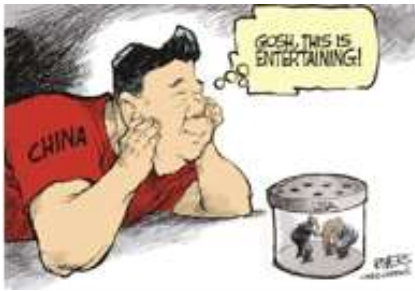
So, take a few minutes and silently thank these patriots. Remember: freedom is not and was never free! We need to thank these early patriots, in prayers, words, and deeds, as well as those patriots that are now still fighting to keep our freedom! We owe it to them to proclaim our patriotism now.

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### Think Toons







### Thought of the Week

“If you let your head get too big, it’ll break your neck.”  
 — *Elvis Presley*

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**RAO Bulletin Editor/Publisher:**

Lt. James "EMO" Tichacek, USN (Ret) Tel: (858) 842-1111 Email: [raoemo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:raoemo@sbcglobal.net) or [raoemo77@gmail.com](mailto:raoemo77@gmail.com)

**RAO Baguio Director:**

SSgt Terrance (Terry) Parker, USAF (Ret), PSC 517 Box 4107, FPO AP 96517-1000, Tel: Smart 0921824728 or Globe 09454073380, Email: [rao.dir.baguio@gmail.com](mailto:rao.dir.baguio@gmail.com)

**RAO Baguio Office:** Mountain Lodge, 27 Leonard Wood Road, Baguio City, 2600 Philippines

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