

RAO BULLETIN

1 September 2021

PDF Edition



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

* DoD *



Arlington National Cemetery

Update 95: Burial Rules Proposal Breaks Promise to Retirees

Imagine you are an 80-year-old who served over 30 years of active military service — with the literal battle scars to prove it — having made plans to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. You and your family made these plans because a burial, with the appropriate honors is what the military promised you when you joined AND when you retired. Now as you and your family think about how and where your life and sacrifice to our nation are to be honored — you discover your end of life plans are null and void. (Even worse — your family finds out after you are gone.)

That's the scenario that will play out for military retirees if the Army is successful in denying burial benefits for retirees at Arlington. The changes proposed will render those who honorably served 20 or more years ineligible for in-ground burial and the military honors currently afforded to retirees at Arlington. It seems bizarre that the Army is proposing to eliminate Arlington burial benefits for veterans alive today in order to benefit those who have yet to serve one day in uniform — but that is exactly what is before the Congress. Equally disturbing is that the Army's move to eliminate Arlington burials for retired veterans is unknown to nearly all retirees. Although retirees receive regular and frequent communications from Defense Finance and Accounting Service — as well as their respective services — there has been no notice to retirees or their families that their end of life plans are about to be upended.

Burial space at Arlington is limited. Without some adjustment in eligibility it may run out in 2055. The question then is who will be afforded this limited space. The answer may seem obvious. Amazingly, the Department of the Army has proposed and put before Congress regulations to break the promise made to military retirees. Without a strong message from retirees, their families and those who believe the military should keep its promise to honor and bury those who have spent 20 plus years in the service of our nation — Congress will no doubt adopt the Department of the Army's recommendation.

An alternative recommendation is to adopt the Army's proposal with one modification — those who are currently receiving retired pay would retain their eligibility to be buried at Arlington, as well as those who meet the newly proposed criteria for burial. The time is now for those who care to contact their Representative and Senators and ask them to keep the military's promise and allow retirees to be buried at

Arlington. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Robin B. Umberg & Thomas J. Umberg (Opinion) | August 16, 2021
++]

Secretary of the Navy

Update 02: 78th SECNAV Confirmed



On 8 AUG, the U.S. Senate confirmed businessman and former Navy officer **Carlos Del Toro** as the 78th Secretary of the Navy. Del Toro takes over from Acting Secretary Thomas Harker, and he will be the seventh person in four years to occupy the service's top civilian post. Del Toro, who retired with the rank of commander after a 22-year career in the Navy, served as the first commanding officer of the destroyer USS Bulkeley. He deployed to the Persian Gulf three times during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and he served aboard a frigate, two destroyers, a cruiser and an aircraft carrier over the span of his time in the service. His shore tours included time as a program manager with Naval Warfare Information Systems Command and the National Reconnaissance Office.

By background, he was born in Havana and immigrated to the United States with his parents at an early age; he is the second Latino and the first Cuban-American to hold the post of Secretary of the Navy. In his confirmation hearing in July, Del Toro told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he would focus on modernization, and would be keeping a particularly close eye on the Indo-Pacific. "I am going to be exclusively focused on the China threat and exclusively focused in moving our maritime strategy forward in order to protect Taiwan and all of our national security interests in the Indo-Pacific theater," he said. The defense of Taiwan is a key mission, he suggested, including arms sales. "It's incredibly important to defend Taiwan in every way possible," Del Toro said. "It takes a holistic view of our national commitment to Taiwan. We should be focused on providing Taiwan with as much self-defensive measures as humanly possible."

He said that to meet these demands, he is committed to investing in the fleet to hit the Navy's 355-ship target - alongside investments in new technology. "I believe that as our nation shifts from a land-based strategy over the past 20 years fighting the wars in the Middle East to a more dominant maritime strategy in the Pacific - particularly in our efforts to deter China - I do believe that our Navy-Marine Corps team will need additional resources," he told the committee. "And I am committed - in fact that it's my responsibility - to make that case to the [Secretary of Defense] and the administration." [Source: The Maritime Executive | August 8, 2021 ++]

Nuclear Weapons Arsenal

Update 09: Biden Blasted for ‘Attempt to Scuttle’ America’s

In the wake of a 12 AUG Washington Free Beacon report, Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) hammered the Biden administration for delaying efforts to upgrade America's nuclear arsenal. Daines, who sits on the Senate Energy Committee, said in a letter obtained by the Free Beacon that the Biden administration's decision to slow the Pentagon's upgrades to American land missile systems runs afoul of military advice and makes America less safe. "This policy reversal contradicts the advice of your own experts and duplicates research already conducted by the Air Force, all while weakening our national security posture," Daines said. "I urge you to rescind this misguided directive. ... This latest development at the behest of far-left special interest groups is nothing more than a thinly-veiled attempt to scuttle the ground-based leg of the nuclear triad on ideological grounds."

Multiple sources told the Free Beacon that, after receiving a letter from left-wing Democrats led by Sens. Jeff Merkley (OR) and Elizabeth Warren (MA) the Biden administration caved to a request for an extended bureaucratic review of ground-based nuclear weapons, which critics say is nothing more than a delaying tactic. That alleged delaying tactic comes after top military officials said the United States urgently needs to upgrade nuclear missiles in the face of growing threats from China and Russia. Commercial satellite images revealed two Chinese nuclear missile silos that could each hold more than 100 missiles, and reports indicate that the Chinese are constructing a third silo.

Admiral Charles Richard, the chief of the U.S. Strategic Command, told the 2021 Space Missile and Defense Symposium that China's expansion of its nuclear stockpile is beyond "breathtaking." "China's explosive growth and modernization of its nuclear and conventional forces can only be what I describe as breathtaking. And that word, breathtaking, may not be enough," Richard said. "We are witnessing a strategic breakout." [Source: Washington Free Beacon | Jack Beyrer | August 12, 2021 ++]

Afghan Withdrawal

Update 14: Afghans Trying to Escape the Taliban



The full uncropped photo from the inside of Reach 871, a U.S. Air Force C-17 flown from Kabul to Qatar on Aug. 15.

In just a matter of days, Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport has transformed into a scene of desperation as thousands of Afghans and Americans alike try to flee the resurgent Taliban through

Afghanistan's last airborne escape route. But evacuating to the U.S. some 22,000 Afghans who risk death if they stay in a country that has swiftly fallen under Taliban rule, as well as rescuing Americans and foreign allies still in the beleaguered nation, is growing increasingly complicated. The Bagram and Kandahar airfields — former military aviation hubs for the U.S.-led coalition — are now in the hands of the Taliban. That leaves the Kabul airport's single runway as the sole remaining option for getting people to safety.

And it's happened much faster than the Biden administration anticipated. "All of our plans were predicated on the notion that we thought that the Afghans were going to be able to hold Kabul," said William Wechsler, a Middle East expert at the Atlantic Council who served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations and combating terrorism in the Obama administration. "Get everyone out that needs to get out, take them to some place where they can then be sorted through, and send some people back that ... should not have been taken out in the first place," he said. Now the U.S. and its allies must work through a unique set of challenges: securing and controlling evacuation work at the shared civilian-military airport amid chaos; vetting tens of thousands of people afraid of being left behind, and keeping the Taliban at bay.

The Biden administration should deem the effort a "noncombatant evacuation operation," which would trigger a formal set of steps for an orderly departure, Wechsler said. He suggested the U.S. and its allies may need a greater military presence at the airport to maintain control of the entire site while tens of thousands of people process through. The Pentagon estimates it can ferry about 5,000 people out of Afghanistan each day. "The forces required for the [evacuation], backed by continuous direct diplomacy with the Taliban, should be sufficient to deter any disruption of the evacuation process," Wechsler argued in an Atlantic Council post on 15 AUG.

Command and control of U.S. jets going into and out of Kabul partially falls to airmen manning the Combined Air Operations Center at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. They handle matters like scheduling the lineup of planes at the Afghan airport and coordinating the movement of air traffic, but maintaining calm and order on the ground remains outside of their purview. That struggle was made plain 16 AUG, when all air operations at the Kabul airport temporarily stopped due to security concerns posed by insurgent fighters who have gained control of the Afghan capital, as well as throngs of Afghan citizens swarming the facility in an attempt to leave.

No military or civilian aircraft could enter or exit the airport while American forces in AH-64 Apache helicopters tried to clear people from the tarmac. The single runway was mobbed as a U.S. Air Force transport jet, a C-17 Globemaster III flown by airmen from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, carved its way through the crowd. Videos showed frantic Afghans running alongside the massive aircraft, clinging to its sides and — for a tragic few — plummeting back to earth as the C-17 climbed into the sky. At least seven people died in the airport melee, the Associated Press reported Monday, citing senior U.S. military officials. American troops killed two people who were carrying weapons, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said.

Bob Holmes, a retired Air Force brigadier general who served as deputy operations director for U.S. Central Command, expressed optimism that the Marine Corps may be able to help stabilize the situation as thousands of U.S. troops deploy to Kabul. "The Marines are good at this. They know how to do expeditionary operations. They know how to command and control airfields," he told Air Force Times on Monday. "I would like to think that the Marines are somewhat able to be in charge of that." The U.S. may get some respite from an unlikely ally: The Taliban established a 2-kilometer buffer zone around the airport to keep

Afghans from rushing the building and airfield, said Joe Saboe. The former U.S. Army infantry officer who served in Iraq now acts as a spokesman for a group of former U.S. military and federal employees who are trying to help more than 50 people leave Afghanistan.

“Time needs to be on their side,” Holmes added. “The more you can do to calm things down, that’s what you’re really going to need, because minutes are precious.” Chaos will prove more restrictive to the evacuation effort than the military’s work to rally airlifters and land them in Kabul, he said. He believes it’s more important to know what to do with evacuees when they arrive and establish an orderly system for processing them. The U.S. has already evacuated 2,000 Afghans who were eligible for special immigrant visas, President Joe Biden said in a televised address 16 AUG. Biden said his administration intends to move visa-eligible Afghans, American citizens, civilian employees of allied countries, and “other vulnerable Afghans who work for our embassy” out of the country.

One stunning C-17 flight carried about 823 refugees, with children sitting on their parent’s laps, to Qatar on 15 AUG — a crowd believed to be among the largest ever flown on the Globemaster III, Defense One reported Monday. The military declined to answer a query from Air Force Times on the flight by the 436th Airlift Wing out of Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. “Panicked Afghans who had been cleared to evacuate pulled themselves onto the C-17’s half-open ramp. ... Instead of trying to force those refugees off the aircraft, ‘the crew made the decision to go,’” a military official told Defense One. Several other jets also reportedly took off with hundreds of people on board.

The flight was one of several that was able to take off with hundreds of people aboard, and some of the others may have had an even larger load than 640, the official said. In 2013, a C-17 evacuated 670 people fleeing a typhoon in the Philippines. Like that evacuation, the Afghans flown from Kabul to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, sat on the floor of the plane’s capacious hold. The procedure is known as “floor loading”; the passengers hang onto cargo straps run from wall to wall serving as makeshift seatbelts, according to a source familiar with the plane’s operating manuals.

If the U.S. tried to set up another evacuation site to ease pressure on the airport, they would need to secure and control it — but it’s unclear whether that’s possible right now, Holmes said. Then there’s the tricky logistics of getting evacuees to multiple sites. “Adding an extra departure point is only as good if you’ve got the forces in-country to now collect and deliver to two departure points, or three, or four,” he said. “You’re going to be constrained by finding these folks and getting them to whatever this departure airfield is.” Multiple federal officials declined to comment on the current state of air operations in Afghanistan. U.S. Transportation Command, Air Forces Central Command and the State Department referred questions on evacuation flights to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, which did not respond.

When asked whether aircraft that were recently dispatched for last-ditch airstrikes inside the country, including platforms like B-52 bombers and AC-130 gunships, are still operating, AFCENT spokesman Phil Ventura replied, “Out of concern for operational security, we have nothing to share ... regarding force posture at this time.” Enemy forces have so far held their fire as U.S. jets rotate in and out of Kabul. The city is flanked by mountains that stretch across much of the country and have hidden insurgents during the 20-year war, raising further security concerns about ambushes amid the withdrawal.

In a face-to-face meeting with senior insurgent leaders in Qatar 16 AUG, U.S. Central Command boss Gen. Frank McKenzie “won Taliban agreement to establish a ‘deconfliction mechanism’ — an arrangement by which evacuation operations at the airport can continue without interference by the new rulers of the

country,” The Associated Press reported. Experts who spoke to Air Force Times believe the Taliban are unlikely to renege on their agreement by firing surface-to-air missiles at transport planes. Taking foreign hostages is more likely, Wechsler said, even if the Taliban or other groups aren’t trying to interrupt the evacuation itself. “Hostage-taking is already a tool that the Taliban uses without shame,” he wrote. “A dedicated U.S. special operations team should be reinserted to move quickly to rescue such hostages if the opportunity arises.”

Holmes noted that military pilots can descend into the airfield in a way that minimizes the risk of attack — but it isn’t foolproof. “I would like to think that there would be an indication that they would not try to shoot down an aircraft,” he said. “But again, who knows? We’ve never quite gauged this enemy after 20 years.” [Source: Defense One & AirForceTimes | James Webb, Tara Copp & Marcus Weisgerber | August 16, 2021 ++]

Afghan Withdrawal

Update 15: Allied Forces Rescue Their Citizens as US Sticks to Airport



French Special Forces Soldiers stand guard near a military plane at airport in Kabul on August 17, 2021, as they arrive to evacuate French and Afghan nationals

As the Defense Department continues to stick to its plans of not reaching out into Kabul to assist U.S. personnel and Afghan helpers evacuate, British and French forces have done so to rescue their citizens, multiple outlets report. The Daily Mail reported that London deployed an additional 300 troops to Kabul specifically to extract trapped British nationals earlier in the week. Within hours of touching down in Kabul, the British troops retrieved some 200 British nationals from around Kabul, the Telegraph reported. Prompting the mission were reports of Taliban hunting down former Afghan government officials, along with Britons stuck behind a web of Taliban checkpoints lining the route to the airport.

Additionally, France 24 reports that the French military has been conducting similar operations since 16 AUG. French President Emmanuel Macron thanked French security forces on Twitter for executing a ‘sensitive operation’ which evacuated more than 200 French and Afghans. News of these operations by NATO partners in Afghanistan leaves some Americans asking for Washington to follow suit. Matt Zeller, who served in Afghanistan as an Army intelligence officer, and is now a member of the Association of Wartime Allies, a group dedicated to relocating Afghans who helped the U.S., expressed his frustration on Facebook. “Some of our NATO allies have already figured out better solutions. Some, like the French, are just going out with their Special Forces and getting their people by whatever means necessary. Mr. President, if the French can do it, so can we,” Zeller wrote.

Zeller’s frustrations stem from a chaotic scene around the HKIA that prevents potential evacuees from reaching safety. Earlier this week, Zeller told Military Times that the situation in Kabul was dire and shaping up to be worse than Saigon. “There’s total chaos at the airport, this is the absolute fiasco we all learned about, and nobody listened to,” Zeller told Military Times. “They need to then begin establishing secure corridors in Kabul, so people can get to the airport because what’s happened is the Taliban have erected checkpoints everywhere.”

On 18 AUG, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that despite the U.S. having at least 5,000 troops on the ground, he does not have the “capability” to reach out beyond HKIA. “The forces that we have are focused on the security of the airfield. And you know how important that is, and you know what happens if we — if we lose the ability to provide that security,” Austin told reporters from a podium in the Pentagon. Austin’s comments come amid reports of both British and French military units doing precisely that, pushing out into Kabul to secure the safety of their citizens. Occurring despite the Daily Mail reporting that the British contingent numbers less than 1,000 troops.

In his press conference Austin acknowledged the challenges that Taliban checkpoints present for those seeking to leave Afghanistan. However, Austin stated that the U.S. government would continue to negotiate safe passage of evacuees with the Taliban rather than take action. “We’ve gone back and tried to — and reinforce to the Taliban that if they have credentials, they need to be allowed through,” Austin said. On 19 AUG, Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby and Army Maj. Gen. William D. “Hank” Taylor, deputy director for regional operations and force management for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reiterated that the U.S. military mission in Kabul is focused solely on operations at HKIA.

Negotiating with the Taliban for safe passage is not enough for Zeller and others, particularly in light of actions taken by Britain and France. “It’s ungodly, man. F---ing sinful,” Dane Bowker, who deployed multiple times to Afghanistan, including with a Joint Special Operations Task Force, told Military Times. Zeller finished his message morning by asking the president on 19 AUG to take action, as the window to fly out both Americans and Afghans is rapidly closing. Among these actions was a request to use the U.S. troops on the ground to secure safe passage for those needing a flight out.

“The Taliban cannot be allowed to remain 100m from US Marines where they can commit atrocities in front of us knowing we will do nothing. They are thugs. We are the United States of America. Show them we won’t be bullied. Use the might of our forces to create a humanitarian corridor in Kabul — so that people can safely get to the airport without this chaos and constant Taliban interference,” Zeller wrote. [Source: AirForceTimes | James Webb | August 19, 2021 ++]

Afghan Failures

Update 05: Billions Spent On Afghan Army Ultimately Benefitted Taliban

Built and trained at a two-decade cost of \$83 billion, Afghan security forces collapsed so quickly and completely — in some cases without a shot fired — that the ultimate beneficiary of the American investment turned out to be the Taliban. They grabbed not only political power but also U.S.-supplied firepower — guns, ammunition, helicopters and more. The Taliban captured an array of modern military equipment when they overran Afghan forces who failed to defend district centers. Bigger gains followed, including combat

aircraft, when the Taliban rolled up provincial capitals and military bases with stunning speed, topped by capturing the biggest prize, Kabul, over the weekend.



Taliban fighters stand guard in front of the Hamid Karzai International Airport, in Kabul, Afghanistan, Monday, Aug. 16, 2021. Thousands of people packed into the Afghan capital's airport on Monday, rushing the tarmac and pushing onto planes in desperate attempts to flee the country after the Taliban overthrew the Western-backed government.

A U.S. defense official on 16 AUG confirmed the Taliban's sudden accumulation of U.S.-supplied Afghan equipment is enormous but not unprecedented. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and so spoke on condition of anonymity. A 2016 Pentagon audit revealed that poor record-keeping and regulations had allowed nearly half of the 1.5 million weapons provided to Iraqi and Afghan security forces since 2002 to go missing, including nearly 978,000 M4 and M16s, while a 2014 SIGAR report found that some 43 percent of weapons provided to the ANDSF likely ended up in the hands of groups like the Taliban or ISIS. There is also plenty of ammo missing from former Afghan government stockpiles.

Table 1: Quantities of Key U.S.-Funded Equipment for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, by Type and Fiscal Year, 2003–2016

Fiscal year	Communications equipment	Vehicles	Weapons	Explosive ordnance disposal equipment	Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment	Aircraft	Total
2003	497	510	0	0	0	0	1,007
2004	1,528	11	10,700	0	0	0	12,239
2005	9,340	2,503	28,913	0	0	0	40,756
2006	21,563	9,251	133,964	57	0	0	164,835
2007	3,743	2,292	126,878	81	1,205	1	134,200
2008	14,720	15,619	46,431	0	0	31	76,801
2009	21,704	7,521	59,976	468	792	7	90,468
2010	22,525	8,902	20,276	195	5,072	2	56,972
2011	47,928	21,841	27,207	2,582	3,643	59	103,260
2012	1,825	0	20	1,399	0	50	3,294
2013	6,578	139	21,114	22,383	4,992	32	55,238
2014	1,361	0	143	365	254	13	2,136
2015	4,237	5,512	43,994	1,640	233	10	55,626
2016	5,094	1,797	80,074	511	0	3	87,479
Total	162,643	75,898	599,690	29,681	16,191	208	884,311

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-17-667R

That said, not all of this captured gear will see combat again. Captured UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters the Taliban paraded on social media during the group's march on Kabul, for example, are both unflyable and outright unsustainable due to a lack of training, spare parts, and logistics required to operate such advanced equipment, as Defense One astutely [noted](#) on 13 AUG.

The reversal is an embarrassing consequence of misjudging the viability of Afghan government forces — by the U.S. military as well as intelligence agencies — which in some cases chose to surrender their vehicles and weapons rather than fight. The U.S. failure to produce a sustainable Afghan army and police force, and the reasons for their collapse, will be studied for years by military analysts. The basic dimensions,

however, are clear and are not unlike what happened in Iraq. The forces turned out to be hollow, equipped with superior arms but largely missing the crucial ingredient of combat motivation. “Money can’t buy will. You cannot purchase leadership,” John Kirby, chief spokesman for Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, said Monday.

Doug Lute, a retired Army lieutenant general who help direct Afghan war strategy during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, said that what the Afghans received in tangible resources they lacked in the more important intangibles. “The principle of war stands — moral factors dominate material factors,” he said. “Morale, discipline, leadership, unit cohesion are more decisive than numbers of forces and equipment. As outsiders in Afghanistan, we can provide materiel, but only Afghans can provide the intangible moral factors.”

By contrast, Afghanistan’s Taliban insurgents, with smaller numbers, less sophisticated weaponry and no air power, proved a superior force. U.S. intelligence agencies largely underestimated the scope of that superiority, and even after President Joe Biden announced in April he was withdrawing all U.S. troops, the intelligence agencies did not foresee a Taliban final offensive that would succeed so spectacularly. “If we wouldn’t have used hope as a course of action, ... we would have realized the rapid drawdown of U.S. forces sent a signal to the Afghan national forces that they were being abandoned,” said Chris Miller, who saw combat in Afghanistan in 2001 and was acting secretary of defense at the end of President Donald Trump’s term.

Stephen Biddle, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University and a former adviser to U.S. commanders in Afghanistan, said Biden’s announcement set the final collapse in motion. “The problem of the U.S. withdrawal is that it sent a nationwide signal that the jig is up — a sudden, nationwide signal that everyone read the same way,” Biddle said. Before April, the Afghan government troops were slowly but steadily losing the war, he said. When they learned that their American partners were going home, an impulse to give up without a fight “spread like wildfire.”

The failures, however, go back much further and run much deeper. The United States tried to develop a credible Afghan defense establishment on the fly, even as it was fighting the Taliban, attempting to widen the political foundations of the government in Kabul and seeking to establish democracy in a country rife with corruption and cronyism. Year after year, U.S. military leaders downplayed the problems and insisted success was coming. Others saw the handwriting on the wall. In 2015 a professor at the Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute wrote about the military’s failure to learn lessons from past wars; he subtitled his book, “Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will Not Hold.” “Regarding the future of Afghanistan, in blunt terms, the United States has been down this road at the strategic level twice before, in Vietnam and Iraq, and there is no viable rationale for why the results will be any different in Afghanistan,” Mason wrote. He added, presciently: “Slow decay is inevitable, and state failure is a matter of time.”

Some elements of the Afghan army did fight hard, including commandos whose heroic efforts are yet to be fully documented. But as a whole the security forces created by the United States and its NATO allies amounted to a “house of cards” whose collapse was driven as much by failures of U.S. civilian leaders as their military partners, according to Anthony Cordesman, a longtime Afghanistan war analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Afghan force-building exercise was so completely dependent on American largesse that the Pentagon even paid the Afghan troops’ salaries. Too often that money, and untold

amounts of fuel, were siphoned off by corrupt officers and government overseers who cooked the books, creating “ghost soldiers” to keep the misspent dollars coming.

Of the approximately \$145 billion the U.S. government spent trying to rebuild Afghanistan, about \$83 billion went to developing and sustaining its army and police forces, according to the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, a congressionally created watchdog that has tracked the war since 2008. The \$145 billion is in addition to \$837 billion the United States spent fighting the war, which began with an invasion in October 2001. The \$83 billion invested in Afghan forces over 20 years is nearly double last year’s budget for the entire U.S. Marine Corps and is slightly more than what Washington budgeted last year for food stamp assistance for about 40 million Americans.

In his book, “The Afghanistan Papers,” journalist Craig Whitlock wrote that U.S. trainers tried to force Western ways on Afghan recruits and gave scant thought to whether U.S. taxpayers dollars were investing in a truly viable army. “Given that the U.S. war strategy depended on the Afghan army’s performance, however, the Pentagon paid surprisingly little attention to the question of whether Afghans were willing to die for their government,” he wrote. [Source: The Associated Press | Robert Burns | August 16, 2021 ++]

Afghan Failures

Update 01: Biden to Cut off Aid but Taliban Taps Billion-Dollar Drug Trade



The Biden administration is set to cut off the Taliban’s access to billions of dollars in critical overseas finance, but some officials warn that the terror-group’s income from drug sales and other illicit activities threatens to undermine Washington’s last-resort pressure campaign. The U.S. has largely secured the backing it needs to block the Taliban’s access to billions in reserves held at the International Monetary Fund and assistance pledged through the World Bank and other donor groups, according to people familiar with the matter. The country cannot access its reserves at the IMF or other fund resources, an official at the emergency lender told The Wall Street Journal 18 AUG.

The administration’s diplomatic scramble to prevent the Taliban from tapping accounts established by the Afghan government has focused on ensuring the group isn’t recognized as the country’s legitimate government by foreign governments that control those accounts, the people said. Washington froze billions of dollars in Afghan government assets and halted cash shipments to the country as the Taliban seized the nation’s capital late last week. U.S. officials say that financial leverage may be key to pressuring the Taliban into abiding by its peace agreements.

U.S. officials have focused their efforts on the World Bank and the IMF, which funnel billions of dollars in aid to Afghanistan and manage some of the government’s overseas reserves. As long as a majority of the

shareholders of the international financing institutions don't officially recognize the Taliban as a legitimate government, it can't access those funds, the people familiar with the matter say. Officials from European Union member states participated in a meeting 17 AUG to discuss the situation in Afghanistan.

"It is more than a matter of political recognition or diplomatic connectivity," Ned Price, State Department spokesman, said Tuesday. "It's an existential question." National security adviser Jake Sullivan on Tuesday sidestepped questions about international recognition of the Taliban. "Right now, there is a chaotic situation in Kabul where we don't even have the establishment of a governing authority, so it would be really premature to address that question." The IMF official said the fund's decision to block Taliban access is based on "a lack of clarity within the international community regarding recognition of a government in Afghanistan." Other Western officials are echoing the U.S. position. "No payments are going to be on the side of the development aid from the EU,"

Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign-policy chief, said after a videoconference with the bloc's foreign ministers late Tuesday. "We will put conditions for continuing our support and we are going to use all our leverage," he said. More than half of the country's \$5 billion annual budget is met by foreign aid. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, managed by the World Bank, provides roughly \$3 billion a year. According to the IMF, such foreign assistance helped keep the economy from collapsing. Some U.S. officials warn that the Taliban's existing income streams may prove substantial enough to partially offset those losses. The group reaps revenue from narcotics smuggling and has set up a shadow government that includes a mining ministry, a customs bureaucracy and even a department that aids people with disabilities, according to a United Nations report.

Estimates of the Taliban's annual combined revenues range from \$300 million to upward of \$1.6 billion a year, according to a June report from the U.N. Security Council, which oversees sanctions on Afghan terrorist factions. "The economy of Afghanistan remains overwhelmingly cash-based, with money-service providers providing the most widely used means of transferring or remitting funds both domestically and across borders," said a U.N. report in May of last year. As evidence of the difficulties authorities face in clamping down on the Taliban's financing, the U.N. said that, as of 2019, just \$2.4 million had been frozen by international authorities on grounds it was intended to finance terrorism.

Despite its puritanical brand of Islam, the Taliban controls the world's largest opium operation, earning about \$460 million a year from taxes on the sale of heroin moving through their territories alone, the U.N. says. The group also recently branched into methamphetamines, which have much higher margins, U.N. and U.S. officials warn. The Taliban's sales surged after it retook a key heroin smuggling hub into Pakistan from a local Islamic State franchise, after joining in an offensive with Afghan and U.S. forces, the U.N. said in a report last year. ISIS had opposed the cultivation of poppies needed to produce the narcotic.

The Taliban controls the world's largest opium operation. "I can't imagine there will be a decrease" of the exports of narcotics with the Taliban in power, said an Taliban-focused European security official. "Unless [the group] offers those commanders making lots of money off heroin something to compensate them." In 2020, the Taliban also made \$464 million from the sale of onyx marble, gold, rare-earth minerals, copper, tin and zinc, the June U.N. report said. The Taliban's territorial expansion boosted revenue from road fees and extortion campaigns against mobile telephone providers and electricity companies, the U.N. said last year.

The Taliban has also been building its relationships in recent days with other nations that could help replace some lost income from foreign sources, analysts say. Besides new diplomatic ties with Russia and India and bolstering its political links with power brokers in Pakistan and Iran, the group also has an important new relationship with the world's second largest economy, China. "Amid all of this regional angst, China is quietly attempting to secure its interests in post-U.S. Afghanistan," said Derek Grossman, a senior defense analyst at the Rand Corporation, which contracts with the U.S. government. Beijing is courting the Taliban in the hope it will rein in the Turkistan Islamic Movement, a jihadi group made out of Uigurs, a Muslim minority from East China, the European security official said. The Turkistan Islamic Movement has 400 members near the Chinese border, he said. [Source: Wall Street Journal | Ian Talley, Kate Davidson, Benoit & Faucon | August 18, 2021 ++]

Afghan Counter-Terrorism Ops

OTH Air Strike Kills 2 High-Profile ISIS-K Targets



The U.S. military conducted an unmanned drone strike in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan — to the east of Kabul — which killed two ISIS-K individuals who were known to be responsible for planning and facilitation activities within the organization, the Pentagon's joint staff deputy director for regional operations said. During a briefing 28 AUG at the Pentagon, Army Maj. Gen. William D. "Hank" Taylor said that an additional ISIS-K member was also wounded in the strike, and that there were "zero civilian casualties." "We will continue to have the ability to defend ourselves and to leverage over-the-horizon (OTH) capability to conduct counter-terrorism operations as needed," Taylor said.

The U.S. military has said since the departure from Afghanistan was announced that it has the ability to conduct "over-the-horizon" operations as part of its ongoing counter-terrorism mission. That means it would continue to be able to conduct an operation such as the drone strike in Nangarhar Province, without having to actually launch it from within Afghanistan. While two ISIS-K members were killed and one was injured, the security situation in Afghanistan is still dangerous, said Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby. "The threat stream is still active, still dynamic. We're still laser focused on that and force protection, and we aren't thinking for a minute that what happened yesterday gets us in the clear," Kirby said. "Do we think that that will have some impact on their ability going forward? Absolutely. What and to how much we're just going to have to keep watching the intelligence going forward."

The U.S. military expects to be out of Afghanistan by 31 AUG. Until then, noncombatant evacuation operations, or NEO, continue at Hamid Karzai International Airport to get as many American citizens,

Afghan special immigrant visa applicants and other vulnerable Afghans out of the country. At the same time that evacuation is happening, the U.S. military is also conducting retrograde operations to get out military equipment and people not involved in the NEO. Taylor said both of those operations — the NEO and the retrograde — can happen concurrently and both will continue until the last U.S. aircraft and service member leaves the country.

"We have the ability to include evacuees on military airlift out of Afghanistan until the very end," he said. "This is a massive military, diplomatic, security and humanitarian undertaking for the United States and our allies." In the last 24 hours, he said, 32 U.S. military aircraft left Hamid Karzai International Airport with about 4,000 personnel. An additional 34 coalition aircraft departed the airport with approximately 2,800 personnel. So far, he said, more than 117,000 have been evacuated from Afghanistan, with approximately 5,400 of those being American citizens. In the end (30 APR), the U.S. and its partners on the ground were able to evacuate 123,000 civilians from Afghanistan, more than 79,000 of those on U.S. military aircraft "This is an incredible number of people who are now safer thanks to the heroism of the young men and women who are putting their lives on the line each day to evacuate American and vulnerable Afghans out of Kabul," Taylor said.

On the morning of 26 AUG, outside the gates of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, 13 of those American service members were killed as the result of an enemy attack while supporting the NEO there. A number of Afghan civilians were also killed, and both American service members and Afghan civilians were injured. Those service members killed came from the Marine Corps, the Army and the Navy.

From the Marine Corps, the deceased include Sgt. Darin T. Hoover, Sgt. Johanny Rosariopichardo, Sgt. Nicole L. Gee, Cpl. Hunter Lopez, Cpl. Daegan W. Page, Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez, Lance Cpl. David L. Espinoza, Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz, Lance Cpl. Rylee J. McCollum, Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, and Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui. From the Navy, Seaman Maxton W. Soviak was killed. And from the Army, it was Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Knauss who was killed.

At https://cdn.dvidshub.net/media/video/2108/DOD_108538531/DOD_108538531-1280x720-2765k.mp4 the 32 min video of the briefing 28 AUG at the Pentagon can be viewed. [Source: DOD News | C. Todd Lopez | Aug. 28, 2021++]

Secretary of the Navy

Update 03: New SECNAV lays out his priorities for the Navy and Marine Corps

The 78th secretary of the Navy, Carlos Del Toro, who as sworn in 9 AUG, released a message to the fleet laying out the “four Cs” that the former officer sees as vital challenges to the department: China, culture, climate and COVID. In the 10 AUG message:

- Del Toro echoed other military leaders in warning of China’s ascendance and its goal of challenging U.S. military superiority. “We will not let this happen,” he wrote. “We will deter China’s aggression, protect our national security and preserve the peace.”

- When it comes to culture, Del Toro wrote that “every Sailor and Marine of all races, genders, religions and ethnicities must treat one another with dignity and respect,” and that such behavior ensures combat readiness.
- He called climate change an issue that “exacerbates every challenge we face, from naval installations to frequent deployments. “It is also a global struggle for resources that demands ingenuity and innovation,” Del Toro wrote. “It demands solutions that mitigate climate damage while ensuring our operational success and competitive edge.”
- On the COVID-19 front, Del Toro called for vaccinating the force “with expedience.” “If we are not vaccinated, we are neither deployable nor combat ready,” he wrote. “Immediately, the Navy and Marine Corps will make every effort to vaccinate and care for our force and defeat the scourge Covid has inflicted on our troops.” Del Toro’s stance on vaccinations follows a Pentagon announcement this month that vaccines will soon become mandatory for all servicemembers.

A retired Navy officer who spent 26 years in uniform, including at the helm of a destroyer, Del Toro said in his message that he has “a bias for action” and “will strive to be direct and transparent with you about what we need to accomplish together.” The safety and welfare of troops “will always be paramount,” he wrote, adding that he was “committed to confronting our maintenance backlog, managing our operational requirements and building our Navy of the future.” “Serving as your 78th Secretary of the Navy is a high honor,” he wrote. “It also carries grave responsibilities to which I will dedicate all my skill and devotion.”

Del Toro graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1983 and then served in the Navy for 22 years. His assignments included serving as the first commanding officer of the guided-missile destroyer Bulkeley, overseeing ship construction and fleet introduction activities as well as the integration of women into the crew. The vessel was one of the first mixed-gender warships. He also served as a program manager for what was called Space and Naval Warfare Command — now known as Naval Information Warfare Systems Command — and as a senior executive assistant to the director for program analysis and evaluation within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he made top-level decisions about program development and budgets.

After retiring from the Navy, Del Toro founded SBG Technology Solutions, where he has served as president and CEO for 17 years. The company has participated in defense programs related to shipbuilding, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and space systems. Del Toro was born in Havana, Cuba, and his family came to the U.S. as refugees in 1962, settling in New York City.

The Navy’s second Hispanic-American secretary, Del Toro has a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from the Naval Academy, a master’s degree in national security studies from the Naval War College, a master’s degree in space systems engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, as well as a master’s degree in legislative affairs from George Washington University. He is married to Betty Del Toro, and they have four children and a granddaughter.

[Source: Navy Times | Geoff Ziezulewicz |August 18, 2021 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials

Reported AUG 16 thru 31, 2021 | Six

“Keeping the Promise“, “Fulfill their Trust” and “No one left behind” are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century as of FEB 2019 are: World War II 73,025 of which over 41,000 are presumed to be lost at sea, Korean War 7665, Vietnam War 1589 (i. e. VN-1,246, Laos-288, Cambodia-48, & Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7), Cold War 111, Iraq and other conflicts 5. Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home.

For a listing of all missing or unaccounted for personnel to date refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil> and click on ‘Our Missing’. Refer to <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories> for a listing and details of the 141 accounted for in 2005. If you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict or have an inquiry about MIAs, contact:

== Mail: Public Affairs Office, 2300 Defense Pentagon, Washington, D. C. 20301-2300, Attn: External Affairs Call: Phone: (703) 699-1420

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



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

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

LOOK FOR

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Henry D. Mitchell, 22**, was assigned to the 48th Fighter Squadron, 14th Fighter Group, 15th Air Force in the European Theater. On July 8, 1944, he was piloting a P-38 Lightning fighter on a mission outside of Vienna, Austria. His squadron encountered enemy aircraft as it was returning from the target. Mitchell indicated he was alright following the combat, but was never heard from or seen again.

With no evidence that Mitchell had survived his disappearance, a presumptive finding of death was issued on July 9, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mitchell](https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2722274/pilot-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-mitchell-h) at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2722274/pilot-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-mitchell-h>.

-- **Army Sgt. Larry S. Wassil, 33**, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 13th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division. On Dec. 28, 1944, his unit was part of the Hürtgen Forest offensive, near Hürtgen, Germany. Wassil was leading a three-man reconnaissance team scouting enemy positions when they started taking enemy machine gun fire and were forced to scatter. When the gunfire stopped, Wassil could not be found. A presumptive finding of death was issued on Dec. 29, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Wassil](https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2725495/soldier-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-wassil-l) at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2725495/soldier-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-wassil-l>.

-- **Marine Pfc. Charles R. Taylor, 26**, 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 Taylor. Interment services are pending. [Read about Taylor](https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2727135/uss-oklahoma-marine-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-taylor-c) at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2727135/uss-oklahoma-marine-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-taylor-c>.

-- **Naval Reserve Seaman 1st Class James C. Williams, 20**, of Portland, Oregon, 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 Williams. He will be buried on Sept. 10, 2021, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Williams](https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2172536/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-williams-j) at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2172536/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-williams-j>.

-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Herman Schmidt, 28**, 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 Schmidt. Interment services are pending. [Read about Schmidt](https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2725504/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-schmidt-h) at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2725504/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-schmidt-h>.

-- **Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Harold F. Carney, 23**, 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 Carney. Interment services are pending. [Read about Carney](https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2728880/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-carney-h) at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/2728880/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-carney-h>.

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

* VA *



VARO Manila

Update 09: Here Are Several Ways to Contact Them



Do you have questions about your VA benefits, need help with filing a new claim, or need to submit documents? The VA has many ways you can contact them and have created new ways, such as virtual appointments due to the COVID Pandemic.

Here are several ways you can contact the VA Manila Regional Office.

Schedule a Telephone/Virtual Appointment:	Use the website link to schedule your appointment online: https://v2.waitwhile.com/lists/vamanila/oin . A representative will contact you on the date and time you scheduled. You do not need to be physically present in our office as we are still closed to in-person visitors.
Online Inquiry:	https://iris.custhelp.va.gov/app/ask
Online Document Submission:	http://www.va.gov and/or https://eauth.va.gov/accessva/# (register or sign in with DS Logon, My HealtheVet, or ID.me)
Phone:	#MyVA (#6982) or 028-550-3888, Toll Free 1-800-1888-5252, Option 1 for Regional Benefits Office (Mondays-Fridays 8:00 am to 3:00 pm)
Fax:	028-550-3942 (with domestic long-distance charges); #MyVA (#6982) or 1-800-1888-5252 and dial 3942 once you hear the voice prompt (no domestic long-distance charges)
Mail:	Department of Veterans Affairs Claim Intake Center PO Box 4444 Janesville, WI 53547-4444

VA Alzheimer Care

VHS Won't Cover Biogen's New Aduhelm Drug



The Department of Veterans Affairs won't cover Biogen Inc.'s BIIB 0.48% new Alzheimer's drug, the latest rebuke of the controversial treatment since it was approved earlier this summer. The VA decided not add the drug, called Aduhelm, to its formulary list of available medicines because of the drug's risk of causing serious side effects and a lack of evidence that it improves cognitive function, an agency spokeswoman said.

The VA provides medical benefits to more than nine million veterans, and is the largest integrated healthcare system in the U.S. The agency is known for being a shrewd customer of prescription drugs, using its large purchasing power to haggle steep discounts from manufacturers. By law, the VA has greater leeway than other government health programs such as Medicare and Medicaid to deny coverage of medicines it deems to be of poor value. Last month, a research paper by a group of VA doctors and scientists identified more than 150,000 veteran beneficiaries diagnosed with Alzheimer's and estimated that the drug could cost the VA more than \$4 billion annually, plus additional spending on associated care such as screening tests and imaging scans. The paper hasn't yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The VA's rejection comes as Biogen seeks to persuade health insurers to cover the medicine and push back against critics who have cast doubt over its effectiveness and value. For the average patient, Aduhelm costs about \$56,000 annually, according to Biogen, which could add up to billions of dollars in new taxpayer spending on Medicare, the federal health program for the elderly that is expected to pay for the majority of Aduhelm prescriptions. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is conducting a nine-month review of whether to cover the drug for Medicare patients and under what circumstances. Meanwhile, a few hospitals have said that they won't administer the drug to their patients, citing concern over the drug's effectiveness and the Food and Drug Administration's process for approving it.

On 12 AUG, the VA posted on its website a document detailing its review of Aduhelm and its decision. The document provides guidance to doctors not to offer the drug to VA patients, but allows for doctors to seek exceptions for certain patients. "Any requests must meet prescribing guidance and will be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis," the spokeswoman said. A Biogen spokeswoman said the VA's no-coverage policy isn't absolute and includes a pathway for veterans to access the drug. "Biogen remains committed to ensuring veterans have access to the latest therapies for Alzheimer's and we will continue to engage closely with the VA as they evaluate potential updates to their guidance," she said.

Biogen's drug, co-developed with Eisai Co. Ltd., has been mired in controversy since being approved by the FDA in June, the first new treatment for the memory-robbing disease in nearly two decades. The FDA cleared the treatment despite what it said were lingering uncertainties about its effectiveness and the unanimous objections of an outside panel of expert advisers, three of whom later resigned in protest of the approval. Ultimately, the FDA said approval was justified based on the reasonable likelihood that the drug's proven ability to remove a protein called amyloid from the brain will slow the mental deterioration caused by a disease with virtually no other treatment options.

The approval was criticized by some doctors and scientists, who said that further clinical studies were needed to prove the drug would benefit patients and thus justify its hefty cost and potential for serious side effects including brain bleeding. Biogen has said it stands by its clinical data used to support FDA approval in people with early Alzheimer's symptoms. The company has said that it expects sales of the drug to build gradually because of logistical hurdles in getting patients treated, but that Aduhelm should eventually reach billions of dollars in annual sales. Disagreements over the drug's approval and concerns about its financial impact on the healthcare system have led health insurers to take a cautious approach to deciding whether

to cover the drug. Most eligible patients are covered by Medicare, according to Biogen. [Source: Wall Street Journal | Joseph Walker | August 12, 2021 ++]

VA Elderly Benefits

Special Benefits for Elderly Wartime Veteran Population

As a follow up to the 14 AUG National Financial Awareness Day, the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching an awareness campaign to inform elderly wartime Veterans and their families of their lesser-known pension, funeral, burial and survivor benefits. “VA’s pension benefit helps Veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income,” said Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy. “Currently, only 189,800 wartime Veterans and 139,800 surviving spouses are using their needs-based pension benefits that are meant to ease the burden on them, their families and caregivers. We need to ensure all of our wartime Veterans and their survivors are aware of their benefits.”

The following benefits are available through VA’s Pension and Fiduciary Service as noted in the guide at https://benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/docs/VA_Fiduciary_Guide_Apr2020.pdf for use in planning and preparing for the future.

- VA pension is payable to wartime Veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to non-service connected disability, or who are age 65 years old or older, and who meet certain income and net worth limits. Refer to <https://www.va.gov/pension>.
- Special monthly pension is an additional benefit for Veterans in receipt of pension who are housebound, require the aid and attendance of another person to help them with daily activities (such as eating, bathing and dressing), have very limited eyesight or require nursing home care. See <https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/EnhancedorSpecialPension.pdf>.
- For surviving spouses, there are two types of benefits P&F Service offers. Survivors Pension (<https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension>) provides monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits. Special monthly pension is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person.
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is available to dependents and parents and generally is not based on income and assets (except the income limits apply to parents). DIC is a monthly monetary benefit paid to a surviving spouse, child or parent of a Veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, or when an active-duty service member dies in the line of duty. Special monthly DIC is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person. See www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation.
- A surviving spouse of a Veteran who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, may be eligible for DIC benefits — even if they were previously denied. See <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange>.

- VA's [funeral and burial benefits](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials) are available for both service-related and non-service-related deaths. New regulations allow a flat-rate burial and plot or interment allowance with decreased paperwork and maximum payment permitted by law. See <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials>.
- For those interested in burial benefits such as a Presidential Memorial Certificate, burial flag, headstone or marker, the National Cemetery Administration has information about pre-need eligibility. See https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/index.asp.

Many vulnerable senior wartime Veterans are targeted with misinformation. In many cases, this is because they are not fully aware of their benefits, which increases the chances of them being taken advantage of and/or defrauded. VA encourages elderly wartime Veterans and their family members to consult a VA-accredited representative (<https://www.benefits.va.gov/vso/index.asp>) if they want or need help filing a claim. They are reminded to beware of individuals or companies that promise benefits or ask for money upfront, as only VA can make final determinations on eligibility.

Factsheets at <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/factsheets.asp#BM3> are available to assist Veterans with limited resources. Pension eligibility information with details on how Veterans and their families can get help filing their claim for free can be found at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/pensionprogram-and-representation.pdf>. [Source: VA News Release || August 17, 2021 ++]

VA Afghan Stress Care

Resources Available for Veterans Unsettled By Afghanistan News

Advocates are reminding veterans that help is available if headlines about the disastrous end of the U.S mission in Afghanistan and the looming Sept. 11 anniversary are triggering anxiety and mental health issues. “Veterans should be on the lookout for red flags if news of Afghanistan starts changing behavior,” Dr. Sonya Norman, director of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ PTSD Consultation Program, said in a statement late last week. “These include isolating, using alcohol and drugs or any increase in unhealthy behaviors compared to normal.”

Even before the collapse of the Afghan government over the weekend, VA officials had been preparing for increased requests for mental health care and trauma assistance amid the ongoing U.S. military withdrawal from the country. Health officials said they have already seen an uptick in the number of veterans seeking help, and expected even more demand “as [veterans] come to terms with their service and as the Afghanistan withdrawal comes to completion.” About 1.9 million post-9/11 veterans are currently enrolled in health care with the department. A 2014 study by department officials found that nearly 16 percent of all veterans who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan screened positive for post-traumatic stress.

Both VA and Defense Department officials in recent years have worked to eliminate the stigmas surrounding mental health care, noting that PTSD and related issues can be handled if individuals acknowledge they are facing personal difficulties. The department has been running a [series](#) on mental health issues on its official blog, including a feature on lessons learned from the aftermath of the Vietnam War for veterans struggling with unresolved medical issues. The Veteran Crisis Line is also available around-the-

clock at 1-800-273-8255 (veterans should select option 1 for a VA staffer.) Veterans, troops or their family members can also text 838255 or visit <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net> for assistance.

Numerous lawmakers and congressional committees shared the crisis line number on social media on 16 AUG, thanking veterans for their service and letting them know help is available. Veterans service organizations are also stepping up their outreach efforts in light of the unsettling news overseas.

- In a statement 16 AUG, officials from Wounded Warrior Project noted that “developments in Afghanistan may bring back difficult memories for warriors and their families.” The group urged anyone needing assistance to contact their counselors at 888-997-2586 or through the organization’s web site.
- Officials from Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America said veterans who served in the recent wars should remember that their service “was important and mattered.” The organization’s Quick Reaction Force for help is available online and at 855-917-274.

The military health system offers many mental health resources. Remember, you re not alone.

TRICARE Mental Health Coverage See what's covered and how to make an appointment at: www.tricare.mil/MentalHealth	
Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255, option 1 http://veteranscrisisline.net	Psychological Health Resource Center 1-866-966-1020 www.health.mil/PHRC
InTransition Program 1-800-424-7877 www.health.mil/inTransition	Real Warriors Campaign www.health.mil/RealWarriors

[Source: ArmyTimes | Leo Shane III | August 16, 2021 ++]

VA Grant Programs

Update 02: Improve Transitional Housing, Prevent Veteran Homelessness

The Department of Veterans Affairs will begin awarding \$116.4 million in grants Sept. 30 to more than 200 community organizations under VA’s Grant and Per Diem program. GPD provides funding to community organizations that provide transitional housing and supportive services for Veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness and aims to help them achieve residential stability, increase skill levels and income, and obtain greater self-determination. “The Grant and Per Diem program is integral to VA’s evidence-based approach to preventing and ending homelessness among Veterans, which remains one of our highest priorities,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “These grants give the department continued flexibility to customize our services to the unique circumstances and needs of each Veteran facing a housing crisis and puts them on the pathway to permanent and stable housing.”

VA will award three different types of grants to address the unique needs of Veterans who are experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

- **Capital Grants** will provide funding for community organizations to build or renovate facilities that serve Veterans experiencing homelessness and are authorized through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act established in 2020. The improvements must result in less

congregate and more individual unit style housing, thereby improving personal safety and reducing risks associated with close quarters living. VA will award 60 capital grants totaling approximately \$64.2 million to provide 1,439 new beds over the next 18 to 24 months.

- **Case Management Grants** will be used to support case managers who provide services to help Veterans maintain self-sufficiency and housing stability. A total of 121 grants to organizations are awarded to support almost 155 case managers, totaling about \$28.4 million over two years.
- **Special Need Grants** will provide funding for community organizations that help Veterans experiencing homelessness with special needs such as women Veterans, those with chronic mental illnesses and those who care for minor dependents. A total of 26 grants to organizations will be awarded for 217 beds totaling about \$23.75 million over three years.

GPD has provided Veterans experiencing homelessness with community-based transitional housing and supportive services since 1994. As a result of this program and other VA efforts (<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5689>, the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the U.S. has declined by 50% since 2010. A list of GPD grantees and nonprofit organizations seeking details about the program can visit homeless GPD at <https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>. [Source: VA News Releases | August 24, 2021 ++]

GI Bill & Covid-19

Update 04: Resurgence Could Cause Major Problems for Users Next Spring



Veterans Affairs officials are confident that class disruptions due to resurgent coronavirus cases won't cause significant challenges for student veterans and other GI Bill users this fall. But next spring's semester could be a different story. That's because a host of emergency authorities approved by Congress last year to deal with potential pandemic problems are set to expire this December. Without intervention from lawmakers, students forced into remote learning options by virus outbreaks on campus may lose out on thousands of dollars a month.

- “We’ve already started preparing messaging for our students this fall to state that without any additional legislation, we will be going back to the way it used to be prior to the pandemic,” said Charmain Bogue, executive director of VA’s Education Service.
- “We’re working very closely with the Hill in terms of any legislative changes that they can consider for the upcoming spring semester. We are hearing from some schools that because of the delta variants and a lot of the uncertainties, they will still probably continue in an online fashion.”

At issue are rules regarding how GI Bill benefits can be awarded to students attending online classes. The Post-9/11 GI Bill awards tuition money for college courses, plus a monthly housing stipend and other payouts to cover books and tutoring services. Eligible students attending in-person classes can receive the full financial benefits as soon as they begin classes. However, under rules passed by Congress, students enrolled in online-only classes receive only half of their housing stipend. The difference can amount to several thousand dollars a semester, depending on where students are living.

The differing payouts came into focus at the end of the spring 2020 college semester, when campuses across America shifted from in-person classes to online coursework in response to the then-emerging coronavirus pandemic. VA officials did not have authority to waive the at-home payout rules, creating a situation where thousands of students were locked into rent payments for the year but poised to see their housing stipends cut in half. Congress intervened, giving the VA Secretary emergency authority to override the rule and maintain current payment rates. Veterans advocates hailed the move, but the congressional authority lasts only until Dec. 21 this year.

Given the recent surge in pandemic cases related to the delta variant of the virus, VA planners worry some schools which have planned to return to in-person learning may be forced into online-only classes again in early 2022. “We have gone back to Congress to ask them to extend [the authorities] further, and there is a legislative proposal that we’ve seen floated already,” Bogue said. “We are providing technical assistance on it, but they will need to pass it in a timely fashion in order for us to be able to make sure there’s no gaps from a student’s perspective between semesters.” That could prove problematic.

Although lawmakers have been generally supportive of such fixes to GI Bill benefits in the past, both the House and Senate are expected to have crowded legislative schedules in the next few months, with annual budget legislation in need of passage and Democratic leadership focused on major initiatives such as new infrastructure spending and voting rights reforms. Renewing the authorities could be tacked on to legislation dealing with VA’s fiscal 2022 budget, but a timeline for passage of any of the federal funding bills is expected to drag late into this year. In fiscal 2020, more than 875,000 individuals used GI Bill benefits for college classes, with more than 75 percent using the Post-9/11 GI Bill program. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III (Opinion) | August 27, 2021 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse

Reported 16 thru 31 AUG 2021

Atlanta, GA — **Kevin Rumph, Jr.**, has pleaded guilty to a charge of theft of medical products. Rumph used his U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) issued credit card to buy over \$1.9 million worth of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) equipment, which he stole and then sold.

According to Acting U.S. Attorney Erskine, the charges and other information presented in court: Kevin Rumph, Jr., was a purchasing agent employed by the VA. He had been employed there since 2012. He worked in the VA’s Prosthetic Department at its Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) located in Fort McPherson, Atlanta, Georgia. Rumph’s job duties included receiving prosthetic request forms and prescriptions from physicians, therapists, patients, and patient representatives, and reviewing those forms for proper documentation and justification of the items, services, and durable medical equipment being

requested. Rumph prepared purchase orders for a wide variety of prosthetic and sensory aids devices, medical supplies, and durable medical equipment and coordinated the delivery of medical equipment and supplies through contracted providers utilizing his VA-issued purchase card.

In addition to his legitimate purchases for veterans' health care needs, Rumph used his government-issued purchase card to make unauthorized purchases of CPAP supplies from a supplier in Alabama. He then stole and sold the CPAP supplies to a vendor located in Ohio. CPAP supplies are medical products used to treat obstructive sleep apnea. Rumph made hundreds of unauthorized CPAP supply purchases between 2013 and 2021 costing the VA in excess of \$1.9 million. Kevin Rumph, Jr., 41, of Fairburn, Georgia, pleaded guilty to theft of medical products. Sentencing is scheduled for November 17, 2021, at 10:00 a.m., before U.S. District Judge Michael L. Brown. For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN. PressEmails@usdoj.gov or call (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>. [Source: DoJ Northern District of Georgia | U.S. Attorney's Office | August 16, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Miami, Fla — A federal district judge in Fort Lauderdale on 18 AUG sentenced the last of 16 defendants for their roles in a large-scale kickback and bribery scheme involving employees and vendors of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers located in West Palm Beach and Miami. **Earron Starks**, 51, was sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2,451,000 in restitution. His wife, **Carlicha Starks**, 42, was sentenced to three years of supervised release, including one year of home confinement, and ordered to pay \$501,000 in restitution.

Earron and Carlicha Starks, both from Hallandale Beach, Florida, were vendors who sold supplies to the VA. They, as did other vendors, paid kickbacks to VA employees in exchange for getting the VA's business. Court filings describe how in exchange for cash bribes, medical center employees used government credit cards to order medical and other hospital supplies from these corrupt vendors. In some cases, the prices of the supplies were grossly inflated. In other cases, the orders were only partially fulfilled or not fulfilled at all. Ultimately, the fraud scheme enabled the Starks couple and other corrupt vendors to receive over \$20 million in purchase orders with VA Medical Centers in West Palm Beach and Miami. Fourteen additional defendants were charged for their roles in this scheme. They pleaded guilty and received the following sentences:

Defendants who worked at West Palm Beach VA Medical Center (Case Number 19-80223-CR-KAM).

- Clinton Purvis, 54, of West Palm Beach, who pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud, was sentenced to 27 months' incarceration followed by 24 months of supervised release and ordered to pay \$1.4 million in restitution.
- Christopher Young, 46, of West Palm Beach, who pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud, was sentenced to 24 months' probation.
- Kenneth Scott, 61, of Riviera Beach, who pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud, was sentenced to 24 months' probation and ordered to pay \$295,511 in restitution.
- Robert "Bob" Johnson, 64, of West Palm Beach, who pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud, was sentenced to 24 months' imprisonment followed by 24 months of supervised release and ordered to pay \$800,000 in restitution.

Defendants who worked at Miami VA Medical Center.

- Waymon Melvon Woods, 60, of Miami, pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official and was sentenced to nine months' incarceration, 36 months of supervised release and ordered to pay \$120,505 in restitution (case number 19-20743-CR-FAM).
- Don Anderson, 61, of Port St. Lucie, FL., pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official and was sentenced to 10 days of incarceration, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$31,579 in restitution (case number 19-20746-CR-FAM).
- Jose Eugenio Cuervo, 55, of Miramar, FL., pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official and was sentenced to six months of home confinement, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$8,596 in restitution (case number 19-20748-CR-DPG).
- Donnie Shatek Hawes, 37, of Cutler Bay, FL., who pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official, was sentenced to 5 days of incarceration, 24 months of probation, and ordered to pay \$2,900 in restitution (case number 19-20745-CR-RNS).
- Robert Lee James Harris, 46, of Miami Gardens, FL., who pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official, was sentenced to 6 months of home confinement, 36 months of probation and ordered to pay \$7,775 (case number 19-20747-CR-RNS).
- Emir Gilberto Reyes, 55, of Homestead, FL., who pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official, was sentenced to 60 months of probation and ordered to pay \$18,380 (case number 20-20098-CR-FAM).
- Eugene Campbell, 62, of Miami Gardens, FL., who pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a bribe as a public official, was sentenced to 36 months' incarceration, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$592,717 in restitution (case number 19-20744-CR-UU).

Defendants who were VA supply vendors.

- Jorge Flores, 47, of Delray Beach, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud was sentenced to 18 months' incarceration, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$2.1 million in restitution (case number 19-80200-CR-RS).
- Robert Kozak, 75, of Boca Raton FL, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud and was sentenced to 6 months' incarceration, 36 months of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$850,000 in restitution (case number 19-80201-CR-RS).
- Vincent Bellafiore, 47, of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud and was sentenced to 36 months' probation and ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine (case number 20-80077-CR-RS).

All VA employees were either terminated or resigned. The convictions were the result of a lengthy investigation by Special Agents of VA-OIG CI, who uncovered the extensive scheme after receiving an anonymous tip. A related case in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania resulted in another VA employee being charged with bribery. VA OIG, Criminal Investigations Division, is responsible for conducting independent investigations of VA's expansive programs and operations, which includes the largest healthcare system in the country. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov or at <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>, under case number 19-80202-CR-WP. [Source: DoJ Southern District of Florida | U.S. Attorney's Office | August 19, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Tampa, Fla. — U.S. District Judge Charlene E. Honeywell has sentenced **David Naylor** (59) of Spring Hill to two years and three months in federal prison, followed by 3 years of supervised release, for theft of government funds. As part of his sentence, the court also ordered Naylor to pay \$730,561.73 in restitution and, separately, entered a forfeiture money judgment against him in the amount of \$549,426.23, the proceeds of the offense of conviction. Naylor had pleaded guilty on September 22, 2020.

According to court documents, Naylor engaged in a scheme to defraud the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). To deceive and steal from the VA, Naylor made false representations regarding his physical limitations in connection with his application for VA Disability Compensation. Based on these false representations, the VA found that Naylor was entitled to Disability Compensation and other related benefits. In total, Naylor received \$549,426.23 in VA benefits to which he was not entitled. Naylor also received \$181,135.50 in Social Security Disability Insurance benefits as a result of relevant conduct. [Source: DoJ Middle District of Florida | U.S. Attorney's Office | August 19, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

San Antonio, Tex. — A federal grand jury in San Antonio returned an indictment this week charging two Kerrville men and an Ingram man with distribution of narcotics. According to court documents, **Scott Mitchell Brown**, 35, and **John Henry Swiencki**, 51, of Kerrville and **David Jeffery Hughes, Jr.**, 42, of Ingram are all charged with one count of conspiring to distribute hydrocodone, oxycodone and amphetamines. In addition to the distribution charge, Brown is charged with one count of theft of prescription medications; one count of possession of stolen mail; and one count of obtaining unauthorized health information from the Kerrville Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Hughes is also charged with one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Swiencki and Hughes were scheduled to make their initial court appearances 20 AUG before U.S. Magistrate Judge Henry Bemporad. Brown is scheduled for an arraignment on September 2, 2021, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Richard Farrer. If convicted on the distribution charge the defendants face up to 20 years in prison. Brown faces up to an additional 10 years in prison on the theft of prescription medications charge and 10 years in prison on the obtaining unauthorized health information charge. He also faces an additional five years in prison for the possession of stolen mail charge. Hughes faces an additional sentence of up to 10 years in prison for the felon in possession charge. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. [Source: DOJ Western District of Texas | U.S. Attorney's Office | August 20, 2021 ++]

* Vets *



Vet Employment Opportunities

Listings from Companies Looking For Vets as of 31 AUG

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 the one 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.

AUG 30

Customer Advocate (<https://jobboard.militarytimes.com/jobs/80258787-customer-advocate-at-ultimate>)

This position will be in their warranty department where the person will answer inbound calls from customers across the nation. The quality of the call will always come first and the ideal candidate will be focused on building a relationship with the customers versus talk time. Since this will be in the warranty department, home-building knowledge will be a huge plus!! This dynamic company will offer a competitive compensation of \$18 to \$22 per hour, opportunity to work from home on selected days, as well as fantastic benefits. If this role sounds like a great fit you, then apply today!!

- **Qualifications:**
 - The ideal candidate will have at least 2 years of customer service experience as well as no more than 2 jobs within the last 3 years.
 - Friendly and outgoing people who come from a background of administration as well as customer service.
 - Since this will be in the warranty department, home-building knowledge will be a huge plus!!
- **Location:** Ultimate, Mesa, AZ, United States - Full Time

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

GI Bill

Update 315: Howard University Reinstated After Official Leaves

A Howard University official has left his job less than two weeks after Military.com published an investigation that found that the school had a long pattern of misfiling paperwork, costing veteran students their GI Bill benefits. A series of clerical errors culminated in the school being stripped of its accreditation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, temporarily losing its eligibility for new students to use the GI Bill and putting some 235 beneficiaries on campus at risk of being displaced. After more than two months of uncertainty, student veterans at Howard University now can use their GI Bill benefits again.

The school on 20 AUG announced the suspension had been lifted and that there will be "no restrictions" on VA benefits. Other military scholarships such as National Guard tuition assistance seemingly were not impacted at all by the temporary suspension. Beyond the certification issue, first reported by Military.com, the publication's investigation found that, for at least a year, staff at Howard mishandled benefits paperwork for student veterans, sometimes leading to benefits being delayed or outright denied. At least one student was forced to move out of Washington, D.C., where the school is located, to seek cheaper housing. And no

less than 57 students petitioned the school to waive tuition outright for the previous, current and next semester.

At the center of the certification process was **Christopher Rhone**, the school's veteran coordinator who served as the middle man between student veterans and the VA. After Military.com's investigation was published, he left the school. Frank Tramble, a university spokesperson, said Rhone's departure is unrelated to the school's handling of military scholarships and subsequent news coverage. The District of Columbia State Approving Agency, or D.C. SAA, a regulatory arm of the VA, suspended Howard in April from collecting GI Bill benefits from newly enrolled students. Howard officials blamed regulators for not giving school officials adequate warning of changing recertification standards. Yet no other university in the D.C. area was suspended.

Failure to comply quickly with the D.C. SAA's rules could have had further repercussions, including permanent suspension and barring any students from using the GI Bill at Howard. Such action would have prevented students not only from paying for school, but collecting stipends for books and housing that many rely on to get by. In the D.C. area, where living expenses are some of the highest in the country which could equal up to \$2,000 or more per month. Students also likely would have been forced to find a new school.

Nearly 1 million veterans and eligible family members use the GI Bill yearly. In 2020, the VA paid out \$11.4 billion in education benefits. Many advocates and lawmakers see the GI Bill as one of the federal government's most sacred and successful entitlement programs -- serving as a clear path for veterans to the middle class. Veteran advocates have long beat the drum for the VA to crack down on predatory schools, usually in the for-profit sector. But the D.C. SAA's moves against Howard, one of the most prestigious historically Black colleges in the country, were met with confusion. According to school officials, regulators took issue with how Howard processed its paperwork when filing for credentials with the VA, which schools typically must do biannually to prove they are in compliance with laws and meet a baseline of standards.

The D.C. SAA did not return requests for comment from Military.com. Multiple employees reached by phone who worked on Howard's suspension case said they were not authorized to talk to the press. In a statement, a school spokesman said that officials submitted everything they believed was needed for certification, including what led to approval in 2019. A week later, they were informed that "standards for recertification had changed and that our recertification submission was incomplete." The Fall semester began Monday, but notice on the GI Bill's reapproval did not come until the end of last week. However, tuition was due two weeks ago, and students -- many of whom rely on GI Bill benefits to pay the rent -- had to sign leases for apartments. It's unclear how long a gap student veterans face to get their first checks from VA for the Fall semester. In the meantime, Howard announced it will not add late fees to tuition.

Officials say the school is "increasing staffing" for veteran needs and offering interest-free loans for up to \$3,000, as posted on the school's website. The loans must be paid back by 14 DEC, the end of the Fall semester. The Protect the GI Bill Act, federal legislation signed into law in January, supercharged protections for student veterans and clarified state approving agencies' authority, making it clear they can cut schools off from GI Bill money. It is unclear whether the legislation spurred the D.C. SAA to take action against Howard. But given the virtually unheard of move of regulators targeting prestigious schools, it's possible the situation at Howard could be a sign that the new law will lead to further suspensions. [Source: Military.com | Steve Beynon | August 23, 2021 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule

As of AUG 31, 2021

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

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

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

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

[Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | September 1, 2021 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs

Scheduled As of AUG 31, 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 | September 1, 2021 ++]

Vet Home Covid-19 Impact

Update 02: Case of 76 Vet Home Deaths of COVID Lands in Court



Dr. David Clinton (left), former medical director and Bennett Walsh (right), former superintendent of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, Bennett Walsh, right, listens to testimony during a hearing in Hampden Superior Court

Two former top officials at a Massachusetts veterans home where nearly 80 residents died in one of the country's deadliest COVID-19 outbreaks in a long-term care facility appeared in court 24 AUG in an effort to have their criminal charges dismissed. Lawyers for former Holyoke Soldiers' Home Superintendent Bennett Walsh and former Medical Director Dr. David Clinton argued on a number of motions to dismiss the case in Hampden Superior Court in Springfield. They maintained the state had not met its burden of proof for charging their clients with 10 counts each, including abuse, neglect, or mistreatment of an elderly or disabled person. Prosecutors argued that the decision by Walsh, Clinton and other facility leaders to cram residents who were positive for the coronavirus into the same unit as those with no symptoms was negligent.

The judge didn't immediately make a ruling, and another court date was set for the end of October. Walsh and Clinton have complained they're being scapegoated by state officials. One of Walsh's lawyers also suggested 24 AUG that his client's effort to alert state officials relatively early in the crisis helped save lives by allowing the state to mobilize the National Guard. But an independent report commissioned by the state concluded that "utterly baffling" decisions made by facility administrators allowed the virus to spread unchecked last March as the pandemic took hold in the U.S. At least 76 veterans died from the virus over 11 weeks, and many more residents and staff were sickened.

Earlier this month, veterans home workers filed a class-action suit against several members of the facility's former leadership team, including Walsh and Clinton. The workers allege they were forced to care for sick and dying veterans, sometimes after testing positive themselves, in "inhumane conditions." The workers argued in the lawsuit filed in federal court that Holyoke Soldiers' Home administrators initially ignored guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for containing the virus and lied

to state officials about measures they were taking to protect residents and staff once the first veteran tested positive in March 2020. [Source: The Ohio Times Leader | August 24, 2021++]

WWII Vets 270

Ed Bearss | Severely Wounded US Marine & Historian



One of the greatest surviving veterans of the US Marine Corps in World War II—a man who was severely wounded in combat—also was one of our finest Civil War historians. And up until his end, he was leading walking tours of battlefields in the United States and Europe.

Edwin “Ed” Cole Bearss was born on June 26, 1923, in Billings, Montana, into a family with a proud Marine Corps tradition. His cousin “Hiking Hiram” Bearss (1875-1938) had been awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism in combat in the Philippines in 1901, and subsequently received the Distinguished Service Cross for his conduct in World War I. Ed’s father Omar also served in the US Marines, in Haiti and in Europe during World War I.

Ed Bearss’s family was listening to a radio broadcast of a football game between the Chicago Bears and the St. Louis Cardinals on December 7, 1941, when an announcer interrupted with news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The family didn’t believe it at first; but when they did, Ed determined to “join the Marines and get back at the Japs.” He enlisted in April 1942 and trained at the Marine Corps base in San Diego. Boot camp, he remembered, had a way “of taking you down to the dregs of your soul then building you up to believe that you, with your fellow Marines, can do anything.”

Assigned to the 22nd Marine Regiment, Ed Bearss was shipped to the South Pacific. But he wanted more than anything to join the Marine Raiders. “I had wanted to be a Raider since I heard of them in boot camp,” he recalled. “And I wanted out of the chicken-shit Twenty-second.” After an interview in which he was asked how far he could walk and swim, and whether he could kill a man with a knife or strangle him, Ed made the cut. He was a Marine Raider. Sadly for the gung-ho 19 year old, however, after a number of deployments he came down with a bad bout of malaria, and was reassigned afterwards to the 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division. But now he was bound for combat.

On Christmas night, 1943, after a meal of steak and eggs, Ed’s unit boarded Higgins boats and made the passage from New Guinea to the Japanese-held island of New Britain, where they were to be tasked with seizing Cape Gloucester. The landing was part of General Douglas MacArthur’s Operation Cartwheel,

aiming at the big Japanese fortress of Rabaul on New Britain. The Marines were engaged in combat almost immediately, seizing ground at the point of the bayonet and then digging in to fight off determined Japanese counter-attacks.

On January 2, 1944, Ed Bearss took point and led his platoon deep into the jungle. Every man in the platoon was ready for combat except for one who—as Ed told me—was left behind to guard camp because “he was yellow.” That “yellow” Marine was to be the only member of the platoon, Ed said, to make it through that day without being killed or wounded. Ed described what happened next: “After pushing about half a mile through dense jungle, we approached a stream perpendicular to our line of march and began to cross. On the other side, I saw men, not ours, about thirty to 35 yards away. They were not wearing our helmets. So I opened fire with my rifle. Other firing opened to our left and right, then all hell broke loose. A nest of Japanese machine guns dug into pill boxes on the opposite bank opened on us.”

“The man next to me was shot through both hands and wrists. Screaming ‘I’m ruined for life!’ he took off running. Another Marine coming up was hit and others were falling. All of this was happening faster than I can talk. I was on my knees when the first bullet struck. It hit me in my left arm just below the elbow, and the arm went numb. It felt like being hit with a sledge hammer. It jerked me sideways and then I was hit again, another sledgehammer blow to my right shoulder. I fell, both arms shattered, and my helmet slipped down over my eyes. I couldn’t see. But there were now dead men lying all around me.” The spot where Ed Bearss and his comrades fell was dubbed by the Marines Suicide Creek.

Ed said that he later mused that he had probably been hit by an older-model Japanese Type 96 machine gun. Had it been the newer Type 99, he was certain that the second bullet would have hit him in the chest. Lying out in the field under enemy fire, however, he only had time to think of survival, especially after subsequent bullets hit him in the heel and buttocks. After several hours bleeding under fire, fortunately, he was able to find cover and receive medical aid.

After a long, grueling journey from New Britain to New Guinea and then back to Mare Island, San Diego, Ed Bearss was to spend months in the hospital, with one surgery after another to save his arms. He was still in the hospital on VJ Day. News of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, “came in over the radio the day after I had been to surgery,” he remembered, “and I remember how disappointed I was I couldn’t go out on the town and get drunk.” Ed would spend a total of 26 months in the hospital—saving his arms, but with permanent nerve damage—before being honorably discharged as a corporal on March 15, 1946.

The GI Bill benefited Ed Bearss, as it also did many other servicemen, helping him to receive degrees from Georgetown University and Indiana University. Fascinated by the Civil War, he embarked on a lifelong study of its leading figures and battlefields. In 1981, Ed Bearss became Chief Historian of the National Park Service. He was one of the leading speakers on the 1990 *The Civil War* television documentary by Ken Burns. And in keeping with his family’s tradition of dedication to service, his son and daughter both joined the US Marine Corps.

Ed’s “retirement” from the National Park Service in 1994 did not come close to marking a withdrawal from public life, however, for he went on to inform and entertain thousands of guests fortunate enough to join him on his many hundreds of battlefield tours. Ed, well into his nineties, navigated battlefields with a cane (which he used only to tap the ground for emphasis as he made points in his deep, thunderous,

distinctive voice) as he told timeless stories of service, bravery and sacrifice—stories that he understands personally, from his experiences in combat and lifelong dedication to his country.

Ed Bearss passed 15 September 2020 at age 97. He is mourned by his family and the many thousands of friends that he made over the course of his remarkable life. [Source: National WWII Museum | Ed Lengel | June 26, 2021 ++]

State Veterans' Benefits Michigan 2021

The state of Michigan 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 – MI**” 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.michigan.gov/dmva> :

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

[Source: <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/michigan-state-veterans-benefits.html> | August 2021 ++]

*** Vet Legislation ***



AO & Burn Pits

Get COST of War & PACT Acts Moving

An estimated 3.5 million veterans have been exposed to burn pits and even more have been exposed to Agent Orange, radiation, and contaminated water. Still others have been exposed to hazards at locations like Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in Uzbekistan and Fort McClellan in Alabama. Many are struggling without access to VA health care and benefits, but there is legislation that can provide help now. Currently there are two veterans toxic exposure omnibus bills pending—the Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act in the Senate, and H.R. 3967, the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, in the House.

Both bills have been marked up by their respective Veterans' Affairs Committees and are now waiting for review by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), input from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congressional negotiations before they can be brought to the floor in the Senate and House. Both omnibus bills are made up from over 14 different pieces of bipartisan toxic exposure legislation and would:

- Grant concession of exposure to burn pits and toxic environments;
- Provide health care based on those exposures;
- Add presumptive diseases due to the burn pits and toxins; and
- Provide a new framework for establishing presumptive diseases in the future.

While DAV has raised concerns over certain sections of each of the omnibus bills, they support both the COST of War Act and the Honoring our PACT Act. They urge you to contact your Senators and Representative and encourage them to lead a bipartisan effort in coordination with veterans service organizations (VSOs). We must collaborate on toxic exposure legislation that we can all support to provide the desperately needed benefits and health care to the men and women exposed to toxins in service of this nation. Towards this they have prepared the below editable letter and are asking veterans to forward it to their legislators:

Dear Sen./Rep. _____

An estimated 3.5 million veterans have been exposed to burn pits and even more have been exposed to Agent Orange, radiation, and contaminated water. Still others have been exposed to hazards at places locations like Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in Uzbekistan and Fort McClellan in Alabama. Many are struggling without access to VA health care and benefits, but there is legislation that can provide help now.

On May 26, 2021, the Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act, was reported out of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. The bill is now waiting for review by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), input from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congressional negotiations before it can be brought to the floor in the House. It is made up from over 14 different pieces of bipartisan toxic exposure legislation and would:

- *Grant concession of exposure to burn pits and toxic environments;*
- *Provide health care based on the exposures;*
- *Add presumptive diseases due to the burn pits and toxins; and*
- *Provide a new framework for establishing presumptive diseases in the future.*

I urge you to engage in a bipartisan effort with your fellow Members of Congress, veterans service organizations (VSOs) and other stakeholders. We must collaborate on toxic exposure legislation that we can all support and provide the desperately needed benefits and health care to the men and women exposed to toxins in service of this nation.

Please advise me of your intentions with respect to this bill.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Address

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

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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 | Andrew Marshall | August 24, 2021 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure Legislation

Update 15: H.R. 4571 | SERVICE Act of 2021

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 indicate 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 almost 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 ever 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. Therefore, we strongly support the SERVICE Act of 2021, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 015, which calls for enhanced medical services for women veterans. Towards this they have prepared the below editable letter and are asking veterans to forward it to their legislators:

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Subj: Please Support H.R. 4571, the SERVICE Act of 2021
Rep. _____

On July 20, 2021, Representatives Mariannette Miller-Meeks (IA) and Julia Brownley (CA) introduced H.R. 4571—the Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environments Act (SERVICE) Act of 2021—which 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 indicate that women who have served in the military have an elevated risk for breast cancer compared to their non-veteran peers. While VA historically outperforms the private sector in providing breast health screenings for women, this bill will bolster those efforts ever further. Better screening and early detection, especially among those with known risk factors, can help save lives.

I ask that you support H.R. 4571 and consider being a cosponsor of this important legislation. Please advise me of your intentions with respect to this bill.

*Sincerely,
Your Name
Your Address*

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If in doubt as to who your representatives 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>. This website provides all legislators names and websites with contact info with which you can substitute your 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 | Andrew Marshall | August 30, 2021 ++]

Note: To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress> for any House or Senate bill introduced in the 116th Congress. Bills are listed in reverse numerical order for House and then Senate. Bills are normally initially assigned to a congressional committee to consider and amend before sending them on to the House or Senate as a whole. To read the text of bills that are to be considered on the House floor in the upcoming week refer to <https://docs.house.gov/floor>.

*** Military ***



Military Myths & Legends

Update 04: Discharge for having too Much Money

One old urban legend that invariably finds its way into the barracks is the story about a friend of a friend (of a friend) who hit a lottery jackpot. When he finally got to pocket the massive sum of prize money, he also received an unexpected surprise: his separation paperwork. Having too much money, the story goes, makes

it unlikely that a soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine will have any inclination to do their job, follow orders or even show up for work. This means the military has an unspoken policy of giving its suddenly wealthy troops the boot.

In a way, such a policy would make sense. In other ways, people don't join the service solely because they need a job or career training. Some people join the military to serve their country because they believe in the mission of the armed forces or because it's an answer to a call of duty. No amount of money could replace that call to service. Does being rich suddenly make people unfit for military service? No. Will the military kick them out anyway? No to that as well, with one caveat: the military might prefer if they separated, but it won't force its troops out.

Military personnel have won big in the past. In 2016, a Coast Guard officer won \$1 million in a Powerball drawing. A soldier from Fort Bragg won \$2 million later that year. In 2017, another soldier won \$5 million with a scratch-off ticket. Did they leave the military? Only one chose to leave the military. One served until retirement, and the other, Andrew Norberg, is still serving in the Coast Guard. The soldier that won \$5 million and chose his discharge papers was able to do so through a clause in his enlistment contract that allowed for a discharge under "unique circumstances." The clause allows military members to voluntarily separate if it's in the best interest of their branch of service.

Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force regulations all have provisions for voluntary separation in the best interests of the branch, and the Marine Corps and Space Force will have them, too, being housed under the Navy and Air Force, respectively. No matter how a service member comes into their newfound wealth, be it through Powerball winning, gambling in Las Vegas, or finding the lost Nazi train full of gold, they will all be offered the same choice: to stay in their original enlistment or commission or take a voluntary separation in the best interests of their branch of service. Never has a service member been shown the door to the civilian world just for having a bit of good luck on lottery night. [Source: Together We Served | August 16, 2021 ++]

Military Draft

Update 07: Should Women Have To Register For The Draft?



Women are piloting fighter jets. They are joining the Marines. And they have the opportunity to serve in any military position, as long as they complete the training. But women in the United States are not required to register for the draft. They can't sign up even if they want to do so. Democrats in Congress, backed by the nation's military leaders and some Republicans, are pushing to expand selective service to women and men ages 18 to 25. This change is attached to a military bill now working its way through the Senate. The last

time the nation actually deployed the draft was 1973 during the Vietnam War, but for decades young men have registered in the event of a national crisis.

Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) supports selective service, but he doesn't want to see it changed. He sees this as a job for America's young men — and young men only. "This policy change is rushed and unnecessary in our current time of peace, and unduly harms women more than advancing any notion of equality," the Utah Republican said in a recent statement. "While American women should be empowered to serve in our armed forces, they should not be forced to fight." The Utah lawmaker is offering a resolution, with five other Senate Republicans, opposing the change. It argues the draft is almost exclusively used to replace combat troops wounded or killed in battle.

The resolution notes women have a harder time meeting the physical fitness requirements to become a combat soldier than men and says "physical disadvantages between men and women often result in excessive fatigue and more frequent injuries in women." It zeroes in on the Army combat fitness test and says women failed it 65% to 84% of the time, while men failed 10% to 30%. It appears that women have performed better on this test over time, with the failure rate dropping to 60% in 2020, though men consistently have scored better. Women now make up 16% of all enlisted soldiers. Lee's resolution ends by saying that having women sign up for selective service would "unduly increase the fatality and injury risks of women in the United States and hinder combat unit readiness in battle."

This is not the first time Lee has weighed in on this issue. Congress debated requiring women to sign up for the draft in 2016, the year after the military lifted the ban on women serving in all combat roles. That year, Lee wrote an opinion piece published by the *Conservative Review*. "We are apparently now contemplating a future national emergency in which young women — as young as teenagers — are taken against their will, sent to boot camp and off to war... while eligible, able bodied young men are not," Lee wrote. "As the father of a teenage daughter, as a husband and a brother and a Christian, I'm going to say this as politely as I can: This is completely unacceptable."

He wrote that this is not about equality or privilege or discrimination but rather that the best war fighters are young men. "It is a question of human nature and human survival — the same reason husbands (and not their wives and kids) are expected to grab the baseball bat and investigate strange noises in the middle of the night," he wrote. "But, of course, the empirical case against conscripting women only points toward the moral case: Men are supposed to protect women and children, not the other way around. Everyone in all three groups knows this, however unfashionable it may be to say in some places."

Utah's other Republican senator, Mitt Romney, has not taken a position on this issue. One notion on which Lee and Democratic President Joe Biden agree is that changes to the draft should be made by Congress, not by the courts. In April, the Biden administration asked the Supreme Court to reject a petition calling for the current selective service program to be considered unconstitutional, saying that Congress hadn't yet had a chance to act on the recommendations of a blue-ribbon commission.

The National Commission on Military, National and Public Service issued its final report in March 2020. It received little attention at the time because of the coronavirus pandemic. The 11-member commission was created in 2017 to study whether women should have to sign up for the draft and how to increase public service. It recommended that women should be required to register for selective service. "Doing so promotes the national security of the United States by allowing the president to leverage the full range of talent and skills available during a national mobilization," the commission wrote. "It also reaffirms the nation's

fundamental belief in a common defense, and signals that both men and women are valued for their contributions.”

The report continued, “The current disparate treatment of women unacceptably excludes women from a fundamental civic obligation and reinforces gender stereotypes about the role of women, undermining national security.” The commission argued that any future draft would supply the military with more than just combat troops and that a modern military includes “intelligence and communication specialists, linguists, logisticians, medical personnel, drone or cyber operators” and more. The report also noted that women in uniform experienced combat in Afghanistan and Iraq where insurgencies used roadside bombs, even if they were not in combat roles.

The group called including women “a necessary — and overdue — step” and that this will send a signal that in a time of true crisis, women, and not just men, will be expected to serve. “The next time America must turn to a draft, it will need to include everyone who is capable and qualified,” the report concludes. “It would be harmful to the nation’s security to leave out the skills and talents of half of the U.S. population.” Among those on the commission was Debra Wada, a former assistant secretary of the Army. She told The New York Times that women bring “a whole host of different perspectives, different experiences.” “If the threat is to our very existence,” she said, “wouldn’t you want women as part of that group?”

The change in selective service is tucked into the National Defense Authorization Act making its way through the Senate. It has passed a Senate committee and received the support of more than half the Republicans on that panel. The House is working on its own version and is expected to include the same change in the draft. A bill must be passed, but plenty of negotiation remains. A similar change was in the 2016 version but was cut out of the final draft. If the measure passes with this change, women ages 18 to 25 would have to register for selective service one year after its enactment. [Source: The Salt Lake Tribune | Matt Canham | August 16, 2021 ++]

Russian Military Strength

Update 04: Putin Launches New Naval Construction



Russian President Vladimir Putin on 23 AUG launched the construction of new nuclear submarines and other warships, part of a sweeping military modernization effort amid tensions with the West. Speaking in a video call, Putin gave orders for two nuclear submarines armed with intercontinental ballistic missiles along with two diesel-powered submarines and two corvettes at shipyards in Severodvinsk, St. Petersburg and Komsomolsk-on-Amur. “We will continue to boost the potential of the Russian Navy, develop its bases and

infrastructure, arm it with state-of-the-art weapons,” Putin said. “A strong and sovereign Russia needs a powerful and well-balanced navy.”

The Kremlin has made military modernization a top priority as relations with the West have plunged to post-Cold War lows after Russia’s 2014 annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea. Moscow has sought to reestablish a regular naval presence in parts of the world that the Soviet Union had during the Cold War. The Russian Navy already has a major presence in the Mediterranean Sea, with a naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus. It has expanded and modified the Tartus base, the only such facility that Russia currently has outside the former Soviet Union. “We will continue to show the Russian flag in strategically important ocean areas,” Putin said.

The ceremony on 23 AUG for the new ships was part of the International Military-Technical Army-2021 show 22 thru 28 AUG (<https://rusarmyexpo.com>) intended to showcase military might and attract foreign customers for Russia’s arms industries. The weeklong show features aircraft, tanks, missiles and other weapons. Refer to <https://youtu.be/Nrpng-FQ5g8>. “Many of our weapons have the capabilities that have no analogues in the world, and some will remain unrivaled for a long time to come,” Putin said. [Source: The Associated Press| Vladimir Isachenkov | August 23, 2021 ++]

USMC Survival Training

Update 02: Cobra Blood is off the Training Menu



The animal rights group *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* declared victory this week after the practice of drinking the blood of cobras was axed from the multinational Cobra Gold military exercise in Thailand. Killing the snakes to demonstrate a jungle survival technique was scuttled at the exercise earlier this month, PETA announced 16 AUG, citing unnamed Thai military sources. The nonprofit, based in Norfolk, Va., spent years lobbying against a practice it called “frat boy-style barbarity.” Images of beheaded snakes, their blood dripping onto the tongues of eager young Marines, were publicized by the Defense Department itself.

“We are proud that after PETA’s intensive campaigning, Thai and U.S. armed forces made the ethical and safe decision to not kill any animals during this year’s Cobra Gold exercises, apparently for the first time in the event’s history,” PETA vice president of international laboratory methods Shalin Gala wrote in an email Wednesday to Stars and Stripes. “This move means that this year troops were no longer made to eat live animals or drink the blood of beheaded snakes, which is a win-win, sparing animals and protecting public health.” The III Marine Expeditionary Force, which is based in Okinawa, Japan, and usually participates in Cobra Gold, did not respond to an email seeking comment 18 AUG.

PETA began campaigning in 2020 against the military killing cobras at Cobra Gold after the images came to their attention, Gala said. The group discovered that troops and instructors also killed chickens with their bare hands, skinned and ate live geckos and ate live scorpions and tarantulas. Gala said the group was concerned about the poor treatment of animals, but also about the health of the service members. The practice poses “a serious zoonotic disease threat,” a group of 19 military veterans and PETA supporters wrote to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on 22 JUL. “The World Health Organization has warned that ‘an estimated 70 percent of emerging and re-emerging pathogens’ — such as those that have caused the current COVID-19 pandemic, along with Ebola, Zika, SARS, MERS, smallpox, tuberculosis, and others — originated in animals,” the letter said. “It’s irresponsible to jeopardize our service members’ health and safety during these bloodlust exercises.”

PETA complained in writing to Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger, then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, Navy Inspector General Vice Admiral John Fuller and Thai officials. PETA supporters protested at the Thai embassy and Austin’s Virginia home; they drafted petitions, wrote op-eds and solicited media coverage, Gala said. He said more than 119,000 supporters responded to PETA online action alerts. “These actions likely influenced the Cobra Gold organizers to reconsider the ritualistic bloodlust killing of animals this year,” he said. “This is an important victory for ensuring that troops can learn survival techniques without having to mutilate and kill animals.” Better jungle survival methods can be taught that do not include the killing of animals, he said.

Gala wrote that PETA would monitor future exercises to ensure the practice is not resurrected. Cobra Gold typically takes place in the winter months and is one of the largest multinational exercises in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to U.S. soldiers and Marines, thousands of troops from over 24 nations also take part. Last year, approximately 5,500 U.S. service personnel participated in activities ranging from amphibious assaults to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok said at the time. This year’s 40th iteration was pushed back to July and August, and some activities were canceled, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Bangkok Post reported 2 JUL. It said only 600 U.S. troops took part. [Source: Stars and Stripes | Matthew M. Burke | August 18, 2021 ++]

New Military Parents Legislation Providing Better Benefits Support



The Military Coalition (TMC) and MOAA are backing proposed legislation to make life easier for new parents, and TMC sent a letter to key leaders in the House and Senate Armed Services committees in July urging their support. You can read the letter from the TMC, a consortium of organizations representing 5.5

million servicemembers, veterans, their families, and survivors, at <https://www.moaa.org/uploadedfiles/tmc-parental-leave.pdf> . The legislation would:

- Modernize the military’s parental leave policies.
- Improve the health of parents and their children.
- Create a healthier, more welcoming environment for parents.
- Support retention of our valuable female servicemembers.

The **Military Moms Matter Act** (H.R.3047) contributes to a more inclusive force and demonstrates a service-level commitment to valuing the contributions of female servicemembers. This legislation would ensure new mothers have access to physical therapy referrals for pelvic floor examinations and expand the number of military treatment facilities that offer these services. It would also expand screening for postpartum depression and anxiety and provide for expansion of a pilot program that pairs newborn check-ups with the mother’s postpartum follow-up care.

The **Servicemember Parental Leave Equity Act** (H.R. 3122/S. 1571) brings parental leave offered to servicemembers in line with federal benefits and options provided by many private, large employers. This legislation would authorize up to 12 weeks of primary caregiver leave (up from six weeks under current law) for birth, adoption, or long-term placement of a foster child. Currently, secondary caregivers in the Navy and Marine Corps are allowed only 14 days of leave. The proposed bill would authorize 12 weeks of secondary caregiver leave and provide guidance for leave to be taken in more than one increment.

Servicemembers seeking extended time off to raise a family may apply for the Career Intermission Program (CIP) which provides the ability to transfer out of the active component and into the Individual Ready Reserve for up to three years while retaining full health care coverage and base privileges. The Servicemember Parental Leave Equity Act modifies the existing payback period for the CIP to a one-month service commitment for every month of participation in the CIP (down from two months under current law). It includes a requirement for service secretaries to report to Congress annually on use of military parental leave by primary and secondary caregivers, the impact on readiness and retention, and number of waivers granted to the 12-month postpartum deferment policies. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Jen Goodale | August 19, 2021 ++]

Military Coronavirus Impact

Update 05: Pfizer Approval Makes Vaccine Mandatory for Troops



Service members not yet vaccinated against COVID-19 will have to sit down for their shots soon or risk administrative or criminal action. With the Food and Drug Administration’s announcement 23 AUG that

the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has received full licensure, the Defense Department is working up a policy to begin requiring it for troops. “A timeline for vaccination completion will be provided in the coming days,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters. In an August memo, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced he would seek a waiver from the president, by mid-September, to make the vaccines mandatory during an FDA emergency use authorization.

In that memo, Austin left open the possibility that one or more of the vaccine options would become fully licensed before his September deadline, and that he would either move up his request or add them one at a time to the mandatory vaccination list. Kirby did not clarify which course of action Austin plans to take, only that the focus for now is on the Pfizer vaccine. “I don’t want to get ahead of decisions that haven’t been made yet,” he added. Once the guidance is out, troops will either need to visit a military medical facility to get their doses, or show proof of outside vaccination to their chains of command, who can enter it in existing medical tracking systems.

The guidance is also expected to lay out some recourse for commanders whose troops refuse to get vaccinated. That could range from non-deployable status, evaluation marks that could affect promotion, administrative or other non-judicial punishment, or even criminal charges. As of 18 AUG, 58 percent of the active-duty and reserve components had gotten at least one dose of vaccine. Officials in late June told reporters that about 70 percent of the active-duty force is vaccinated, with the Navy the most complete, at 73 percent, and the Marine Corps the least, at 58 percent. The overall number on 18 AUG had increased roughly 2 percent over the previous week, when Austin first announced he intended to make the vaccines mandatory. That jump doesn’t represent a significant spike, as vaccine rates have been growing 1 to 2 percent week over week for much of the summer.

DoD does have a process for requesting medical or religious exemptions. Approval requires legal and spiritual counseling, as well as discussion of all alternatives. Additionally, DoD is creating guidance to get into compliance with the rest of the federal government, as President Joe Biden in August announced that unvaccinated federal employees will be subject to regular COVID-19 testing. The Pentagon’s announcement follows the military’s deadliest stretch of the pandemic yet. In the past month, eight service members died of COVID-19, twice as many as the November, previously the worst month. Four of those deaths came between Aug. 13 and Aug. 15, bringing the military mortality rate to 0.01 percent — well below the nearly 2-percent rate across the U.S., but also 25 times higher than in was for troops in 2020. [Source: ArmyTimes | Meghann Myers | August 23, 2021]

Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang

‘Turn Count’ thru ‘Ustatfish’

Turn Count - Estimating a vessel's speed by counting screw (propellor) rpm via sonar.

Turn To – Begin working, or "Get to work!"

Turn Turtle – Capsize.

Tweak - See TWIDGET.

Twelve O'clock Reports - Reports on fuel and water, magazine temperature, and position. These reports are made to the OOD (Officer of the Deck) by the engineering officer, the weapons officer, and the navigator, respectively. The OOD then reports to the CO.

Twidget - Any of the electronics/computer/communications technicians.

Two-blocked - To reach the maximum limit of something. Can also mean just right, or perfect. The term originates in the use of block and tackle for hoisting. When the two blocks touch, lifting can proceed no farther. RN/RCN is "chock-a-block" or "chokers," though these forms are more restricted to the "maximum limit" definition.

Two-and-a-half - (RN) Lieutenant Commander.

UA - Unauthorized Absence. The Naval/Marine equivalent of AWOL (Absent Without Leave).

Uder - (RN, pronounced like the cow's appendage) The stoker in charge of the fuel tanks, fresh water, and fuels reports.

Under Way – Sometimes seen as "under weigh." The term refers to a ship which is not physically connected to solid ground, i.e. neither moored, anchored, nor aground. Often confused with "MAKING WAY" (q.v.), though legally very different.

UNREP - Underway Replenishment. The transfer of supplies, fuel, and munitions from one ship to another while at sea. Also seen as RAS (Replenishment At Sea), esp. RN/RCN.

Unsat – Unsatisfactory. Up Homers - (RN) Being invited to someone's home, especially a female's.

Upper Works – The structure of a ship which lies above here weather decks. Also known as "superstructure."

Up the Hawsepipe – (UK) An officer commissioned from the lower deck (enlisted ranks). Similar to the USN's Mustang.

US – (RN/RCN/RAN) UnServiceable.

USMC – United States Marine Corps. Cynically, 'Uncle Sam's Misguided Children.'

Ustafish - (1) General term for a previous submarine command one has served in. Often used as "That's not how we did it aboard the USTAFISH." Generally followed by various short, forceful comments from others present. (2) A rogue virtual submarine manned by members of the sci.military.naval newsgroup.

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

*** Military History ***



WWII Liberation of Paris

The German General Who Refused To Destroy the City

By August 1944 Adolf Hitler had few prizes left in his beleaguered domain. From Tripoli to Rome to Kiev, the conquered metropolises had been retaken. He had just lost the first capital he had won almost five years earlier, as Josef Stalin's surging Red Army replaced Warsaw's brown yoke with a red one. When resistance forces within Warsaw rose against the Germans in anticipation of the Russians' arrival, Stalin paused. Seasoned guerrilla fighters would not be a valued commodity in Soviet-occupied Poland, so the dictator ordered his advancing hordes to halt mere miles from Warsaw, leaving the hapless guerrillas alone against a German garrison determined to thoroughly eradicate this rioting gang of "subhumans."

By the time the new rulers marched in, the city was a smoldering rubble heap whose inhabitants were in no state to present difficulties. It was a situation the Führer also found quite appealing, if for a very different reason. If Hitler and Germany could not have Warsaw, why should anyone else? For that matter, why should anybody else have Paris? Far from Warsaw, a very powerful American was also preoccupied with the fate of Paris. For General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the French capital, the cultural and artistic nucleus of Western civilization, was a gargantuan headache. Two miles inland from the Normandy coast, the supreme Allied commander sat in his nondescript, rain-drenched command caravan and reluctantly decided that he would have to postpone the liberation of the "City of Light."

To learn how Eisenhower dealt with the situation, his nemesis DE Gaulle who disagreed with him, and how Paris was eventually liberated refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**WWII Paris' Unlikely Savior**" [Source: <https://www.historynet.com/paris-unlikely-savior-july-96-world-war-ii-feature.htm> | Kelly Bell | August 24, 2021 ++]

USS Thresher (SSN-593)

Update 01: Loss Result of Policies & Procedures Failing to Keep Pace w/Technology



1960 file photo of the 278-foot long nuclear powered attack submarine USS Thresher

The release of about 3000 pages of documents delving into the deadliest submarine disaster in US history has not yielded any sinister effort to hide the truth, a retired Navy skipper says. Instead, documents show the US Navy's policies and procedures failed to keep pace with fast-moving technological advances during the Cold War, allowing a series of failures that led to the sinking of the USS Thresher on April 10, 1963, said retired Captain James Bryant, who sued for release of the documents under the Freedom of Information Act.

"There's no cover-up. No smoking gun," he said. That doesn't make it any less tragic, though. The loss of the nuclear-powered submarine and all 129 sailors and civilians aboard during a test dive in the Atlantic Ocean was both a tragedy for the families and a blow to national pride during the Cold War. The Thresher was the first of a new class of attack submarines that could travel farther and dive deeper than any previous sub. But the documents suggest the nuclear-powered submarine's capabilities outstripped the Navy's best practices based on older-generation subs. For example, the ballast system used to surface in an emergency was a legacy system that was never tested at greater depths, and proved to be inadequate, the documents show. There were known problems with the silver-brazed joints in pipes throughout the sub. And training was inadequate for a nuclear reactor shutdown at depth.

The Navy believes the Thresher's sinking was likely caused by a burst pipe and electrical problems that led to a nuclear reactor shutdown. "The Navy continues to stand by and remain transparent with the families and the public on the conclusions of the 1963 Court of Inquiry and the likely scenarios that caused the loss of Thresher," Lieutenant Katherine Diener, a US Navy spokesperson said. Another 4000 pages of Thresher-related documents are due to be released, she said. Mr Bryant, himself the skipper of a Thresher-class submarine, agreed that a series of events led to the sinking: The sub descended far too quickly without stopping to assess for leaks from previous shock testing months earlier; there were training concerns because the location of valves had changed while in dock; and ice build-up prevented the crew from effectively blowing the ballast tanks to resurface.

The main cooling pumps eventually stopped, followed by the nuclear reactor, robbing the submarine of the ability to stop its fatal descent, he said. No one will know for sure exactly how the disaster played out. But it's clear that precious minutes went by as the crew became aware of their dire situation. At one point, a message from the submarine to a rescue ship referred to "900 north" suggesting the sub was 900 feet (274m) beyond its test depth, according to the documents. The test depth was redacted but previously declassified documents indicated it was 400m, said Norman Friedman, a US naval analyst and author of more than 30 books on naval topics. The documents reveal many of the submarine's safety systems were based on operations in shallower depths from previous-generation submarines, and were inadequate in the unlikely scenario of a loss of nuclear propulsion while deep underwater, Mr Bryant said.

That World War II mindset during the nuclear age proved fatal for the Thresher crew, he said. At the time, the US Navy's resources and personnel were strained as it pushed to get ballistic missile-equipped submarines deployed quickly to counter the Soviet missile threat, Mr Friedman said. That contributed to veteran crew members being reassigned and new officers and sailors coming aboard who were less familiar with the Thresher's complicated system of pipes and valves before the fatal dive, he said. "It's almost a wartime situation and you might consider them casualties of the Cold War," he said of the Thresher's crew. The sub's destruction caused the Navy to accelerate safety improvements and to create a program called SUBSAFE, an extensive series of design modifications, training and other improvements. One submarine has sunk since then, the USS Scorpion in 1968, and it was not SUBSAFE-certified, the Navy said.

Tim Noonis, whose father, a radio operator, perished on the Thresher, said the loss remains painful for families like his, but he finds comfort that the Navy corrected mistakes for the sake of future sailors. "No one wants to lose a family member, but if other families have benefited, well, there's some solace in that," Mr Noonis said. Mr Noonis was born at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, where the Thresher was built. The sub was based in Groton, Connecticut. Its final dive took place beyond the continental shelf, about 350km off

Massachusetts' Cape Cod. Thresher currently rests at a depth of 2600m. The wreckage is spread over more than a kilometer on the ocean floor. [Source: Associated Press | David Sharp | August 2, 2021 ++]

Civil War 54th Massachusetts

Failed Attack on Confederate Battery Wagner



The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment is best known for its service leading the failed Union assault on Battery Wagner, a Confederate earthwork fortification on Morris Island, on July 18, 1863. This was one of the first major actions in which African American soldiers fought for the Union in the American Civil War. The courage of the soldiers in the 54th convinced many politicians and Army officers of their value, prompting the further enlistment of black soldiers.

The 54th Massachusetts was the second all-Black infantry unit formed by the Union Army during the war. It began recruiting troops outside of Boston in February 1863 under the command of Col. Robert Gould Shaw. William Harvey Carney joined the unit within weeks of its formation, along with 40 other Black men who were dedicated to the cause of ending slavery by force. Carney was born a slave in the area around Norfolk, Virginia, in 1840. When his family was emancipated, they moved north to Massachusetts. It was there that Carney secretly learned to read and write. When the Civil War broke out, he volunteered to fight and free those still in chains in the south.

Initially tasked with manual labor details, the 54th did not see real action until a skirmish with Confederate troops on James Island on July 16, 1863. The Battle of Grimball's Landing served as a diversion for the later attack on Battery Wagner and also provided the men of the 54th with combat experience. Five thousand US Army soldiers began marching in the darkness toward Battery Wagner on the evening of July 18, which stood eerily quiet in the distance. The Union high command anticipated a victory as Union artillery from shore batteries and aboard Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren's fleet had pounded the Confederate garrison in preparation for the assault. Defending Morris Island, Brigadier General William Taliaferro of Virginia commanded about 1,800 Confederates, representing units from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia, all of whom were determined to repulse the expected Union attack.

Leading the Union attack were the men of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment under the command of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. Though many northern states were represented on the field, the 54th stood out as one of the first African American regiments to see major combat during the war. Ready to demonstrate their bravery and military bearing, they pushed on until coming within one hundred yards of the Confederate line, at which point the order was given to charge. Almost immediately, Southern guns opened fire, tearing through the Union ranks with devastating effect. Temporarily halted by the intense fire, Shaw gathered his men and led them through the moat and up the slope.

Upon reaching the top, Confederate soldiers engaged them in hand-to-hand combat. At this climatic moment, Shaw was killed by a Confederate volley, moments after shouting to his men "Forward Fifty-Fourth!"; the men of the 54th continued the fight even amid heavy casualties. The 54th suffered roughly 42% casualties in a horrific battle against a strongly defended position. Of 600 men, over 280 men were killed, wounded, captured, and/or missing and presumed dead. Behind them, units from New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, and Pennsylvania pressed forward in an attempt to capitalize on the assault of the 54th. Severe fighting continued for several hours. Union troops were able to briefly penetrate into Wagner itself but not could exploit their breakthrough due to determined Confederate counterattacks and sweeping artillery fire. Finally in the early hours of July 19, Union troops withdrew, and the fierce battle came to an end.

There were a number of standouts from the fighting. Early on, the 54th's color guard was killed in the unit's approach to the fort. It was the enlisted soldier, William Harvey Carney, who scooped up the American flag as the flag bearer succumbed to his wounds and carried the flag forward. Though wounded by several gunshots himself, he even carried the flag to the fort's walls during the doomed attack on the parapet. Despite quickly losing blood and being near death, he planted the flag in the sand and positioned his body to keep it upright.

The importance of unit colors in combat during the Civil War cannot be understated. It was more than a symbol; men were trained to follow the flag into a blaze of gunfire and to rally around it. The presence of the unit colors kept the unit together in the melee of men and smoke. If the flag had gone down, the men might have thought the battle was lost, causing them to break formation and retreat. When William Harvey Carney kept the flag high, it kept the unit together, enabling them to press the assault as two other Union units attacked from the other sides of the fort. He not only saved the lives of men from the 54th Massachusetts, he kept Confederates from moving men to repel assaults from the 6th Connecticut, 48th New York, 3rd New Hampshire, 76th Pennsylvania, and the 9th Maine regiments who were also in the fighting. When he returned to camp, he reportedly said, "Boys, the old flag never touched the ground!" 60 days of constant bombardment later, the Confederates abandoned Fort Wagner. For keeping Old Glory high in the air that night, Carney was promoted to Sergeant.

In 1863, the Medal of Honor was just a year old. Many of these medals were awarded years after the deeds to receive them were performed on May 23, 1900, Sgt. William Harvey Carney received the Medal of Honor for his dedication at Fort Wagner and wore it the rest of his life. Because of the valor shown by the men of the 54th, the US Army increased the number of black enlistments so that by 1865 almost two hundred thousand African Americans had served from 1863-1865, comprising roughly ten percent of the American soldiers who served in the US Army during the Civil War. The 54th Massachusetts Regiment not only fought the Confederates in the field, they also took up the call for equal pay and fought against discrimination from the US government.

The 54th continued to serve on the southeast coast for the remainder of the war. Although most of its service took place in Charleston Harbor, the regiment also saw service in a significant campaign in Florida in 1864 where they repulsed attacking Confederates, guarding the Union retreat in the aftermath of the Union defeat at the Battle of Olustee in Florida. They also fought at Honey Hill and Boykin's Mill, South Carolina in the waning months of the war. The regiment mustered out of service in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina on August 20, 1865. [Source: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/54th-massachusetts-regiment.htm> & TWS | August 16, 2021 ++]

ROK | Old Breed's 3rd Bn

Distinguished Military Unit: George Company-3-1



The 1st Marine Division, the oldest and largest active duty division of the United States Marines, is perhaps best known by the nickname coined following World War II, "The Old Breed." With a long and distinguished history, no subordinate unit better reflects the honor and best traditions of the Marine Corps than the 3rd Battalion, G Company during the Korean War. George Company served gallantly spanning Inchon, Seoul, Wonsan landings, and Chosin Reservoir, pushing the limits of human endurance, but in the final days of the war would have to fight for their lives less than six miles from the site of the armistice, eerily reminiscent of World War I when soldiers were sent to their deaths up until the final moments of the war.

3rd Battalion, 1st Marines (3-1) was reactivated on August 4, 1950, for a rapid September deployment to Korea. The Marines of George Company were an uncommonly diverse cross-section of American society, small towns and big cities, some rich and some poor, coal mines and farming communities, a Harvard graduate and one with a sixth-grade education, veterans of WWII, volunteers and draftees. The speed of deployment meant that basic training was foregone and replaced instead by summer camp, an effort focused on as much physical conditioning as possible prior to embarking for Korea. In many cases, the men learned to fire their weapons on board the ship. However, for these men, it has been speculated that immense patriotism developed during World War II coupled with hardships endured during the Great Depression created a generation that knew and accepted hard times, engraining a sense of hard work, self-reliance, and patriotism that would be tested on the battlefield.

The men of George Company would be tested first in combat at Inchon, an amphibious October landing code-named Operation Chromite, with the objective of recapturing Seoul, the South Korean capital that had been lost to earlier enemy invasion. Landing through Blue Beach, Two George Company attacked inland, enduring house-to-house fighting and some of the battle's heaviest combat while suffering moderate casualties. Success at Seoul proved a major turning point in the war and caused widespread enemy retreat north, behind the 38th parallel.

With UN forces now poised along the 38th parallel, the Chinese government warned that any breach of this border would result in the commitment of twelve divisions (120,000 troops) to reinforce North Korean communist forces. Despite this threat, UN forces, including the 1st Marine Division, embarked for transport and a second amphibious landing at Wonsan on the east coast of Korea, deep behind the 38th parallel. As the east prong of a pincer movement alongside US 10th Army and ordered north to the Yalu River (the Korean border with China), the Marines were to link up with the US 8th Army advancing up the west coast.

As a capstone by war planners, the campaign was popularized as "Home for Christmas" - but could not be more wrong.

Now the end of November, Marines fought their way north along the Main Supply Route (MSR), a 15-foot-wide roadway extending 78 miles from the coastal town of Hungnam to the Chosin Reservoir through mountainous and otherwise impassable terrain. The US 1st Marine Division occupied Koto-ri and established headquarters further on at Hagaru-Ri to support elements of the 5th and 7th Marines advancing on Yudam-ni. What they could not know is that two reinforced Chinese communist armies had infiltrated into North Korea weeks earlier as promised, moving at night and remaining hidden during the day. As the US 8th Army began its advance to the Yalu River, the Chinese swarmed UN forces, destroying four South Korean regiments and battering the 8th Army.

Ordered to retreat, the 8th Army would undertake a six-week-long withdrawal resulting in 10,000 casualties, and in doing so, abandon forward US Marine positions to overwhelming communist forces. Following enemy engagements with elements of 5th and 7th Marines, the scale of the opposition became apparent, outnumbering US forces more than ten to one meanwhile, as Marines and soldiers of 10th Army dug-in temperatures plummeted as far as minus 540 F, conditions not seen for over one hundred years. In just three days of combat, the Chosin Reservoir had become a virtual massacre with communist forces well-entrenched in the high ground that encircled the reservoir and lined the MSR.

The best hope for UN forces was a coordinated withdrawal extending from Yudam-ni to Hagaru-Ri, Koto-Ri, and final extraction at Hungnam. Then located at Koto-ri, George Company was assigned to support a 250-man element of the British 41st Royal Marine Commandos in relieving Hagaru-ri, then oversee the evacuation of remaining troops. Identified as Task Force Drysdale, a convoy of 14 tanks and 150 trucks fought their way out of Koto-ri and toward certain death twelve miles away. Under continuous bombardment, the task force crept forward, arriving twelve hours later at Hagaru-Ri with George Company suffering 110 of the earlier 270 men killed-in-action. It is then that a LIFE magazine photographer inquired of one soldier, "What do you want for Christmas?", triggering the iconic response "Give me tomorrow."

To ensure the MSR remained open to remaining elements of 5th and 7th Marines withdrawing from Yudam-ni, control of East Hill was vital. Once under the control of US forces, communist units overran the position and were now the scene of fierce fighting. At dawn, George Company was ordered to take the Hill and, together with remnants of the original force, assaulted the position, the last line of defense for Hagaru-Ri. Inexplicably, the Company retained control and held for four more days against vastly overwhelming forces, enabling the evacuation of remaining marines and soldiers. Passing by East Hill George Company, Marines viewed a thousand Chinese bodies littering the rocky slopes. For actions during this campaign, two Marines of George Company were awarded the Medal of Honor, Captain Carl Sitter and Sergeant Harold Wilson.

Thirteen days after it began, the "Home for Christmas" offensive ended with the last US troops entering Hungnam. But for George Company, the men's time in hell was not yet over. Twenty miles inland from the west coast of the Korean peninsula in the demilitarized zone separating North Korea and South Korea rests a hill with large granite boulders near its crest. Spanning July 24 to 27, 1953, this hill, then known as Boulder City, was the site of the final and perhaps fiercest battle of the Korean War. Located approximately six miles from Panmunjom and the signing of an Armistice on July 27th, this position had been under attack by communist forces for several months. However, as negotiators neared an agreement, the Chinese

escalated fighting in an attempt to capture as much territory as possible, the potential impact of which has been argued since the war's end.

In point of fact, it has been suggested that had Boulder City fallen, communists would have terminated negotiations and prolonged the war. Nonetheless, before dawn on July 24th, George Company-3-1 relieved elements of the 7th Marines and found itself again confronted by a reinforced Chinese regiment. Sergeant James Everson remembers, "the regimental chaplain was there to give us absolution- now we had good reason to be nervous." Within the first few hours of the battle, George Company was down to 25% of its effective strength of 209, with 24 Marines missing in action. The Chinese artillery raining down on Boulder City was relentless, causing a large number of the company's casualties. One marine, John Comp, recalls, "Boulder City was just like the end of the world." At battle's end, these three nights of combat alone earned the Marines of George Company one Navy Cross, eleven Silver Stars, a wealth of Bronze Stars, and other awards for valor.

The Chosin Reservoir campaign is one of the greatest periods in Marine Corps history, heralded as upholding the highest standards of discipline and military conduct. Equally, just how the Marines of George Company retained control of Boulder City in the final days of the war is beyond our understanding. Arguably, a number of questions exist underlying decisions made and actions that were taken; why were forces at the Chosin Reservoir not withdrawn until weeks after the Communist infiltration was known, why did ROK negotiators boycott peace talks for the last two months of the war, why wasn't a cease-fire negotiated in the closing days of the war with a single article yet to be agreed... and others. Over seventy years later, we will never know these answers, but what we do know is that when their country called, scores of men stood up across the nation from diverse walks of life to be counted. Much like our heroes today, they didn't run from the fight but instead ran shoulder-to-shoulder into danger and certain death. [Source: Together We Served | August 16, 2021 ++]

WWII U.S. War Crimes

Crimes Committed By the United States during the War



Rather than taking them as POW's (center), U.S. troops executed about 60 SS officers upon liberating Dachau.

When thinking about war crimes in World War II, the Holocaust, the Nazi Party, and the Nuremberg trials come to mind. War crimes perpetrated by the Allies are something that most are not aware of. While it can be argued that the war crimes committed by the United States were not as heinous as those of Germany, they were still devastating.

Mass rape in Asia and Europe

One of the tragic tolls of war that is often glossed over is rape. This is an odious crime, and historians agree that American soldiers raped tens of thousands of women. These rapes occurred both during the war and in its immediate aftermath. Precise estimates are impossible to obtain, but the book *Taken By Force* estimates approximately 11,000 women were raped in Germany between 1945 and 1946. While fraternization with German women was forbidden, one American commander stated that copulation without conversation was not fraternization.

Germany was not the only country in which these atrocities occurred. The allied country of France also suffered from this war crime. Hundreds of French women reported being raped by American soldiers during the country's liberation from German occupation. The attitude of American troops was no different in the Pacific. An estimate states that 10,000 women were raped on Okinawa alone. The rapes did not stop after the Japanese surrender, as 1,336 incidents were reported in the first ten days after the surrender in Kanagawa.

Mutilation in the Pacific

After Pearl Harbor, the United States started military campaigns in the Pacific. The primary enemy was Japan and many soldiers on both sides perished. The war crimes committed by US soldiers during this campaign are clearly documented. The worst was the mutilation of Japanese corpses to take trophies such as their skulls. The practice was widespread among the troops, and reached a point where the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet ordered directives against it in 1942 and 1944. In *Trophies of War*, history professor James Weingartner states that mutilation was not uncommon. The Nevada Daily Mail ran a story in 1944 about Francis Walter presenting President Roosevelt with a letter opener made from a Japanese soldier's arm. Charles Lindbergh was once asked if he was carrying bones on his way home from the Pacific. The customs agent told him that the practice was so common that this had become a routine question.

The bombing of Dresden

In February 1945, British and American bombers started the Dresden bombing campaign, which lasted for three days and nights. While this was not the worst bombing mission of the war, 25,000 people were killed. Historians who believe the bombing of Dresden is a war crime point out that the target was civilians and done as a show of might to the Soviet Union. A British Royal Air Force memo which was issued to the bombers appears to support this theory. The memo stated that the campaign would show the Russians what Bomber Command was capable of. The fact that industrial targets in the city were unscathed also lends credibility to this view. There were two official inquiries by the United States into the bombing. Both found the action to be justified, but they are largely dismissed by scholars today. The reports are seen as a whitewashing of the bombing by one of the perpetrators.

Operation Teardrop

Operation Teardrop was the US answer to Adolf Hitler's U-boats in the North Atlantic. The campaign went largely according to plan and international law. There is only one incident that went so far out of hand that it ended up being a war crime. In 1945, U-546 sank the USS Frederick C. Davis, killing 126 of the crewmen. When the U-boat was then sunk by the USS Flaherty, 32 survivors were taken prisoner. All of the prisoners should have been sent to a prisoner of war camp, but 8 were pulled aside for interrogation. The 8 prisoners were repeatedly beaten, subjected to exhaustive physical strain, and placed in solitary confinement. The torture continued for over two weeks until Germany surrendered. After the surrender, the prisoners were moved to Fort Hunt where they were again subjected to harsh treatment and conditions.

Concentration camp slaughter

While we understand in hindsight how brutal the Holocaust was, liberating Allied troops had to experience the literal aftermath of it. There is no way to understand the shock and horror they might have felt when confronted with concentration camps. The question is whether this excuses the war crimes they committed

as a result. When American soldiers liberated the Dachau concentration camp, they found thirty-nine railway boxcars filled with corpses. The surrender of the camp was quick and painless, but that gruesome discovery left the soldiers thirsty for vengeance. What happened next varies, depending on whose account you read. According to commanding officers at the scene, 12 to 16 German prisoners were executed by machine gun. Approximately 30 more Germans were executed that day, according to Lt. Col. Felix Sparks. First Lt. Howard Buechner alleges that 520 Germans were killed, with 346 of them being a mass execution.

The Biscari massacre

When the Allies invaded Sicily, they found their first triumph in their campaign to take Europe back. The problem came just 4 days later with the largest massacre to be committed by American soldiers. The killings have become known as the Biscari massacre, named for the airfield the Americans were trying to capture. On July 14, 1943, American troops slaughtered 73 prisoners of war in 2 incidents. The first incident occurred under the command of Sergeant Horace West. His men stormed the airfield and took more than 40 prisoners. A few were sent for questioning while the others were lined up and executed via machine gun. Later that day, Captain John Compton and his men took 36 prisoners. The American interpreter asked the prisoners if they had been shooting, since many were dressed in civilian clothing. He received no answer. However, Compton's lieutenant told him that they had. This prompted Compton to give the order to shoot the prisoners.

[Source: War History Online | Claudia Mendes | November 11, 2018 ++]

Bonus Expeditionary Force

WWI Vet's Storm Washington and Bring about Change for Vets



In 1932, 43,000 demonstrators made their way to the US Capitol to demand early access to service bonus certificates. The demonstration was carried out by WWI veterans, of which around 17,000 were in attendance, and had brought their wives and children with them. The veterans were unemployed due to the Great Depression but were unable to redeem their WWI bonuses until 1945. The demonstration semi-unsuccessfully demanded immediate access to these bonuses. Named the “Bonus Expeditionary Force” as a nod to the US American Expeditionary Force that fought in WWI, the protestors would eventually clash with US authorities, resulting in the deaths of two veterans.

US Servicemembers have been given bonuses for their wartime experience since the 1700s as a means to ensure veterans received fair payment for leaving civilian life behind. This legislation was inspired by similar English customs that guaranteed maintenance for disabled veterans and gave bonuses to active soldiers. These bonuses for veterans and soldiers were significantly less generous than those given out in England, resulting in veterans marching for improvements in this system in the late 1700s. While the protests would be quashed, the US government slowly passed more accommodating legislation regarding pensions and bonuses. By the 1830s, even widows were able to benefit from these pensions.

Up until the late 1800s, land and money were given as payments to soldiers after a conflict had ended. The amount given to veterans was mostly decided by rank. For example, a private would be given \$80 dollars (around \$2,000 today) and 100 acres of land (even for cheaper areas in the US, this could be worth up to half a million dollars today). 73,500,000 acres of land had been given to veterans by 1860, and continuing this form of payment was becoming a problem, so the US government removed land as a bonus payment. As a result, only money would be given from then on.

Despite the provisions in place to support soldiers from previous wars, WWI veterans did not receive such bonuses. This prompted veterans' organizations to pressure the US government to give veterans compensation for their WWI service. In 1924, the government gave in, passing the World War Adjusted Compensation Act into federal law. This would see each veteran receive up to \$500 (equivalent to about \$8,000 today) for serving during WWI in the US or up to \$625 (equivalent to about \$9,500 today) for serving overseas. Smaller amounts were paid upfront, but for any other amounts, the bonus could only be redeemed after 20 years. A certain amount of their bonus could be borrowed before its due date.

By the start of the 1930s, the US was in the grips of the Great Depression, and many people, including veterans, were out of work. Needing money, a large number of veterans demanded that the government release their bonuses, but they refused, instead only increasing the amount that could be borrowed. In response, tens of thousands of veterans and their families marched to Washington D.C. to demonstrate. They set up camp in a "Hooverville" near Capitol Hill, constructed from materials from a nearby junk heap. Although it may have had a crude appearance, the camp was strictly managed, with streets and sanitation facilities.

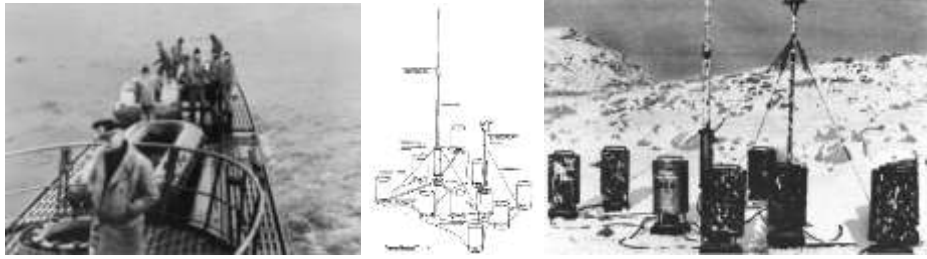
Virtually all of the veterans were well behaved, cooperating with the Superintendent of the D.C. Police, Pelham D. Glassford to keep the camp under control. Unfortunately, the peace would not last for long. Under pressure from the government, Glassford was ordered to clear out the town. Glassford had wanted to allow the veterans to disperse in their own time to prevent violence. Following orders, he forced the demonstrators out of the camp. However, once they began returning, D.C. police began firing at the crowd, killing two veterans.

After the killings, the US Army was brought in, under the control of General Douglas MacArthur. The Army, with the assistance of six tanks led by General George S. Patton, arrived to remove the demonstrators. Initially, the Bonus Army thought the military had shown up in support of their cause, but this wasn't the case. The troops fired tear gas into the camp and rushed in, evicting all of the veterans and their families. The attack injured 55 veterans and tragically caused a miscarriage. A further 135 were arrested. After the vicious attack, the government still did not budge on releasing the veterans' bonuses early, and none of the reputations of the high-ranking military officials involved were damaged.

A second demonstration occurred in 1933, at which point Franklin D. Roosevelt was now the US president. Instead of attacking the demonstrators, he offered them work in the Civilian Conservation Corps, dramatically diffusing the situation. Regardless, in 1936 the Adjusted Compensation Payment Act was passed, finally granting veterans the money they so desperately needed. [Source: Wat History Online | Jessee | August 18, 2021 ++]

WWII Weather Station Kurt

The German's Only North American Operation during the 1940s



U-537 (left) delivered and set up on the Land automatic weather station (right) on Hutton Peninsula, Labrador, Dominion of Newfoundland on 22 October 1943

In 1943 a German U-boat visited Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada and established the only German military operation on North American soil during the war. The operation was just a small weather station, but, in conjunction with other monitoring systems was massively important for Germany's military effectiveness in Europe. The station was planted by the U-boat crew in a position they believed would prevent its discovery. It turns out they were right, as the station would not be found until 1977, 32 years later.

The weather can play an enormously decisive role in both civilian and military operations. Cloud cover over a target can render a bombing raid useless, while heavy rains can bog down an advancing army in mud. As a result, accurately predicting the weather is an ability military planners have continuously worked to improve. Unfortunately for Germany, they were at an inherent disadvantage when monitoring the weather. Weather systems mostly move from west to east in the Earth's northern hemisphere, which, with territories much farther west, naturally gave the Allies more time to monitor and plan around the weather. Germany was forced to send weather ships and aircraft west to the North Atlantic to monitor conditions and report their findings back to meteorologists in Europe. These missions were easily discovered and attacked by the Allies, though, and were often lacking accuracy.

To avoid the problems faced by weather ships, aircraft, and U-boats, Germany began establishing weather stations on land in enemy territories. Dr. Ernst Ploetze and Edwin Stoebe developed the Wetter-Funkgerät Land automatic weather station, which consisted of ten 1 meter tall canisters and a 10-meter tall antenna. Only one of the canisters actually contained the weather-monitoring instruments; the other nine were filled with batteries that would power the device for six months. The station sent a two-minute transmission of its readings once every three hours. The equipment was manufactured by Siemens. A number of these stations were placed around the Arctic and sub-Arctic, all sending back important data to Germany.

German submarine U-537 left from Kiel, Germany on September 18, 1943. Within her hull, she carried Wetter-Funkgerät Land weather station WFL-26, which was nicknamed "Kurt". Meteorologist Dr. Kurt Sommermeyer and his assistant joined the U-boat crew. The vessel was commanded by Kapitänleutnant Peter Schrewe, who was instructed to find a suitable location for the weather station. A month after it had departed, U-537 arrived at the northern tip of Labrador at a location they believed was unlikely to be discovered by locals. They dropped anchor and an armed party set out to find the exact position for the station. Meanwhile, the rest of the crew began repairing damage the submarine received while in a major storm at sea.

With Dr. Sommermeyer’s assistance, the station was assembled and concealed. For additional security, American cigarette packets were discarded around the site, and the station was labeled as property of the fictional “Canadian Weather Service”. U-537 left the location just over a day later, once the station was working as intended. However, the station would stop working just a month later for unknown reasons. U-537 would eventually return to Europe but was sunk a year later with the loss of all lives on board. After the war ended, a few of the German weather stations were found, usually by chance, but most of them were simply forgotten. This was the case for Weather Station Kurt until it was rediscovered in 1977 when geomorphologist Peter Johnson accidentally stumbled across the WWII German hardware.

It was around this time that a retired Siemens engineer Franz Selinger learned about the station while reading Dr. Sommermeyer’s documents. After this, Selinger informed a historian from the Canadian Department of National Defence, who ventured out to the recorded position of the station. When the historian arrived in 1981, the station the station was found intact. The station was collected and put on display at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, where it can be seen today. [Source: War History Online | Jesse | August 20, 2021 ++]

Military History Anniversaries

01 thru 15 SEP

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 SEP**”. [Source: This Day in History www.history.com/this-day-in-history | August 2021 ++]

Medal of Honor Awardees

Robert Burke | Vietnam



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

MEDAL OF HONOR

To

Pfc. Robert C. Burke

Organization: U.S. Marine Corps Company I, 3d Bn, 27th Marines, 1st Marine Division (Rein) FMF
Place and date: May 17, 1968 at Le Nam 1, Go Nai Island, Quang Nam Province (southern), Republic of Vietnam

Entered service: Summer 1967

Born: November 7, 1949, Monticello, Piatt County, IL



When you're stuck in a bad situation, someone has to take the lead. That's what Marine Corps Pfc. Robert C. Burke did in 1968 when his unit was pinned down by intense enemy fire in Vietnam. Burke didn't make it out alive, but his actions earned him the Medal of Honor. Burke was born Nov. 7, 1949, in Monticello, Illinois, and lived with his parents, four sisters and two brothers. As a teen, he worked after school helping his dad build fences for area farmers. His mother told reporters later that he had dreamed of being a Marine since he was a young boy.

Burke made that dream a reality when he enlisted in the Marine Corps at 17 before graduating from Monticello High School in 1967. By the fall of that year, he had completed basic and individual combat training and earned the rank of private first class. His first few months as a Marine were spent as a vehicle mechanic at Camp Pendleton in California. By February 1968, he joined the 3rd Battalion, 27th Marines, 1st Marine Division, as a machine gunner in Vietnam. That spring, the Go Noi Island sector — about 15 miles south of Da Nang Air Base that housed U.S. troops — was considered a haven for the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong. By early May, the 7th Marines were tasked with going into that sector to prevent enemy troops from staging a new offensive. Operation Allen Brook, as it was called, began 4 MAY.

Third Battalion's Company I, of which Burke was part, joined the fray later that month. Within days, their unit and several others successfully took over a major North Vietnamese supply staging area on the island. On May 17, 1968, the group set out again in the early morning, with Company I in the lead. As Burke's unit approached a dry riverbed near a dense line of trees bordering the small village of Le Nam, they were ambushed by a large force hidden in the tall grass and woods. Fire from heavy mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons exploded on them. Several men in Burke's unit were injured, and some were killed, including its captain and two platoon leaders. The heavy enemy fire kept other units from being able to advance to help them.

Burke realized that key enemy points had to be taken out for them to advance and move their wounded. Without hesitating, he grabbed his machine gun and launched a series of one-man assaults against several enemy fortifications. As he moved to the edge of the steep riverbank, he focused his assault on several enemy bunkers, which allowed his fellow Marines to move forward and get the wounded to relative safety. He then laid down heavy fire into an enemy position filled with automatic weapons, killing three North

Vietnamese soldiers as they tried to get away. Burke kept moving, systematically quieting the hostile fire until his weapon malfunctioned. He then grabbed a rifle and some hand grenades off someone nearby and kept fighting, taking out two more enemy soldiers.

When Burke saw that a fellow Marine had cleared his malfunctioning machine gun, he took it back and moved into an open position. He laid down a heavy line of fire along the trees until his injuries got the best of him. He died where he fell. U.S. air and artillery support helped more Marines break through to help the stranded unit, and, eventually, the enemy retreated. Fifteen men from Company I died and 50 more were wounded. If it hadn't been for Burke's selfless actions, many more could have been lost. The 18-year-old's body was brought home and buried in Monticello Cemetery in his hometown.

After recommendations from his comrades and commanders, Burke became the youngest person from the Vietnam era to earn the Medal of Honor. It was presented to Burke's entire family by Vice President Spiro Agnew on April 20, 1970, during a White House ceremony that honored several other Marines. Burke's sacrifice hasn't been forgotten by the Marines or his hometown. Burke Hall, a recruit training facility at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, stands in his honor. In 1982, a park in his hometown was dedicated in his memory. Burke's Medal of Honor is on display with some of his other belongings in the Piatt County Courthouse in Illinois in what is now a shrine honoring him. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | May 17, 2021 ++]

Medal of Honor Awardees

Dewitt Lewis | Civil War



The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the

MEDAL OF HONOR

To

Lt. Col. Dewitt Clinton Lewis

Organization: U.S. Army, Company F, 97th Pennsylvania Infantry

Place and date: June 16, 1862 at Secessionville, South Carolina

Entered service: April 1861

Born: July 30, 1822 Monticello, West Chester, Pennsylvania



Of the 3,507 Medal of Honor recipients, nearly half of them earned the honor during the Civil War when the medal was first introduced. One of those recipients was Army Brevet Lt. Col. Dewitt Clinton Lewis, who saved one of his men during a treacherous battle through a South Carolina swamp.

Lewis was born July 30, 1822 in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Few details are available regarding his early life, but according to an online search, he was a 38-year-old carpenter when the Civil War began. Before that, however, Lewis married Sarah Winterbottom, and they had three boys named Adelbert, William and Fred. On, Confederate troops bombed Fort Sumter in South Carolina, officially starting the Civil War. Lewis enlisted in the Union Army shortly after that. He was commissioned but mustered out a few months later, so he reenlisted in October 1861. Lewis was made a captain and put in charge of Company F of the 97th Pennsylvania Infantry.

Several months later, Lewis and his soldiers found themselves trying to gain ground in South Carolina in what became known as the Battle of Secessionville. At daybreak on June 16, 1862, Union forces tried to take Fort Lamar, a strategic point for the Confederacy on James Island. If they succeeded, they would have the upper hand in taking control of Charleston. Union forces outnumbered Fort Lamar's garrison forces 3 to 1. This advantage helped the Union gain a foothold on the causeway approaching the low-lying post, but swampland kept them from making further progress. The 97th was ordered to push forward anyway, so they slogged through a deep swamp at low tide and got to within about 200 feet of the fort. They were able to keep the Confederate soldiers from firing in two directions before enemy reinforcements came and pushed the Union soldiers back.

By this point, the tide was rising in the swamp. The gun and artillery fire had stirred it up, too, which made it a mess to get back through. Lewis made it across and helped many others, who were all trying to stay afloat while dodging heavy fire from canisters shot at short range. "I landed, tired, disgusted and dreadfully covered with mud, and was trying to find out where I was located in the mass of filth, when I heard a faint call that sounded thick and muddy," Lewis said in a personal account of the ordeal. Looking back into the swamp, he saw a private who was stuck and needed help. Lewis quickly dove back into the muck and rescued the man, despite the hail of fire exploding around them. If it weren't for Lewis' actions, that soldier would likely have drowned.

Lewis continued to lead his company through several more battles, including the Bermuda Hundred campaign near Petersburg, Virginia, in May 1864. During that battle, Lewis saved a wounded man in his company as they were retreating. Through a hail of bullets, Lewis went back for the man and carried him off the field to safety, despite being wounded himself. Lewis received the brevets of major and lieutenant

colonel before mustering out of the military for a final time on Oct. 3, 1864, due to the wounds he suffered at Petersburg, according to the publication Military Images.

During the Civil War, a brevet was a promotion for an officer to a higher rank without the corresponding pay. The practice of brevetting disappeared in the 20th century but was reintroduced by the Army in 2019. For his role in the Battle of Secessionville, Lewis received the Medal of Honor on April 23, 1896, from President Grover Cleveland. Lewis died on June 28, 1899 in Morton, Pennsylvania, not far from his hometown of West Chester, where he was buried in Oaklands Cemetery. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | May 24, 2021 ++]

Every Picture Tells A Story

Swords to Ploughshares



From swords to ploughshares. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses and Consolidated B-24 Liberators await destruction on death row at Kingman Air Force Base, Arizona after the Second World War. Within a year of the end of hostilities, some 34,000 military aircraft of the US Navy and Air Force had been flown in to storage facilities at 30 locations across the USA, including Kingman, which was known as Storage Depot No. 41. In all, more than 117,000 aircraft met their end in a similar fashion by the time the program was finished. The process of turning these old warbirds back to aluminum is best described in this excerpt from the website airplaneboneyards.com:

“The contractor for aircraft scrapping at Kingman was the Wunderlich Contracting Company of Jefferson City, Missouri, who received an 18-month contract from the federal government for \$2.78 million to reduce 5,400 aircraft to aluminum ingots. Active duty military personnel typically flew the aircraft into Kingman, and civilian employees would handle parking and classification. To accommodate the large numbers of employees, tent cities were erected on site. In subsequent months, brand new aircraft directly from assembly lines were even disposed of at Kingman. Fuel was drained from the aircraft and sold. Aircraft engines were then removed and placed in rows on the desert floor. By the time the planes reached Kingman, most of the ordnance (predominantly .50 cal machine guns and Norden Bombsights) had already been removed at other temporary storage depots. However, a few planes did arrive with some machine guns and a few Norden Bombsights, which were temporarily and securely stored. The guns were retrieved by the government, but the Nordens were ‘demilled’ using a sledgehammer. Interior items of the aircraft such as radios, oxygen equipment, handguns, manuals, life rafts, fire extinguishers and instruments were removed. The main aircraft airframe was then sliced into major pieces using a guillotine. Some hand cutting of smaller

parts was also done. The final step was placing parts into the smelter, or furnace, for melting. Three furnaces were operated at Kingman for melting about 70% of an airplane's metal components into ingots. The furnaces were run 24 hours a day, and could consume up to 35 aircraft a day."

WWII Bomber Nose Art [81] Apache Princess



* Health Care *



Vaccines

Update 02: Vaccinations and Older Adults

As you get older, your doctor may recommend more vaccinations, also known as shots or immunizations, to help prevent certain illnesses. Talk with your doctor about which of the following vaccines you need. Make sure to protect yourself as much as possible by keeping your vaccinations up to date.

COVID-19 vaccines

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) is a respiratory disease that causes symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. It can lead to serious illness and death. Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are effective at keeping people from getting COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. We are still learning how effective COVID-19 vaccines are against new variants of the virus. [Read more about COVID-10 vaccine effectiveness.](#) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone age 12 and older get vaccinated. Contact your local health department (<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/index.html>) or use the Vaccine Finder at <https://www.vaccines.gov> for more information on COVID-19 vaccination in your area. Learn more about the [new vaccines to prevent COVID-19.](#)

Flu vaccines for older adults

Flu - short for influenza — is a virus that can cause fever, chills, sore throat, stuffy nose, headache, and muscle aches. Flu is very serious when it gets in your lungs. Older adults are at a higher risk for developing serious complications from the flu, such as pneumonia. The flu is easy to pass from person to person. The virus also changes over time, which means you can get it again. To ensure flu vaccines remain effective, the vaccine is updated every year.

Everyone age 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine, but the protection from a flu vaccine can lessen with time, especially in older adults. Still, you are less likely to become seriously ill or hospitalized because of the flu if you get the vaccine. A flu vaccine is especially important if you have a chronic health condition such as heart disease or diabetes. You should get your vaccine ideally by the end of October each year so you are protected when the [flu season](#) starts. It takes at least two weeks for the vaccine to be effective. However, if you have not received your flu vaccine by the end of October, it's not too late as flu season typically peaks in December or January. As long as the flu virus is spreading, getting vaccinated will help protect you.

There are [flu vaccines](#) designed specifically for people age 65 and older. [Medicare will pay for the vaccine](#), and so will private health insurance plans. You can get a flu vaccine at your doctor's office or local health department, as well as at some grocery and drug stores. The vaccine ingredients are the same wherever you receive it.

Vaccines to help prevent pneumonia

Pneumococcal disease is a serious infection that spreads from person to person by air. It often causes [pneumonia in the lungs](#) and it can affect other parts of the body. There are two pneumococcal vaccines: PPSV23 and PCV13. According to the [CDC](#), adults who are age 65 and older should get the [PPSV23 vaccine](#). Some older adults may also need the PCV13 vaccine. Talk with your health care professional to find out if you need both pneumococcal vaccines.

Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough) vaccines

Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis are serious diseases that can lead to death.

- [Tetanus](#) (sometimes called lockjaw) is caused by [bacteria](#) found in soil, dust, and manure. It enters the body through cuts in the skin.
- [Diphtheria](#), also caused by bacteria, is a serious illness that can affect the tonsils, throat, nose, or skin. It can spread from person to person.
- [Pertussis](#), also known as whooping cough, is caused by bacteria. It is a serious illness that causes uncontrollable, violent coughing fits that make it hard to breathe. It can spread from person to person.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Most people get vaccinated as children, but you also need booster shots as you get older to stay best protected against these diseases. The CDC recommends that adults get a [Tdap](#) (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) or [Td](#) (tetanus, diphtheria) booster shot every 10 years. Ask your doctor when you need your booster shot.

Shingles vaccine for older adults

[Shingles](#) is caused by the same virus as chickenpox. If you had chickenpox, the virus is still in your body. The virus could become active again and cause shingles. Shingles affects the nerves. Common symptoms include burning, shooting pain, tingling, and/or itching, as well as a rash with fluid-filled blisters. Even when

the rash disappears, the pain can remain. This is called post-herpetic neuralgia, or PHN. The [shingles vaccine](#) is safe and it may keep you from getting shingles and PHN. Healthy adults age 50 and older should get vaccinated with the shingles vaccine, which is given in two doses. (Zostavax, an earlier shingles vaccine, is no longer available in the United States.)

You should get a shingles shot even if you have already had chickenpox, the chickenpox vaccine, or shingles, received Zostavax, or don't remember having had chickenpox. However, you should not get a vaccine if you currently have shingles, are sick or have a fever, have a weakened immune system, or have had an allergic reaction to Shingrix. Check with your doctor if you are not sure what to do. You can get the shingles vaccine at your doctor's office and at some pharmacies. All [Medicare Part D](#) plans and most private health insurance plans will cover the cost.

Travel vaccines

Check with your doctor or local health department about vaccines you may need if traveling to other countries. Sometimes a series of shots is needed. It's best to get them at least four to six weeks before you travel to allow time to build up immunity and get the best protection, particularly from those that may require multiple doses. For more information, visit the CDC website <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> or call its information line for international travelers at 800-232-4636.

Vaccine side effects

Common side effects for all these vaccines are mild and may include pain, swelling, or redness where the vaccine was given. Before getting any vaccine, talk with your doctor about your health history, including past illnesses and treatments, as well as any allergies. It's a good idea to keep your own vaccination record, listing the types and dates of your shots, along with any side effects or problems. For more about vaccine safety and vaccine side effects go to <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaccines/index.html>. For more information about shots and vaccines contact:

- *American Lung Association* 800-586-4872, info@lung.org, or www.lung.org.
- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)* 800-232-4636 or 888-232-6348 (TTY). cdcinfo@cdc.gov, or www.cdc.gov.
- *National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute* 301-592-8573, nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov, or www.nhlbi.nih.gov.
- *National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases* 866-284-4107 or 800-877-8339 (TTY), ocpostoffice@niaid.nih.gov, or www.niaid.nih.gov.

[Source: National Institute on Aging | August 16, 2021 ++]

Covid-19 Treatment

Update 10: Why You Should Not Use Ivermectin to Treat or Prevent It

COVID-19. We've been living with it for what sometimes seems like forever. Given the number of deaths that have occurred from the disease, it's perhaps not surprising that some consumers are looking at unconventional treatments, not approved or authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Though this is understandable, please beware. The FDA's job is to carefully evaluate the scientific data on a drug to be sure that it is both safe and effective for a particular use, and then to decide whether or not to

approve it. Using any treatment for COVID-19 that's not approved or authorized by the FDA, unless part of a clinical trial, can cause serious harm.



There seems to be a growing interest in a drug called ivermectin to treat humans with COVID-19. Ivermectin is often used in the U.S. to treat or prevent parasites in animals. The FDA has received multiple reports of patients who have required medical support and been hospitalized after self-medicating with ivermectin intended for horses. Here's What You Need to Know about Ivermectin

- FDA has not approved ivermectin for use in treating or preventing COVID-19 in humans. Ivermectin tablets are approved at very specific doses for some parasitic worms, and there are topical (on the skin) formulations for head lice and skin conditions like rosacea. Ivermectin is not an anti-viral (a drug for treating viruses).
- Taking large doses of this drug is dangerous and can cause serious harm.
- If you have a prescription for ivermectin for an FDA-approved use, get it from a legitimate source and take it exactly as prescribed.
- Never use medications intended for animals on yourself. Ivermectin preparations for animals are very different from those approved for humans.

What is Ivermectin and How is it Used?

Ivermectin tablets are approved by the FDA to treat people with intestinal strongyloidiasis and onchocerciasis, two conditions caused by parasitic worms. In addition, some topical (on the skin) forms of ivermectin are approved to treat external parasites like head lice and for skin conditions such as rosacea. Some forms of ivermectin are used in animals to prevent heartworm disease and certain internal and external parasites. It's important to note that these products are different from the ones for people, and safe when used as prescribed for animals, only.

When Can Taking Ivermectin Be Unsafe?

The FDA has not reviewed data to support use of ivermectin in COVID-19 patients to treat or to prevent COVID-19; however, some initial research is underway. Taking a drug for an unapproved use can be very dangerous. This is true of ivermectin, too. There's a lot of misinformation around, and you may have heard that it's okay to take large doses of ivermectin. That is wrong. Even the levels of ivermectin for approved uses can interact with other medications, like blood-thinners. You can also overdose on ivermectin, which can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, hypotension (low blood pressure), allergic reactions (itching and hives), dizziness, ataxia (problems with balance), seizures, coma and even death.

Ivermectin Products for Animals Are Different from Ivermectin Products for People

For one thing, animal drugs are often highly concentrated because they are used for large animals like horses and cows, which can weigh a lot more than we do—a ton or more. Such high doses can be highly toxic in humans. Moreover, FDA reviews drugs not just for safety and effectiveness of the active ingredients, but also for the inactive ingredients. Many inactive ingredients found in animal products aren't

evaluated for use in people. Or they are included in much greater quantity than those used in people. In some cases, we don't know how those inactive ingredients will affect how ivermectin is absorbed in the human body. Meanwhile, effective ways to limit the spread of COVID-19 continue to be to wear your mask, stay at least 6 feet from others who don't live with you, wash hands frequently, and avoid crowds.

[Source: FDA & Becker's Hospital Review | <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/why-you-should-not-use-ivermectin-treat-or-prevent-covid-19> | March 5 & August 25, 2021 ++]

Medicare Part B Premiums

Update 09: Government Report Estimates the Next 6 Years of Premiums

Your Medicare Part B costs will increase by about 6% next year, according to estimates in a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report projecting premiums through 2029. That rate of increase would remain fairly steady through the coming decade, per the report, with most beneficiaries seeing a 57% overall increase from their 2021 premiums to their 2029 rates. Most Medicare Part B users – those whose tax returns in 2019 were \$88,000 or less for an individual tax return (or married but filing a separate return) or \$176,000 for a joint return – are paying \$148.50 a month in 2021. That beneficiary bracket would pay \$157.70 per month in 2022 under CRS estimates, and \$234.10 in 2029.

In addition to this group, there are five levels of higher-income beneficiaries who pay higher Part B premiums based on reported income levels. These income levels will rise yearly; the CRS report does not estimate the incomes assigned to each level in future years. You can read the full report which contains the full chart of all estimated rates at all income levels through 2029 below at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40082.pdf>:

Appendix C. Estimated Future Part B Premiums

Table C-1. Projected Part B Premiums

Percentage of Program Costs Represented by Premium

	25% (Standard)	35%	50%	65%	80%	85% ^a
<i>Actual</i>						
2017	\$134.00	\$187.50	\$267.90	\$348.30	\$428.60	—
2018	134.00	187.50	267.90	348.30	428.60	—
2019	135.50	189.60	270.90	352.20	433.40	\$460.50
2020	144.60	202.40	289.20	376.00	462.70	491.60
2021	148.50	207.90	297.90	386.10	475.20	504.90
<i>Projected</i>						
2022	157.70	220.70	315.30	409.90	504.50	536.00
2023	166.70	233.40	333.40	433.40	533.40	566.80
2024	176.60	247.20	353.20	459.20	565.10	600.40
2025	187.30	262.20	374.50	486.90	599.20	636.70
2026	197.90	277.10	395.80	514.50	633.30	672.90
2027	209.50	293.20	418.90	544.60	670.20	712.10
2028	221.50	310.10	443.00	575.90	708.80	753.10
2029	234.10	327.70	468.20	608.70	749.10	795.90

Here are the 2022 and 2029 estimates for each level, along with current Part B premiums and income figures

- Level 1 (35%) income: \$88,001 to \$111,000 (individual return or filing separately) or \$176,001 to \$222,000 (joint)
- Level 2 (50%) income: \$111,001 to \$138,000 (individual/filing separately) or \$222,001 to \$276,000 (joint)
- Level 3 (65%) income: \$138,001 to \$165,000 (individual/filing separately) or \$276,001 to \$330,000 (joint)
- Level 4 (80%) income: \$165,001 to \$500,000 (individual) or \$88,001 to \$412,000 (married, filing separately) or \$330,001 to \$750,000 (joint)
- Level 5 (85%) income: Above \$500,000 (individual) or above \$412,000 (married, filing separately) or above \$750,000 (joint)

Official Medicare Part B premium rates typically are announced in November for the following calendar year. You can learn more about Medicare Part B, TRICARE For Life, and more in [MOAA's TRICARE Guide](https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/moaas-2020-21-tricare-guide-medicare-and-tricare-at-65-and-beyond) at <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/moaas-2020-21-tricare-guide-medicare-and-tricare-at-65-and-beyond>. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Kevin Lilley| August 18, 2021 ++]

Carbon Dioxide Poisoning

Causes, Symptoms, and Long Term Effects

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a colorless, odorless gas that is naturally produced by animals (including humans) as a byproduct of metabolism. This CO₂ travels to the lungs where it is eventually exhaled out of the body. On the other hand, plants use CO₂ as an energy source and produce oxygen as a waste product. Often called a greenhouse gas, CO₂ also has significant effects on the Earth's atmosphere. If you or someone you know may be experiencing carbon dioxide poisoning, seek immediate medical attention. In the U.S., you can contact a Poison Control Center by calling 1-800-222-1222.

Cases of carbon dioxide poisoning are fairly rare. According to some estimates, less than 100 people die from CO₂ poisoning each year in the U.S. Carbon dioxide is not the same as carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide (CO) is also a colorless, odorless gas, but carbon monoxide poisoning is generally much deadlier and more common. Carbon monoxide poisoning causes about 50,000 deaths each year in the U.S.

Causes

Carbon dioxide poisoning occurs when a person breathes in high concentrations of CO₂ gas. Normally, CO₂ is found in the air at very low concentrations, at around 0.04%. This concentration of CO₂ is typically harmless to the body. However, certain situations may increase exposure to CO₂. The most common cause of CO₂ poisoning is working in small, poorly ventilated spaces such as basements, storage tanks, and mines. This is because poor ventilation causes a buildup of CO₂ that eventually displaces the oxygen that is available.

Poisoning can also occur in areas where alcoholic beverages are made, like wineries, breweries, and cellars. This is because the fermentation process that produces alcohol also creates CO₂. A source of CO₂ that is often overlooked is dry ice, which is the frozen form of CO₂. There are a few reports of CO₂ poisoning caused by dry ice melting in enclosed spaces. Volcanoes also emit CO₂ in large quantities, which

can collect into nearby pocketed locations. A small number of CO₂ poisoning cases have been attributed to volcano emissions.

Symptoms

The concentration of CO₂ that is normally found in the air (0.04%) typically does not have negative effects on the body. Even at much higher air concentrations, like 1%, CO₂ may only cause mild drowsiness in some people. However, at concentrations above 1%, CO₂ may start to affect breathing rate, heart rate, heart rhythm and consciousness. At extremely high concentrations (above 10%), CO₂ may cause convulsions, coma, and death. These effects occur because high concentrations of CO₂ will displace the available oxygen, causing anyone nearby to suffocate.

Other Causes of High Carbon Dioxide Levels

A number of factors may cause high carbon dioxide levels. If your levels are outside of the normal range, it may not necessarily mean there is something wrong. However, a normal level also doesn't mean a particular medical condition is absent. Always talk with your doctor to learn more about your test results.

- *Metabolic Alkalosis* -- CO₂ levels are closely tied to the pH of the blood. This is because most of the CO₂ in the body is in the form of HCO₃⁻ (bicarbonate), which plays an important role in maintaining blood pH. Metabolic alkalosis occurs when blood pH increases above 7.45, becoming too basic. During metabolic alkalosis, the body naturally compensates by slowing its breathing rate, causing a buildup of CO₂ in the blood. Some causes of metabolic alkalosis include: dehydration, vomiting, medications like diuretics that increase urination of hydrogen ions, Kidney issues that reduce the urination of HCO₃⁻, and taking too many antacids
- *Respiratory Acidosis* -- CO₂ that is produced by the body's metabolism is eventually exhaled out of the body through the lungs. Conditions that slow or block the body's ability to breathe can cause a buildup of CO₂ in the blood, which is referred to as respiratory acidosis or hypercapnia. Any condition that disrupts the ability to breathe can cause respiratory acidosis. Some common examples include: Asthma, COPD, Pneumonia, Sleep apnea, and Obesity Symptoms of respiratory acidosis can vary depending on the underlying cause and may include: Headaches, Drowsiness, Confusion, and increased heart rate
- *Medications* -- Several drugs can cause an increase in CO₂ levels.
 - Diuretics like furosemide can disturb the balance of electrolytes in the body, leading to higher HCO₃⁻ and CO₂ levels.
 - Taking an excessive amount of antacids containing calcium can cause calcium levels and blood pH to increase. Both of these factors can elevate HCO₃⁻ levels, leading to metabolic alkalosis and an increase in CO₂.
 - Sodium bicarbonate is sometimes used in the hospital to treat certain conditions, like overdoses and high potassium levels (hyperkalemia). Sodium bicarbonate directly increases HCO₃⁻ levels, which can lead to alkalosis and elevated CO₂.
 - Certain corticosteroids, such as dexamethasone and triamcinolone, can change how the kidneys reabsorb electrolytes, which also leads to higher HCO₃⁻ levels.
- *Environmental Factors* -- Since the start of the industrial revolution in the 18th century, global carbon dioxide levels have almost doubled. Today, certain areas in the world have very high CO₂ levels in the air, due to several factors like pollution, deforestation, and emissions from burning fossil fuels. One recent study of 13,000 cities across the world found that the cities with the highest CO₂ emissions include Seoul, South Korea; Guangzhou, China; and New York City, U.S. The use of fossil fuels by vehicles and industrial plants plays a major role in CO₂ levels in all of these cities. Research shows that a combination of high CO₂, pollution, and climate change has serious effects

on human health, such as increasing the risk of lung disorders, infectious diseases, birth defects, and death in general.

Long-term Health Effects of High CO2 Levels

As mentioned in the carbon dioxide poisoning section, very high concentrations of CO2 in the air can be toxic and require immediate medical attention. However, emerging research suggests that long term exposure to slightly elevated levels of CO2 may also have negative effects on cognition and decision making. The normal concentration of CO2 in the Earth's atmosphere is about 0.04%. One study with 22 participants looked at the effects of exposure to CO2 concentrations at 0.06%, 0.1%, and 0.25% after three 2.5 hour sessions. The group exposed to 0.25% of CO2 in the air performed significantly worse on tests measuring decision-making compared to the groups exposed to lower CO2 levels.

Another study of 24 participants looked at 6 different CO2 concentrations, ranging from 0.05% to 0.14%. After 6 full workdays of exposure in an office environment, the group exposed to the highest CO2 levels performed the worst on cognition tests measuring activity, concentration, and strategic thinking.

These studies suggest that CO2 levels commonly seen in office buildings, which is usually about 0.09%, may hinder the performance and health of workers.

[Source: <https://labs.selfdecode.com/blog/carbon-dioxide-poisoning> | Mathew Eng, PharmD | January 2021 ++]

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Impacts on Thoughts and Behavior

We all know the worrying feeling that we have forgotten to do something, like turning off the oven or locking the door. And it might be a good idea to double-check if you aren't absolutely sure. But some people are so worried about forgetting to do something that they feel the urge to check over and over again. Compulsive urges like this may gradually come to dominate their whole life. There are different types of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Some people are so afraid of germs that they constantly wash their hands. Others can't stop counting things, cleaning their surroundings or obsessing over the same repetitive thoughts. Regardless of the kind of ritual they may have developed, people who have OCD just can't stop doing these things.

Symptoms

Obsessive-compulsive disorder covers both obsessive thoughts and compulsive behavior. Obsessive thoughts are constant and repetitive thoughts that are very hard to shake off. Although someone with OCD feels that the thoughts are illogical and unpleasant, it is hard to simply stop them using will power alone.

Typical obsessions include a constant fear of germs and infections, a fear of forgetting to do something, and a fear of behaving inappropriately. An excessive need to keep things orderly is also considered to be obsessive-compulsive behavior. Some people have an obsessive fear of hurting themselves or others, or of sexually molesting someone. But that doesn't mean that they would actually do those things.

Compulsive behaviors are certain rituals that are repeated over and over. For people with OCD, this is a way to try to get frightening thoughts out of their head and feel safe again. Some people are afraid of dirt, and constantly wash their hands or clean their home all the time. People who compulsively arrange things have developed a very specific idea of how and in what order things should be arranged. If things are

arranged in a different way it makes them nervous. Some people are compelled to collect things, and can't throw anything away. This can become so extreme that they may stop taking out the garbage. Others can't stop counting things: For example, repeatedly counting to 20 helps them feel calm for a short while. If people with OCD suppress this behavior, they feel anxious, tense and scared.

Causes, Prevalence, & Outlook

There are probably many reasons why some people develop OCD. It is thought that genetic, psychological and external circumstances all play a role. OCD sometimes develops following a stressful time in life or a serious crisis. Some people with OCD experienced traumatic events in childhood, such as abuse or the sudden death of a close relative. Certain personality traits seem to increase the likelihood of developing OCD too. For example, some people who develop OCD tend to be very responsible and conscientious by nature, and may be scared of making mistakes.

Genes might also influence the development of OCD. There are often several people in one family who have OCD symptoms. But the causes may vary from person to person. OCD is fairly common. It is estimated that as many as 3 out of every 100 adults are affected by it at some point in their lives. Although it can develop at any age, it usually starts in childhood, puberty or young adulthood.

It usually takes some time before people notice that they or someone else have developed OCD. This condition doesn't appear from one day to the next. A lot of people think that their behavior is normal until they realize how much time their rituals are taking up. This may affect their work, family lives or relationships and make it difficult for them to fulfill their responsibilities or pursue hobbies. OCD starts to govern their lives. The way in which OCD develops over time can vary. Without treatment, it often becomes chronic, although the intensity of symptoms may vary. Some people with OCD go through phases in which they have no symptoms, or in which the symptoms are barely noticeable. The type of obsessions and compulsions might change over time too.

OCD is often less severe in adults than it is in children and teenagers. If teenagers with OCD don't have treatment, only 4 out of 10 of them experience an improvement in symptoms within five years. Many people only manage to get their OCD under control with the help of professionals.

Diagnosis

It can be difficult to clearly distinguish between OCD and other conditions similar to OCD. It is important to see a doctor or psychotherapist in order to get a reliable diagnosis. The first step is finding out how people feel about their obsessive thoughts and what kind of compulsive behavior they have. The doctor or therapist asks various questions, such as the following:

- Do you find that certain thoughts or images keep coming to mind even though you try to shut them out?
- What do you do to get rid of these thoughts?
- Do you think that any of your behavior is illogical or exaggerated?
- Do you feel you need to do certain things over and over again even though you don't want to?

To be diagnosed with OCD, a person must have obsessions and compulsions on most days for at least two weeks, or their symptoms must have a noticeable impact on daily life. Sometimes OCD also causes physical symptoms, like very dry skin in people who feel compelled to wash themselves all the time. The diagnosis also involves looking for signs of other medical conditions that cause similar symptoms. For

instance, people who constantly worry too much about all sorts of things might have general anxiety disorder rather than OCD. If the main reason for washing all the time is an exaggerated fear of germs, the person may have a phobia instead. OCD sometimes occurs together with several other psychological problems or disorders. Many people with OCD also have depression.

Treatment

Although there's no "cure" for OCD, with good professional help the symptoms can be reduced to a tolerable level, enabling people with OCD to start leading normal lives again. People with OCD are usually advised to have psychological treatment. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in particular has been proven to be an effective treatment for OCD. In Germany, it is offered by behavioral therapists. Medication for depression (antidepressants) may be considered in addition to CBT, or if psychological treatment isn't an option (yet). Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are commonly used for this purpose.

Apart from these treatments, self-help is an option, for example by talking to other people with OCD in a support group. Some people like to use books or websites to learn about their obsessive-compulsive behaviors and deal with them. Others may try to manage their OCD using relaxation techniques like meditation or autogenic training. Compulsions are exhausting and can be very time-consuming. They may become so severe that you hardly have time for anything else in life, making it difficult or impossible to get on with daily activities. People with OCD are also often ashamed of their thoughts or behavior. They might try to hide their behavior because they're worried that other people will think they're weird. It can be difficult to hide, though.

Many people are reluctant to seek help or tell others about their problem. Others might be scared of how being labeled "mentally ill" could affect their work and their families. But many people who have completed treatment say that they wish they had sought help earlier. OCD can be a challenge for families and possibly lead to conflict. Family members may feel they also need to go along with the compulsive behavior, for instance by arranging things in a certain order, so they don't upset the person with OCD. Or they might feel like they constantly have to make sure that they're not doing anything to reinforce the person's fears. Parents in particular often also feel bad because they think they should have noticed their child's problem sooner.

But it often takes a long time to realize that someone has a problem, not least because they try to hide their obsessive-compulsive behavior as long as possible. Many of them might not think that they have OCD themselves, or they may refuse to accept help. But family members are important when it comes to helping people with OCD because they may understand the person's condition better than other people do. When family members are involved in therapy, they can help the person face their fears and manage their behavior. This can be especially helpful after the treatment is completed, to help make sure it has a lasting effect.

[Source: <https://www.informedhealth.org/obsessive-compulsive-disorder.html> | August 2021 ++]

Military Medical Services

Staff Cut Plans under Reconsideration in Light of Pandemic

The Navy is reconsidering its plan to reduce medical staff -- part of a military-wide review of 18,000 proposed job cuts in health fields -- in response to lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, the service's top doctor said 19 AUG. As part of a massive effort to reform the military health system, the

Defense Department announced in 2019 that the services would reduce their uniformed medical staff by roughly 18,000, mainly by attrition -- not filling jobs after a service member departs -- but also through reductions of billets. At one point, defense officials estimated that the Army would lose roughly 7,300 jobs, and the Navy and Air Force about 5,300 each.

Congress moved last year, however, to slow thinning of the ranks, ordering the Pentagon to furnish a complete review that was to include the services' medical staffing requirements, the specific cuts, the services' plans to address gaps in care and an analysis of the Tricare network and its ability to take on patients who would no longer have access to military treatment facilities after the reorganization. In a video conference with reporters 19 AUG, Navy Surgeon General Rear Adm. Bruce Gillingham said the number of billets that will be cut "has yet to be finalized," and analysts are considering the impact of COVID-19, which highlighted the need for strong public health and preventive medicine capabilities in the U.S. Navy. "A few things have changed since that initial proposal," Gillingham said. "Obviously, we want to make sure that we're able to meet mission and that our leaders understand whatever risks they may incur with the proposed cuts."

The DoD began reorganizing its health system in 2013, creating the Defense Health Agency, or DHA, an overarching organization established to manage the health support services for the service medical commands, such as administration, IT, logistics and training. But the reforms ballooned in 2016 with the passage of the fiscal 2017 National Defense Authorization Act. With that legislation, Congress placed the DHA in charge of all military hospitals and clinics worldwide and made it responsible for all medical research and development, public health agencies, medical logistics and other operations run by the service medical commands. With the changes, the services are to focus on medical care for service members while other beneficiaries such as family members and retirees are to be seen mainly by civilians or contractors, either in military facilities or through Tricare. The plan also calls for reorganizing 50 military treatment facilities, sending nearly 200,000 military family members, retirees and their dependents to civilian facilities under Tricare.

- In May, Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) noted hospital staff at Naval Hospital Bremerton, in his district, had been reduced by 100 positions through attrition over the previous year, affecting patient care, although the Navy hadn't eliminated the billets altogether. "Unfortunately, we've seen some of these changes come at the expense of improving health care outcomes for the folks that I represent, including veterans and active-duty military and their families," Kilmer said May 25 during a House Defense Appropriations subcommittee hearing. "I've seen them lose access to quality care."
- In April, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday had said pandemic-related deployments and support for the nationwide vaccination effort are responsible for strained military hospitals, reducing health care services for beneficiaries. "[The pandemic] gave us a lot of insights into where there are likely friction points with respect to military health care reform," Gilday testified, also in a Defense Appropriations subcommittee hearing.

The services' analysis of their billet cuts was expected to be delivered to Congress this summer, but Gillingham declined to say when exactly that would happen. He said no proactive reductions have occurred and added that none would be taken until the analysis has been approved by Congress. Of those slated to move to Tricare, the DoD plans to send 80,000 active-duty families and 120,000 retirees and their eligible family members to civilian physicians. Thirty-eight facilities no longer would see retirees or family

members. Eleven clinics have already started the process of moving to active-duty only, while 24 are expected to shift over the next several years. Three clinics are scheduled to close altogether. [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime Team | August 24, 2021 ++]

TRICARE Pharmacy Challenges

Non-Coverage of Dexilant



A recent article addressing MOAA's work to improve TRICARE pharmacy coverage resonated with frustrated members, and many contacted them to share their experiences with the TRICARE pharmacy program. MOAA appreciates member feedback and will use these stories to build support for their pharmacy priorities as the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) moves forward.

Many MOAA members were surprised to learn nearly 19,000 beneficiaries have been negatively impacted by TRICARE's non-coverage of Dexilant, a drug treating gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and used in the maintenance of healed erosive esophagitis. Among those who reached out to MOAA were two surviving spouses in their 90s:

- "I am a military widow, 94 years of age, and was on the medication Dexilant for 11 years with absolutely no problems, before TRICARE eliminated it. I have been on a number of medications to replace Dexilant and none were effective. On June 20, 2021, I was taken to the ER where I was misdiagnosed with a heart attack, because my GERD was not under control since I was not on Dexilant. I appreciate you in trying to get Dexilant reinstated to the Tricare Formulary system as are the other 19,000 patients."
- "I read your article and wanted to let you know I am one of the people affected by TRICARE's decision to eliminate coverage for Dexilant. My doctor has been giving me samples, but at my last appointment she said she was running out. I'm afraid I won't be able to get more and then my pain will return. I'm 91 years old and just trying to get through without suffering every day."

Servicemembers and their families make extraordinary sacrifices in support of our nation. Their health care benefit should provide comprehensive coverage that is at least on par with commercial plans. MOAA's research shows most commercial plans and other government payers cover Dexilant, so they have been focused on getting the drug reinstated to the TRICARE formulary. TRICARE formulary decisions involve a lengthy multistep review process required by statute. Where does Dexilant stand in that process? In February, the DoD Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee reevaluated its non-coverage decision for Dexilant. The next step is a review by the Beneficiary Advisory Panel (BAP), but the BAP was suspended earlier this year as part of a zero based review of DoD Advisory Committees. The panel is preparing to

reconvene, and MOAA expects a meeting announcement shortly. [Source: MOAA Newsletter| Karen Ruedisueli | August 24, 2021 ++]

Heart Failure

Update 04: 'High Normal' Sodium, Poor Hydration Link

Having a "high normal" serum sodium level in midlife, which reflects less than optimal fluid intake, is associated with an increased risk for left ventricular hypertrophy — a heart failure (HF) precursor — and for HF itself, in older age, a new study suggests. Compared with middle-aged adults in the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study with normal serum sodium, those with levels of 142 to 146 mmol/L were more likely to have left ventricular hypertrophy or HF when they were in their 70s and 80s, independent of other risk factors.

Natalia Dmitrieva, PhD, a research scientist at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, says, "Our study suggests that maintaining good hydration can prevent or at least slow down the changes within the heart that lead to heart failure," she said in a statement from the ESC. It "suggests that all adults should aim for eight to ten glasses of liquid [daily] and keep salt intake low," Dmitrieva elaborated in an email to theheart.org | Medscape Cardiology. However, people should not rely completely on thirst, she cautioned, especially in middle age, when thirst sensation starts to deteriorate. And too much fluid intake can be harmful and even dangerous.

Normal serum sodium is usually defined as 135 to 146 mmol/L, Dmitrieva explained, and this study only involved patients in ARIC with sodium levels in this range, to try to exclude patients with genetic or water-salt balance diseases. The findings suggest that a serum sodium level of 142 to 146 mmol/L, which would not be flagged as abnormal by a test lab, "can be used by clinicians as a warning sign" for a patient's increased risk for HF, she noted. [Source: Medscape | Marlene Busko | August 25, 2021 ++]

Constipation

Update 03: Ten More Foods That Cause It

Constipation isn't any fun. Our bowel movements are supposed to be easy, regular, and without much effort on our parts. In fact, when you're eating right, it shouldn't be a problem having regular bowel movements that pass effortlessly. You should be enjoying the time we get alone on the toilet, maybe reading a book or doing a crossword puzzle. You shouldn't be straining and striving to get out a few little pieces. Your stool should be healthy-looking, come out quickly, and not cause any pain or harm when it's exciting.

So, how do you achieve this? You simply change your diet. You get out all the bad stuff that is making it hard to poop, and you replace those foods with real foods that make pooping regular, easy, and effortless. We're supposed to be eating plenty of fiber, drinking water, and exercising regularly. All these things help with bowel movements. But, if you're eating the wrong foods, you still might have trouble. Following are

ten more of the 21 top foods that cause constipation. You should remove these from your diet as soon as you can so you can get back to enjoying your daily bathroom routine.

1. Cookies

Cookies are easy to grab when you want a bite to eat and to satisfy your sweet tooth, but they can aggravate constipation. Cookies tend to be high fat, dry, and low in fiber. The crunchiness of cookies may be appealing, but their lack of moisture can dry out your system and can cause delays in bowel movements. In addition, most cookies lack nutrients and fiber which keep your intestines running smoothly. Cookies are also full of fat which occupies your digestive system and require more time to break down than other kinds of foods.

2. Frozen Dinners

You may be working late and need to depend on convenience foods such as frozen dinners. You may think that freezing the food preserves vitamins and minerals, but the ingredients used in processed frozen dinners do not contain the same nutrients and fiber whole foods. It can be quick and easy to make sandwiches from whole wheat bread and hummus and other bowel-friendly foods. Try making your own frozen dinners that contain healthy ingredients that will help keep you regular. Try lean chicken or fish over brown rice with mixed vegetables or frozen bran muffins.

3. Dairy Products

Many parents today have been told that children need large amounts of dairy products for their growing bones and teeth. Although dairy has needed calcium and other minerals, children don't need massive doses of dairy. Excess amounts of milk and cheese can cause constipation in children and adults. A study has shown that children with constipation who reduced consumption of cow milk saw an improvement in their symptoms. You can switch from cow's milk to goat or sheep milk for the same nutritional benefits and lower risk of constipation. You can also find yogurt and cheese made of sheep's milk.

4. Fried Foods

Whether it is French fries, fried chicken, or donuts, there is no doubt that many people have a taste for deep-fried foods. However, they should be eaten sparingly, if at all, not only because of their low nutritional value but also because fried foods can harm the gastrointestinal tract and can cause constipation. Fats slow down the digestive system and make it work harder. In addition, fried foods can make you feel fuller and can keep you from eating healthier foods that have fiber, vitamins, and minerals. You can enjoy fried food now and again, but keep it to a minimum.

5. Eggs

You may eat them boiled, fried, poached, or in an omelet, but consuming too many eggs may keep your bowels from moving quickly. Eggs contain plenty of protein and fats that nourish the body, but they are low in fiber and the fat content can preoccupy your digestive system. There is no need to give up eggs entirely. Enjoy them poached on whole-wheat toast or make an omelet with high-fiber vegetables and greens that can keep you regular. Combining eggs and whole wheat carbs can give you a balanced breakfast.

6. Crunchy Snacks

You may want to grab potato chips or pretzels if you are feeling hungry, but you may not be doing your bowels a favor. White potatoes can aggravate constipation and the white flour in pretzels can also slow down the digestive system. The combination of high fat and low fiber is a recipe for constipation. The fat slows the food from moving through the system because it takes a significant time for the body to break down fats.

The lack of fiber keeps the food from passing through the intestines regularly. Try snacking on sweet potato chips or whole wheat crackers.

7. Some Medicines

Although medicines are not technically food, we often consume them with food and they are a part of our regular routine. It is important to check to see the side effects of medications and interactions with other drugs. If you notice that you are not having regular bowel movements and there hasn't been a dramatic change to your diet and you are drinking enough fluids, consult your doctor. He or she may recommend an alternative medication that will not interfere with your digestive health. The problem may not be just one medication, but the combination of one or two of them.

8. Refined Sugar

The disadvantages of eating refined sugar are widely-known, but not many people realize that white sugar can lead to constipation and other problems with the digestive tract. Not only does white sugar increase the chances of developing conditions such as diabetes, but it can also cause you to gain weight. White sugar can also aggravate conditions such as Crohn's disease and according to one study, can increase the likelihood of developing colorectal cancer. Try replacing refined sugar with brown sugar (genuine brown sugar and not just an item that has been colored and flavored with molasses) or honey.

9. Fast Food

You may look at burgers and fries and wonder why conventional wisdom says these foods are unhealthy. While it is true that the core foods, such as bread, potatoes, and meat are not inherently unhealthy, but the way they are produced at fast-food restaurants have few nutrients and are high in fat. The bread is stripped of fiber and nutrients and the fat keeps food from traveling quickly through the system. Try making burgers at home with whole wheat buns and using sweet potato fries, which are better for your bowels than white potatoes.

10. White Potatoes

The typical "meat and potatoes" diet may provide some nutrients, but it can also trigger constipation. While potatoes have a number of health benefits and contain Vitamin C, it is often better to choose sweet potatoes that contain more fiber and nutrients than white potatoes. Although potatoes are watery and hydrate the body, they slow down the digestive system unlike many other vegetables, which have a sufficient amount of nutrients and fiber to keep your digestive system in good working order. In addition to sweet potatoes, white potatoes can often be replaced with zucchini and cauliflower.

[Source: Cheapism | Scott Nyerges | July 19, 2021 ++]

Medicare Fraud

Update 141: Convicted Fraudster Being Retried After Trump Commutation

Bond was set at \$50 million by a federal judge on 13 AUG for a convicted former skilled nursing facility owner **Philip Esformes** being retried on unresolved Medicare fraud charges. Florida judge Robert N. Scola Jr. also ordered that Esformes surrender all passport and travel documents, and not obtain any of those documents during the case in addition to the personal surety bond, court documents showed. The bond was co-signed by Esformes' father and three children. Law360 first reported the bond hearing. Esformes is being

retried by federal prosecutors after his 20 year sentence for his role in record healthcare fraud scheme was commuted by President Donald Trump in December 2020.

The commutation for Esformes left intact other aspects of his sentence, including supervised release and restitution. He previously had been ordered to pay \$44 million to the Medicare program, which he is appealing. Esformes was sentenced in September 2019 to 20 years in prison for a Medicare fraud scheme that he ran through his network of nursing homes. He was accused of bribing doctors to admit patients and then cycled them through his nursing and assisted living facilities, where they often received medically unnecessary services, or no care at all, according to the Department of Justice. In April of that year, a jury found him guilty on 20 charges for bribery, money laundering and paying and receiving kickbacks in connection to the \$1.3 billion scheme that occurred between 1998 and 2016. [Source: McKnight Long-Term Care News | Danielle Brown | August 18, 2021 ++]

* Finances *



Prescription Drug Costs

Update 74: Problems on Lowering Drug Prices

According to The Senior Citizen's League (TSCL) lowering drug prices is a top goal of Democrats, including President Biden. Republicans have indicated they will not support that effort so the Democrats have to pass it with just their own members. With only the slimmest of majorities in both the House and Senate, the Democratic leadership has to try and keep all of their members on board. However, a rift has developed among Democrats in the House of Representatives. Those who want to empower the government to demand lower prices from drug makers are concerned that moderates in their party are now emboldened to blunt their ambitious drug-pricing agenda.

Last week a group of 10 moderate Democrats delayed a procedural vote for their party's reconciliation bill, which is the expensive bill containing the President's program to rebuild the U.S. infrastructure. The fear is that some of those same moderates may again band together to blunt the drug-pricing provisions going into the reconciliation package. That fear comes from the fact that some of those same lawmakers who are demanding action on the bipartisan infrastructure bill ahead of the reconciliation package have also expressed misgivings with taking on drug-pricing changes without Republican support.

But that's not all. Congressional Democrats also want to add dental, vision and hearing coverage to Medicare but that goal is running into resistance from powerful health industry lobbies. Progressives see expanding the popular entitlement as essential to fulfilling their campaign pledges and keeping Democratic

control of the House and Senate. But the reforms threaten the bottom line of insurers who administer private Medicare plans and sell supplemental coverage for dental, vision and hearing services. Groups like the American Dental Association, worried their members will be paid less in traditional Medicare than in private Medicare plans, are also pushing to limit the new benefits to the poorest Americans.

Health insurers are pushing back, and are warning that the cost of new coverage could limit other benefits they offer in private Medicare Advantage plans — such as free transportation to medical appointments or free over-the-counter drugs. An insurance industry source said Congress' deliberations are “freaking out” companies who worry that seniors will drop their private plans en masse and migrate to traditional Medicare once the new benefits are in place. But the source said the industry is mindful of the optics of publicly opposing coverage of eyeglasses, dental care and hearing aids, and is largely lobbying behind the scenes.

TSCL continues to support efforts to lower prescription drug prices and we will be watching this very carefully as things develop in the next few weeks.

[Source: TSCL Weekly Update August 28, 2021 ++]

Hospital Charges

Update 05: Price Transparency Rule Non-Compliance Fines

CMS has refrained from penalizing providers who haven't complied with its price transparency rule, Bloomberg Law reported Aug. 16. CMS said that it began sending warning letters to hospitals not in compliance with the regulation in April. The agency told Bloomberg that it had sent about 165 warning letters by mid-July. Hospitals have 90 days to address the violations before CMS decides whether additional compliance actions are necessary. "CMS intends to continue its monitoring and enforcement activities and will issue additional warning letters on a monthly basis going forward, as necessary," a CMS spokesperson told Bloomberg. The CMS spokesperson confirmed that the agency has not issued any fines to hospitals.

The CMS final price transparency rule, which took effect 1 JAN, aims 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 both a machine-readable file with the negotiated rates for all items and services and display the prices of 300 shoppable services in a consumer-friendly format. The price transparency rule states that if a hospital is noncompliant, the agency may request a corrective action plan, assess a civil monetary penalty of up to \$300 per day or publicize the penalty on a CMS website. A recent analysis of 500 hospitals conducted by the nonprofit Patient Rights Advocate found that 94.4 percent of hospitals haven't met at least one of the requirements since the rule took effect.

To boost compliance, CMS has proposed increasing the minimum fine for price transparency violations to up to \$2 million per year. Hospitals with more than 30 beds in violation of the rule would pay \$10 per day for each bed, up to \$5,500 per day. Hospitals with 30 beds or fewer would continue to pay up to \$300 per day. This would make the annual penalty at least \$109,500, or as high as \$2 million a year for large hospitals that fail to make prices public.

[Source: Becker's Hospital Review | Alia Paavola | August 16, 2021 ++]

Cost of Wars

Update 05: Iraq, Afghanistan

The cost of caring for veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan could top \$2.5 trillion by 2050, creating tough financial decisions for both the veterans community and the entire country, according to a new analysis by the Costs of War Project released 18 AUG. “The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have created a veterans care crisis, with disability rates soaring past those seen in previous wars,” said Harvard University professor Linda Bilmes, lead author of the new estimates. “This will take a long-term toll not only on veterans, but the U.S. taxpayers that will bear these costs for decades to come.”

The latest analysis of the costs of veteran care in coming decades is roughly \$1 trillion over previous estimates by the group. Researchers cited “more frequent and longer deployments, higher levels of exposure to combat, higher rates of survival from injuries, higher incidence of serious disability, and more complex medical treatments” as the reasons for the higher price tag. For the Afghanistan war which cost more than \$2T and 240,000 lives, the Costs of War Project report estimates nearly \$300 billion has been spent so far on caring for Afghanistan veterans. The figures include half-a-trillion dollars on interest.

The group also noted that the increased demands are already putting pressure on the federal budget. In fiscal 2001, before large-scale U.S. deployments to Afghanistan, mandatory veterans spending accounted for about 2.4 percent of annual federal spending. By fiscal 2020, that jumped to 4.9 percent, even as the number of veterans in America dropped from about 25.3 million to 18.5 million. “The majority of the costs associated with caring for post-9/11 veterans has not yet been paid and will continue to accrue long into the future,” the report states. “As in earlier U.S. wars, the costs of care and benefits for post-9/11 veterans will not reach their peak until decades after the conflict, as veterans’ needs increase with age. This time around, veterans’ costs will be much steeper.”

About \$900 billion of the estimated costs will be for direct medical care by Veterans Affairs physicians and contractors. All post-9/11 veterans are entitled to five years of free medical care through VA, while individuals with significant service-connected injuries can qualify for lifetime care. The group estimates another \$1.4 trillion for disability benefits payouts. Researchers also estimated about \$100 billion in additional spending for VA staff to keep up with the increased demands of veterans care. Past analyses by the group have estimated that about 3 million veterans served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, either in direct combat deployments or support roles. The median age of the group now is just under 37 years old.

The new report comes as the United States completes its full withdrawal from Afghanistan ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks which prompted the start of the war on terror. “As the U.S. tries to close this chapter in its military history, an entire generation of veterans and families will not be able to do so,” the report states. “The cost of these wars in blood, toil and treasure will endure for the next half-century.” The full report is available on the project’s web site at https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Bilmes_Long-Term%20Costs%20of%20Care%20for%20Vets_Aug%202021.pdf. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III| August 18, 2021 ++]

Covid-19 Health Care

Most Private Health Plans No Longer Waiving Cost-Sharing For Care

Seventy-two percent of the country's largest health plans are no longer waiving out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 treatment, according to research released 19 AUG by the Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker. Most private insurers waived cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment early in the pandemic. Some insurers started phasing out these waivers last November, and even more followed suit after COVID-19 vaccines became widely available in the U.S.

The research team looked at the two largest health plans in each state and Washington, D.C. They found that as of 2 AUG, 72 percent of these plans are no longer waiving cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment, and another 10 percent of plans have planned to phase out the waivers by the end of October. During the first seven months of 2021, about one-third of employers said their largest plan waived cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatment. The typical deductible for an employer health plan is \$1,644, and a patient hospitalized for COVID-19 could incur out-of-pocket costs amounting to about \$1,300, according to the report. [Source: Becker's Hospital Review | Katie Adams| August 20, 2021 ++]

Student Loan Debt

Update 08: 47,000+ Troops, Vets Will See Federal Student Loan Fees Waived

More than 47,000 troops and veterans will see some of their federal student loan debt erased thanks to new policies announced by the Department of Education on Friday. "Brave men and women in uniform serving our country can now focus on doing their jobs and coming home safely, not filling out more paperwork to access their hard-earned benefits," Federal Student Aid Chief Operating Officer Richard Cordray said in a statement announcing the change. "We will seek to reduce red tape for service members wherever possible."

Under previously passed legislation, any troops who deployed to overseas combat zones and hostile fire areas could have interest on many federal student loans waived. The rules include student loans first paid out after Oct. 1, 2008. For some individuals, that extra interest can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. But until now, getting those additional fees waived required lengthy paperwork proving past military service and deployments. Department of Education officials said fewer than 5,000 service members and veterans requested the interest fees be waived in recent years.

The new policy change shifts the burden from student veterans and troops to federal officials. Under a new data sharing agreement announced by the Departments of Defense and Education, federal processors can identify federal student loan borrowers who serve on active duty by matching records to DOD's personnel files. "As a result, the department can automatically provide the student loan interest benefit to eligible service members," education officials said in a statement. "Today's announcement means that service members are not required to take any action to receive the interest rate benefit." Loan recipients should see the changes appear automatically in their accounts. Individuals with questions can contact Department of Education officials with questions regarding the benefit.

The move does not wipe out the entirety of troops and veterans student loan debt, only the extra interest fees. Earlier this week, administration officials announced plans to cancel all student loan debt for about 300,000 severely disabled Americans. In a statement, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) praised the announcement as "necessary relief for those who served our country so honorably." More information on the changes is available on the Department of Education website <https://www.ed.gov>. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III August 20, 2021 ++]

Commissary Price Increases

Taking Steps to Lessen the Inflation Impact on Customers



Food inflation is affecting prices at grocery stores everywhere — including commissaries — but commissary officials and industry are taking steps to lessen the impact on their customers and offer bargains where they can. Commissaries have some distinct advantages over civilian retailers when it comes to holding down prices. Over the 12 months ending in July, the cost of food at grocery stores and supermarkets rose overall about 2.6 percent, according to the Consumer Price Index. Prices in all major grocery store food categories rose in that time frame, with increases ranging from 1.2 percent for nonalcoholic beverages, to 5.9 percent for the category of meats, poultry, fish and eggs.

The Defense Commissary Agency is experiencing about the same level of grocery price increases as commercial retailers have seen, said DeCA spokesman Kevin Robinson. "DeCA has received price increase updates from suppliers at the same time they inform commercial retailers." These price increases have affected virtually every category in the store, he said. DeCA's category managers continually work with suppliers, to include negotiating the best cost of grocery products, he said. "In addition, DeCA is statutorily required to sustain an overall patron savings of 23.7 percent against local market basket averages. Where we must increase prices, we ensure we are consistent relative to industry price increases," Robinson said.

But while grocery suppliers' prices have increased, the commissary stores have a major advantage in holding down prices for customers, which increases the "value proposition" of the commissary, especially during an inflationary environment, said Steve Rossetti, president of the American Logistics Association, a trade group of manufacturers and distributors who supply products to military stores. "The commissary has the advantage that its labor costs and a lot of costs that contribute to inflation are picked up by the taxpayer. So commissaries should do well in an inflationary environment. They have a firewall against a lot of costs that are associated with other retailers because they are subsidized," Rossetti said. DeCA receives about \$1.1 billion annually to operate 236 commissaries around the world.

Aside from the increased suppliers' costs affecting civilian and military grocery stores alike, civilian grocery stores have experienced increased labor costs, which in turn get added into the price of the groceries.

There are about 14,000 commissary employees worldwide, and their salaries are paid by the taxpayer, which is why commissary customers are able to get that 23.7 percent average worldwide savings that is mandated by law. Suppliers' costs for moving products have gone up — labor costs, increased transportation costs such as fuel and trucking costs, and costs related to COVID protection measures. “Across the board, commercial and military, they don't expect the distribution costs to normalize until mid-next year,” Rosetti said.

Some manufacturers have taken steps such as reducing the numbers, sizes and varieties of products to make production lines more efficient, Rossetti said. Where manufacturers can control prices, they are, Rossetti said. “But when commodity prices increase, they have to pass that along. “I've been told by all our major manufacturers that they're doing everything they can to hold the line on prices,” he said. Until the law was changed to allow “variable pricing” several years ago, commissaries were required to sell items at the cost from the supplier, plus a 5-percent surcharge added at the cash register. Now commissary officials can markup items — or mark down items.

Rossetti said suppliers are anxious to work with commissary officials to provide more promotions, if they can be assured that those reduced prices from the suppliers are passed on as savings for customers and not to pay for commissary operating costs. Among the efforts between commissary officials and industry is the August initiative “Come Home to Savings, Shop Your Local Commissary,” offering more daily, weekend and seasonal savings opportunities during the month. This effort is in addition to ongoing programs like the “Your Everyday Savings” or “YES!” program that ensures commissaries stay competitive with commercial stores on the pricing of popular products, and their private store brands.

Commissary officials, like those at other grocery store chains, navigated the disruption of the global supply chain during the pandemic to maintain grocery products on the shelves. But they're still in the process of trying to bring back a number of customers who couldn't get to the commissaries when base access restrictions were at their highest, Robinson said. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers + August25, 2021 ++]

Child Tax Credit

Update 02: For Non-IRS Filers

Americans have struggled during the pandemic, especially people with kids. The Child Tax Credit is here to help. It is not too late to sign up for Child Tax Credit payments. Most families are already signed up! If you've filed tax returns for 2019 or 2020, or if you signed up with the Non-Filer tool (<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool>) last year to receive a stimulus check from the Internal Revenue Service, you will get the monthly Child Tax Credit automatically. You do not need to sign up or take any action.

If you aren't already signed up, you can still sign up to get the Child Tax Credit. You won't lose your benefits if you do. These payments do not count as income for any family. So, signing up won't affect your eligibility for other federal benefits like SNAP and WIC. You are also eligible to apply for the Recovery Rebate Credit, also known as stimulus payments, as part of this process. If you have at least one qualifying child and earned less than \$24,800 as a married couple, \$18,650 as a Head of Household, or \$12,400 as a

single filer, you can use the IRS Non-filer Sign-up Tool to get the Child Tax Credit and receive missing stimulus payments. Here's a list of things you will need to complete the process.

- Social Security Social Security numbers for your children and Social Security Numbers (or ITIN) for you and your spouse
- A reliable mailing address
- E-mail address
- Your bank account information (if you want to receive your payment by direct deposit).

You can receive monthly Child Tax Credit payments even if you don't have a permanent address. You can list a trusted address where you would like to temporarily receive your monthly checks, such as the address of a friend, relative, or trusted service provider like a shelter, drop-in day center, or transitional housing program. If you don't have a bank account, checks will be mailed to your address. [Source: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/child-tax-credit/sign-up> | The White House | August 27, 2021 ++]

Take Out Order Scams

Placing One? Check the URL First

The COVID-19 pandemic has made ordering takeout more popular than ever. Some restaurants have even set up their own websites to avoid the fees and challenges that come with food delivery apps, like [DoorDash](#) or [GrubHub](#). As always, scammers are quick to pick up on a trend. Watch out for fake food ordering websites that scam consumers out of their money and personal information.

How the Scam Works

- You search for your favorite restaurant's website to see if they offer delivery and a way to order online. Near the top of the search results, you find a website that looks like it belongs to the restaurant. Or you may find a third-party website that looks very professional and similar to popular services like DoorDash or GrubHub.
- You click on the link, select your food, and enter your credit card information to pay. Charges appear on your account, but the food never arrives. When you call the restaurant to see what's happened, they are unaware of your order. The website was a fake, and now the scammers have your credit card information, address, and other personal details.
- Some consumers reported to BBB Scam Tracker accidentally ordering from fake websites called "Order Hero" or "Order Ventures." But look out for other variations. Scammers often change their name and continue their tricks under a different fake identity.

Avoid scams when ordering takeout:

- Only order from websites you know and trust. Even if you think you are on a website you know, double check the URL before you place your order.
- When in doubt, confirm with the restaurant. The first time you order directly from a restaurant's website, call the restaurant to confirm that they have online ordering and you are on the correct URL.

- Use your credit card. When you pay with your credit card, you can dispute any unauthorized charges. The same may not be true if you use your debit card or if you give a company your banking information, such as your account number and your bank's routing number.
- Take action if you think you've ordered on a fake site. If you suspect you entered your credit card information to a fraudulent website, cancel your card right away and request a new one. Scammers might wait a few weeks or months before they start using the card numbers you gave them access to.

For More Information

To learn more ways to protect yourself from online scams, read the BBB's tip for shopping online at <https://t.e2ma.net/click/bjp65d/3cbhhbb/b7nthl>. If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.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](https://www.bbb.org/avoidscams). [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | August 20, 2021 ++]

Employment Scams

Update 01: Don't Fall for This Pet Sitting Job Offer

Scammers have been using employment scams to trick people out of their personal information and money for years. These scams often target students or others looking for part time jobs. Recently, BBB Scam Tracker has seen multiple reports of a tempting scam that appears to be a friendly family looking for a pet sitter.

How the Scam Works

- A very polite-seeming person contacts you through social media, a legitimate job website, or your student email with what sounds like an excellent job offer. First, the person tries to earn your trust by sharing a lot of personal information, such as their name, age, pets' names, and job. Then, they give you a long story about how they are moving to your area and will need a pet sitter immediately. They offer you a generous hourly rate or ask you to name your price. Because you are such a good fit, they don't even need to interview you in person.
- Once you accept the job, the scammers get down to business. They may ask you for sensitive personal information, such as your full name, address, phone number, social security number, and banking information, claiming they need it to set up direct deposit or pay you in advance. In some cases, they may send you a check for a large amount of money and ask you to deduct your wages and use the rest to purchase supplies. If you follow their instructions, you'll lose your own money paying for supplies when it comes to light that the check was a fake.

How to protect yourself from job scams:

- *Never give your personal information to strangers.* Don't share sensitive details like your home address, social security number, or bank account information with someone you've never met. You should only give this information to a person or business you know and trust.

- *Do thorough research.* If a person contacts you with a pet sitting job and a long story about their life, you should be able to verify the details. Ask to connect on social media and look up the home address they provide. If the person is hesitant to tell you specifics or changes the subject when you ask for more information, don't accept the job.
- *Stay alert to red flags.* Correspondence with grammatical errors, offers to hire you without an interview, and pay that seems too good to be true are all classic elements of a scam. If you notice any of these red flags, steer clear.
- *Understand how checks work.* If someone sends you a check and asks you to deposit it, know that your bank will credit the funds to your account before they are actually transferred to your account. It can take a few weeks to discover a check is false. If you spend the money before then, the bank will hold you accountable for the funds.

For More Information

To protect yourself from job scams, read the BBB Tip: [Employment Scams](#). Read more about job scams offering positions as a secret shopper or driving around with a car wrap. If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](#). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](#).

[Source: BBB Scam Alerts | August 13, 2021 ++]

Friend in Distress Scams

It's the Latest Venmo Con

When a friend or family member is stuck in a bad situation and urgently needs money, you should help them out, right? Not if they are a scammer pulling this new con. Watch out for a Venmo scam that impersonates real users of the app.

How the Scam Works

- You get an out-of-the-blue Venmo request from a friend who needs money. Perhaps your friend has lost their wallet and needs to buy groceries. Could you send a couple hundred dollars to tide them over?
- It sounds like a reasonable request. And it looks legitimate too. The message comes from an account using – what seems to be – your friend's username and profile photo. But if you look closer, you notice that the name is a character or two off from their real Venmo account.
- Scammers are taking advantage of generous friends by changing their username and profile pictures to impersonate real app users. Using the information visible in Venmo's public feed, they figure out from whom this person had previously sent or received money. Then, scammers contact these users with requests for money.
- This scam is just one of many cons using digital wallets apps, such as PayPal, Venmo, Zelle, and Apple Pay. Be aware that unlike credit cards, many digital wallet vendors will not shoulder the cost

of fraud. This if you pay scammers using a digital wallet, you may not be successful in getting the company to reimburse you.

Avoid scams when using a digital wallet:

- Always double check with your friend before sending cash. If you get an unusual request, call or text your friend to confirm their story. If you can't reach them, you can also tap on their Venmo profile to view their public transaction history and information.
- Keep your transactions private. Scammers use the information visible in Venmo's public feed to find targets. By keeping your transactions private, you reduce your risk of being targeted by scammers. Here's privacy setting information from Venmo.
- Use money transfer with friends. Protect yourself from scams by only using money transfer apps for their intended purpose -- sending money to people you personally know.
- Enable additional security settings. Check your account settings to see if you can turn on additional security measures, such as multi-factor authentication, requiring a PIN, or using fingerprint recognition like Touch ID.
- Link your money transfer app to a credit card. As with many other purchases, using a credit card will help protect you if you don't get the goods or services you paid for. Linking to a debit card or directly to your bank account does not give you that added protection.

For More Information

Learn more about staying safe when using a [peer-to-peer payment system](#) like Zelle, Venmo or Apple Pay. Read about [another Venmo scam](#) that seems to send you money by accident. If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at BBB.org/AvoidScams. [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | August 20, 2021 ++]

Surviving Spouses

Update 01: Financial Considerations



You are never prepared for the loss of your spouse. That is true emotionally, and sometimes financially. Even if you do all the work of setting legal instruments in place, often something is overlooked or neglected or some circumstance has changed that requires an update or adjustment. To prepare, compile papers (especially DD Form 214 and Disability Claims) and determine your financial standing. Calculate the income of each spouse if the other dies. The reality might surprise you. Curtailing your lifestyle, downsizing,

saving more, or buying insurance products are options that can avert financial chaos. Give these options some serious thought. Keep in mind these additional considerations:

Credit cards. Each spouse should have a credit card in their name — alone — as well as some jointly held cards. Be careful that automatic recurring charges, a monthly newspaper subscription, for example, are not billed to a card solely owned by one spouse. If that spouse dies, it takes more effort to have that card cancelled.

Pensions. When you are retired, determining your income seems pretty straightforward. Pensions don't change much. But what if that pension does not transfer to the surviving spouse? If you have the Survivor Benefit Plan, what percentage of the pension continues? Has it been assigned to the spouse or a special-needs child or to a spouse from a previous marriage? Will the spouse receive the veteran's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation?

Social Security. Decisions made about when to start taking Social Security are really difficult. Do what you must, but if there is flexibility, plan a strategy that will support you best and longest. Most people I talk to feel they started withdrawal too soon. Consider delaying Social Security withdrawals from the higher-income spouse. Statistically, women might face 20 years or more of widowhood. Each year that you postpone drawing Social Security creates a larger long-term benefit. Do the math. Ask for advice.

Investments. If you have IRAs, you must start withdrawing at a certain age (currently 72). If you have land investments or precious metals or own a small business, converting them to cash requires market timing. These conversions should be discussed with a sales professional specializing in that niche.

Gifts and inheritances. If your wealthy Uncle Harry sends you and your spouse each a check for \$15,000 yearly, soon that gift is thought of as spendable income. But if one spouse dies, Uncle Harry can only send one check for \$15,000 without causing himself tax consequences. Besides, other family members won't think it's fair if you get \$30,000 and they each only get \$15,000. Be grateful, but consider this check a gift, not a reliable source of income. If you own part of an income producing property that is supporting you in retirement, make sure the property is titled correctly and the deed transfer upon death achieves the result you need for that income. Take the example of owning a rental house in partnership with your father, and you and your spouse use half of that rental income for living expenses. You expect to inherit this property upon your father's death. But if you predecease your father and the property is not correctly titled, your spouse could be denied the half share of future income.

Taxes on investments. Losses on the sale of an investment owned by your spouse are not carried over after the year of the spouse's death. Offset that capital loss by selling an asset that produced a comparable gain.

Don't procrastinate. Do this during the year of death to receive the full benefit of the write-off. When a spouse dies and there are no dependents, the survivor pays taxes at the rate of a single person, not married or head of household. Examine the tax table; the single rate is much higher. It can happen that a survivor will have less income and still pay more income taxes. And if the survivor has a modified adjusted gross income exceeding \$88,000 a year, Medicare premiums will also be increased.

Secrets. That diamond ring from a former beau, stamp collection, or Bitcoin is not valuable if your spouse doesn't know the ID number or the bank deposit box where it is located. Be sure you discuss all your assets and debts with your spouse.

[Source: MOAA Newsletter | Pat Green | July 30, 2021 ++]

Tax Burden on Nevada Vets

As of AUG 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 Nevada in 2021

Sales Taxes

The Nevada state sales tax rate is 6.85%, and the average NV sales tax after local surtaxes is 7.94% which is lower than 75% of states.

- Groceries and prescription drugs are exempt from the Nevada sales tax. Nevada treats both candy and soda as groceries for sales tax purposes
- Counties and cities can charge an additional local sales tax of up to 1.25%, for a maximum possible combined sales tax of 8.1%
- Nevada has 249 special sales tax jurisdictions with local sales taxes in addition to the state sales tax. Counties and cities are allowed to charge an additional local sales tax as approved by voters or local legislatures. Some counties such as Clark County (which includes Las Vegas) have special sales tax rates for accommodation businesses like hotels of up to 13%. Other items including gasoline, alcohol, and cigarettes are subject to various Nevada excise taxes in addition to the 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 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 Nevada Sales Tax. The 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. The state'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 merchants pass on the excise tax to the customer through higher prices for the taxed goods. Nevada collects an average of \$848 in yearly excise taxes per capita, one of the highest average per capita excise taxes in the country.

- **Alcohol:** Beer: \$0.16 per gal | Wine: \$0.70 per gal | Liquor \$3.60 per gal. The excise tax on beer is lower than 70% of the other 50 states. New Mexico's beer excise tax is ranked #35 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on Wine is lower than 58% of the other 50 states. Nevada's excise tax on wine is ranked #29 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on liquor is lower than 76% of the other 50 states. Nevada's excise tax on Spirits is ranked #38 out of the 50 states. Nevada state taxes on hard alcohol

vary based on alcohol content, place of production, size of container, and place purchased. All excise taxes are included in the price of the beverage when bought in New Mexico. Note that the IRS also collects a federal excise taxes on alcoholic beverages, which are included separately from your alcohol taxes in the final purchase price.

- **Cannabis:** None
- **Cellphone:** The average tax collected on cell phone plans in Nevada is \$2.08 per phone service plan, one of the lowest cellphone taxes in the country. Nevada's average cellphone tax is ranked #49 out of the 50 states. The Nevada 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
- **Cigarettes:** The Nevada excise tax on cigarettes is \$0.80 per 20 cigarettes, lower than 68% of the other 50 states. Nevada's excise tax on cigarettes is ranked #34 out of the 50 states. The Nevada cigarette tax of \$0.80 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 Nevada excise tax on gasoline is 23.00¢ per gallon, one of the highest gas taxes in the country. Nevada's excise tax on gasoline is ranked #10 out of the 50 states. The Nevada 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:** Nevada 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 Nevada Department of Transportation and receive documentation (registration and title papers) proving the fees were paid.

Personal Income Taxes

Retirement Income: Not taxed. There is no state income tax.

Website: <https://tax.nv.gov> Nevada Department of Taxation

Tax Forms: <https://tax.nv.gov/Forms> All Tax forms

Property Taxes

The median property tax is \$1,749 per year for a home worth the median value of \$207,600. Counties collect an average of 0.84% of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax per year. Nevada is ranked number twenty four out of the fifty states, in order of the average amount of property taxes collected. Nevada's median income is \$66,086 per year, so the median yearly property tax paid by Nevada residents amounts to approximately 2.64% of their yearly income. Nevada is ranked 28th of the 50 states for property taxes as a percentage of median income.

The exact property tax levied depends on the county in Nevada the property is located in. Washoe County collects the highest property tax in Nevada, levying an average of \$1,889.00 (0.64% of median home value) yearly in property taxes, while Esmeralda County has the lowest property tax in the state, collecting an average tax of \$414.00 (0.54% of median home value) per year. For more localized property tax rates refer

to the county list at <http://www.tax-rates.org/nevada/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.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

Since Nevada collects so much in gaming taxes, they do not impose an estate or inheritance tax or a gift tax. The good news also is that the IRS does not impose an inheritance tax. This is a tax that is assessed when beneficiaries receive money from an estate. So even if inheritance tax is not relevant at the federal level it still could be applicable to you depending on what state you live in and what state the assets were located.

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 Nevada Department of Taxation website <http://tax.state.nv.us> or call 866-962-3707 for further information. [Source: <https://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#NEVADA> | August 2021 ++]

*** General Interest ***



Notes of Interest

AUG 16 thru 31, 2021

- **Military History.** Refer to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D0bhpf-kQ8> to view a 17 min video titled Killing Rommel – The Demise of the Desert Fox.
- **Vets.** President Biden signed H.R.1448, the Puppies Assisting Wounded Service Members for Veterans Therapy Act into law 25 AUG. Click www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1448/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr+1448%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=2 for a copy of the bill text.
- **Celebrity Marriage.** The shortest one was nine times married Zsa Zsa Gábor with Felipe de Alba which lasted 1 day. Gábor seemed to have quite a sense of humor about her marital history, dropping gems such as this: “I am a marvelous housekeeper: Every time I leave a man I keep his house.”

- **Vet Legal Questions.** The federal American Bar Association (ABA) has created a “Free Legal Answers” website site where financially eligible veterans may submit questions about veterans’ federal legal issues—such as discharge upgrades, VA disability, and other VA benefits—and receive answers from pro bono attorneys. At https://www.americanbar.org/groups/probono_public_service/projects_awards/free-legal-answers they may also get advice on family law matters.
- **GI Bill.** Howard University is offering student veterans a \$3,000 no-interest loan after a Military.com investigation revealed the school had lost its accreditation for new students to use GI Bill benefits to pay for their education.
- **Afghan Withdrawal.** Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the Civil Reserve Air Fleet to activate, requesting 18 aircraft from the U.S. airlines to help in the evacuation of Afghans and Americans. It marks the third time in history that the military has mobilized the U.S. airlines to help with a military evacuation.
- **USS George H.W. Bush.** Aircraft carrier departed Norfolk Naval Shipyard 26 AUG after 30 months of maintenance and will begin sea trials ahead of its reintroduction into the training and deployment cycle
- **Sleep Apnea.** Philips recently issued a product recall for specific ventilators and sleep apnea devices. If you own or rent one of the Philips products that was recalled, talk to your doctor as soon as possible about whether to continue using your recalled equipment. For a list of devices recalled and to register your equipment visit www.philips.com/src-update , or call 1-877-907-7508.
- **Military Fraud.** Military retirees and veterans far outpaced other members of the military community when it comes to damage done by financial fraud in 2020, according to federal data released in July, with \$68 million reported lost to various scams. That figure nearly doubles the combined losses reported by active duty servicemembers (\$13 million), National Guard and Reserve members (\$6 million), and spouses or dependents of active duty members (\$17 million) according to data from the Federal Trade Commission’s Consumer Sentinel Network.
- **Military Vaccination Status.** To follow the latest number of military personnel by service branch vaccinated refer to <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus-DOD-Response>.
- **Insurance.** Delta Air Lines is increasing health insurance costs for its employees who aren't fully vaccinated against COVID-19, CEO Ed Bastian said 25 AUG. The average cost for a COVID-19 hospital stay for the company has been \$50,000. The airline said all of its employees who have been hospitalized for COVID-19 haven't been fully vaccinated.
- **Taliban propaganda.** Recently released Taliban propaganda appears to mock the famous Iwo Jima flag raising photo. In the Taliban image, fighters belonging to the Badri 313, which some are calling the Taliban’s elite commando unit, are shown wearing full camouflage uniforms, combat boots, tactical gear and night vision goggles.



[Source: Various | August 31, 2021 ++]

China U.S. Relations

Update 03: China's Afghanistan Taunt

It's too early to know the wider strategic fallout from America's botched Afghanistan withdrawal. But there's strong reason to doubt convenient claims that the retreat will help the U.S. balance a revisionist China. Beijing is more likely to see the display of fecklessness as an opening to exploit. "Our true strategic competitors, China and Russia, would love nothing more than the United States to continue to funnel billions of dollars in resources and attention into stabilizing Afghanistan indefinitely," said President Biden in his defiant 16 AUG speech. Put aside that, because of the Taliban triumph, the U.S. now has more attention and troops devoted to Afghanistan than it did before the exit. Beijing is already using the debacle to taunt Taiwan and the U.S.

"Is this some kind of omen of Taiwan's future fate?" said an editorial in the Global Times, a Communist Party organ. "Once a cross-Straits war breaks out while the mainland seizes the island with forces," the paper added, "the US would have to have a much greater determination than it had for Afghanistan, Syria, and Vietnam if it wants to interfere." China's Foreign Ministry also took a victory lap in a press briefing 17 AUG. Its spokeswoman said the Afghanistan war shows that the U.S. shouldn't "interfere in other countries' internal affairs," pointedly using the same language Beijing uses to object to America's support of Taiwan's independence. China says Taiwan's status is an "internal" issue, though the self-governing democracy is a linchpin of security for Pacific states including Japan.

Beijing's propagandists will take any opportunity to denigrate the U.S. But its strategic opportunities from the Afghanistan withdrawal are real. The U.S. abandoned its air base at Bagram for nothing, sacrificing some of its ability to project power in Central Asia. Afghanistan under Taliban rule may also be a fruitful source for China's development of strategic rare-earth minerals. One clear loser from the regime change in Afghanistan is India, whose ambassador fled Kabul amid the Taliban takeover. India's northern border was the site of deadly clashes with Chinese troops last year, and New Delhi is part of the "Quad" coalition for checking China in the Indo-Pacific. But if India needs to manage renewed security threats from jihadists, it will have less capacity to resist China's bullying.

Beijing's Afghanistan taunts resonated enough in Taiwan that the island democracy's premier repudiated them in press remarks 17 AUG. He said Taiwan's leaders are "not afraid of being killed or imprisoned" in case of an invasion, Reuters reports. China's military flew sorties near the island the same day. Taiwan's government is far more advanced than the fragile state the U.S. stood up in Kabul. Many in the Biden Administration who were willing to abandon Afghanistan to the Taliban may be more committed to U.S. allies in the Western Pacific. But as Beijing watches the U.S. retreat in Kabul, it might miss that message—especially as the Administration proposes a stagnant defense budget despite rising threats. If China's Communist Party perceives that the U.S. won't "interfere" to protect its allies in the Pacific, the world will soon be a far more dangerous place. [Source: The Wall Street Journal | Editorial Board (Opinion) | August 17, 2021 ++]

U.S. Sanctions on Iran

Update 04: Taliban Takeover Is a Boon for Cash-Strapped Iran



Iranian oil refinery

Iran this week restarted fuel exports to Afghanistan that had been disrupted by fighting between the Taliban and forces under the now deposed Afghan government, traders in Tehran and former U.S. officials say, with the Taliban now providing critical dollars to the sanctions-crushed Iranian economy from its lucrative narcotics operations. The burgeoning trade relationship between Tehran and the Taliban threatens to undermine key U.S. pressure campaigns against both. Iran has been cut off from the global market for the greenback by U.S. sanctions, and the Taliban’s willingness to trade with their neighbor gives Iran rare access to U.S. dollars it needs to import essential goods and bolster its depreciated currency.

Meanwhile, the arrangement enables the Taliban, who are also cut off from trade and finance by international sanctions, to purchase basic commodities vital to keeping the ailing Afghan economy running. Iranian traders, who had been selling to Afghan businessmen under the supervision of the U.S.-backed government in Kabul, stopped sending refined petroleum to their Eastern neighbor this summer after fighting escalated between the Afghan national army and the Taliban. After the conflict largely ended with the hard-line Islamist faction taking control of Kabul last week, the Taliban permitted the cross-border trade in petroleum products to resume. It has now returned to levels seen earlier in the year, to about \$5 million a day, traders and officials say. With the Taliban desperate for oil and short on other trading partners—and Iran in need of cash—trade is expected swiftly to rise.

Proceeds of Iranian fuel sales are deposited in dollar bank notes at the Afghan branch of Iran’s state-owned Bank Melli, among other financial firms, said Hamid Hosseini, a spokesman at Iran’s Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters’ Union in Tehran. Bank Melli, which didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment, has been sanctioned by the U.S. since 2018 for handling transfers to Iraqi militias. The bank’s Afghan branch transfers the dollars as a money exchange house, Mr. Hosseini said. The system operates outside the traditional financial infrastructure, thus evading international financial sanctions. “It is an important sort of lifeline for Afghanistan and, historically, a supply of dollars to Iran,” said Rachel Ziemba, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for a New American Security, a bipartisan think tank that has called for carefully calibrated sanctions policy on Iran.

For the Taliban, the fuel trade undercuts the financial leverage the Biden administration holds over the militant group, according to analysts and former U.S. officials. The Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan has cut the country off from the foreign financing that has kept the country afloat. The U.S. led a successful international effort to block the United Nations-sanctioned group from accessing the country’s assets overseas, including dollar reserves, and financial aid that provided more than half of the government’s

budget. Furthermore, the U.S. and other world powers could expand the sanctions against the Taliban to include all of Afghanistan, further isolating the country. In recent years, Tehran sought to play both sides of the Afghan civil war, supporting the Kabul government while also maintaining ties to the insurgent Taliban.

The Taliban's ascent now poses risks to Iran, which has faced waves of refugees in previous Afghan civil wars and the threat of extremist Sunni terrorist groups that oppose its Shia brand of Islam. But Iranian traders and officials say they expect a boost in dollar-denominated energy sales to Afghanistan. Mr. Hosseini said the Taliban have cut the customs tariff on oil products by 70%. In addition, other Afghan trading partners may be reluctant to sell directly to the new regime. "The greater part of trade on the border with Afghanistan is done in cash, and, due to these reasons, a bigger volume of dollars will flow into Iran from Herat," Masoud Daneshmand, a member of Iran's chamber of commerce, said in an interview with Iranian newspaper Ebtekar.

That is particularly the case because Afghan's official currency, the Afghani, has little value outside the country and the exchange rate has tumbled to record lows in recent weeks. Since the Taliban took Kabul, the U.S. has moved to block access to U.S. dollars to the group. The U.S. canceled bulk shipments of dollars headed for the country as Taliban fighters took control of Kabul, and are working to prevent the group's access to nearly half-billion dollars-worth of reserves at the International Monetary Fund, The Wall Street Journal has reported. And on 24 AUG, the World Bank suspended funding for dozens of projects in Afghanistan, citing questions over the legitimacy of Taliban rule.

Iran traders expect Afghanistan's booming heroin sales to partly offset a lack of access to U.S. dollars abroad. "They are exporting a billion dollars in 'al afiun,'" said Mr. Hosseini of Iran's oil exporters union, using a Persian word for opium. The U.N. Security Council, which oversees sanctions on the Taliban and the country's Islamic State affiliate, estimates taxation of drug trafficking could amount to a quarter of the Taliban's annual combined revenue of as much as \$1.6 billion a year. [Source: The Wall Street Journal | Benoit Faucon & Ian Talley | August 26, 2021 ++]

Afghan ISIS-K **Who They Are & What They Want**



Smoke rises from a deadly explosion outside the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan Aug. 26, 2021.

The Islamic State Khorasan Province, which is also known by the acronyms ISIS-K, ISKP and ISK, is the official affiliate of the Islamic State movement operating in Afghanistan, as recognized by Islamic State core leadership in Iraq and Syria. ISIS-K was officially founded in January 2015. Within a short period of

time, it managed to consolidate territorial control in several rural districts in north and northeast Afghanistan, and launched a lethal campaign across Afghanistan and Pakistan. Within its first three years, ISIS-K launched attacks against minority groups, public areas and institutions, and government targets in major cities across Afghanistan and Pakistan.

ISIS-K was founded by former members of the Pakistani Taliban, Afghan Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Over time, though, the group has poached militants from various other groups. By 2018, it had become one of the top four deadliest terrorist organizations in the world, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index. But after suffering major territorial, leadership and rank-and-file losses to the U.S.-led coalition and its Afghan partners – which culminated in the surrender of over 1,400 of its fighters and their families to the Afghan government in late 2019 and early 2020 – the organization was declared, by some, to be defeated.

One of the group's greatest strengths is its ability to leverage the local expertise of these fighters and commanders. ISIS-K first started to consolidate territory in the southern districts of Nangarhar province, which sits on Afghanistan's northeast border with Pakistan and is the site of al-Qaida's former stronghold in the Tora Bora area. ISIS-K used its position on the border to garner supplies and recruits from Pakistan's tribal areas, as well as the expertise of other local groups with which it forged operational alliances. Substantial evidence shows that the group has received money, advice, and training from the Islamic State group's core organizational body in Iraq and Syria. Some experts have placed those figures in excess of US\$100 million.

ISIS-K's general strategy is to establish a beachhead for the Islamic State movement to expand its so-called caliphate to Central and South Asia. It aims to cement itself as the foremost jihadist organization in the region, in part by seizing the legacy of jihadist groups that came before it. This is evident in the group's messaging, which appeals to veteran jihadist fighters as well as younger populations in urban areas. Like the group's namesake in Iraq and Syria, ISIS-K leverages the expertise of its personnel and operational alliances with other groups to carry out devastating attacks. These attacks target minorities like Afghanistan's Hazara and Sikh populations, as well as journalists, aid workers, security personnel and government infrastructure.

ISIS-K's goal is to create chaos and uncertainty in a bid to push disillusioned fighters from other groups into their ranks, and to cast doubt on any ruling government's ability to provide security for the population. **ISIS-K sees the Afghan Taliban as its strategic rivals.** It brands the Afghan Taliban as "filthy nationalists" with ambitions only to form a government confined to the boundaries of Afghanistan. This contradicts the Islamic State movement's goal of establishing a global caliphate.

Since its inception, ISIS-K has tried to recruit Afghan Taliban members while also targeting Taliban positions throughout the country. ISIS-K's efforts have met with some success, but the Taliban have managed to stem the group's challenges by pursuing attacks and operations against ISIS-K personnel and positions. These clashes have often occurred in tandem with U.S. and Afghan air power and ground operations against ISIS-K, although the full extent to which these operations were coordinated is still unclear. What is clear is that the majority of ISIS-K's manpower and leadership losses were the result of U.S. and Afghan-led operations, and American air strikes in particular.

As a relatively weakened organization, ISIS-K's immediate goals are to replenish its ranks and signal its resolve through high-profile attacks. Doing so can help ensure that the group doesn't become an

irrelevant player in the Afghanistan-Pakistan landscape. It is interested in attacking U.S. and allied partners abroad, but the extent to which the group is able to inspire and direct attacks against the West is an issue that has divided the U.S. military and intelligence community. In Afghanistan, however, ISIS-K has proved itself to be a much greater threat. In addition to its attacks against Afghan minorities and civilian institutions, the group has targeted international aid workers, land-mine removal efforts and even tried to assassinate the top U.S. envoy to Kabul in January 2021.

It is still too early to tell how the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will benefit ISIS-K, but the attack on the Kabul airport shows the continued threat posed by the group. In the short term, ISIS-K will likely continue its efforts to sow panic and chaos, disrupt the withdrawal process and demonstrate that the Afghan Taliban are incapable of providing security to the population. If the group is able to reconstitute some level of territorial control in the longer term and recruit more fighters, it will most likely be poised to make a comeback and pose threats on the national, regional and international levels. [Source: Defense One | Amira Jadoon & Andrew Mines | August 26, 2021 ++]

DPRK Nuclear Weapons

Update 29: Yongbyon Nuclear Reactor Appears to Have Been Restarted



North Korea appears to have resumed operation of its plutonium-producing reactor at Yongbyon in a move that could enable the reclusive country to expand its nuclear-weapons arsenal, the U.N. atomic agency said. The development, disclosed in the agency’s annual report on North Korea’s nuclear activities, adds a new challenge to President Biden’s foreign policy agenda, alongside the dangerous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and stalemated talks on restoring the 2015 deal on Iran’s nuclear program. “Since early July, there have been indications, including the discharge of cooling water, consistent with the operation of the reactor,” said the report by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Yongbyon reactor appeared to have been inactive from December 2018 until the beginning of July 2021, the report noted. It added that signs that the reactor is now being operated coincides with indications that North Korea is also using a nearby laboratory to separate plutonium from spent fuel previously removed from the reactor. The agency, whose inspectors were kicked out of North Korea in 2009, described the twin developments as “deeply troubling” and a clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

During then-President Donald Trump’s 2019 meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi, the North Korean side offered to shut its Yongbyon complex, encompassing the reactor and other facilities, in return for major sanctions relief. The Trump administration rejected that offer

as insufficient. “The recent inactivity of key facilities at Yongbyon seems related to Kim Jong Un’s offer at the Hanoi summit to shut down Yongbyon,” said Robert Einhorn, a former senior State Department official who negotiated with North Korea. “Resumed operations at the reactor and reprocessing facility may be an indication that he sees little prospect of a nuclear deal.” [Source: Wall Street Journal | Michael Gordon & Laurence Norman | August 29, 2021 ++]



U.S. Embassy Manila

ICV Guidance & Quarantine Update September 1-7, 2021

The Philippine government has announced that travelers who are fully vaccinated may now apply for an International Certificate of Vaccination (ICV, or yellow card) from the Philippine Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ). The ICV can be used as proof of vaccination within the Philippines or internationally. Each ICV has a unique QR code, allowing local and international authorities to verify its authenticity. For more information for travelers who are fully vaccinated, please see the [BOQ’s website](#). Below are the current quarantine classifications according to the Philippine government:

Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) September 1- 7, 2021

- NCR – Metro Manila
- Luzon – Cordillera Administrative Region: Apayao; Region I: Ilocos Norte; Region III: Bulacan, and Bataan; and Region IV-A: Cavite, Laguna, Lucena City, and Rizal
- Visayas – Region VI: Aklan, Iloilo Province, and Iloilo City; Region VII: Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, and Mandaue City

General Community Quarantine (GCQ) with heightened restrictions September 1-7, 2021

- Luzon – Region I: Ilocos Sur; Region II: Cagayan; Region IV-A: Quezon and Batangas; and Region V: Naga City
- Visayas – Region VI: Bacolod City, Capiz and Antique; and Region VII: Negros Oriental and Cebu Province
- 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) September 1-7, 2021

- Luzon – Cordillera Administrative Region: Baguio City; Region II: City of Santiago, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino; Region III: Tarlac; Region IV-B: Puerto Princesa
- Visayas – Region VI: Guimaras, Negros Occidental
- Mindanao – Region IX: Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga City, 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 **September 7, 2021**.

The above quarantine classifications are subject to change. For quarantine classification protocols and regulations, visit the [Philippine Department of Health's website](#). The Philippine government has mandated that everyone must wear full-coverage face shields together with face masks while in public places. Local governments continue to implement additional requirements to slow the virus' spread.

For further information and assistance:

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

[Source: U.S. Embassy in the Philippines | August 31, 2021 ++]

Airline Logic Covid-19 Spacing



Food Leftovers

Update 02: 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.

Hot Dogs - Time: 1 week open, 2 weeks unopened

Around summer, the mostly used pack of hot dogs is ubiquitous. If you've kept it out at room temperature for a few hours during a barbecue, that life expectancy should be far less. Keep a cooler by the grill and freeze what you don't use for 1 to 2 months.

Lunch Meats - Time: 3 to 5 days open, 2 weeks unopened

The more pedantic eaters will point out that cured or smoked meats will last much longer, but typically fresh deli meats and packaged lunch meats have a week at most, according to the FDA. However, they can be frozen for 1 to 2 months.

Bacon - Time: 7 days

We applaud the Department of Agriculture for its in-depth rundown on bacon and for going into just about every possible bacon-storage scenario. Bacon in the package will last a week in the fridge and up to a month in the freezer, but leftover cooked bacon has about 4 to 5 days and can be frozen for a month.

Sausage - Time: 1 to 2 days raw, 7 days smoked

Much like the hot dog, the half-used pack of sausages makes regular appearances during the summer. Given its meager life expectancy in the fridge, however, the FDA suggests keeping in the freezer (where it can remain for 1 to 2 months) until it is eventually used.

Fresh Steak - Time: 3 to 5 days

Steak has remarkable staying power if you have to put off a steak night for a while. If you see it on sale, meanwhile, pick up a bunch of it: Whatever you don't use immediately can freeze for 6 to 12 months.

Roasts - Time: 3 to 5 days

There is a reason why Depression-era grandparents always bought a roast when they could get a deal on one. It keeps for the better part of a week and can freeze for 4 to 12 months.

Fresh Chicken or Turkey - Time: 1 to 2 days

Don't make fun of the people at the supermarket who save receipts and collect their bonus turkeys each year. They may only last a day or two in the fridge, but they can freeze for a year whole or 9 to 12 months in parts. Just remember to toss the giblets, which will only freeze for 3 to 4 months.

Cooked Meat Dishes - Time: 3 to 4 days

Once again, this is just the FDA offering a rule of thumb. If you've cooked more of any meat product than you can eat, either make sure the remaining portion is something you can eat in less than a week or freeze the rest for up to 2 to 3 months.

Gravy and Meat Broth - Time: 1 to 2 days

Just a reminder to all of you holiday chefs that leftover gravy or broth really shouldn't make it to the next holiday. If there's too much to finish within the next day or so, freezing it will buy you only 2 to 3 months of peak flavor and consistency.

Fried Chicken - Time: 3 to 5 days

It's possible to reheat fried chicken to its former glory, so don't think twice about leaving it in the fridge for a few days. In fact, the FDA says you can freeze it for 4 months if you feel like cooking up a batch in advance.

Chicken Nuggets - Time: 3 to 5 days

Most chicken dishes will keep in the fridge for this amount of time, according to the FDA. However, anyone who's bought a bag of pre-cooked frozen nuggets knows that they have no problem keeping in the fridge for 1 to 3 months.

Plain Cooked Chicken Pieces - Time: 3 to 4 days

The lack of breading cuts roughly a day's worth of fridge life off of chicken, according to the FDA, but you can still freeze it for 4 months.

Cooked Chicken Pieces in Broth or Sauce - Time: 3 to 4 days

The broth and sauce won't get your leftovers into next week, but they'll help them freeze for up to 6 months.

Cooked Fish - Time: 3 to 4 days

Fish isn't something the FDA wants you to take chances with, so stick with that 3 to 4 day window. However, if there's too much left over for you to handle, even cooked fish can freeze for 4 to 6 months.

Smoked Fish - Time: 14 days

Did that smoked salmon, sturgeon, sable, and lox platter from Barney Greengrass not go over as well at the company meeting as you thought it would? Forget it: You can pack it up and put it in your fridge for 2 weeks. Smoked fish was made to keep, and it'll last up to a year if you freeze it, says the FDA.

Fresh Shrimp, Scallops, Crawfish, Squid - Time: 1 to 2 days

Now we're getting into the fish and seafood that you don't want to have sitting around for too long. Any of the above probably should be finished up by lunch the next day (hey, it won't stink up the office like microwaved fish), but you could freeze larger quantities for 4 to 6 months.

Lean Fish - Time: 1 to 2 days

Pike, snapper, cod, porgy ... they aren't as fatty as salmon, trout, or herring, but they have their own endearing qualities. Chief among them is the ability to keep after freezing for 6 to 8 months.

Fatty Fish - Time: 1 to 2 days; freeze for 2 to 3 months

The upside is that these are the delicious fish filled with the good fats and oils that health professionals love. The downside? They'll only maintain flavor after freezing for about 2 to 3 months, so try not to leave too many leftovers.

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

Carbon Dioxide Poisoning

Update 01: Lake Nyos disaster

On 21 August 1986, a limnic eruption at Lake Nyos in northwestern Cameroon killed 1,746 people and 3,500 livestock. The eruption triggered the sudden release of about 100,000–300,000 tons (1.6 million tons, according to some sources) of carbon dioxide (CO₂). The gas cloud initially rose at nearly 62 mph and

then, being heavier than air, descended onto nearby villages, displacing all the air and suffocating people and livestock within 16 miles of the lake.



What triggered the catastrophic outgassing is not known. Most geologists suspect a landslide, but some believe that a small volcanic eruption may have occurred on the bed of the lake. A third possibility is that cool rainwater falling on one side of the lake triggered the overturn. Others still believe there was a small earthquake, but because witnesses did not report feeling any tremors on the morning of the disaster, this hypothesis is unlikely. The event resulted in the supersaturated deep water rapidly mixing with the upper layers of the lake, where the reduced pressure allowed the stored CO₂ to effervesce out of solution. It is believed that about 0.29 cu mi of gas was released.

The normally blue waters of the lake turned a deep red after the outgassing, due to iron-rich water from the deep rising to the surface and being oxidized by the air. The level of the lake dropped by about a metre and trees near the lake were knocked down. Scientists concluded from evidence that a 330 ft column of water and foam formed at the surface of the lake, spawning a wave of at least 82 ft that swept the shore on one side. Since carbon dioxide is 1.5 times the density of air, the cloud hugged the ground and moved down the valleys, where there were various villages. The mass was about 160 ft thick, and travelled downward at 12–31 mph. For roughly 14 mi, the gas cloud was concentrated enough to suffocate many people in their sleep in the villages of Nyos, Kam, Cha, and Subum. About 4,000 inhabitants fled the area, and many of these developed respiratory problems, lesions, and paralysis as a result of the gas cloud.

Reporters in the area described the scene as "looking like the aftermath of a neutron bomb." One survivor, Joseph Nkwain from Subum, described himself when he awoke after the gases had struck: *"I could not speak. I became unconscious. I could not open my mouth because then I smelled something terrible ... I heard my daughter snoring in a terrible way, very abnormal ... When crossing to my daughter's bed ... I collapsed and fell. I was there till nine o'clock in the morning (of Friday, the next day) ... until a friend of mine came and knocked at my door ... I was surprised to see that my trousers were red, had some stains like honey. I saw some ... starchy mess on my body. My arms had some wounds ... I didn't really know how I got these wounds ... I opened the door ... I wanted to speak, my breath would not come out ... My daughter was already dead ... I went into my daughter's bed, thinking that she was still sleeping. I slept till it was 4.30 in the afternoon ... on Friday (the same day). (Then) I managed to go over to my neighbors houses. They were all dead ... I decided to leave ... (because) most of my family was in Wum ... I got my motorcycle ... A friend whose father had died left with me (for) Wum ... As I rode ... through Nyos I didn't see any sign of any living thing ... (When I got to Wum), I was unable to walk, even to talk ... my body was completely weak."*

Interviews with survivors and pathologic studies indicated that victims rapidly lost consciousness and that death was caused by CO₂ asphyxiation. At nonlethal levels, CO₂ can produce sensory hallucinations, such that many people exposed to CO₂ report the odor of sulfuric compounds when none are present. It is a possibility that other volcanic gases were released along with the CO₂, as some survivors reported a smell of gunpowder or rotten eggs which indicates that sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide were present at

concentrations above their odor thresholds. However, CO₂ was the only gas detected in samples of lake water, suggesting that this was the predominant gas released and as such the main cause of the incident.

The scale of the disaster led to much study on how a recurrence could be prevented. Several researchers proposed the installation of degassing columns from rafts in the middle of the lake. The principle is to slowly vent the CO₂ by lifting heavily saturated water from the bottom of the lake through a pipe, initially by using a pump, but only until the release of gas inside the pipe naturally lifts the column of effervescing water, making the process self-sustaining. Starting from 1995, feasibility studies were successfully conducted, and the first permanent degassing tube was installed at Lake Nyos in 2001. Two additional pipes were installed in 2011. In 2019 it was determined that the degassing had reached an essentially steady state and that a single one of the installed pipes would be able to self-sustain the degassing process into the future, indefinitely maintaining the CO₂ at a safe level, without any need for external power.

Following the Lake Nyos disaster, scientists investigated other African lakes to see if a similar phenomenon could happen elsewhere. Lake Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2,000 times larger than Lake Nyos, was also found to be supersaturated, and geologists found evidence that outgassing events around the lake happened about every thousand years. [Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Nyos_disaster | August 2021 ++]

Vocabulary

Some Words to Enhance Yours | 210901

Which word best matches these example sentences?

- (a) Regina was known to _____ when addressing her minions.
(b) *Tortuous - Perquisite - Corpulent - Vituperate*
- (a) Everyone around the table was getting very impatient with the _____ dinner guest.
(b) *Jut - Compunction - Loquacious - Capricious*
- (a) The adventurer was shocked by what the great _____ had to say about his future.
(b) *Impugn - Oracle - Ember - Pontificate*
- (a) His immense enthusiasm toward his ideals easily qualified him as a _____.
(b) *Incumbent - Concatenate - Dichotomy - Zealot*
- (a) He wasn't great in school, and many considered him a _____.
(b) *Teetotaler - Futz - Surfeit - Rambunctious*
- (a) Heather gave into her feelings of _____ when she turned around instead of entering the spooky, old house.
(b) *Misgiving - Triskaidekaphobia - Inimical - Loquacious*
- (a) After getting their perfect scores, she and her friends _____ ed through the halls.
(b) *Roister - Baksheesh - Dollop - Sayonar*
- (a) Jennifer took a _____ to Joe simply because he was promoted faster than her.

(b) *Grommet – Pacifist – Scunner - Invigilat*

9. (a) The _____ was so refreshing on the hot summer afternoon.

(b) *Astute – Zephyr – Pleonasm - Aggrandize*

10. (a) The young man, who has extremely _____ views, isn't highly regarded in his neighborhood.

(b) *Cognoscente – Charlatan – Libertine - Amorphous*

Answers

1. Vituperate [vahy-too-puh-reyt] - to use or address with harsh or abusive language; revile.
2. Loquacious [loh-kwey-shuhs] - talking or tending to talk much or freely; talkative; chattering; babbling; garrulous.
3. Oracle [awr-uh-kuhl] - a priest or priestess acting as a medium through whom advice or prophecy was sought from the gods in classical antiquity
4. Zealot [zel-uh-t] - a person who is fanatical and uncompromising in pursuit of their religious, political, or other ideals
5. Futz [fuhts] - noun: a fool; simpleton & verb: to pass time in idleness (usually followed by around)
6. Misgiving [mis-giv-ing] - a feeling of doubt, distrust, or apprehension.
7. Roister [roi-ster] - enjoy oneself or celebrate in a noisy or boisterous way
8. Scunner[skuhn-er] - an irrational dislike; loathing
9. Zephyr [zef-er] - a gentle, mild breeze.
10. Libertine [lib-er-teen, lib-er-tin] - (adj) Characterized by a disregard of morality, especially in sexual matters; freethinking in matters of religion. (noun) A person who rejects accepted opinions in matters of religion; a freethinker.

News of the Weird

AUG 16 thru 31, 2021

Fine Points of the Law – Paul Flores, 44, of San Pedro, California, is facing the court for the 1996 disappearance and murder of Kristin Smart, Yahoo News reported. On Aug. 11, Bob Sanger, Flores' attorney, filed a motion requesting a hearing to recuse the entire district attorney's office. Sanger argued that prosecutors have a conflict of interest because they've been wearing purple clothing during the hearing, which was Smart's favorite color. He also said the victim witness coordinator has been sending a "prejudicial message" to witnesses that the DA's office is on Smart's side. Specifically, Sanger said, Detective Clint Cole had worn a purple tie every day of the hearing. Sanger's motion will be heard on Aug. 25. [Yahoo News, 8/14/2021]

o-o-O-o-o-

Puppy Le Pew – A Nylabone dog treat plant in Neptune City, New Jersey, has neighbors holding their noses after the company consolidated its manufacturing at the site recently. "It's nauseating," Linda Williamson, who lives nearby, told NBC New York. "Instant headaches." Nylabone President Glen Axelrod said the company has spent more than \$2 million on odor abatement, charcoal filters and other fixes. "If it were a

bakery, you'd be smelling baked food; if we were a steakhouse, you'd be smelling steak," he said. But ... it's not. "You can't enjoy your own yard in this beautiful neighborhood," complained Linda Colucci. While neighbors consult with lawyers about their next moves, Axelrod said the company will continue to explore solutions to the noxious odors. [NBC New York, 8/11/2021]

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Rubbish – In Bathside, Harwich, England, resident Irene Slater, 59, has been "gobsmacked" by the theft of garbage bags from outside her home -- four times! She keeps the full bags outside because of the smell, but someone obviously appreciates the bouquet, according to the Harwich and Manningtree Standard, sneaking up in the dark of night to take them away. Slater and her neighbors are concerned that the thieves are looking to steal their identities. "It's just so strange -- why would you steal a bin bag?" Slater asked. "It's certainly not as bad as being burgled, but it still makes you think." [Harwich and Manningtree Standard, 8/17/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Suspicious Confirmed – In January, Demetra Street of Baltimore attended a memorial service for her husband, Ivan, complete with a photo of him next to an urn at the front of the room at Wylie Funeral Homes. But after the service, funeral home personnel whisked the urn away and wouldn't turn over Ivan's ashes, she told The Washington Post. Now she thinks she knows why: Ivan's ashes weren't in the urn. Instead, his body had been buried three days earlier, according to the wishes of another woman who claimed to be Ivan's wife, at Baltimore's Mount Zion cemetery. In early August, Street filed a lawsuit against the funeral home for \$8.5 million, calling the urn displayed at the memorial service a "sham." The funeral home's president, Brandon Wylie, denies the accusation: "We vehemently deny the claims advanced by Ms. Street and assert that the underlying matter was handled with the utmost sensitivity toward the loved ones of the deceased." [Washington Post, 8/16/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Awesome! – In July, customers at Tesco supermarkets in England were greeted with motivational posters encouraging camaraderie during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Daily Record reported. However, some patrons were amused by the placement of the messages -- especially one reading "Together we can do this" found in a urinal stall in the men's restroom. Users posted the sign online, prompting replies such as, "Nah I got this one all by myself thanks Tesco" and "Ok, but only three shakes please." [Daily Record, 7/6/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Inexplicable – Metro News reported on Aug. 15 that authorities in the village of Wonersh in Surrey, England, are stumped by a serial baked bean bandit who is pouring the savory legumes on doorsteps, cars and into mail slots. Officers have promised to step up patrols in the area, but residents are seeing the lighter side: "What half-baked idiots would do this? I hope they get thrown in the can!" and "Absolutely Heinous crime." [Metro News, 8/15/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

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]

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

Trivia Oddball Facts

Did You Know?



- When Franklin Roosevelt started a foundation to fight polio, Comedians Eddie Cantor came up with the "March of Dimes", asking people to mail a dime to the White House. They were soon overwhelmed with 2,680,000 dimes mailed to them, literally truckloads, mostly from children. These dimes went directly to research that resulted in the Polio vaccine. This is why Roosevelt is on the U.S. dime.
- Ben Franklin left \$2000 to the cities of Boston and Philadelphia in his will to help young tradesmen, but they could not draw the balance or 200 years. In 1990, it was worth \$6/5 million. The money has been used to fund scholarships, women's health, and help firefighters and disabled children.
- Before she became a famous actress in classic sitcoms like Maude and the Golden Girls, Bea Arthur served as a truck driver in the United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve during WWII. She respectively earned a Honorable Discharge, and was regarded as "One Hell of a Marine."
- A knocker-upper was someone whose purpose was to wake people up during a time when alarm clocks were expensive and not very reliable. They earned about six pence a week using a pea shooter to shoot dried peas at the windows of sleeping workers in East London, 1930s. She would not leave window until she was sure that the workers had woken up.
- A powerful photo was taken in April, 1945, by Major Clarence Benjamin that shows a train of Jewish prisoners that has been intercepted by Allied Forces. This is the moment they learned that the train would not be heading to a Concentration Camp and they would be liberated.
- Jonas Salk (1914-1995) decided not to patent his 1996 Polio Vaccine so that it would be affordable for millions of people who couldn't afford it. As a result, he lost out on an estimated 7 billion dollars.



- In 1922, at the University of Toronto, scientists went to a hospital ward with children who were comatose and dying from diabetic keto-acidosis. The scientists went from bed to bed and injected the children with the new purified extract – insulin. As they began to inject the last comatose child, the first child injected began to awaken. One by one, all of the children awoke from their diabetic comas. A room of death and gloom, became a place of joy and hope. Thank You Dr. Banting and Dr. Best.
- United States soldiers paid tribute to the 8 million Horses, Donkeys, and Mules during WWI, 1918 by standing in formation that was the shape of a Horse’s Head.
- During the Holocaust boxes of wedding bands were collected at Nazi Concentration Camps from victims prior to their execution. Each ring represented a destroyed family. Never Forget.
- Despite being dead for over a year, famous author Agatha Christie saved a baby’s life in 1977. Her novel The Pale Horse described thallium poisoning so well that a nurse who had been reading it was able to diagnose a sick 1-year-old who had doctors stumped. The baby was immediately tested, found to have traces of thallium, the doctors changed her treatment and her life was saved by an old murder mystery novel.
- Photographer Daniel S. Sorine took pictures of two mimes in 1974, and 35 years later discovered it was Robin Williams before he was famous.
- In 1959, a coffee maker was an optional extra in Volkswagen cars.

Have You Heard or Seen?

Potpourri #4 | Military Truisms | Think Toons

Potpourri #4

A 70-year old woman chose to remain overnight at a costly hotel as a treat for her birthday. The following morning she was appalled when the desk clerk gave her a bill for \$250.000. She requested to know why the charge was so high. “It’s a nice hotel, but the rooms certainly aren’t worth \$250.000 for just an overnight stay! I didn’t; even have breakfast,” she told the clerk.

The clerk clarified that \$250.000 is the standard rate. At that point, the older lady insisted on talking with the manager. The manager showed up and explained that the hotel “has an Olympic-sized swimming pool and a huge conference center which are available for use.

“But I didn’t use them,” the old woman said. “Well, they are here, and you could have,” he said. The manager proceeded with that she could have likewise have seen one of the in-hotel shows for which h hotel is famous. “We have the best entertainers from the world over performing here,” he said. “But I didn’t go to any of those shows,” she said. The manager replied, “Well, we have them, and you could have.”

Regardless of what facility he recommended, the older lady would just answer, “But I did’ use it!” The manger then countered with his standard reaction. After several minutes of contending with him, she chose to pay. He manager was shocked when she gave the check to him. “But madam, this check is only for \$50.00,” he said.

That is right. I charge you \$200.00 or sleeping with me,” the old lady replied. But I didn’t the manager shouted. “Well, too bad. I was here and you could have.”

-o-o-O-o-o-

A mother-in-law stopped by expectantly at her newly married son’s house. She knocks on the door, then immediately walks in. She is shocked to see her daughter-in-law lying on the couch, totally naked.

What are you doing?” She asked. “I’m waiting for Jeff to come home from work,” the daughter-in-law answered. “But your naked!” the mother-in-law exclaimed. “This is my love dress,” the daughter-in-law explained. “Love dress? But your naked!” she says. “Jeff loves me to wear this dress! It makes him happy and it makes me happy.”

The mother-in-law on the way home thought about the love dress. When she got home she undressed, showered, put on her best perfume and expectantly waited for her husband, lying provocatively on the couch.

Finally her husband came home. He walked in and saw her naked. “What are you doing?” he asked. “This is my love dress” she replied. Needs ironing” he says. “What’s for dinner?”

Military Truisms

From the Army

- Never forget that your weapon was made by the lowest bidder.
- Success occurs when no one is looking, failure occurs when the General is watching.
- No combat-ready unit has ever passed inspection.

From the Navy

- Any ship can be a mine-sweeper. Once.
- There are more planes in the ocean than submarines in the sky.
- Weather forecasts are horoscopes with numbers.

From the Air Force

- It is generally inadvisable to eject directly over the area you just bombed.
- The only time you have too much fuel is when you’re on fire.
- If the wings are traveling faster than the fuselage, it’s probably a helicopter –and therefore, unsafe.

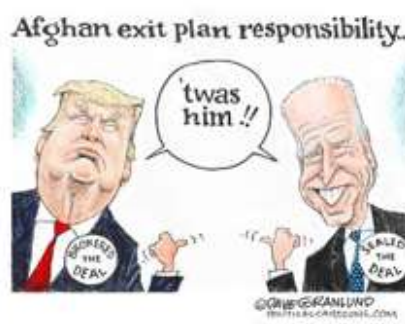
From the Marines

- When the pin is pulled, Mr. Grenade is not our friend.
- Never tell the Platoon Sergeant you have nothing to do.
- “You, you, and you...panic. The rest of you, come with me.”

Think Toons



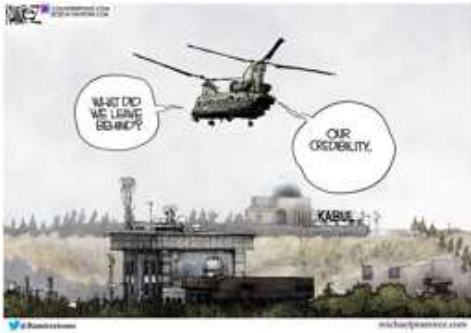
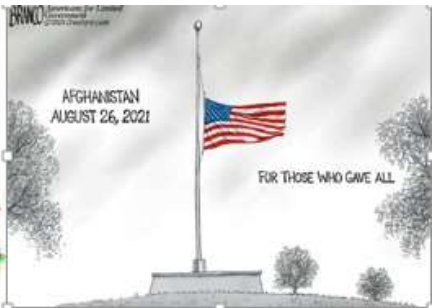
New attire for flight attendants...



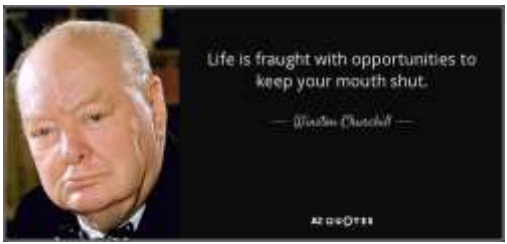
Civilians: I can't believe they had to sleep in a garage!!!

Military: Yeah its terrible :)





Thought of the Week



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