

RAO

BULLETIN

1 December 2016

PDF Edition



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1. The page number on which an article can be found is provided to the left of each article's title
2. Numbers contained within brackets [] indicate the number of articles written on the subject. To obtain previous articles send a request to raoemo@sbcglobal.net.

*** ATTACHMENTS ***

Attachment - South Carolina Vet State Benefits & Discounts NOV 2016

Attachment - Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 15 DEC

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Attachment - WW2 - Bataan & Corregidor

*** DoD ***



Holiday Troop Mail Update 01 ► 2016 Military Shipping Deadlines

APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 090-092

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIP 093

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: None
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec.2
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 094-098

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIP 340

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 962 - 966

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

Domestic Mail (any U.S. address that is not an APO/FPO)

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 23
- First-Class: Dec. 20
- Priority Mail: Dec. 21
- USPS Retail Ground: Dec. 15

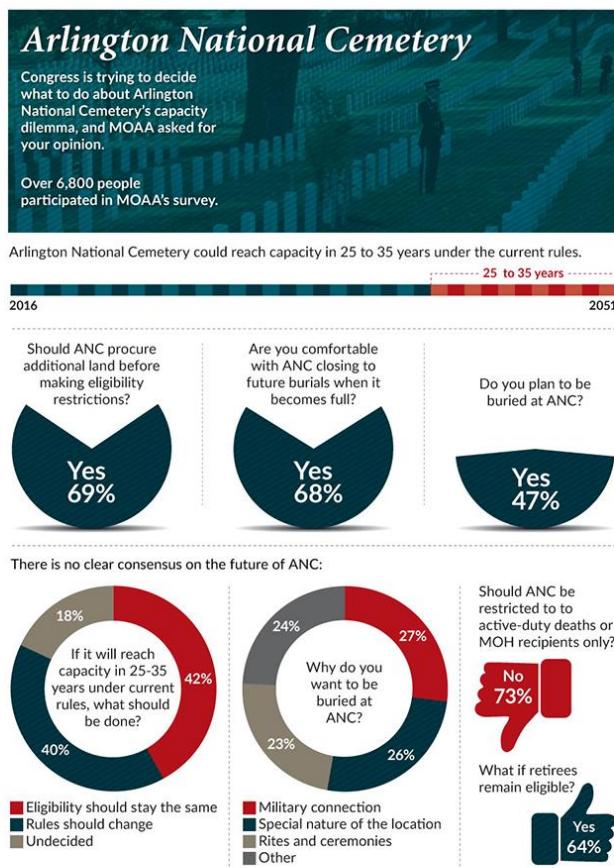
Priority Express Mail Military Service (PEMMS) is available from selected military post offices. If mailing to an APO/FPO/DPO address, check with your local post office to determine if PEMMS service is available and specific delivery service standards.

Space Available Mail (SAM) refers to parcels mailed to APO/FPO addresses at parcel post rates first transported domestically by surface, then to overseas destinations by air on a space available basis. The maximum weight and size limits are 15 pounds and 60 inches in length and girth combined. From overseas locations, items mailed at Standard Post rates are sent to CONUS by air on a space available basis. The maximum weight and size limits are 70 pounds and 130 inches in length and girth combined.

It is recommended customers check with local civilian or military post offices for information regarding size restrictions and customs declaration form requirements. Customers are advised mailing restrictions apply and some items cannot be mailed. Examples of non-mailable items are: alcohol, switchblade knives, pornography, controlled substances, and explosive or incendiary devices. If in doubt, contact your local civilian or military post office. As a final note, customers should ensure articles are packaged properly for mailing and packages do not display markings related to any type of hazardous material, such as bleach, alcohol, or cleaning fluids. Parcels found by U.S. Postal Service with such markings or labels on the outside of the box will not be processed. For more information see the Military Postal Service Agency website or the U.S. Postal Service website. <https://www.usps.com/ship/apo-fpo-dpo.htm?pov=international>. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update | November 18, 2016 ++]

Arlington National Cemetery Update 66 ► Capacity Dilemma

After the completion of two current expansion projects, Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) will reach maximum capacity around 2050. And what's being done to address this? Over the last several months, the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery (ACANC), an independent federal advisory committee, has been meeting to discuss ways to extend the active life of the cemetery. The committee developed a letter for Congress discussing several options moving forward. As Congress begins discussions on the fate of the cemetery, MOAA wanted to know what you thought was best. Over 6,800 people took MOAA's survey and the results are summarized in the chart below:



Participants overwhelmingly rejected the idea of restricting retirees, with the majority preferring expansion options as the initial course of action. In fact, most participants favored continued eligibility for retirees, even if that means closing ANC to future burials once it reaches capacity. Based on the results, there's no single dominant reason why individuals choose to be buried at ANC compared to other veteran cemeteries. Of the 47 percent of participants who stated that they planned to be interred or inurned at ANC, the reasons for this choice were evenly split among:

- The Cemetery's Military Connection,
- The Special Nature Of The Location,
- The Rites And Ceremonies Performed At Anc, And
- Other Reasons

This response is significant, because it illustrates just how difficult it would be to create an analogous cemetery option if Congress decides to restrict eligibility. As discussions on the future of ANC proceed, MOAA urges Congress to keep in mind these results and the importance of acknowledging needs of retirees who have already made plans vs those who may die a century or more from now. [Source: MOAA Leg Up | November 2016 ++]

TRICARE Regions Update 03 ► GAO Denies Reduction Protests | 3 to 2

A plan to consolidate Tricare's three regions into two is set to go ahead after the Government Accountability Office on 10 NOV announced it denied a series of protests to the contract. "In denying the protests, GAO concluded that the agency's evaluation was reasonable, consistent with the terms of the solicitation, and in accordance with procurement laws and regulations," Ralph White, the office's managing associate general counsel for procurement law, said in a statement. The two five-year contracts, known simply as "T2017," are worth over \$58 billion and were awarded in July to the insurers Humana and HealthNet. Nine protests were filed against that decision, and all were denied Nov. 9 by the GAO. Although further legal action in the Court of Federal Claims is possible, it's expected the new contracts will now go forward as planned.

Under the new plan, Tricare's current three regions -- South, North and West -- will be consolidated into two regions, East and West. Humana will manage the East region, while HealthNet will manage the West region. About 9.2 million beneficiaries are enrolled in the military's Tricare health care system. Coverage rules are set by law and don't depend on which contractor is administering the system. Contractors are responsible for processing claims, providing customer support, managing referrals and establishing and maintaining provider networks, among other tasks.

- The new East region will include the District of Columbia; Alabama; Arkansas; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Illinois; Indiana; the Rock Island Arsenal area of Iowa; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Mississippi; the St. Louis, Missouri, area; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New York; North Carolina; Ohio; Oklahoma; Pennsylvania; Rhode Island; South Carolina; Tennessee; most of Texas; Vermont; Virginia; West Virginia and Wisconsin.
- The new West region will include Alaska; Arizona; California; Colorado; Hawaii; Idaho; all of Iowa except the Rock Island Arsenal area; Kansas; Minnesota; all of Missouri except the St. Louis area; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Mexico; North Dakota; Oregon; South Dakota; west Texas; Utah; Washington and Wyoming.

Tricare officials said the new contracts improve efficiency within the system. "In designing the T2017 contracts, we retained the best parts of prior contracts and incorporated new best practices to improve access, quality and safety," Dr. Karen S. Guice, acting assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, said in a statement. "We've added new controls to provide a more seamless transition to the new contracts. We'll work very closely with our new partners to test their systems and ensure a smooth handoff of care for all of our beneficiaries." The new contracts will likely start in late summer of 2017, although no official start date has been announced. The decision comes on the heels of two other major Tricare decisions. A dental contractor swap is set to take place on May 1, 2017, while a decision to remove CVS from the system's retail pharmacy network goes into effect 1 DEC. [Source: Military.com | Amy Bushatz | November 15, 2016 ++]

NDAA 2017 Update 21 ► Progress, But No Final Agreement

Congressional negotiators finalizing the annual defense policy bill have agreed to add about \$9 billion to the Pentagon's budget request to fund the wars and fill readiness shortfalls, according to a report published 16 NOV. Such a deal would mean armed services committee leaders from both chambers had vaulted a key hurdle for wrapping up the fiscal 2017 National Defense Authorization Act and bringing it to a vote in both chambers. Politico, citing a source directly involved in the negotiations, posted its report on Wednesday evening. [i.e. **Politico** is an American political-journalism organization that covers politics and policy in the United States and internationally. It distributes content via television, the Internet, The Politico newspaper, radio, and podcasts. Its coverage in Washington, D.C., includes the U.S. Congress, lobbying, media and the presidency].

The negotiations, while underway, are highly sensitive and customarily secretive, and Defense News could not independently confirm Politico's report.

- While one House Armed Services Committee aide, when pressed, would not deny the report, three other sources said the news was premature. "The Politico story is inaccurate," said Chip Unruh, a spokesman for the Senate Armed Services Committee's top Democrat. "There has been progress, but no final agreement. They are continuing to work on a bipartisan basis."
- The spokesman for House Armed Services Committee Democrats said: "It is premature to say there is any agreement at this time. We have more to settle and every issue is open until we can close it all."
- A source familiar with conference proceedings said, "Reports of a final deal are premature. The conferees are still working to finalize the conference report, which they hope to accomplish as soon as possible."

The deal, as reported by Politico, reportedly included extra money to halt the drawdown of soldiers, Marines and airmen and fully fund the military pay raise. But it would not include the additional F-35s, F/A-18s and extra littoral combat ship that were included in the House version of the annual defense policy bill. The House and Senate versions were \$18 billion apart after the House added that amount to the \$610 billion Pentagon request, but the Senate did not. Armed services committee leaders reportedly agreed to split the difference at \$9 billion above the Pentagon's request and the final bill will include additional money at roughly that same level.

The bill would stop the Pentagon's proposed drawdown of 15,000 soldiers, 2,000 Marines and about 4,000 airmen for fiscal 2017, with additional support dollars included, Politico reported. "The decision to stop the proposed troop drawdown was also tied to the fact that President-elect Donald Trump has called for higher end strength numbers," the source told Politico. The agreement incorporates the additional \$5.8 billion war funding request that was submitted by the White House last week, Politico reported. That money will help fund the war in Afghanistan and the US-led air campaign against the Islamic State through the end of the fiscal year. The deal was reportedly agreed upon by the "Big Four," House Armed Services Chairman Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, Senate Armed Services Chairman John McCain (R-AZ) and ranking Democrats Rep. Adam Smith (WA) Washington state, and Sen. Jack Reed (RI).. The Democratic sign-off signals that the deal is likely to attract bipartisan support, and a presidential veto is unlikely unless there are controversial policy provisions remaining in the final version of the legislation, the report said.

McCain on 16 NOV declined to discuss the negotiations in detail with reporters but said he hoped a final bill would be complete before the Thanksgiving recess. A day earlier, he said neither the policy questions were resolved nor the funding. The House NDAA contained controversial policy provisions that if kept threaten to derail the bill, and Thornberry told Defense News on 14 NOV that lawmakers are reassessing such provisions in light of the incoming administration.

"House and Senate negotiators putting the finishing touches on the new defense policy bill are ditching the controversial riders that could draw a presidential veto. The final version of the National Defense Authorization Act will not include provisions dealing with the greater sage grouse or workplace protections based on sexual orientation, according to sources familiar with the negotiations. "The provisions were two of the major sticking points between the House and Senate versions of the bill and were part of the reason Armed Services leaders were

unable to strike an accord in September. Committee aides and leaders cautioned that nothing was officially finalized until the entire bill was completed. But one House Armed Services member said they've been told negotiations on issues where the two chambers differed are all wrapped up. 'It's done,' the lawmaker said. 'There's no more negotiations, even on the small stuff.'" As a result it is possible that passage could be before Christmas. [Source: Defense News & NAUS Weekly Update | Joe Gould | November 16 & 18, 2016 ++]

Transition Assistance Program Update 02 ► Progress Report

On 21 NOV five years ago today, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which brought about major changes to help transitioning Servicemembers acquire the training and skills they need to seamlessly integrate into the civilian economy. On the fifth anniversary of the signing of the law, we pause to reflect on the progress the administration has made to promote the economic opportunity of our Servicemembers and Veterans.

In 2011, faced with Veteran unemployment rates that remained high following the Great Recession and a national need for more entrepreneurs and skilled workers, the president signed the VOW Act, which mandated that the Department of Labor (DOL) study the skills that Service members learn in the military and improve the translation of those skills into civilian-sector certifications. The act also authorized VA to provide eligible Veterans with up to one year of additional Montgomery GI Bill benefits, to extend vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits for 12 months for eligible Veterans, and to expand the Special Incentive Program to employers who hire and provide on-the-job training for eligible Veterans.

At the same time, the administration brought together a diverse group of government partners charged with redesigning the decades old Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to ensure separating Servicemembers are prepared for educational advancement and meaningful career opportunities after transitioning into civilian life. Together, the Departments of Defense (DoD), Education, Labor and VA, as well as the Office of Personnel Management and the Small Business Administration, and others, oversaw the creation and implementation of a framework to instruct, gauge and enhance Servicemember career readiness through the redesigned TAP. "For many Servicemembers, TAP is the first encounter they will have with VA," said Curtis L. Coy, VA's Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity. The interagency collaboration improved communication on the topic; better leveraged federal tools, processes and limited resources; and resulted in several enhancements to the transition process, including the following:

- A redesigned curriculum that is mandatory for all separating Servicemembers and available to all military spouses
- Additional "career tracks" for those wanting to start a business, seeking job-ready skills and those pursuing higher education
- Smaller class sizes to provide individual attention
- Individual transition plans that are customized to each Servicemember's personal goals
- Completion based on achieving career readiness standards, not simply attendance

The program concludes with a capstone event, verifying that each Servicemember has met career readiness standards and has an actionable individual transition plan. The enhanced TAP also equips Servicemembers with skills and resources to cope with the stress of separating from the military; how to identify and promote translatable employment skills, training and pre-transition activities to help them obtain meaningful civilian employment; and information on how to capitalize on all the VA benefits earned through their military service. An additional congressional authority called SkillBridge complements TAP by allowing eligible Servicemembers to obtain civilian job skills training from employers beginning up to six months prior to separating from the military.

To further improve transition, an online curriculum was made available to Service members, Veterans, and their families. Participants can access the courses and review the training at their preferred pace. Veterans who transitioned before the enactment of the redesigned TAP can also take advantage of this online curriculum at any time. This curriculum is available at <http://jko.jten.mil/courses/tap/TGPS%20Standalone%20Training/start.html>. Since the implementation of the VOW Act:

- More than 1 million Servicemembers have transitioned into civilian life
- The unemployment rate for Veterans has been reduced by more than half, falling from a high of 9.9 percent in 2011 to 4.3 percent today. In addition, the Post-9/11 Veterans unemployment rate is 4.7 percent today, down from a high of 15.2 in 2011.
- VA has deployed more than 300 benefit advisors worldwide to provide information on the benefits and services VA provides

Every year, roughly 200,000 Servicemembers separate, retire or are released from active duty, and we are excited about the progress that has been made in preparing them for success. Moving forward, the agencies will continue to work to ensure Servicemembers, Veterans and their family members are provided the opportunity to fulfill the American dream

- To learn more about DoD's curriculum and transition resources, visit: <https://www.dodtap.mil>.
- To learn more about VA support under TAP, visit: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/tap>.
- To learn more about DOL's employment resources for Veterans and more than 2,400 local American Job Centers across the country offering in-person assistance, visit: <http://veterans.gov>.
- To learn more about OPM's resources supporting the employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, visit Feds Hire Vets: <https://www.fedshirevets.gov>.
- To learn more about the federal government's Council on Veterans Employment efforts to assist Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers, and their families with federal careers, visit Feds Hire Vets, the federal government's one-stop resource for federal employment information at: www.fedshirevets.gov.

[Source: VAntage Point | November 21, 2016 ++]

350 Ship Fleet ► Primer On The U.S. Navy Today.

During his campaign, President-elect Donald Trump promised to increase the size of the U.S. Navy to 350 ships. Since the election, senior campaign advisors Alexander Gray and Peter Navarro have laid out what they say his Asia-Pacific strategy will be, a cornerstone of which is the 350-ship fleet. The Navy's current 30-year shipbuilding plan is designed to grow to a 308-ship fleet, though it doesn't achieve this goal until the 2020's and projects that fleet size will drop back below that level for the last 20 years of the plan. Further, even this current plan faces strong challenges.

As essays appear advocating visions for what Trump's promised 350-ship fleet should look like, Franz-Stefan Gady recently posed strategic questions about what the Navy should be used for and how many ships it really needs. But to evaluate the coming debate over growing the fleet, it helps to have a baseline understanding of how big the U.S. Navy is today, where it is, what it does, and what it is for. What follows is meant to help orient readers along these lines.



How Many Ships and Where? To Have One, You Need Three

There are 272 ships in the United States Navy today. That includes: ten (soon eleven) aircraft carriers, 52 attack submarines capable of hunting enemy ships and submarines as well as launching missile attacks against land targets; 14 ballistic missile submarines for nuclear deterrence; 85 major surface combatants (cruisers and destroyers) capable of air defense, anti-submarine, anti-ship, and land attack, with some capable of providing defense against nuclear ballistic missiles; 8 small surface combatants, the Littoral Combat Ship, with modular mission packages; 31 amphibious ships capable of landing marines to assault beaches.

Normally, about 20 percent of the fleet is deployed at any given time conducting operations around the world. Another third is usually at-sea conducting training in preparation for deployment. And roughly another third is in concentrated maintenance and repair periods that preclude these ships from being able to deploy. The remaining ships are at, or close-to, deployment-ready on a moment's notice.

Even though the U.S. Navy is expert at refueling and resupplying its warships at sea, without having to pull into a port, ships cannot stay at sea indefinitely. They regularly require repairs and upgrades, and crews inevitably become fatigued (and have homes and families to return to) and periodically require retraining to remain a cohesive and effective team. Practically, this means that for every ship "on station" somewhere in the world, you need two more back home to maintain that presence: the one on deployment, one undergoing repairs, and one in training to take the place of the deployed ship when it returns home to get its own repairs. That repair-train-deploy cycle is currently about 18 months, which includes a seven month deployment overseas.

What is the Mission? Presence, Deterrence, Sea Control, and Power Projection

The stated mission for all these ships is "winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas." The Navy's mission, as an organization, is to "maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces" capable of doing those things. That distinction is important. In the United States the military branches are "force providers" and not "warfighters." The Navy maintains the fleet, which is then parsed out to the geographic Combatant Commanders (divided into the Pacific, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and North and South America), who are responsible for using those forces to achieve the missions assigned to them by the Secretary of Defense and the President. The Combatant Commanders' demand for warships is high. In 2014, the Chief of Naval Operations testified to Congress that the Navy would need 450 ships to actually fill every commander's request for forces.

Naval forces provide the Combatant Commanders with four traditional core capabilities (sometimes called missions or essential functions) -- Deterrence, Presence, Sea Control, and Power Projection. Since they were first formally laid out by the President of the Naval War College in 1974 some of the wording and emphasis has evolved; for example, an initial focus on strategic or nuclear deterrence was broadened to include conventional deterrence. Two new missions/capabilities/functions were later added, Maritime Security and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief. Humanitarian Assistance was later re-categorized, Presence is sometimes dropped, and All Domain Access currently appears in its stead, but the original four 'high end' capabilities remain the basis for U.S. naval doctrine:

- Deterrence includes both credible, persistent conventional naval forces to dissuade adversaries from initiating hostilities, and the secure second-strike nuclear capability provided by U.S. ballistic missile submarines.
- Presence is a more nuanced, and less necessarily coercive upgrade to the idea of “gunboat diplomacy.” As first explained in 1974, it is “the use of naval forces, short of war, to achieve political objectives” and can provide ally reassurance, demonstrate resolve to an adversary, or dampen an emerging crisis.
- Sea Control is perhaps the most traditional naval mission; ensuring freedom of action for friendly forces in the maritime environment, either through deterrence, or the actual destruction of adversary forces that threaten them (i.e. sinking the enemy fleet). In the face of opposition, Sea Control enables all the other core capabilities.
- Power Projection is simply the delivery of destructive force from the sea against targets on land. Freed from the diplomatic, geographic, and military hurdles faced by armies and ground-based airpower, the Navy can use carrier-based aircraft to drop bombs and launch missiles, land Marines from its amphibious ships, or use naval cannon and missiles to bombard the shore.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Navy’s primary combat mission has been Power Projection, especially through carrier air power and the Tomahawk cruise missile. The Tomahawk gives ships and submarines the ability to precisely hit targets with a 1000-pound warhead at ranges of approximately 1000 miles, without having to risk a pilot flying overhead to drop a bomb. The public first saw these new weapons on display during the first Gulf War in 1991 and the Navy has launched over 2,000 Tomahawks since (about 1,500 were used in operations against Iraq).

With the demise of the Soviet Union, U.S. Sea Control capabilities withered. Starting in the late 1990’s, new surface ships were constructed without a long-range anti-ship cruise missile. The Harpoon missile carried by older cruisers and destroyers is itself a 40-year old design. The rapidly expanding Chinese fleet, armed with advanced anti-ship cruise missiles that are faster and have greater range than the U.S. Harpoon, has generated renewed focus on the Sea Control mission and development of new concepts and improved technologies.

Why do we Need a Navy? Solving ‘the Tyranny of Distance’

The bulk of the U.S. Navy is based on the east and west coasts, but the regions it patrols most heavily are across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It takes 10 days to get from the main east coast base in Virginia to the Strait of Gibraltar and another two weeks to reach the Arabian Gulf without stopping. It takes a week to get from the major west coast base in California to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (itself a base for cruisers, destroyers, and submarines), and another two weeks to reach Japan. Because of these great distances, the U.S. keeps Forward Deployed Naval Forces (FDNF) hosted in allied foreign countries. It is much easier to maintain a substantial force in strategically important regions if those forces reside permanently in those regions. There they deter aggression, maintain stability, engage and train with partner and ally nations, and are positioned to respond rapidly to emerging crises and provide time for reinforcements to arrive from the United States.

The bulk of FDNF are in Japan, where the U.S. maintains a nuclear aircraft carrier, eleven major surface combatants, and four amphibious ships. Though not an ally, the U.S. plans to keep four smaller surface combatants based rotationally in Singapore, where the U.S. Navy also has a major logistics hub. The other major concentration of FDNF are in Rota, Spain, near the Strait of Gibraltar. The four destroyers based there are part of the U.S. contribution to ballistic missile defense for Europe and to ensure forces are available to respond to crises in Europe, northern Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean.

The U.S. Navy possesses diverse combat capabilities to achieve a variety of missions for the United States, distributed geographically to ensure stability in key regions and respond rapidly to any crisis that cannot be prevented. The Navy’s own analysis has determined that it will need a larger fleet to continue to meet the operational demands placed on it, but it has not yet requested the 350-ship fleet proposed by the incoming administration. In Part II, I will examine some of the risks and challenges such a fleet expansion might face.
 [Source: The Diplomat | Steven Stashwick | November 18, 2016 ++]

DoD Appropriations Act Update 01 ► Idiot Short Term Plan Proposed

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain blasted congressional leaders as “idiots” for their decision to pursue a short-term budget plan instead of yearlong appropriations bills, saying the move will harm national security. “I think it’s one of the worst mistakes we could ever make,” the Arizona Republican said Thursday. “The president-elect of the United States has said over and over we need to spend more money on defense, to build up our Army, Navy, Air Force. But what we’re going to do is in effect cut \$12 billion.” McCain said military readiness will suffer “if these idiots say they want to go through with a continuing resolution,” a measure used to extend current government spending levels for a fixed and often brief duration. Earlier in the day, House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers announced Republican leaders in both congressional chambers made the decision not to move forward with any long-term spending bills for the rest of this year, because that could restrict funding plans for President-elect Donald Trump’s new administration. Instead, lawmakers plan to pass a budget bill extending fiscal 2016 levels until April 2017, halfway through the new fiscal year. To view the original proposed bill for 2017 refer to <http://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hrpt-114-hr-fy2017-defense.pdf>. [Source: Military Times | Leo Shane | November 17, 2016 ++]



DoD Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 30 NOV 2016

US Embassy, RP -- A former U.S. naval attache to the U.S. embassy in the Philippines has admitted to securing illegal diplomatic clearances for a Malaysian defense contractor in exchange for luxury trips and the services of prostitutes. Retired Navy Capt. Michael Brooks, 57, pleaded guilty 15 NOV in federal court in San Diego to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery for helping Leonard Francis in one of the Navy's worst scandals. Neither Brooks nor his lawyer could be reached for comment. According to the plea agreement, Brooks secured quarterly diplomatic clearances for the vessels of Francis' Glenn Defense Marine Asia to travel freely in and out of the Philippines. Brooks also submitted official U.S. Navy documents that Francis ghost wrote and provided the company Navy ship schedules and the billing information of competitors. [Source: The Associated Press | November 15, 2016 ++]

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Louisiana NG -- A former sergeant major in the Louisiana Army National Guard has been indicted on federal fraud charges after U.S. attorneys say he lied on several official forms to gain supplemental pay from the federal government. **Randy M. Kiley** Sr., 63, of Slidell was formally charged (Nov. 10 with two counts of wire fraud and two counts of making false statements, according to U.S. Attorney Kenneth A. Polite's office. Kiley served as an Active Guard Reserve soldier in the Louisiana National Guard for 35 years, spending his last years of duty assigned to Jackson Barracks, the indictment shows. He retired in July 2014 as a Sergeant Major, the second-highest rank

achievable by a non-commissioned officer. Kiley is accused of lying about his marital status to receive increased Basic Allowance for Housing and Family Separation Allowance pay.

Court documents show that after Kiley and his wife divorced around July 2005, Kiley failed to make the required notification to National Guard officials. The indictment alleges that instead, between July 2005 and July 2014, Kiley submitted four forms on which he lied about his marital status to receive additional money from the U.S. Department of Defense. He falsely listed his marital status as "married" on two forms requesting Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), a type of supplemental pay available to eligible active-duty service members, court documents show. Active Guard Reserve soldiers with qualifying dependents, which can include a soldier's spouse and minor children, receive more BAH pay. However, soldiers cannot request additional BAH for former spouses, children over 21, or children ages 18 to 21 who are enlisted in the military, according to court records.

In December 2008, Kiley's youngest child turned 18 and enlisted in the National Guard, the indictment shows. From July 2005 through July 2014, Kiley continued to receive a BAH pay at a rate higher than he was entitled due to his false statements, according to court records. Kiley also falsely certified that he was "not divorced or legally separated" from his spouse on two forms requesting Family Separation Allowance (FSA) pay, the indictment alleges. The National Guard pays FSA to soldiers required by the military to travel away from their homes and dependent family members for more than 30 consecutive days. Soldiers are not eligible for FSA for children over 21, for children 18-21 enlisted in the military, or for children under 21 who do not live with them for at least 14 days per month.

In July 2005, Kiley's ex-wife received sole custody of the couple's two children, the indictment shows. According to the indictment, Kiley was deployed by the National Guard and received FSA pay to which he was not entitled during the following: August 2005 to June 2006, from April 2008 to April 2009, and for all but a few days of 2013. If convicted, Kiley faces up to 20 years in prison and up to a \$250,000 fine, Polite's office said. He could also receive up to five years of supervised release following any prison term. [Source: The Times-Picayune | Laura McKnight | November 14, 2016 ++]

o-o-O-o-o

Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan -- A Benjamin Guidry of North Dakota has been convicted of government property theft in connection with the illegal acquisition of copper wire from Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. A jury trial demonstrated that Guidry, while working for an Afghan company, solicited civilian contractors to obtain materials for him for cash. The contractors reported him to the U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Command at Kandahar Airfield, who set up a sting operation offering \$54,000 in stolen spools of copper wire he purchased for \$4,000 before being apprehended. Sentencing has been set for March 20, 2017. [Source: FederalTimes | Tony Ware | November 28, 2016 ++]

Trees for Troops ► Free Christmas Trees for Military Families

Once again, the Christmas Spirit Foundation is offering free Christmas trees for military members and their families at selected locations across the country. With generous support from FedEx, the Trees for Troops program will deliver more than 18,000 donated trees, which are distributed on various dates from 30 November 2016 to 9 December 2016. This is the 12th year for the Trees for Troops program. Tree farmers across America donate trees, which are delivered to bases during the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

How It Works

Every base is a little different. There may be eligibility restrictions. For example, at Fort Lewis, the trees are available to families whose sponsor is rank E-5 and below. Also, there may be some sort of pre-registration or voucher system at your location. For example, Fort Bragg gives out vouchers before the event on a first come, first

served basis. Some bases do the tree distribution as part of an overall holiday event, such as Scott Air Force Base's holiday party and tree lighting event.

Want To Get A Tree?

First, check the list to see if your installation is receiving trees. This can be determined by going to <http://www.treesfortroops.org/Portals/23/Files/2016T4TBase%20Deliverydate.pdf?ver=2016-11-10-165943-267>. Then, check the communication channels for your base to see if you qualify and if you need to take action before the delivery date. Facebook to be very helpful for this. If you go to your installation's Facebook page, and use the search function to search for "trees," it will show you if your installation has advertised the Trees for Troops program via Facebook. If you can't find the information you need there, on the base webpage, or newspaper. You might also try calling your family service center (Fleet and Family Readiness Center, Airman and Family Readiness Center, Army Community Service, or Marine Corps Community Service) for more information. Even if they're not running the program, they probably know who is.

Support The Program

You can help make the Trees for Troops even better by donating to the program and/or purchasing fresh trees at one of close to 50 Christmas tree retail locations nationally during Trees for Troops weekend, DEC 2-4. Donated trees will be added to the program's planned deliveries to U.S. bases during 2016. More information on how to get involved can be found at www.treesfortroops.org.

[Source NCOAdvocate | Kate Horrell | November 21, 2016 ++]

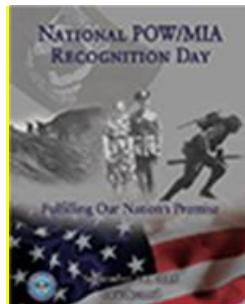
POW/MIA Recoveries ► Reported 16 thru 30 NOV 2016 | Seven

"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,515) Korean War (7,841), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,627), 1991 Gulf War (5), and Libya (1). 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 personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil/> and click on 'Our Missing'. 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 remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

None

Korea

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains and burial updates of four U.S. servicemen who had been previously listed as missing in action from Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Robert R. Cummings**, of Schoolcraft, Mich., was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry Regimental Combat Team, when his unit was attacked by an estimated 200,000 Chinese soldiers near the Yalu River in North Korea. He would be declared missing in action on Nov. 29, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read more at

<http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1007708/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-identified-cummings>.

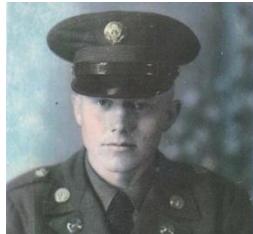
-- **Army Pfc. Daniel Hunt**, 18, of Columbiaville, Mich., will be buried Dec. 2 in Phoenix, Ariz. On Sept. 28, 1951, Hunt was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting in Korean border area often referred to as Heartbreak Ridge. Hunt was reported missing in action after a series of battles. Read more at

<http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1011148/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-hunt/>.



Daniel Hunt

-- **Army Cpl. Vernon D. Presswood**, 19, will be buried Dec. 3 in his hometown of Pinckneyville, Ill. In late November 1950, Hendrickson was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, which was assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team and deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was engaged by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Presswood was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1011150/soldier-killed-in-korean-war-accounted-for-presswood> .



Vernon D. Presswood

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Harold P. Haugland**, of Gallatin, Mont. In late November 1950, Haugland was a member of Company D, 15th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, which was assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team and deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was engaged by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Haugland was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read more at

<http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1008321/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-identified-haugland>.

World War II

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains and burial updates three U.S. servicemen who had been previously listed as missing in action from World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Robert E. Moessner**. On April 18, 1944, Moessner was the bombardier of a B-24 aircraft out of Kwelin, China, when it was shot down near Hong Kong. Of the 12 crewmembers aboard, only two would survive the crash landing in shallow water. Interment services are pending. Read more at
<http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1010134/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-identified-moessner/>.

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Wilbur C. Mattern**, 23, of Oelwein, Iowa, will be buried Nov. 21, in Arlington National Cemetery. In November 1943, Mattern was assigned to Company M, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. After several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Mattern died on the second day of the battle, Nov. 21, 1943. Read more at

<http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1004088/marine-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-mattern>.



Mattern

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Frederick W. Langhorst**, 24, of Yonkers, New York, will be buried Nov. 26 in Battle Creek, Michigan. On July 17, 1945, Langhorst was assigned to the 1330 Army Air Force Base Unit, Air Transport Command, and was the co-pilot of a C-109 aircraft with three other crew members on a routine cargo transport

mission from Jorhat, India, to Hsinching, China, when it crashed in a remote area. An extensive search of the area failed to identify the crash site and the crew was declared deceased on July 18, 1946, and their remains designated non-recoverable. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1008332/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-langhorst>.



Langhorst

[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | November 30, 2016 ++]

* VA *



VA Secretary Update 49 ► Rep. Jeff Miller Would Consider the Position

The outgoing chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), says he's open to serving as President-elect Donald Trump's VA secretary if asked. Miller, who has been mentioned frequently as a possible pick by Trump to lead the VA, said in an interview that "if a president-elect asks you to be a part of his team, you have to look at that very seriously." "I'm just saying I would look at it very seriously," Miller told POLITICO in an interview. "I mean, that would be a discussion that anybody would have with the next commander-in-chief." Miller, who is retiring from Congress at the end of the year, was an early supporter of Trump. He helped craft his 10-point veterans plan and introduced him at a veterans policy speech this summer.



Rep. Jeff Miller

But while Miller wouldn't rule out taking a job in the Trump administration, he stressed that talk of him leading the VA was "organic" and he hadn't spoken to Trump or his transition team about it. "I will help Mr. Trump in any way that he sees...a way for me to help," Miller said. "I have not been contacted. To my knowledge I haven't been vetted." Miller, who has been highly critical of the VA's delivery of health services and attempts to hold employees accountable for poor performance, called Trump's election "a once in a lifetime opportunity" to reform the massive bureaucracy. "There are so many things that need to change at the department that people have been resistant to because it's the way it's always been done," Miller said. "Donald Trump comes with a totally clean slate, not bound by any preconceived notions as to what works, what doesn't work."

In response to the 2014 scandal over wait times to see VA doctors and specialists, which resulted in the resignation of then-Sec. Eric Shinseki, Miller negotiated — along with his Senate counterpart Bernie Sanders (I-VT) — a \$10 billion emergency funding package to allow veterans facing lengthy delays for medical appointments or who live long distances from a VA facility to obtain private healthcare services. Miller has proposed expanding that initiative, known as the Choice Program, so that any veteran can seek medical treatment outside the VA health system. Trump included an expansion of medical choice in his July plan. "Under a Trump Administration, no veteran will die waiting for service," Trump's plan promised. [Source: POLITICO | Connor O'Brien | November 16, 2016 ++]

VA Reform Update 05 ► Eliminate Free Medical Care Proposal

A health policy expert at the libertarian Cato Institute is offering a radical idea to help reform the Department of Veterans Affairs and prevent future wars at the same time: Make troops and veterans pay for their own medical insurance. In an online essay last week, institute Director of Health Policy Studies Michael Cannon recommends dropping the idea of free health care for veterans and instead offering better pay for current troops and vouchers for current veterans to buy their own coverage on the open market. He also calls for privatizing the Veterans Health Administration -- something the major veterans groups have all argued against -- with shares of the new publicly-run company to be given to veterans and servicemembers based on time in service. "Privatization would improve the quality of veterans' benefits immeasurably," he wrote. "The federal government promises veterans' benefits to military personnel once they leave active duty. Only it's not an explicit promise. And Congress doesn't fund it. "As a result, Congress can -- and does -- renege on that commitment."

Cannon also argues that since the government would have to front the costs for insurance stipends and vouchers, it would also make the costs of war clearer before the first shots are fired. "Veterans benefits are one of the largest financial costs of any armed conflict," he wrote. "Yet Congress does not pre-fund those obligations. It only funds them once they come due. "(In the event of war), the added risk of deaths and injuries would cause premiums to rise, which would increase the amount of added pay Congress must provide each service member. The result is that future Congresses and presidents would have to confront this enormous cost of war at the moment they decide to send U.S. troops off to war, and every day they decide to keep them there."

The idea is as radical as it is theoretical. While Republicans including President-elect Donald Trump have argued in favor of expanding private care options for veterans, none have offered plans to completely dismantle veterans benefits and hospital management. Meanwhile, Democrats and veterans groups have warned against even small steps towards privatization of VA functions, arguing that many outside hospitals and physicians lack the expertise or motivation to handle the most difficult service-connected injuries. But Cannon argued that without radical changes, any reform effort is doomed. "If Trump retains the VA's basic structure, he will join a long line of presidents who have failed our nation's veterans," he wrote. [Source: Military Times | Leo Shane | November 26, 2016 ++]

myVA311 ► One Place to Call for Everything | 1-844-698-2311

When VA Secretary Bob McDonald first started evaluating business and customer service practices across VA to improve the Veteran experience, the need for a revamped phone system was clear. Instead of navigating dozens of automated phone trees with no guarantee of success, Veterans needed one place to call to get connected to the right place quickly. VA is introducing 1-844-MyVA311 (1-844-698-2311) as a go-to source for Veterans and their families who don't know what number to call. This new national toll-free number will help eliminate the feeling of frustration and confusion that Veterans and their families have expressed when navigating the 1000-plus phone numbers that currently exist.

With 1-844-MyVA311, Veterans, families, and caregivers can access information about VA services like disability, pension, healthcare eligibility, enrollment, and burial benefits, in addition to a self-service locator to find the nearest VA facility. And if they're looking for immediate assistance with housing or are having a mental health crisis, MyVA311 will route callers to the Homeless Veteran help line and the Veterans Crisis Line. If you know what number you're calling – keep calling it. None of the existing VA numbers will go away. The future vision is that 1-844-MyVA311 will become a 24/7 one-stop information service platform for all VA services.

Veteran feedback has been instrumental helping us streamline the way we get callers routed to the right place at VA. VA is also making improvements to the overall Veteran experience eliminating blocked calls and hiring more people to reduce wait times. We will continue to gather feedback from our Veterans to ensure VA is meeting their needs. The new MyVA311 phone number is just one step in a larger effort to modernize VA contact centers so Veterans have a seamless, positive experience when reaching out VA. In the coming months, we will be sharing more on additional steps as we continue to improve the Veterans experience. [Source: VAntage Point | November 14, 2016 ++]

PTSD Update 223 ► How VA Handles Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Claims

Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a condition that's both underestimated and misunderstood, especially when it comes to the Veterans Association. PTSD is actually a common condition. The Mayo Clinic estimates that more than 3 million Americans are diagnosed with PTSD every year — and that doesn't take into account those individuals who never receive a diagnosis. PTSD develops when an individual has witnessed or experienced a traumatic or terrifying event. Unsurprisingly, it's a condition that's particularly prevalent among veterans. Although the VA estimates that 10-15% of veterans will develop PTSD at some point following their military service, it's entirely possible these numbers might actually be much higher in reality.

PTSD is classified as a trauma and stressor-related disorder. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the condition is characterized as a repetitive re-experiencing of an extremely traumatic event (or stressor), usually accompanied by increased arousal, nightmares, and flashbacks. Those who have PTSD often have trouble concentrating, remembering, and sleeping. But a PTSD diagnosis is not always easy to come by. The manifestation of the condition is not always straight-forward and doesn't appear in the same way from person to person. It may take months or even years to develop, and symptoms may shift or appear over time. To diagnose a case of PTSD, physicians will look at specific criteria for symptoms. There are four distinct groups of criteria, all with different symptoms. These groups are:

- **Intrusion Symptoms**—Nightmares, intrusive memories or thoughts, or psychological and physical reactions to memories of the event.

- **Avoidance Symptoms**—Avoiding situations, thoughts, or feelings that you associate with the traumatic event.
- **Negative Changes in Cognitions and Mood**—Memory issues, negative thoughts about themselves or others, severe emotions like shame or sadness, lack of interest in activities they once enjoyed, or feelings of detachment, isolation, or disconnection.
- **Changes in Arousal and Reactivity**—An easy startle response, or feeling constantly jittery or alert.

It's easy to see how these symptoms could easily disrupt a person's life and take a significant toll on their mental health, as well as their personal and professional life. If you or someone you love may be suffering from PTSD, it's important to seek out help. Because PTSD presents itself differently in every patient, treatment must be sought and tailor-made for each individual. Although there is no cure for PTSD, treatment has proven to be very effective for the majority of patients. Typically, this treatment includes psychotherapy — including cognitive and exposure therapy, as well as regular appointments with a psychiatrist — and in some cases, medication.

If you are a veteran who has been diagnosed with PTSD, you may be entitled to receive benefits and compensation from the VA. There are many things that you need to know to get the benefits that you deserve, and the veterans advocates at Hill & Ponton have published a PTSD guide covering everything regarding a PTSD claim at <https://www.hillandponton.com/introduction-ptsd-guide>. In years past, veterans were required to provide evidence of the traumatic event that led to the development of their condition. Below are some of the important points in the guide on how to establish service connection and get the proper rating.

The first thing is to establish a service connection for your PTSD in order to be eligible for benefits. The three things the VA requires are:

- **Current Diagnosis:** you must have a current PTSD diagnosis that was given by professionals who the VA has deemed "qualified to perform PTSD Compensation and Pension examinations." These professionals have doctoral-level training in diagnostic methods, clinical interview methods, and psychopathology. They also need to have a working knowledge of the DSM-V and have extensive clinical experience with both the diagnosis and treatment in veterans with PTSD. Typically, these are board-certified psychiatrists and licensed psychologists, but may also include psychiatric residents and psychology interns as long as they're under close supervision of an attending professional in the field. Essentially, if you've received a current PTSD diagnosis from a licensed professional, that analysis satisfies this requirement. Please note: most VA hospitals and clinics employ licensed mental health social workers to treat veterans. Their diagnosis of PTSD alone is not enough to meet this requirement.
- **In-Service Stressor:** This might be the most difficult requirement to satisfy. Sometimes, trauma is easy to determine, but other times, proving its occurrence can be challenging. There are a lot of different regulations regarding the type of trauma you experienced. For example, the rules for determining fear of terrorist activity are different from veterans who engaged in combat or sexual trauma. It's recommended that you consult with your psychiatrist or psychologist, as well as a qualified lawyer, to address this requirement.
- **Nexus:** Basically, this is the link between the first two requirements. It's what connects the traumatic event you experienced with your current diagnosis of PTSD. A medical expert is required in order to explain how your symptoms are a direct result of your in-service stressor — which is especially important if you have multiple stressors. It's vital you establish that the traumatic event is the definitive link to your diagnosis and cannot be explained by any other events that took place outside of your military service.

Once these requirements have been satisfied, you can then file a claim through the VA. If you file a claim, you'll need to undergo a Compensation and Pension Examination (sometimes called a C&P Exam) to verify your diagnoses, assess symptom severity, and definitively determine whether your PTSD is directly related to your military service. The VA treats the C&P exam with a lot of weight and it will determine the amount of compensation you receive. When you go to your exam, remember to be as honest and as forthcoming as possible. You should bring written statements from family or friends that say how your PTSD has impacted your life. You should also

bring a list of symptoms you've experienced to help you when being questioned during the exam. After the exam, you will be assigned a disability percentage rate. This percentage reflects how severe your condition is and how much the symptoms affect your ability to work and maintain social relationships. Depending on the severity of your PTSD, you could potentially receive a disability rate of 0%, 10%, 30%, 70%, or 100%.

Overall, the compensation you receive will be related to your estimated impairment of working ability. Above all, it's important to demonstrate evidence of occupational impairment due to PTSD. Even if your symptoms don't constitute a 100% disability rating, you may still be able to receive one through a TDIU, which stands for total disability based on individual unemployability. A TDIU may be assigned if an individual fails to meet the criteria for 100% disability but is still completely unable to obtain and maintain employment. Because the way the VA determines disability percentages can be highly confusing and complex, working with a lawyer who specializes in VA claims may be to your benefit. The various rules and regulations for determining physical disability can be hard to navigate, but mental conditions like PTSD can be even more difficult to prove. That's why having an expert on your side can be vital.

If you or someone you love may be suffering from PTSD as a result of military service, seek out assistance from an attorney who specializes in veterans' issues. Alternatively, if you are dissatisfied with a disability rating you have received and aren't receiving the benefits you need, there may be other options at your disposal. [Source: Independent National News for Veterans (VNN) | Matt Hill | November 8, 2016 ++]

Brain Cancer Link to Sarin Update 03 ► Victims Want Justice

Hundreds of veterans with terminal brain cancer and their families were close to being fast-tracked toward millions of dollars in government benefits and compensation -- before a White House decision this fall prevented it. The White House denied a recommendation from the Department of Veterans Affairs that would establish a connection between brain cancer and service in the Persian Gulf War, fast-tracking VA benefits and compensation. As it stands, veterans and families have the burden of proving the connection - a process that can take years and require hundreds of pages of military and medical records. "What it means is years more of struggling," said Ron Brown, president of the National Gulf War Resource Center. "I just find that unacceptable. It's like leaving veterans and their families behind."

Laura Edwards, 54, knows the struggle of trying to obtain VA benefits. After a recent phone conversation with a VA representative, she felt so frazzled she "couldn't remember my own phone number," she said. Her husband, retired U.S. Air Force Sgt. 1st Class David Edwards, died at 53 of glioblastoma -- a form of brain cancer -- in 2013. In the conversation with the VA that November morning, she had attempted to take another small step in a years-long process to prove her husband's brain cancer was a result of his service in the Persian Gulf War. "It's really stressful," she said. "It's a real sappy, horrible day."

In 2015, the VA established a work group to decide whether there was a clear connection between brain cancer and servicemembers in Southwest Asia in 1990 and 1991, when troops were exposed to hazards such as oil-well fires and nerve agents. David Edwards had worked on generators at U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia with the 323rd Civil Engineering Squadron. Her late husband used to talk about the chemical alarms going off at the bases, Laura Edwards said, and he said their superiors told them the alarms were false. Later, studies would show that in some cases wind carried nerve agents from Khamisiyah in southern Iraq, triggering the alarms. Laura Edwards, now living alone in small Warrensburg, Mo., submitted her first claim to the VA in 2014 but it was quickly denied. According to a copy of that denial letter, she didn't provide enough supporting evidence.

She has struggled, even with help from Brown and a local veterans service officer. In the ongoing effort to make her case, Edwards recently arranged the exchange of about 170 pages of medical records. If the VA determines that

Edwards' death stemmed from his service, Laura Edwards would be eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation. Those payments go to survivors of veterans whose deaths resulted from a service-related injury or disease. The current basic monthly payment is set at \$1,254.19, or about \$15,000 annually. For each child under 18, \$310.71 is added to the payment. Brown, a Gulf War veteran, served with three men in the 1st Battalion, 504th Infantry Regiment, who were later diagnosed with brain cancer, he said. As president of the National Gulf War Resource Center, he's heard from spouses, including Edwards, asking for help to qualify for compensation. "It's very hard; there have been a very small number of veterans who have been successful at it," Brown said. "It places an extreme burden on the families."

Brown said he was optimistic this summer, when the VA work group stated that soldiers who served near Khamisiyah were at a higher risk of dying from brain cancer. The group proposed a rule allowing VA employees to automatically presume a connection when faced with a claim for compensation, said Dr. Ralph Erickson, a VA physician who led the effort and a Persian Gulf War veteran. VA Secretary Bob McDonald backed the group's recommendation. But when it was sent to the executive branch for final approval, the VA was told there wasn't enough evidence, Erickson said. "It was felt that at this time the data, the evidence are just not strong enough to really support a presumption," he said. "In the end, the decision was made by the executive branch that we need to do more research."

Before a federal regulation such as this one is established, it has to go through the president's Office of Management and Budget. The office did not respond to requests for comment. "I was disappointed that we didn't get it," McDonald said at a public meeting earlier this month. "I was disappointed that we didn't get it for Gulf War veterans and their families, and I was disappointed because we had a great team of experts who put a tremendous effort together to see if we could put together a case and convince our partners in the White House that we should have a brain cancer presumptive." The work group estimated that if the fast-track process were approved, about 400 veterans or their families would seek treatment and compensation within the first year, Erickson said. Brown, who has worked closely with Erickson throughout the process, said the cost to the government for first year was about \$14 million.

In comparison, the VA adopted a fast-track process in October for veterans who served at Camp Lejeune, N.C., when the base drinking water was contaminated. According to a VA analysis, the cost to the VA will be \$379.8 million in the first year and more than \$2.2 billion total over the next five years. The group's full findings, with detailed cost estimates of a fast-track policy, were put into a report that is going through peer review, Erickson said. He said it would likely be published in the next few months. Erickson reiterated that the cost would not have played into a decision to deny the recommendation. "The reason this didn't make it to completion was the science itself was insufficient," he said. But it's unclear how - or when - more evidence can be found.

The VA has been studying the connection between brain cancer and Persian Gulf War service for over a decade. In March 1991, U.S. forces destroyed chemical munitions at Khamisiyah, releasing nerve agents into the air. It's been reported that servicemembers downwind from the site were at twice the risk of dying from brain cancer than others in the theater. Another study linked exposure to smoke from oil-well fires to a slight increased risk for death from brain cancer. The VA has a 16-member research committee dedicated to illnesses among Persian Gulf War veterans. Just over a year ago, the group voiced concerns about the prevalence of brain cancer. The new analysis built on what's already been found. "We felt like we didn't have a good handle on exactly what the exposures were," Erickson said. "The Gulf War veterans who were in the thick of things would've had a whole variety of exposures." After their recent proposal was denied, Erickson and McDonald said the VA would continue to look for enough evidence to get it passed. Erickson said he couldn't provide a timeline for when the fast-track process could be proposed again.

McDonald spoke earlier this month about working with the National Academy of Medicine to create another work group. The next issue of the academy's "Gulf War and Health" report is planned for 2018, McDonald said, with the thought that getting a study into that publication would help boost the evidence. "There's a mark on the

wall; we would like to get this done before then," McDonald said. "This initial denial doesn't mean that the issue is finished. It just means we have more work to do." McDonald is unlikely to be at the VA to see the goal through. President Barack Obama appointed McDonald in 2014, and as Obama prepares for his exit, the VA chief will likely be replaced soon with a new leader named by President-elect Donald Trump.

In addition to uncertainty because of political change, the science is "limited," Erickson said. This year marked the 25th anniversary of the end of the Persian Gulf War, and not enough data on environmental hazards were collected at the time of the conflict. "One of the biggest challenges we have - the daily challenge I have - is oftentimes we've gone to war, and yet we have not measured things very well," Erickson said. "Our attention is drawn to fighting battles and being able to win those battles. We don't always have the ability to say, 'Yes, there's an exposure, here's who was affected.'" A similar situation occurred with Vietnam veterans and the herbicide Agent Orange, which the U.S. used from 1961 to 1971. The health effects to veterans were not fully understood until years later, and more illnesses continue to be linked to the herbicide. It wasn't until 1991 that the Agent Orange Act put into place a fast-track compensation process such as the one the VA is seeking for Persian Gulf War.

The VA and the Department of Defense are attempting to create a system in which data on environmental hazards could be collected and cataloged in real time. "That's the future, where we want to go," Erickson said. "But the Gulf War occurred now 25 years ago." More veterans may have to be diagnosed with brain cancer before more is known about the connection to service in the Persian Gulf War. Veterans who served Southwest Asia in 1990 and 1991 are aging into their 50s and 60s - the average age for developing brain cancer. "We need to tease out how the experience of veterans, and if they have more brain cancer, the same amount or less than the general population," Erickson said. "Science is like this river that continues to flow. We will continue to gather information from that river as new breakthroughs become available. There's always new information." While researchers continue their attempts, families are waiting, said Brown, who speaks with a sense of urgency about the issue. "The families deserve to be taken care of," he said.

Laura Edwards buried her husband on March 30, 2013, which would've been their 11th wedding anniversary. She called the VA for the first time one year later, not realizing at first that she was eligible for compensation, she said. She called to tell the agency her suspicions that David Edwards' death was caused by his military service, in case anyone was keeping track. She wanted an acknowledgement that he died as a result of fighting for his country. Now, two years after that first phone call, Edwards doubts it's worth it at times. "Sometimes I wish I had never even started this," she said. "It's dredging it up all the time. It's like I can't get any peace from it. I'm getting to the point where I want to just forget it." But then, she said, she remembers her husband, whom she described as extremely proud of his military service and hardworking until the end. "He wasn't a complainer," she said. "He was such a strong man. He loved his country. He did not deserve to die the way he did. What I want is justice." [Source: Stars and Stripes | Nikki Wentling | November 19, 2016 **]

VA Mobile Apps Update 01 ► Designed to Make VA More Accessible

VA has launched a number of mobile apps aimed at improving the lives of veterans and making VA more accessible. Currently, VA has 16 apps available through the Apple store and six apps available on Android's Google Play. These apps help veterans manage their PTSD, pressure ulcers, preconception care and other aspects of their health care. Many of the applications are also available for download on desktops and laptops. VA is currently field testing 11 more applications that will be released soon, including a self-scheduling application, an app to help veterans track their health care by receiving notifications from their health care team, and sending health information, such as blood pressure and other vital signs back to their health care team. For more information, visit <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore>.

- **ACT Coach App.** Helps you work with a mental health professional during Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/act-coach>.
- **Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry App.** An online database of health information provided by OEF/OIF/OND. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/burn-pit-registry>.
- **Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry Clinical Portal App.** A database of health information from Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/burn-pit-registry-clinical-portal>.
- **Annie App for Clinicians.** Allows you to assign protocols to your patients to help them track and manage their health. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/annie-app-clinicians>.
- **Annie App for Vets.** A Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging capability that promotes self-care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/annie-app-veterans>.
- **Antibiogram App.** Provides easy access for VA care team to cumulative antibiograms from any VAMC. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/antibiogram>.
- **Ask A Pharmacist App.** Allows Veterans to access information quickly about VA pharmacies and medications as well as tools to manage health care. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/ask-a-pharmacist>.
- **CPT Coach App.** Helps you work with your therapist during Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT). CPT is used to reduce symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/cpt-coach>.
- **DS Logon Education App.** Helps vets learn about DS Logon accounts. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/ds-logon-education>.
- **Exposure Ed App.** Delivers information on military-related exposures to health care providers. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/exposure-ed>.
- **Imaging Viewing Solution (IVS) App.** Allows VA clinicians and other relevant staff to search for and view patients' x-rays, radiology images, and other stored images in Veterans Health VistA Imaging. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/imaging-viewing-solution>.
- **Immunization Campaign App.** Helps (VA) providers you to easily administer immunizations to multiple patients in a quick succession. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/immunization-campaign>.
- **Mindfulness Coach App.** provides vets with tools and guided exercises to help them practice mindfulness, which means paying purposeful attention to the present moment without passing judgment on it. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach>.
- **Mobile Blue Button App.** Designed to help both you and your Caregivers better manage your health care needs and communicate with your health care teams. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/mobile-blue-button>.
- **MOVE! Coach App.** A weight self-management app that provides education, tools, and guidance designed to help you meet your weight and health goals. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/move-coach>.
- **Moving Forward App.** You can access on-the-go tools and learn problem solving skills to overcome obstacles and deal with stress. <https://mobile.va.gov/app/moving-forward>.
- **My VA Health App.** Allows you to access your official VA medical record and enter information about your health. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/my-va-health>.
- **Parenting2Go App.** Designed to provide convenient tools to help you strengthen your parenting skills and reconnect with your children. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/parenting2go>.
- **Patient Viewer, Version 3 App.** Lets you easily find information from your patients' Electronic Health Records (EHRs) - including labs, medications, consults and more. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/patient-viewer>.

- **PE Coach App.** Helps you work with a mental health professional during Prolonged Exposure (PE) therapy. PE therapy is used to reduce symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/pe-coach>.
- **PFA Mobile App.** Designed to assist responders who provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) to adults, families and children as part of an organized response effort following a disaster. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/pfa-mobile>.
- **Preconception Care App** Provides you with information to support the integration of preconception care into comprehensive primary care. <https://mobile.va.gov/app/preconception-care>.
- **PTSD Coach App.** Helps you learn about and cope with the symptoms related to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that commonly occur following trauma. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-coach>.
- **Safe Patient Handling App.** Provides direction for both VA and non-VA care teams, particularly direct care providers including nurses, physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) specialists and Imaging staff. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/safe-patient-handling>.
- **Scheduling Manager App.** Allows you to receive and book appointment requests sent by patients through the Veteran Appointment Request (VAR) App, and securely send messages to patients who are using the VAR App. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/scheduling-manager>.
- **Stay Quit Coach App.** Helps you “stay quit” after you stop smoking with tools to control cravings, reminder messages and support links. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach>.
- **Summary of Care App.** Lets you receive and view your VA medical information – including lab results, medications, allergies, and more – in one place and from the convenience of your mobile device. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/summary-of-care>.
- **VA Launchpad for Care Teams App.** Designed for VA care team members to connect to patients VA’s Electronic Health Record (EHR). Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-launchpad-care-teams>.
- **VA Launchpad for Veterans App.** Houses all apps that connect to VA’s Electronic Health Record (EHR) and access your personal VA health information. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-launchpad-veterans>.
- **VA Pressure Ulcer Resource (VA PUR) .** Designed to help Veterans and their Caregivers learn about preventing and taking care of existing pressure ulcers. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-pressure-ulcer-resource>.
- **Veteran Appointment Request (VAR) App.** Allows you to directly schedule or request primary care appointments, and request mental health appointments at facilities where you already receive care. Learn more at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/veteran-appointment-request>.

[Source: The Newberry Observer | Thomas Crisp | November 16, 2016 ++]

VA Whistleblowers Update 48 ► Employee Resigns Citing Retaliation

A Department of Veterans Affairs employee who told Congress the agency was using unauthorized wait lists for mental health care in Colorado has resigned, saying he was subjected to retaliation for speaking out. Brian Smothers told The Associated Press 16 NOV the VA had opened two separate inquiries into his actions and tried to get him to sign a statement saying he had broken VA rules. He said he refused. Smothers also said the VA reassigned him to an office with no computer access, no significant duties and no social contact. He called the VA's actions punitive and his working conditions intolerable. He said he resigned as of Tuesday.

VA officials had no immediate comment on Smothers' claim that he was punished for speaking up but said the agency does not tolerate retaliation. They said previously they take any allegation about unauthorized wait lists

seriously and were cooperating with an inquiry. Smothers alleges that Colorado VA facilities in Denver and suburban Golden used unauthorized wait lists for mental health services from 2012 until last September. He said the lists hid how long it takes for veterans to get treatment and made the demand for mental health care appear lower than it really was. He said the longer that veterans have to wait for mental health care, the less likely they are to use it when it becomes available. "It was totally unacceptable to me," Smothers said. He added: "It's my hope that the incoming administration (of president-elect Donald Trump) goes and fires people."

Smothers estimated the lists contained 3,500 entries but did not know how many individual veterans were on them because some names appeared multiple times. It was not immediately clear how long veterans on the lists had to wait for care. Unofficial wait lists have been used by VA health care facilities elsewhere. The discovery of the lists created a nationwide scandal in 2014 when 40 veterans died while waiting for appointments at a Phoenix VA hospital. Smothers was a peer support specialist on the VA's post-traumatic stress disorder clinical support team in Denver. He said he started the job in April 2015. Smothers went to Republican Sens. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Cory Gardner of Colorado in September, saying he had uncovered the unauthorized lists on spreadsheets in the VA computer system. He also said a veteran had taken his own life while waiting for PTSD treatment at a Colorado Springs VA clinic.

At Johnson and Gardner's request, the VA inspector general's office — the agency's internal watchdog — opened an inquiry into Smothers' claims. A spokesman for the inspector general did not immediately respond Wednesday to a telephone message seeking comment. Gardner said in a written statement that he was troubled by the circumstances of Smothers' resignation. "This employee's communication with my office is protected by federal law," he said. Gardner said he has asked the inspector general to look into whether the VA retaliated against Smothers. Johnson said he too is concerned about Smothers' case. "My office will continue to work with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel to ensure that federal employees who blow the whistle do not suffer any retaliation," he said in an email. The Office of Special Counsel is an independent federal agency that protects whistleblowers.

Smothers told the AP he had emailed copies of the spreadsheets to himself so he could provide them as evidence. The VA later warned 2,100 veterans that their personal information may have been compromised by that, although the agency did not identify Smothers as the person involved. Smothers told the AP he also offered copies of the spreadsheets — with the veterans' identifying information removed — through Amazon.com's self-publishing book service in order to preserve them in a public format. Smothers said two copies of the list have sold through Amazon: He bought one, and the inspector general's office bought the other. Smothers also provided redacted versions of the spreadsheets to the AP that do not contain the identifying information.

Smothers said that after he contacted the senators, the VA investigated whether his actions had violated agency rules and concluded they had not. He said the VA opened a second inquiry after discovering he had offered the lists on Amazon. That inquiry was still underway when he resigned, he said. Smothers said the VA learned the lists were on Amazon by looking at his social media posts. He said that demonstrated the VA was monitoring him even after clearing him in its first inquiry. [Source: The Associated Press | Dan Elliott | November 16, 2016 ++]

VA Whistleblowers Update 49 ► Retaliation at McGuire VA Hospital

A high-level manager is paid \$94,000 a year and does not work. She hasn't had a meaningful job assignment in almost a year. She says it's punishment for breaking rank. Lorelei Hudson says it's a gross waste of taxpayers' money. McGuire says it doesn't comment on personnel issues. The army veteran and 23-year federal employee claims she was pressured to hire another top-level manager's husband for a job he wasn't qualified for.

Shining a light on alleged nepotism has consequences. The Assistant Human Resources Officer says she was stripped of her responsibilities, moved to a different office, and for the past eight months, passing time doing

nothing. "I'm crying. I'm sitting in an office alone. I'm isolated. It's psychological abuse. There has been blatant abuse of authority," said Hudson. She's still paid \$94,000.00 a year but no longer supervises 56 people. That new closet-sized office is not the first place her bosses wanted to banish her. Hudson provided emails showing they had something worse in mind, but she fought back. "I was told, 'you're going to the trailers.' That's how angry this person was at the time. Threatening, 'you are never going to do HR work again.'"

The trailers, she says, is like being imprisoned in a dungeon, so Hudson took a leave of absence, reported it to the Office of Special Counsel, a federal agency that protects whistleblowers, and wrote Senator Tim Kaine when he was campaigning with Hillary Clinton. WWBT NBC12 got a copy of that letter, and in it, she tells Kaine about the reported violation of prohibited personnel practices, the retaliation, and asks for his help and protection. We don't know who did what, but Hudson soon got an email from the Acting Hospital Director saying the trailer space was no longer available. But when she did return to work, she says, her office door was covered in signs defining what a bad leader is. "They want me to keep quiet. They wanted me to go along with discriminating against other people. Nepotism - when they wanted to hire a family member or friend - and I cannot do that."

She says Hospital Director John Brandecker was silent during a meeting she claims a hospital leader attacked her verbally for questioning her husband's credentials. "When it was determined he wasn't qualified, she yelled and screamed at me in front of him. He did absolutely nothing. I left out of that conference room and I was disoriented. That's how bad it was." Hudson says she became the subject of four internal investigations designed to remove her after she reported a hostile work environment, all with the bullying continuing. She believes employees are scared now to report anything. "I think it's almost intentional. You see what we're doing to Lorelei." Just recently, Hudson got an email from the hospital leader who moved her, asking, "What are your accomplishments for the year?" This after eight months of getting paid, but no work assignments - a strategy she believes to get her to quit or be fired. "This happened to myself and another employee, and he recently left. You don't get any work. It means pretty much you're rejected."

McGuire won't comment, but I also contacted Secretary Robert McDonald with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. His office's response in part says "The department has made it clear that retaliation against whistleblowers is not tolerated at VA." Hudson hopes the "No Fear" whistleblower protection policy gets backed up with action. If not from the VA, the Office of Special Counsel now investigating her allegations. "The way I have been treated so badly, I hope that they will prosecute." Hudson says the manager's husband did not get the job in question, but he is working at McGuire. [Source: WWBT Richmond VA | NBC Diane Walker | November 23, 2016 ++]

VA Agent Orange Benefits Update 02 ► Study Could Expand Benefits

A new study has found a close relationship between Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War and high blood pressure, a conclusion that could lead the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to dramatically expand the number of veterans eligible for compensation. The study, published last in early NOV by VA researchers in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, found a higher rate of hypertension among members of the Army Chemical Corps who handled Agent Orange during the war compared to those who didn't. Corps members who served in Vietnam but did not spray the chemicals also had a higher rate of hypertension than their peers who served outside Vietnam. Both results were statistically significant and add to a body of evidence linking Agent Orange exposure and hypertension.

The findings come 41 years after the close of the Vietnam War and decades since the last supplies of Agent Orange were incinerated. Since then, veterans have become increasingly distrustful of the VA. They maintain that their exposure to Agent Orange, which contained the toxic chemical dioxin, has harmed their own health and has been passed on to their children. A VA working group has been studying the latest scientific literature since March to determine if any illnesses should be added to the agency's list of diseases for which vets are automatically entitled

to compensation if they served in Vietnam. Specifically, the group has been looking at new evidence linking bladder cancer, under-active thyroid, Parkinson's-like symptoms and hypertension to Agent Orange exposure.

The VA had been expected to announce its decision this year, but officials now say that will be left to the administration of President-elect Donald Trump. "For this administration, the deadline for proposing new rules for potential new presumptions [of service connection to herbicide] has passed, and this will become work for the new administration to take to completion," VA officials said in a written statement first reported last week in the newspaper Stars and Stripes. Hypertension is the most common ailment among veterans seeking health care at the VA—indeed it is one of the most common ailments among older adults generally.

Rick Weidman, legislative director of Vietnam Veterans of America, said the new report should add pressure to the VA to compensate vets for hypertension. His group has been pressing the VA to add the condition to its list of Agent Orange-connected diseases ever since the advisory panel first noted evidence of a link. He can think of only one reason to explain the agency's reluctance: "Money." An estimate of the cost of offering compensation for Vietnam vets with hypertension was not available. [Source: ProPublica & The Virginian-Pilot | Charles Ornstein & Mike Hixenbaugh | November 15, 2016 ++]

VA Patient Stats Update 01 ► 11% Utilization Increase

The percentage of disabled post-9/11 vets with health insurance through the VA has increased 11 percent over the last few years, despite the department's well-publicized management problems and the 2014 patient wait-times scandal, according to a new survey. Seventy-one percent of injured Iraq and Afghanistan veterans said they had VA health care coverage in 2016, compared to 66 percent in 2015, and 59 percent in 2014, the latest survey from the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) found. Of those respondents, or "alumni" as the WWP calls them, 68 percent used VA health care as their primary health care provider. The percentage of alumni with two or more types of health care insurance is also growing, jumping from 45 percent in 2015 to 48 percent in 2016. The 2014 Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act expanded health insurance options for many vets, allowing them to use private health care providers in cases where VA could not meet their needs.

The 2016 WWP survey, the seventh such analysis the organization has conducted on post- 9/11 disabled Vets, includes information on the population's demographics, military experiences, physical and mental well-being, as well as education and employment data. More than 31,000 Vets participated in the 2016 survey, which was sent to more than 79,000 WWP alumni, making it "one of the largest annual collections of data about this generation of wounded Veterans," the organization said in a statement. The 2016 response rate was 40 percent, up slightly from a 39 percent response rate in 2015. To see a more detailed breakdown refer to the WWP Survey stats at <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/media/2641/2016-wwp-annual-warrior-survey.pdf>. [Source: CWV Press Release | November 4, 2016 ++]

VA Sex Change Surgery ► Controversial Plans Dropped

Veterans Affairs officials are dropping controversial plans to allow sex-change surgeries for transgender veterans, not because of criticism but instead due to budget constraints. The move, first reported by Military.com, is a significant setback for LGBT advocates and raises questions on whether the surgeries will be offered anytime in coming years, given conservative control of the White House and Congress in 2017. In a statement 14 NOV, VA officials said they plan on continuing to offer assistance to transgender veterans by offering "hormone therapy,

mental health care, preoperative evaluation” and other services. But pursuing a rule change to allow the long-held ban on VA physicians offering the surgeries will be delayed until “when appropriated funding is available.”

Department leaders suggested in June that they would work to overturn the ban this year, to allow sex-change operations to take place in coming years. On Monday, they indicated that they still believe the idea is worthwhile, even if not financially feasible. “Increased understanding of both gender dysphoria and surgical techniques in this area has improved significantly and is now widely accepted as medically necessary treatment,” the statement said. “VA has been and will continue to explore a regulatory change that would allow VA to perform gender alteration surgery...” Numerous conservative groups decried the proposal earlier this summer, calling it ridiculous for taxpayers to foot the bill for the controversial procedure.

Some Republican lawmakers have also pushed back in recent months against Defense Department plans released this summer to allow transgender troops to serve openly, and to develop plans for sex reassignment surgeries in the near future. Republican leaders included language objecting to “social engineering” in the ranks in the party’s political platform at the GOP convention in July. President-elect Donald Trump has not specifically commented on the VA surgery proposal, but crafted his campaign around a return to “traditional” values and railing against political correctness.

On 14 NOV, officials from the LGBT advocacy group American Military Partner Association called the VA decision upsetting. “All of our nation's veterans, regardless of their gender identity, deserve access to the medical care they earned serving our nation,” said AMPA President Ashley Broadway-Mack said in a statement. This is a deeply disappointing setback in making sure an often medically necessary procedure for transgender veterans is part of that care. Moreover, as we face a new incoming administration, we implore fair-minded Americans to stand united in holding our new administration officials accountable by insisting this be fixed.” [Source: Military Times | Leo Shane | November 14, 2016 ++]

VA Hiring Update 07 ► Rumor Control

One thing Veterans know about is “Rumor Control” – *the most accurate source of information prior to the actual occurrence of an event*. Translated, that means.... “I have heard”. I have heard we will be off tomorrow. I have heard you do not need a driver’s license in Europe. I have heard that an artillery shell whistles when it is coming in close to you. The truth is, until you have experienced something or researched it, you do not know yourself. By now you should learned that no one cares about you or your career the way you do. That means, you owe it to yourself to learn it for yourself.

Often, jobseekers and employees will ask others for answers before seeking the answer themselves. The first step should always be self-reliance. Research is much simpler today than it was decades ago. The first step should always be your policy, manual or instructions. Today, we have a range of search engines to choose from that provide answers to most questions. For example: Does Veterans Affairs recognize other state nursing licensees? The answer is easily found on the VA Careers website <http://www.vacareers.va.gov/application-process/navigating/before-you-apply.asp> (and the answer is “yes”). This site should also be reviewed before you consider applying for any position at VA.

Some think that applying for a job at VA is a complicated process. While it’s true, processes can vary between departments and specialties, the first thing you should ask yourself before applying to any VA position is, “Do I meet Basic Qualification Standards?” Start by asking yourself the questions from the following list. And once you determine that you fit the basic qualifications, applying for a job at VA is much easier than you may think.

- U.S. citizen
- Graduate of an approved/accredited program (if education is required for the position)
- Current, full, active, and unrestricted professional license from any State, Commonwealth, or Territory (e.g., Puerto Rico) of the United States or from the District of Columbia

- English language competency
- If you have done your research, we encourage you to search opportunities at [VAcareers.va.gov](#).
- We learn more and impress more when we become the one with the answers, rather than the one with the questions.

[Source: VAntage Point | November 23, 2016 ++]

Vets.gov Update 02 ► Locked or Lost Applications Acknowledged

The Veterans Health Administration has for the first time acknowledged publicly that software problems with its Online Health Care Application on Vets.gov caused tens of thousands of veteran applications to be locked or lost in the process, forcing the agency to disable the app and pay employees overtime to manually work through the applications. When asked by MeriTALK 15 NOV how the agency planned to tackle the interoperability problems that led to records becoming locked or lost during transmission, VHA officials initially stated that they had no knowledge of records being lost or locked. However, the agency retracted that statement 21 NOV. “We knew about the issues and we reverted to utilize *modality* of processing applications,” a spokesperson said in an email.

As first reported by MeriTALK, VHA officials on 30 JUN ordered the launch of the Online Health Care Application (HCA) on Vets.gov without notifying or training the vast majority of VA enrollment specialists around the country and despite serious technical problems that led to tens of thousands of applications being lost or locked. Dozens of new emails provided to MeriTALK by an agency whistleblower show that White House officials, including a member of the U.S. Digital Service, raised questions about the planned launch of the enrollment app and warned officials about potential legal problems. Those new internal VHA emails also show that as of 4 NOV, as many as 65 percent of veteran health care applications remain locked or lost, a situation described by one official as having “DIRECT NEGATIVE IMPACT on the Veteran experience.”

The number of applications estimated to have been affected by problems with HCA stands at 30,000, according to an agency whistleblower. Technical issues forced VHA officials to turn off HCA and route the applications back to an application called “Forum” for processing. All applications submitted through Vets.gov are currently being routed to the respective VA Medical Center into a holding file as they were prior to the activation of Vets.gov. Employees are working overtime to process the backlog. [Source: MeriTALK | Dan Verton | November 21, 2016 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 30 NOV 2016



Florida — Nine South Florida residents are charged with stealing more than \$800,000 from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Wifredo A. Ferrer, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Monty Stokes, Special Agent in Charge, United States Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Criminal Investigations Division (VA OIG), made the announcement. **Mary Flynn**, 67, of Miami; **George Byrnes**, 55, of Coral Springs; **Marta Correa**, 58, of Miami; **Judy Jasiecki**, 54, of Davie; **Gregory Kramer**, 64, of Fort Pierce; **Leroy Weston**, 58, of Pembroke Pines; **Devorah Rosello**, 52, of Miami; **Beverly Anne Garcia**, 62, of Lake Worth; and **Peggy Karrh**, 61, of Royal Palm Beach are each charged with theft of government funds, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 641. If convicted, the defendants each face a statutory maximum penalty of up to 10 years in prison.

According to allegations in the Indictments, Mary Flynn, George Byrnes, Marta Correa, Judy Jasiecki, Gregory Kramer, Leroy Weston, Devorah Rosello, Beverly Anne Garcia, and Peggy Karrh obtained and utilized, for their own unauthorized personal use, federal government benefit funds of deceased veterans or their beneficiaries. All nine defendants failed to notify the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of the benefit recipients' death; thereby, enabling continued payments for several years and in one case up to 14 years. In total, the VA made over \$800,000 in fraudulently induced payments to the defendants. The charges contained in the Indictments are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. [Source: DOJ US Attorneys Office | So. Dist of FL | November 10, 2016 ++]

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New York, NY — A US Department of Veterans Affairs executive who ran a "shameless" veterans' charity will be allowed to retire with full government benefits. **Thomas Burch**, a career lawyer for the Department of Veterans Affairs will retire November 30 with a full pension and lifetime health care, a congressional source told CNN. Burch was in the process of being fired by the VA after an internal investigation and an investigation by the New York attorney general's office found Burch personally benefiting from donations made to the National Vietnam Veterans Foundation. The Foundation, which Burch ran, raised more than \$29 million in four years but spent less than 2% of that money on actual veterans causes. The New York attorney general's office discovered most of the donated funds went to professional fundraising, and that "the fraction that actually made it to NVVF was further reduced by a pattern of abuse, mismanagement and misspending by NVVF's former president."

In announcing a settlement which shut down the charity, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman issued a statement saying, "There is nothing more shameless than exploiting military veterans in order to enrich oneself. The actions of this charity and its founder are appalling." Schneiderman has accused Burch of using donated funds to spend lavishly on travel, a yearly salary and other personal benefits, including a severance package the charity awarded him when he stepped down after being exposed by CNN. Burch's spending also included payments to women, as well as hotel and nightclubs. The VA was unaware of Burch's involvement with the National Vietnam Veterans Foundation until a CNN investigation exposed the VA employee in May. The Department of Veteran Affairs Inspector General launched its own investigation, and in early NOV the Department of Veterans Affairs announced it "immediately initiated the process for Mr. Burch's removal from federal service. [Source: CNN | Drew Griffin & David Fitzpatrick | November 14, 2016 ++]

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Mineral, VA — A Allison Rulli, 34, pleaded guilty 3 NOV to charges of obtaining controlled substances by misrepresentation, fraud, or deception. According to the statement of facts filed with the plea agreement with the DOJ, Rulli was a registered nurse employed in the Spinal Cord Injury Ward at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Administration Medical Center in Richmond. From August 2015 to August 2016, Rulli fraudulently obtained 20 to 30 Oxycodone tablets from the medication dispensing cabinets for her own use. On occasion, Rulli removed the correct amount of Oxycodone prescribed for a patient but would only administer some of the tablets to the patient and would keep the remainder for herself. Rulli also fraudulently obtained eight to 10 Fentanyl patches,

each 25-100 micrograms. Rulli used a scalpel to open the Fentanyl packaging and remove the patch, but would return the tampered packaging to the medication dispensing cabinet in order to hide the evidence. When confronted by law enforcement, Rulli admitted her wrongdoing. Rulli waived indictment and pleaded guilty to a criminal information. Rulli faces a maximum penalty of four years in prison when sentenced on Feb. 4, 2017. The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes, as the sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. [Source: DOJ US Attorneys Office | E. Dist of VA | November 3, 2016 ++]

VAMC Providence RI Update 01 ► Cleanliness Issues

Claims that the Providence Veterans Affairs Medical Center has issues with cleanliness are not true according to the hospital's director, who gave WPRI's Target 12 access to the facility in an effort to prove her point. But the size of the 536,000 square foot facility limited the how much could be seen, and there were claims and counter-claims about how much cleaning was done beforehand. The response from Susan MacKenzie (Director) followed a Target 12 report on 17 NOV that included several pictures from inside the medical center that serves about 35,000 veterans a year. "Those are not the current conditions that you would see here at the medical center," MacKenzie said. "We want veterans to know and understand how clean this facility is." The pictures included stained and sagging ceiling tiles, dirty floors, rodent droppings and other issues that the source of the images said made the facility "unsafe" for patients and employees.

The tour was offered the day after the news report, and a week after the photos were forwarded to the hospital from Target 12 in order to get comment about them. "We wanted to make sure you got in here as soon as possible," MacKenzie said as she offered to show us any area of the hospital. "We take very seriously the healthcare that we provide here." She said she told her staff not to do any extra cleaning in order to offer our cameras an accurate perspective. But VAMC Public Information Officer Winfield Danielson later stated that some staff members "dry mopped" despite the director's orders. Staff members said through emails and phone calls to Target 12 that the hospital was cleaned "extensively" on 18 NOV. The tour lasted about an hour, with MacKenzie saying even the hundreds of thousands of square feet of the hospital we didn't see are sanitary and safe. "We have a clean facility," MacKenzie said.

The original building was constructed in the 1948, but there have been a number of additions since then, including one project that is underway right now. An active federal lawsuit blames a 2014 project for causing permanent health issues for VAMC employees Dr. William S. Naughton and Maria Horridge. They allege the construction sent noxious fumes and dust into the hospital's Podiatry Clinic. MacKenzie said she could not comment on the lawsuit. Last week, Danielson said he could not comment on t pictures that are part of the lawsuit. "We have environmental care rounds in place that are strictly followed," MacKenzie said. "Any [cleanliness] issues that are found are corrected immediately. We have the highest percentage in our New England network in the VA of completing all of the open findings." MacKenzie also said that a VA rating system gives the hospital four out of five stars. "And we're almost five stars," she said. "Before I became director [in 2013 Providence VAMC] had one star."

Her assertions did not silence a number of critical VAMC employees who said they feared retribution from supervisors if they came forward with their claims. MacKenzie pointed to a patient survey system that she said indicates 92 percent of the veterans who are served rate their care as satisfactory or better. Regarding the patients who have given poor ratings, MacKenzie said she wants "to hear from them." "Yes I do," she said. "They can call me." [Source: WPRI Eye Witness News 12 | Walt Buteau | November 21, 2016 ++]

VAMC Mountain Home TN ► Abuse, Disrespect, Neglect Charged

While veterans in Tennessee endured some of the longest wait times in the nation, Mountain Home VA Medical Center employees abused, disrespected and refused to help some patients and some of those people kept their jobs, according to federal disciplinary files. Congressman Phil Roe (R.) District 1, called the findings “unacceptable” and said Congress needs to act. “Accountability and transparency, the VA is lacking,” Rep. Roe said. We’ve spent the last 11 months filing Freedom of Information Act requests, reviewing federal disciplinary records and demanding answers from the VA. Records show from January 2014 through the end of 2015, Mountain Home disciplined roughly 150 employees, according to public records.

The VA fired almost half of those people and issued letters of disapproval, reprimands and suspensions to the rest. We don’t know the specifics of all of those cases, instead only very few of them, because the VA made it difficult to collect that information, but the documents we did obtain left Congressman Roe convinced the VA should have fired more people. “They should work for somebody else. They don’t need to be serving veterans,” he said after hearing about three substantiated abuse cases from late last year within the nursing service. “That’s unacceptable and if those involved were working in the private sector they’d be fired.”

“We don’t have water”

An internal investigation found one of the employees was rough with a patient while repositioning him. In addition, the VA found the employee let the man’s leg dangle over the side of his bed while repositioning him after the man told him it hurt. “He feels that you push him in bed and his legs hurt really bad,” the report said. “You allowed his leg to continue to dangle over the bed for an extended period of time.” Records show when the same veteran asked for water that nursing employee repeatedly refused to give it to him. “We don’t have water...How many times do I have to tell you we don’t have water,” the employee said before taking away the man’s food tray, according to VA records. The VA gave the employee a three-day suspension for his actions. “He probably laid out in a ditch somewhere in Germany 70 years ago, freezing his back end off, no water, no food or anything else,” Roe said of the veteran “I want him to have it as quick as he opens his mouth. I want him to have water.”

“I deserve to be treated with respect.”

Another nursing employee received a two-day suspension after mocking a WWII veteran, letting his leg dangle over the side of his bed for an extended period of time while re-positioning him, refusing to cut up or open the patient’s food even though the man couldn’t use his left arm or hand and refusing to help the man get off the toilet, walking away and telling him “You can wait a while.” “If that’s your attitude that you just read to me, you need to be gone,” Rep. Roe said.

“What in the hell is wrong with you?

A third nursing service employee received a three-day suspension after taking a veteran’s food away before he was finished eating, according to VA records. When the patient threw a coffee cup in his direction, the employee slammed the door shut and asked “What in the hell is wrong with you? I didn’t know I was taking care of a two year old,” federal paperwork said. Following the situation, the employee didn’t document the inappropriate behavior and then wasn’t truthful about the situation after a colleague reported it, records reveal. Documents call all three employees’ actions first-time offenses.

2,500 phone calls and no answer

Over in the business office, records show an operator who scheduled appointments was “very rude and curt” to a patient who wanted to speak with his cancer doctor and then essentially hung up on him. A month later, records show that same employee didn’t answer a single call over a three-day period, even though the call center received more than, 2,500 calls during that time. Despite previous customer complaints and two previous written counseling actions, the VA only reprimanded him.

Two months later, documents suggest the VA investigated the same employee for again being rude and discourteous, this time to four other patients who called needing help. The employee hung up on all of those

patients, according to records. “The patient reported to your supervisor that you were very short, rude, and cut him off when he tried to explain what he needed stating words to the effect, ‘I know what you need,’ before abruptly hanging up on the patient without directing the patient’s call to the department he needed to speak to,” an internal report said of one patient’s experience. He received a 14-day suspension this time. Then Acting Director Dan Snyder said, “I do believe that there is potential for (blank’s) rehabilitation,” according to records. However, Mountain Home fired the employee in November 2015 after he acted disrespectful to a supervisor and a coworker, according to VA documents.

41-day no show of police service dispatch employee

In another case, a police service dispatch employee failed to show up to work for 41 days. Mountain Home suspended him without pay for two weeks despite the acting chief’s “little confidence in his ability for rehabilitation,” according to records.

Case: Doctor admits to Inappropriate touching of nurses

There’s also the case of a doctor who admitted to the inappropriate touching of women he worked alongside, kissing one on the top of her head and whispering in the ears and rubbing the shoulders of her and other nurses. After initially suspending him, the VA chose to rescind a five-day suspension and instead gave him an official letter of disapproval, according to records. That decision came after the physician, with the help of his union representative, signed a settlement agreement. The settlement prevented him from securing any new jobs at the VA for five years and removed all mentions of his suspension from his personnel file.

“I believe that we handle discipline appropriately.”

“Overall, do you think that you all have handled discipline appropriately?” we asked the then acting director. “I believe that we handle discipline appropriately,” Snyder said. Snyder says the VA relies on a progressive table of penalties for all cases that takes into account the seriousness of the act and the employee’s history. “It’s not to punish people,” Snyder said. “It’s to change behavior. They don’t continue to work here if their behavior doesn’t change, so I think people should be glad to see that those things are looked after, and dealt with.” Snyder says overall, the number of employees who misbehave is small, but he knows those rare cases include some egregious ones. “I just have to say I’m very disappointed any time there’s a situation like that, especially where a patient’s abused in any way, disrespected,” he said. “Respect is part of our core values, as well as integrity.”

Snyder says Mountain Home’s goal is to treat veterans like heroes and give them the care they’ve earned. “Anything short of that is a disappointment and as you’ve seen in the record, we deal with it harshly,” Snyder said. “The three-day suspension some people may say, ‘That doesn’t sound harsh to me,’” we said. “Someone that has earned a three-day suspension will likely earn a separation next time something happens,” Snyder said. “I do think that some people may see this abuse case involving those three people and say, ‘Three days just doesn’t seem like a lot.’ What would you say to that?” we asked. “I’m aware of the specifics of that case as well as you are and it is characterized as abuse, but it was some verbal abuse,” Snyder said.

Legislation to speed up VA disciplinary process now in hands of U.S. Senate

Rep. Roe understands Mountain Home is at the mercy of its progressive discipline policy. That’s part of the reason why he and the majority of U.S. representatives passed bi-partisan reform in September aimed at improving accountability and speeding up the disciplinary process. The legislation is now in the hands of the Senate. “The VA needs to be more accountable and they need to be more responsive and some of it is not that their fault,” Rep. Roe said. “The VA administration needs a way to quickly get rid of those bad apples, but most of the people, certainly a vast majority, care deeply about veterans and take quality care of them.” The legislation would shorten the firing/demotion/appeals process for rank-and-file VA employees from more than a year on average to a maximum of 77 days.

Union response

A third of the VA's employees are veterans. Employees are also members of a union, which often gets involved in disciplinary cases on employees' behalf. AFGE Local 1687 President Mary Sipple told us VA management is rarely held to the same standards as employees, often receiving counseling or relocation instead of facing discipline. "The VA moves their problems around," Sipple said. "They do not deal with them." The legislation aimed at improving accountability would open the door for more executive level punishment.

Allegations are "swiftly and thoroughly investigated"

As for those three abuse cases, Mountain Home's current Acting Director Dr. David Hecht said the cases involved three separate patients. However, he said he's not aware of any injuries to the veterans in those cases and said the employees have not had any problems since. Dr. Hecht said these allegations and all allegations like this are "swiftly and thoroughly investigated." He added the three employees involved make up less than one tenth of one percent of all Mountain Home employees. All three cases were finalized in 2016, according to VA paperwork.

[Source: WJHL News Channel 11 | Nate Morabito | November 21, 2016, ++]

VA Nursing Homes Update 06 ► Red Tape Limits Availability

World War II veteran Morton Kessler, 91, was forced to leave a skilled nursing facility in Missoula, Mont., less than two weeks after he moved into it. The facility's owner, the Goodman Group, had dropped its contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs because of "extensive" regulations required in order to accept VA benefits, a company spokesman told the Missoulian newspaper in March 2015. The family needed Kessler's VA benefits to pay for care, and in rural Montana, the options were limited. "It ended up costing us time and money and a lot of stress — on my family, but also on him," said Kessler's son, Jeff. "It really just seemed not right. We were hoping to have closure that wasn't fraught with logistical and financial issues." The Kesslers found a place 30 miles away in Stevensville, Mont., and Kessler's wife, Roseann, drove from Missoula every day to visit him. He died four months after the move of complications from Alzheimer's.

Dana Halvorson, with the American Health Care Association, said the situation isn't unique among the 13,000 skilled care and assisted living facilities her organization represents. The VA has also acknowledged that veterans are losing support from long-term care providers who don't want to go through the red tape. "We've had members that have dropped because of the contracting requirements over the years; that's why we've been fighting this," she said. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were about 15,600 nursing homes in the United States in 2014. VA data shows that only 1,800 of them have contracts to accept VA benefits. Nursing home care is not part of Veterans Choice, a \$10 billion program to give veterans outside health care.

AHCA and VA leadership have spent years trying to simplify the way nursing homes work with the VA. They've proposed that long-term care providers enter into individual agreements with the department, rather than become federal contractors — a designation that comes with regulations that Halvorson and long-term care providers said were complex and costly. In 2015, VA Secretary Bob McDonald said long-term care was the VA's "top legislative priority for the year." But they've faced challenges in making the change. Different versions of legislation addressing the issue have stalled, and civil rights organizations have fought the measure. They've said regulations that health care providers are trying to bypass are necessary to protect against workforce discrimination. "We've been fighting this for so long at this point, and this is the closest we've ever come," she said. "There's some tension on this."

Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND) introduced legislation in spring 2015 that said long-term care facilities that want to work with the VA would not be treated as federal contractors. Instead, they would be subject to other requirements to ensure quality of care, he said. He said about the current process: "It's not just additional reporting and inspections; they may even have to change their facilities and things like that. There's a whole set of regulations."

His provision ended up as part of a large veterans' reform bill, the Veterans First Act, which the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed unanimously in June. The measure would allow the VA secretary to enter into "veterans care agreements" for extended care. Hoeven is hopeful the Veterans First Act will move before the end of the year, and McDonald and some veterans service organizations are advocating for a vote. But lawmakers have only a short session, and it's uncertain whether there will be time to consider the 400-page bill. "If it doesn't happen, we'll absolutely take a look at the next Congress and continue to work with the VA to think of options," Halvorson said. "We're not going to give up now."

A similar measure was tacked onto a House bill earlier this year but was removed before the legislation passed in September. Earlier that month, Human Rights Campaign, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, National Partnership for Women & Families and the National Women's Law Center came out against the idea. They said in written testimony that exempting the health care providers from federal contract regulations would "send a disturbing message." They warned it would allow providers to ignore anti-discrimination protections, affirmative action rules and other requirements under the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance. The change "represents a step backward from equal opportunity," the groups wrote.

Three years ago, the VA tried to make the change without going through Congress. The department proposed a new federal rule to enter into agreements with extended care providers, including nursing facility care, geriatric evaluation, domiciliary services, adult day health care, respite care and hospice and home health care – services needed as the veteran population continues to age. At the time, Daniel Schoeps, the director of purchased long-term services for the VA, said he expected the change to lower administrative costs and increase the number of outside providers that work with the department. One year later, when the executive branch hadn't made a decision, McDonald received a letter from 109 members of Congress who wanted to move forward. "Veterans who need these extended care services deserve access to this critical care," the lawmakers wrote. When the VA learned it would have to go through Congress, McDonald wrote a letter to leaders of the House and Senate in May 2015, along with a draft bill. "Failure to address this issue will have an enormous negative impact on veterans' access to health care," he wrote.

Since then, the different legislation addressing the issue, including Hoeven's, has deviated from what McDonald proposed. In a written statement, the VA wrote that none of the bills fully accomplishes the goals the department requested. President-elect Donald Trump is likely to soon appoint McDonald's replacement. As he finishes out his time in the position, McDonald has publicly called on Congress to "fulfill its responsibility," including with veterans' access to long-term care. A November update to McDonald's "MyVA" initiative said: "Thus far, inaction on this issue has resulted in complications with extended-care providers and other non-Veterans Choice care. Some small long-term care facilities have already withdrawn their support of veterans due to the overwhelming administrative requirements."

With only 1,800 extended-care facilities nationwide that contract with the VA, some veterans have had to be housed far from family. "The problem you run into is, it limits where veterans can go and get care," Hoeven said. "It limits their ability to stay in their community and be close to family and friends." In the Kesslers' case, the family was lucky, Jeff Kessler said. The home in Stevensville took good care of his father, he said, and his mother was able to visit every day. But it did eliminate his twice-weekly lunch visits with his father and limit his visits to weekends. Michael Wemple, the administrator of The Living Centre in Stevensville – where Morton Kessler was moved – said five other veterans came to his facility the month the Goodman Group dropped its contract.

The Goodman Group owns several facilities in the area, and the company left a shortage of options for veterans in that part of western Montana when it dropped its VA contract, Wemple said. The Goodman Group declined to comment on whether they accept VA benefits. Though he doesn't foresee dropping his facility's contract with the VA, Wemple does understand how others could get to that point, he said. He cited some issues he faces in working with the department, such as not receiving timely payments and not being reimbursed at a rate comparable with Medicaid. "I don't want to put any facility down for their decisions," Wemple said. "We're a business, but at the

same time if anybody deserves proper care, it's our veterans." [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | November 28, 2016 ++]

* Vets *



PTSD Punitive Discharges Update 04 ► Bad Paper Appeal Help

A first-of-its-kind program now in place in Connecticut will help veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder appeal their "bad paper" discharges and connect them with people who can help them through that process. The program is a collaborative effort between the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs, Vietnam Veterans of America and the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School to actively seek out Connecticut veterans with service-connected PTSD and less-than-honorable discharges, and notify them of new opportunities to upgrade their discharge status. Local service providers such as veteran centers and legal assistance offices are collaborating to help veterans navigate the upgrade process.

PTSD was not considered a medical diagnosis until 1980, so it was impossible for members of the military or veterans to get screened for PTSD prior to then. Today, the military doesn't do a good job of diagnosing its members while they're serving, according to Ashley Ingram, a law student intern with the Yale clinic. In some cases, they are only able to receive a diagnosis of PTSD after the fact. Administrative boards that review requests to rectify discharges "can be dismissive of that after-the-fact diagnosis," Ingram said. According to a recent report by the Yale clinic, for decades, these boards "have refused to permit veterans to appear before them personally, failed to disclose information about (their) work, and most importantly, engaged in a near-categorical refusal to correct the discharge status of veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), denying more than 95% of such applications from Vietnam veterans in the last 15 years."

In 2014, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directed boards to grant "liberal consideration" to PTSD-based applications. The Yale report, which looked at the boards' performance in the year after the directive, found that the overall acceptance rate for all veterans applying for PTSD-based discharge upgrades at the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records rose from 3.7 percent in 2013 to 45 percent. And the acceptance rate for Vietnam veterans applying for such upgrades at the Army Board for the Correction of Military Record increased from 5.6 percent in 2013 to 59 percent. Discharge Review Boards review the discharges of former service members, except those that resulted from a court-martial sentence and those who were discharged more than 15 years ago. Those who were discharged more than 15 years ago can apply to the Boards for Correction of Military Records to get a review.

In more recent decisions reviewed by Ingram, the law student, she found that in some cases boards "still didn't believe it." "Overall, it's not clear how and to what degree the different boards for the different branches are implementing the memo," Ingram said. "It is important to note that the Department of Defense hasn't given clear instructions on how the boards are supposed to implement the memo, so implementation has varied to a large degree by each board, and the system has been rather opaque." There "may be 80,000 or more" Vietnam veterans who were

given a less-than-honorable discharge for "conduct attributable to undiagnosed PTSD," and at least 10,000 post-9/11 veterans who "likely" have a less-than-honorable discharge and PTSD, Ingram said. Those statistics are based on the estimated number of Vietnam and post-9/11 veterans with less-than-honorable discharges and the relative rates of PTSD, she said.

Bad paper discharges can bar veterans from federal benefits, including disability compensation, health care and education, and veterans "face barriers to private employment and a lifetime stigma due to their military record," Tom Berger with Vietnam Veterans of America said in a news release announcing the new program in Connecticut. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Julia Berman | November 16, 2016 ++]

Homeless Vets Update 75 ► 24% Rise in Colorado

While most states saw their homeless veteran populations drop an average of 17 percent in the past year to a total of 39,471, Colorado was one of only eight states going in the opposite direction with increasing numbers, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's annual report on homelessness, which was released Thursday. Colorado had the biggest gain of any state with an increase of 231 homeless veterans, a 24 percent rise. Colorado's homeless veteran population of 1,181 is now nearly as high as the state of New York, which has 1,248 homeless veterans, the HUD report says. Colorado's overall homeless population increased by 721, or 13 percent, from 2015 to 2016, the report says. HUD volunteers conducted a statewide survey one night in January and counted 10,555 homeless people. Of those, 7,611 were living in emergency shelters or transitional housing and 2,939 were on the streets.

Between 60 and 70 veterans are entering Colorado each month, but programs for homeless veterans are finding homes for only about 50 a month, said Daniel Warvi, spokesman for the Department of Veterans Affairs. A "perfect storm" of circumstances is pushing many veterans onto the streets, Warvi said. Veterans are coming to Colorado planning to get a job in the burgeoning legal marijuana industry or because Colorado's job market is booming, he said. They also return to Colorado after completing their service because they were trained at a Colorado military base, he said. But when they arrive in Colorado, the jobs many of them qualify for don't pay enough to cover rent, and they learn they must be a Colorado resident for a year before getting a cannabis-related job. "They don't have a plan B," Warvi said.

That was the story for Jesse Bowman, 34, who served in the U.S. Coast Guard between 2004 and 2008 on USCG Cutter Spencer, largely chasing down drug runners in the Caribbean. When he returned home to Montana, he couldn't find a job, and in November 2015 he took a Greyhound bus to Denver, he said. "I knew there would be a job in Denver," Bowman said. He got a job at Dish Network for \$12.50 an hour. "Unfortunately, that wasn't enough to pay for a one-bedroom apartment, let alone a studio apartment," he said. "The cost of housing is ridiculous. It's really a shame." Bowman lost his job at Dish Network and spent two nights on the street before getting a bed at Samaritan House homeless shelter. This fall he got an apartment through a VA program, he said.

Michael Ospina, 61, also a homeless veteran who served in the Coast Guard, said Denver apartments that were renting for \$450 in 2015 are going for \$1,200 now. "Some of them are straight bed-bug, cockroach city," Ospina said. Ospina and Bowman stood outside in the cold in a line with about 200 other homeless or wounded veterans at Denver's VA Hospital 18 NOV as volunteers from the group Soldiers' Angels handed out 50 pounds of groceries to each veteran. "The cost of living here is one of the highest in the country," said Kristin Henning, VA voluntary coordinator for Soldiers' Angels. "Most of the people getting groceries are making minimum wage and can't afford housing. I'm not sure how to remedy that."

Army veteran Wayne Anspach, 53, who served in Panama between 1980 and 1983, said he gets a \$713 monthly disability check because he has cirrhosis of the liver and can't work. After he moved from Kansas to Denver in

February, his Social Security check wasn't enough to keep him off the streets where robbers armed with knives took his backpack, sleeping bag and clothes. "It was difficult. The weather is very cold," Anspach said.

Alfred Zabawa joined hundreds of military veterans streaming into Colorado last year for legal pot or to find a job in a state with a thriving economy, only to find themselves living on the streets and contributing to the highest rise in the number of homeless veterans in the nation. Zabawa, 61, arrived in Colorado an able-bodied man. He pulled up his pajama bottoms to reveal an aluminum prosthetic leg as he sat in a wheelchair waiting in line for free groceries in a parking lot outside Denver's VA Hospital. Zabawa, a diabetic who served in the Army from 1973 to 1978, moved from Nebraska to Denver last December. He slept in bushes before a toe infection spread to his foot and leg. His left leg was amputated just below the knee. "These streets aren't ADA," he said, referring to requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. [Source: The Denver Post | Kirk Mitchell | November 18, 2016 ++]

Pets for Patriots Update 01 ► Offers Adoption Assistance to Vets

Donations to the Combined Federal Campaign make a big difference to charities both large and small, and to their beneficiaries — both two- and four-legged. "CFC has been a lifeline to create a stable foundation of support so that we can, with confidence, honor the commitment we've made to veterans adopting pets through our program," said Beth Zimmerman, founder and executive director of Pets for Patriots. The organization, which launched in 2010, helps troops and other veterans adopt companion pets from animal shelters — giving the most overlooked and undervalued dogs and cats a home, Zimmerman said.



It's the fourth year Pets for Patriots has been part of the CFC, she said, and the group has seen donations grow exponentially. Pledges in 2015 topped \$162,000, more than double the nearly \$70,000 raised in 2014. This year, Zimmerman said, the goal is to reach \$200,000 in pledges via the CFC, which is the official workplace giving campaign of the federal government. It runs from 1 SEP through 15 DEC, but each area campaign designates the time frame within those months to conduct its local campaign. Pets for Patriots' mission is to make pet ownership affordable for veterans, and the donations help veterans in a variety of ways. The organization is building a network of shelter, rescue and veterinary partners to help link last-chance animals with troops and other veterans. Generally the veteran is responsible for the adoption fee to ensure the veteran has some investment in the process, but many shelters offer discounts or waivers.

Once the veteran or service member adopts the pet, Pets for Patriots sends them a gift card, generally for about \$150, Zimmerman said. They can also receive ongoing veterinary care from veterinarians in the network who agree

to give a discount of at least 10 percent. The organization has worked with other retailers to offer discounts to those adopting pets through their program. There are many elderly and low-income veterans in their program, which has been involved in more than 1,209 adoptions since 2010, when there were five. Those who have adopted pets who experience temporary financial hardship can apply for financial assistance to pay for pet food and other expenses; the program also can assist their veterans whose companion pets are in need of medical care that they can't afford. "The need is so great on both sides," Zimmerman said. "We're growing as fast as we can and as responsibly as we can."

In 2015, they started the pilot program to provide veterinary care subsidies to those in their adoption program who need it, and provided \$4,400. In 2016 to date, they've spent \$11,300 for veterinary care. "As we grow more robust, we're getting more requests. There are also a lot more therapies available for pets. The good news is it helps more pets; the down side is, it's more expensive," she said. In 2015, they helped 447 individuals through adoption, their hardship programs and other programs. They spent \$72,640 on those programs, plus the \$4,400 for veterinary care subsidies.

For more info on Pets For Patriots refer to <http://patriotsforpets.com>. There you will find out how you can adopt an animal, donate an animal, join their foster program, or volunteer to assist them in their efforts. The best way to reach them is via Facebook at Patriots For Pets Rescue and Shelter or via e-mail at patriotsforpets@yahoo.com. If you do telephone them at 641-357-8050 you will get a message which indicates it is best to contact via the aforementioned methods. You can also write 805 North 40th Street, Clear Lake, IA 50428. [Source: Military Times | Karen Jowers | November 17, 2016 ++]

Uniform Disposal ► What Should You Do With Old Uniforms

You might cherish your old military uniforms given all the memories they hold. Or maybe you — or your spouse — are tired of them taking up space in the closet. When the time comes to unclutter, what should you do with those uniforms?

Dispose

The easiest way to get rid of any uniforms is to dispose of them, and there are a handful of ways to do this. The first is to simply throw them in the trash. It is cautioned that if you decide to trash the uniforms, you should remove any insignia and names on them. Some individuals even go as far as cutting or ripping the uniforms to avoid any reuse. Others have found it best to burn their old uniforms to avoid any possible stolen valor. Another option is to check with a local base, as some military installations have shredding programs for old uniforms.

Donate

If you aren't comfortable with trashing a uniform, consider donating it. As with disposal, you should remove any insignia and names when donating. One of the more convenient places to donate uniforms is at a thrift store. Though thousands of uniforms end up in thrift stores every year, it might be best to donate them to a military thrift store or one close to a base. If you're looking for your donation to go a little further, you can give your uniforms to organizations that help veterans, such as [Bands4Courage](#) or your local Airman's Attic. Other options include school drama departments, local museums, or VFW or American Legion posts.

Repurpose

Maybe you'll want to put the old uniforms to use. Some individuals prefer to keep their uniforms intact and put them on display in a shadow box along with their awards. Others repurpose their uniforms to craft a wide array of projects, including turning the uniforms into bags, aprons, and even wreaths for the holidays. But others choose to get an active use out of them. You can wear them when doing household work such as working on the car or cleaning out the attic or when going paintballing, mudding, or hunting. Be aware some services have stringent

restrictions on when you should and should not wear a uniform, so even if your service is in your past, it might be best to consider those rules.

[Source: MOAA News Exchange | Joseph Eisenmann | November 23, 2016 ++]

Stolen Valor Update 101 ► Reported 161115 thru 161130

They were two Marines from Texas in western Iraq, taking part in some of the worst fighting in the early stages of the insurgency. Both left the battlefield early — and ended up with Purple Hearts. But one didn't earn it. Casey Owens was critically injured and lost his legs when his Humvee hit an anti-tank mine. He committed suicide in 2014 after a decade of suffering from numerous surgeries, brain injury and severe pain. **Brandon Blackstone** went home after about a month, his military records show. His medic said he got appendicitis and did not return. The Arlington man ended up in a Dallas federal courtroom in OCT 2016, where he pleaded guilty to two felonies for claiming he was "blown up" in a Humvee in Iraq in order to profit personally. To read the entire story of what transpired refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titles, "**Stolen Valor : Unearned Purple Heart**". [Source: The Dallas Morning News | Federal Courts Reporter Kevin Krause | November 23, 2016 ++]

WWII Vets 121 ► Jonathon Mendes | Pilot

Forrest Gump doesn't have anything on retired Marine Col. Jonathan Mendes. The 96-year-old Devil Dog recently became the oldest person to complete the New York City Marathon, completing the 26.2 mile race through the city's five boroughs in 11 hours and 23 minutes and chasing it with a shot of scotch to boot. "You have to have goals in life," Mendes told Runner's World. "They don't have to be important. But at this stage, I've done it all. I've skied all over the world. I've canoed the great rivers of the world. I flew dive-bombers for the Marine Corps in World War II, and jet fighter attack planes in Korea." This isn't the first time Mendes has completed the prestigious New York City Marathon, however. In 2010, the then-90-year-old was the oldest entrant in the race, crossing the finish line in nine hours and 55 minutes. He had also participated in the marathon five years before that.



Retired Marine Col. Jonathon Mendes

Mendes received his commission in 1942 after graduating from Dartmouth College. He flew more than 100 missions in World War II and over 70 during the Korean War. He earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for "heroism and extraordinary achievement" when on June 15th, 1953, he led a group of jet fighter-bombers from Marine Fighter Squadron 311 on an airstrike against a heavily defended enemy airfield deep in hostile territory. "[Mendes] skillfully navigated the flight directly to the target area, despite extremely adverse weather, and initiated a dive-bombing and strafing attack through intense and accurate enemy anti-aircraft fire," according to his citation.

Mendes retired from the Marine Corps after a 32-year career, but didn't let up. The marathon -- undertaken at a disciplined speed of 25 minutes per mile -- is his 16th. He's been running for over 50 years, since a doctor told him he needed to quit smoking at the age of 44. Mendes has been plying the same two-mile PT route around Central Park at 7:30 a.m. every day since, barring inclement weather. He also takes a shot of scotch every day at 4 p.m. "I've been saying for years that the key to living this long is a shot of whisky a day and a good woman, in that order," Mendes said. The annual New York City Marathon is the largest in the world. Over 50,000 runners took part this year, with 20-year-old Eritrean Ghirmay Ghebreslassie taking the win with a 2:07:51 time.

Nine hours after Ghebreslassie sprinted across the finish line and 45 minutes after the official timer ran out, Mendes pulled through the line accompanied by personal trainer Tom Mangan and Art Berman, who volunteered to escort Mendes through the non-profit Achilles International. They were greeted by Peter Ciaccia, the marathon's race director, who embraced Mendes and put a medal around his neck. "Semper Fi," Ciaccia told him. "Do or die!" Mendes responded. [Source: Marine Corps Times | November 10, 2016 ++]

WWII Vets [122] ► Vera Palmer | Nurse

Vera Cecelia Gustafson Palmer experienced World War II in a unique way. She was seldom far from the front, and she saw the worst that the War inflicted, but she also saw heroism on a daily basis. And many saw hers. Mrs. Palmer was a proud soldier of the Army Nurse Corps. Her story is one among approximately 400,000 women who served in uniform in World War II. Thankfully, Mrs. Palmer shared her experience with the Veterans History Project. Please enjoy Maari's research about her. [Maari's words follow]



Vera Cecelia Gustafson Palmer on May 28, 2003, during her Veterans History Project oral history interview

During World War II, women participated in the war effort in various ways. They bought war bonds. They worked in war industries. Some joined the military. Nurses willingly left the safety of their homes and offered their expertise to the Army, saving lives by caring for soldiers in tough battlefield conditions. Palmer was one of these

nurses. On May 28, 2003, at age 86, Mrs. Palmer sat down with Michael Willie to record an oral history for the Veterans History Project. For much of the interview, she read from a written document rife with details about her time in the Army Nurse Corps. Her entire Veterans History Project collection has been digitized, and it can be accessed at <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/loc.natlib.afc2001001.17171>.

Palmer was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, in a family of seven children – six girls and a boy. After graduating from high school, she had a couple of different jobs before she “went into training – nurse’s training,” which lasted for three years. At the end of her program, she became a registered nurse, and she “worked in doctor’s offices...[and as] an industrial nurse” before her coworkers convinced her to enlist in the Army Nurse Corps. The army unit that she joined was composed largely of “graduates of the University of Illinois Medical School and people from the Midwest.” She became a member of the 27th Evacuation Hospital, which, as she recalled, consisted of “49 officers, including the doctors, 52 nurses, and 307 enlisted men.” Although she did not know him when she entered the army, the man that she would marry, Sergeant Walter Palmer, was an enlistee in her unit.

The United States was deeply involved in World War II when Mrs. Palmer, then Ms. Gustafson, first joined the Army Nurse Corps, but she spent her first year and a half on duty in the United States, first at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, and later doing maneuvers in Tennessee and West Virginia. Then, in the spring of ’44, her unit traveled to Fort Devens, Massachusetts” to get outfitted, and the nurses and some of the officers moved on to Camp Patrick Henry, in Newport News, Virginia. From there, they “headed for Europe.” When asked if she got seasick on the trip across the Atlantic Ocean, Mrs. Palmer responded with, “Not me. I’m a Viking!” followed by a big laugh.

The ship brought them to Casablanca, and they then traveled by train and automobile to Oran, Algeria, “to a campsite...right by the Mediterranean Sea.” Then, on May 9, 1944, they “sailed for Naples.” Three days later, Mrs. Palmer was working at a “1,500-bed hospital and [getting] ready to receive patients from the Battle of Monte Cassino.” They had patients of many different nationalities and ethnicities, and found them all to be “grateful, cooperative, and appreciative.” Mrs. Palmer recalled that, among the patients, “wounds were proudly unbandaged to show their fellow patients.” In total, her unit cared for “1,467 patients” before moving on to their next assignment.



1LT Vera Gustafson with patients, Maddaloni, Italy, May, 1944

After their time in Italy, the 27th Evacuation Hospital “set sail for southern France.” When they arrived, the people “welcomed them and showered them with fruit and crunchy French bread.” In this location, they were responsible for treating American, British, and French personnel. They moved north by train and truck in order to stay close enough to the action to be of help. During the Battle of the Bulge, the unit did such great work that it earned the Citation of Merit. Since “German planes were dropping bombs all too close to them,” they were evacuated on December 28, 1944. Mrs. Palmer’s unit continued to follow the Army’s advances to care for those who were wounded along the way, moving toward the Rhine and, later, into Dreisen, Germany. Along the way, her

unit was also given the responsibility of helping to nurse hundreds of returning prisoners of war back to health. Mrs. Palmer recalled that “they all told similar stories of cruelty and starvation.”

Her next assignment was to help care for people who had been imprisoned in Dachau Concentration Camp at the time of its liberation. She recalled the acuteness of the hunger she encountered among the people in Dachau, describing one woman, “a Hungarian political prisoner, [who], at the time of her capture, ...had spoke[n] seven languages. And here she was just worried about getting her food.” She also remembered that “if they couldn’t finish their food, they stuffed it under their pillow for later.”

Later, Mrs. Palmer moved on to a less emotionally draining assignment, where her unit “had little activity except for accidents and general illnesses.” During this assignment, even though the United States and Germany had just been enemies, “native German boys collected the Americans’ laundry and took it home for their mothers to wash. ...After the war, she sent care packages to” the young boys who had done this for her husband and for her. She also kept in touch with them throughout her life and noted that “we still exchange Christmas cards.”

While Mrs. Palmer was in Europe, the Army gave her the opportunity to explore her surroundings and travel whenever it could. She recalled that, in Rome, “a priest who been, uh, in the United States...offered to take us through and see the Sistine Chapel, which, uh, was not open to usual tours.” As her time in Europe continued, she “went to London, the French Riviera, Sorento, Riems, Paris, and Dieppe. “ In Dieppe, she saw women making “beautiful” lace by hand. During her time in England, she “visited...the Salisbury Cathedral, which is an example of twelfth century – pure twelfth century Gothic architecture.” Additionally, Mrs. Palmer sang at the weddings of three nurses who got married while they were stationed in Europe.

After returning to the United States, the 27th Evacuation Hospital had reunions “in the Chicago area, ‘round O’Hare field...every few years, and then...every five years” for decades. Vera Cecelia Gustafson Palmer died on July 13, 2008 and was laid to rest in Chattanooga National Cemetery. We honor her service. [Source: VAntage Point | November 2016 ++]

Homeless Vet Burials ► Stephen Carl Reiman | Casper WY

Natrona County Coroner Connie Jacobson experienced a problem in November doing her job. She received the remains of Vietnam vet Stephen Carl Reiman to process for burial. She knew he served with honor in Vietnam. She knew he loved cooking and Bruce Springsteen. She knew he died lonely in Casper. But that’s about all she knew for certain about the 63-year-old homeless Navy veteran who died 17 NOV at Wyoming Medical Center. Her office looked for a friend or a family member to claim Reiman. They haven’t found anyone. The other thing Jacobson knew is that Reiman needed to be buried with respect. And that he shouldn’t be alone.



Stephen Carl Reiman and the Oregon Trail State Veterans Cemetery

Reiman came to Wyoming from a Southern California community for homeless veterans. He served in the Navy from 1971 to 1975, his last post aboard the U.S.S. Long Beach. Reiman had previously told a VA doctor that he had struggled with PTSD, depression and alcoholism, Jacobson said. Those symptoms worsened when Reiman's only son died in combat in Iraq, Jacobson said, and Reiman became incapable of working. He depended on the VA for housing, income and health care. It's not clear why Reiman traveled the 1,250 miles to Sheridan with just one backpack — full of Bruce Springsteen CDs, a laptop, an iPod, two identification cards, a copy of his birth certificate and his Navy discharge papers. He also had Springsteen's memoir, "Born to Run," in his pack, his most recent page marked with the book's dust cover.

It appeared that Reiman was looking to build a life in Wyoming, that perhaps he had connections there. He had a Wyoming identification card that was issued in 2007, but otherwise there are no clues as to why he ended up in a Sheridan motel. But before he could build a life there, he was whisked in an ambulance from the motel to Memorial Hospital in Sheridan. He was later transferred to the Wyoming Medical Center in Casper, where he died of an illness. Nobody visited him in the hospital. Jacobson's office spent three days searching for a family member or close friend for Reiman. The staff searched medical records, police databases and called Veterans Affairs officials in both states. Staff members put together a list of the dozens of phone numbers they called looking for someone who could claim Reiman as their own.

Reiman had a cell phone and a laptop, but it appears he only used them for business, like communicating with his bank or the VA. There was no personal correspondence, no letters, no notes. "It seems he lived a very lonely life," Jacobson said. Jacobson has found family members for many dead people in her years in the coroner's office. Usually it takes a day or two to find someone, but she's hit a wall in Reiman's case. "You don't ever want to look back and think you could've done more," she said. "But we've gone as far as we can." At this point, Jacobson needs someone with information to come forward with a new kernel of information — she's exhausted her regular resources. "My main job when someone dies is to find information for the family," she said. "This time I'm asking for answers."

It's the first time in her decades of work in the coroner's office that Jacobson has not been able to find family for a veteran, though she said it's not uncommon elsewhere. A funeral with military honors was scheduled to be held for Reiman at 10 a.m. 29 NOV at the Oregon Trail State Veterans Cemetery in Evansville. Every year, the cemetery hosts a handful of funerals for veterans whom nobody claimed as family, the cemetery's interim director said. The ceremonies are brief. There's a rifle salute and a short prayer. A trumpeter or a trombonist will play taps. Then the veteran is laid to rest beneath a simple granite headstone. Jacobson doesn't know how many people, if any at all, will come to Reiman's funeral outside those who will be a part of the service. She and her staff will be there. Members of the Natrona County Veterans Council will be there. Jacobson hopes people from the community will join them. At least someone, even if they are strangers, will mark his passing.

But who will miss the old sailor who loved Springsteen? Nobody will stand in front of the large stained glass window in the cemetery chapel and tell his stories. Nobody will recount old memories with a tearful smile. Usually during a military burial, the veteran's flag is passed on to a grieving spouse or parent. In Reiman's case, there's no clear recipient. Jacobson hadn't thought of that. Maybe the flag will join the rest of Reiman's possessions, locked away in evidence. Maybe someday someone will come forth and claim the flag. Maybe someday someone will claim the memory of a man who died alone and far from home. [Source: Casper Star Tribune | Elise Schmelzer 307-266-0574 | November 23, 2016 ++]

Obit: Willie N. Rogers ► 18 NOV 2016 | Tuskegee Airmen

Willie N. Rogers, one of the oldest surviving members of the Tuskegee Airmen, died Friday from complications of a stroke. He was 101. The longtime St. Petersburg, Florida, resident was a member of the original 100th Fighter

Squadron established during World War II. He was wounded in action, shot in the stomach and leg by German soldiers, during a mission in Italy in January 1943. Rogers spent three months in a hospital in London before returning to the war, the Tampa Bay Times reported. The group's 300 surviving members were decorated by President George W. Bush at the White House in 2007, during which they were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. But Rogers didn't attend.



Willie Rogers, 99, reflects on his service and his life on Feb. 23, 2015, at home in St. Petersburg, Fla.

His family didn't even know that he was part of the Tuskegee Airmen, first African-American military aviation squadron in U.S. armed forces history. Rogers didn't reveal his service until 2012, partially because his work was in logistics and administration and not in the sky, family members said. "He would always say there were many who deserved attention more but were not here to receive it," said Veronica Williams, one of Rogers' daughters. His Tuskegee service was disclosed in 2012, and his family worked to get him credit for it, the Times reported. Rogers received a Congressional Gold Medal in November 2013. He was also presented in recent years with the keys to the cities of Lakeland and St. Petersburg, Florida. His portrait hangs in the St. Petersburg Museum of History. St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman on Sunday tweeted: "Rest in peace, our friend — St. Pete's 2015 Honored Veteran and Tuskegee Airman, 101-year-old Willie Rogers." [Source: USA Today | Greg Toppo | November 21, 2016 ++]

Obit: Frank Royal ► 19 NOV 2016 | WWII Pilot

World War II veteran Air Force Col. Frank Royal died Saturday, 19 NOV, a month after he took a final flight in Colorado Springs alongside the P-38 he flew in the Pacific. In his final months, the 101-year-old aviator got a reunion with his World War II plane after a visit to the National Museum of World War II Aviation in Colorado Springs, where workers labored for more than year to rebuild it from wreckage pulled from the jungles of New Guinea. "We are so proud of him, all he did for us as a family and what he did for our country as a veteran. His legacy is huge and we will forever be proud of him," his son Randy Royal wrote on Facebook. "We know how blessed we are as a family for having him with us for close to 102 years, and that we had the opportunity to hear his stories and see his sense of humor as he traveled through life! He is a wonderful man, husband to Renee, father, friend, leader and example to all."

Born in Colorado and raised on a ranch outside Rocky Ford, Royal told The Gazette in a 2015 interview that he had an idyllic rural childhood before it was disrupted by the Great Depression. "The '29 crash nearly wiped out my parents," Royal said. "Then came the Dust Bowl and the Depression." After leaving home at age 16, Royal worked odd jobs around the country and picked up a private flying experience after working with a barnstormer. He returned

to Colorado and started college at the University of Colorado in Boulder. "If I didn't sleep very much and if I didn't eat very much I could stay in college," Royal said. To make ends meet, he joined an Army program for would-be fliers in 1940.

When World War II erupted, Royal was sent to the southwest Pacific flying the Bell P-39. Royal loathed the weird fighter with its carlike doors that made bailing out nearly impossible. While the P-39 was well-armed with a 37 mm cannon, it was sluggish at high altitude and not much of a match for the nimble Japanese Zero, which dominated the skies over New Guinea, Royal's unit was re-equipped with the twin-engined Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Royal said he fell in love with his, a plane dubbed White-33. "The first time I took off, everything worked perfectly," Royal said. With a deadly combination of machine guns and cannon centered in the nose, the P-38 was a match for anything the Japanese flew. Royal was credited with one kill and two probables in the P-38 before he was sent to the Pentagon to plan air campaigns. His plane stayed in New Guinea and was scrapped after battle damage. "You could get into scoring position and often did," Royal said. "In the first year we had them, we destroyed 100 enemy planes and only lost four pilots."

After the war, Royal married and raised five children. He settled in Colorado Springs after 30 years in uniform. Randy Royal said his father left his children with simple yet powerful life lessons. "Put other people first, do everything you can to serve other people and fight hard to do the right thing," Randy Royal said. Seven decades after the war, Royal was reunited with his old plane. Bill Klaers and his crew at Westpac Restorations loved having the World War II pilot in their shop as they painstakingly rebuilt every part of the P-38. Workers called Royal Superman and referred to the fighter as Superman's cape.



Smiling ear to ear, World War II pilot Frank Royal, 101, walks arm in arm with his son, Randy Royal (right), and granddaughter Kallie Royal after having what he called his "final flight".

Last month, with White-33 restored to flying status, Royal made a last visit to the aviation museum. The crew from Westpac loaded Royal in a Cessna and took him for a ride flying alongside his plane from World War II. Family members said Royal, who entered hospice care in October, put off his death for weeks while awaiting a last look at the P-38. On the ground after the brief return to the sky, Royal had a wide grin. "Mentally, I was flying it," he said. [Source: The Gazette | Tom Roeder | November 22, 2016 ++]

Obit: Shurvon Phillip ► 30 OCT 2016 | Iraqi Mine Survivor

Marine Sgt. Shurvon Phillip defied the odds for 11 years. An Iraqi land mine severely injured him in 2005, leaving him paralyzed and unable to speak. According to his mother and guardian, doctors said the reservist would never move again and probably won't live more than a year or two. But the gung-ho Marine proved them wrong. He learned to type, play video games and brush his teeth. With help, he managed to work out, walk and ride a bike.

Phillip survived many surgeries and infections, a common problem for paralyzed patients, but died on 30 OCT at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland. "We got 11 years of borrowed time," says Bill Bailey, a Navy reserve judge advocate and Phillip's legal guardian through a nationwide program to help the wounded.



Shurvon and his mother, Gail



Shurvon, on deployment before injury.

Phillip was the 49th member of a battalion based in the Cleveland suburb of Brook Park to die from wounds incurred during a tough tour of Iraq, where the Third Battalion, 25th Regiment, Fourth Marine Division fought 900 to 1,200 strong. Staff Sgt. Derick Young of Canfield, Ohio, was wounded by the same mine that injured Phillip. Young says Phillip "continued to fight and fight and fight, like a typical Marine. We're stubborn like that."

Phillip's mother, Gail Ulerie, who took care of him at their home in Richmond Heights, says he smiled often and loved life. "Even though his injuries got the better of him, he never let them get him down. He was always ready to go anywhere. He would never say no." Ulerie said of her son, Sgt. Shurvon Phillip: "He was the proudest Marine ever." Phillip was the third of four children born in Trinidad. The family moved to East Cleveland when he was about 11. He became an honor student at Shaw High School, studied information technology at Cuyahoga Community College and joined the 3/25 Marines meanwhile. "Oh my gosh," says Ulerie, "he was the proudest Marine ever. He wanted to serve the country that he was now calling home."

When the 3/25 was deployed to Iraq, "he assured me that everything was going to be OK." On May 7, 2005, Young was commanding a Humvee with Phillip and three other Marines inside. They were returning to their base from observations when they hit a mine. The blast injured all five. It damaged Phillip's brain, collapsed his lungs, broke his jaw, foot and more. Phillip spent more than a year in different hospitals. At the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, President George W. Bush pinned a Purple Heart on the Marine and promised to make him a U.S. citizen. The promise was fulfilled a year later. Phillip eventually returned to his mother's small apartment on a high floor in East Cleveland. Soon the Veterans Administration bought the family a wheelchair-accessible home in Richmond Heights. He remained a proud Marine. "He loved putting on his dress blues," says Ulerie. "He'd sit up straighter."

With paid help, Ulerie took care of her son around the clock. With more help, he loved to work out in the gym, ride a two-person bike outdoors, travel in a horse-drawn cart at a therapeutic stable or cuddle with Polly, his shih Tzu. He never spoke again but developed facial signals, such as raising his eyebrows for "Yes." Someone once asked Phillip if he would have enlisted knowing the outcome. Usually, he paused before answering questions. This time, he raised his eyebrows for "Yes" right away. Ulerie once asked him what he missed the most before his injuries. He typed, "Marines." Phillip worked out at ATP Evolution in Warrensville Heights with trainer Dan Medves. "He had the biggest smile, loved working up a sweat," says Medves.

Last month, Phillip returned to the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center with a fever and yet another infection. He died four days later. His VA doctor reported the cause of death as "homicide" from "war injury with explosive device." No other 3/25 members are known to have died at home from Iraqi wounds. The other 48 fatally wounded members died instantly or soon afterward. Delayed deaths have occurred in other military units. But Bailey, once a staff lawyer for the Navy's Wounded Warrior Project, said he's never seen a combat death delayed as long as Phillip's.

Looking back, Ulerie says U.S. troops should not have been sent to Iraq. "What happened after we left? The people there dropped their guns and ran. We should not have been there. I should not have to go through this. Nothing in this world is worth my son's life. I'm glad I had him those 11 years, but I wish I could have him 11 more." Phillip loved Christmas, so she bought more decorations this year. "Every Thanksgiving, when we were done eating, he'd say, "Let's put up the Christmas thing." Fighting tears, Ulerie says, "I don't think I'm going to do Christmas this year." [Source: The Cleveland Plain Dealer | Grant Segall | November 26, 2016 ++]

Retiree Appreciation Days ► As of 29 NOV 2016

Retiree Appreciation Days (RADs) are designed with all veterans in mind. They're a great source of the latest information for retirees and Family members in your area. RADs vary from installation to installation, but, in general, they provide an opportunity to renew acquaintances, listen to guest speakers, renew ID Cards, get medical checkups, and various other services. Some RADs include special events such as dinners or golf tournaments. Due to budget constraints, some RADs may be cancelled or rescheduled. Also, scheduled appearances of DFAS representatives may not be possible. If you plan to travel long distances to attend a RAD, before traveling, you should call the sponsoring RSO to ensure the RAD will held as scheduled and, if applicable, whether or not DFAS reps will be available. The current updated schedule for 2016 is available at:

== 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

This schedule has been expanded to include dates for retiree\ veterans activity related events such as Seminars, Veterans Town Hall Meetings, Stand Downs, Resource\Career Fairs and Other Military Retiree & Veterans Related Events for all military services. To get more info about a particular event, mouseover or click on the event under Event Location. Please report comments, changes, corrections, new RADs and other military retiree\ veterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager at milton.bell126@gmail.com.

(NOTE: Attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214. "@" indicates event requires registration\RSVP.)For more information call the phone numbers indicated on the schedule of the Retirement Services Officer (RSO) sponsoring the RAD.

To quickly locate events in your geographic area just click on the appropriate State\Territory\Country listed at the top of the schedule. They will look like this:

**AK AL AR AS AZ CA CO CT DC DE FL GA GU HI IA ID IL IN KS KY LA MA
MD ME MI MN MO MS MT NC ND NE NH NJ NM NV NY OH OK OR PA PR RI
SC SD TN TX UT VA VI VT WA WI WV WY Belgium Germany Italy Japan Korea
Netherlands Thailand**

[Source: RAD List Manager | Milton Bell | November 29, 2016 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► 01 thru 31 DEC 2016

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. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date in the below list. To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering (if indicated) for the hiring fairs which are shown below for the next month. For more information about the USCC Hiring Our Heroes Program, Military Spouse Program, Transition Assistance, GE Employment Workshops, Resume Engine, etc. visit the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's website at <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/hiringourheroes/events> . Vet Job Fairs being conducted in the next 30 days in state order include:



San Diego, CA

December 01 - 11 am to 3 pm [San Diego All Veterans Job Fair](#), Scottish Rite Event Ctr, www.recruitmilitary.com
December 04 & 05 [Western Regional Hiring Conference](#), register online, www.orioninternational.com

Jacksonville, Fla. [Jacksonville All Veterans Job Fair](#),

December 01 - 11 am to 3 pm EverBank Field, www.recruitmilitary.com

December 13 - 10:30 am to 1:30 pm [Jacksonville Hiring Fair](#), Adam W. Herbert University Center, www.hiringourheroes.org

Orlando, FL [Orlando Veteran Job Fair](#),

December 08 - 11 am to 3 pm Heaven Event Center, www.recruitmilitary.com

Fort Gordon, GA [Defense, IT, Cyber and Intel Career Fair](#)

December 01 - 10 am to 2 pm Gordon's Conference and Catering Center, www.transitioncareers.com

Atlanta, GA

December 08 & 09 [Military Hiring Conference](#), register online, www.lucasgroup.com

December 12 [BMI ConferenceHire](#), register online, www.bradley-morris.com

Chicago, IL [Military Hiring Conference](#),

December 08 & 09, register online, www.lucasgroup.com

Indianapolis, IN [Indianapolis Veteran Job Fair](#).

December 08 - 11 am to 3 pm Lucas Oil Stadium, www.recruitmilitary.com

Fort Campbell, KY [Military Job Fair](#)

December 07 - 9 am to 3 pm Cole Park Commons, www.civilianjobs.com

Fort Knox, KY [Military Job Fair](#),

December 14 - 10 am to 2 pm Saber & Quill, www.civilianjobs.com

Raleigh, NC [Southeast Regional Hiring Conference](#)

December 05 & 06, register online, www.orioninternational.com

Las Vegas, NV [Las Vegas All Veterans Job Fair](#)

December 08 - 11 am to 3 pm Conference Center of Las Vegas, www.recruitmilitary.com

Lawton, OK [Military Job Fair](#),

December 06 - 10 am to 2 pm Hilton Garden Inn, www.civilianjobs.com

Cincinnati, OH [Midwest Regional Hiring Conference](#)

December 04 & 05, register online, www.orioninternational.com

Portland, OR [Northwest Regional Hiring Conference](#),

December 11-12, register online, www.orioninternational.com

Philadelphia, PA [Philadelphia All Veterans Job Fair](#),

December 4 & 5 [Northeast Regional Hiring Conference](#), , register online, www.orioninternational.com

December 8 &9 [Mojo Career Fair](#) www.militarymojo.org

Houston, TX [Houston All Veterans Job Fair](#)

December 01 - 11 am to 3 pm Minute Maid Park, www.recruitmilitary.com

December 04 & 05 [South Central Regional Hiring Conference](#), , register online, www.orioninternational.com

Allen, Texas [Allen Hiring Fair](#),

December 01 - 10:30 am to-1:30 pm Allen Event Center, www.hiringourheroes.org

San Antonio, Texas [Joint Base San Antonio Military Spouse Event](#)

December 01 & 02 - www.hiringourheroes.org

Fort Bliss, Texas [Fort Bliss Military Spouse Event](#),

December 06 & 07, Centennial Banquet Conference Center, www.hiringourheroes.org

Fort Hood, Texas

December 07 - 10 am to 2 pm [Military Job Fair](#), Phantom Warrior Center, www.civilianjobs.com

December 07 & 08 [Fort Hood Military Spouse Event](#), www.hiringourheroes.org

Arlington, VA [Military Officer Job Fair](#).,.

December 01 - 9 am to 12:30 pm Army Navy Country Club, www.corporategray.com

Fredericksburg, VA [JobZone Job Fair](#)

December 01 - 3 to 7 pm Fredericksburg Expo Center and Conference Center, www.jobzoneonline.com

Norfolk, VA

December 05 - BMI ConferenceHire, register online, www.bradley-morris.com

December 05 & 06 [Military Hiring Conference](#), register online, www.lucasgroup.com

[Source: Military Times, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Assn, <http://civilianjobs.com/careeradvice/jobfairs.aspx> & <https://events.recruitmilitary.com> | November 2016 ++]

State Veteran's Benefits & Discounts ► South Carolina 2016

The state of South Carolina provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below. To obtain information on these plus discounts listed on the Military and Veterans Discount Center (MCVDC) website, refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Vet State Benefits & Discounts – SC**" for an overview of the below benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below refer to <http://va.sc.gov> & <http://militaryandveteransdiscounts.com/location/south-carolina.html> .

- Veteran Housing Benefits
- Veteran and Active Duty Financial Assistance Benefits
- Veteran Employment Benefits
- Veteran Dependent Education Benefits
- Other State Sponsored Veteran Benefits

- Discounts

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veteran-state-benefits/south-carolina-state-veterans-benefits.html>
Nov 2016 ++]

Vet Flag Protest ► College Decides to Stop Flying U.S. Flag

Veterans were protesting at a western Massachusetts college facing criticism from around the country for its decision to stop flying U.S. flags after students allegedly burned a flag in protest of Donald Trump's presidential election. The school is a private liberal arts college that opened in 1970 as an experiment in alternative education, in association with four other colleges in the Pioneer Valley. The College is widely known for its alternative curriculum, socially liberal politics, focus on portfolios rather than distribution requirements, and reliance on narrative evaluations instead of grades and GPAs. In some fields, it is among the top undergraduate institutions in percentage of graduates who enroll in graduate school. It is ranked 30th among all US colleges in the percentage of its graduates who go on to attain a doctorate degree (notably first among history doctorates).



Veterans stand (left) during the playing of the Star Spangled Banner at a protest (right) held at Hampshire College for its decision to stop flying U.S. flags.

Dozens of veterans and other demonstrators held American flags and chanted "U.S.A." at Hampshire College in Amherst on Sunday, in what organizers called a "peaceful demonstration of freedom." College officials decided to indefinitely stop flying flags earlier this month after the main flag in the center of campus was burned after students lowered the banner to half-staff. Officials replaced the flag, but it was lowered again. School officials say they welcome peaceful discussions about the flag decision. VCollege spokesperson John Courtmanche said that the school's president spoke with a veterans group before the rally. "President Lash listened respectfully to the views of the veterans, and explained that the Hampshire College community includes a wide range of views including employees and students who have served or are currently serving in the U.S. military." Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno and others at the rally said the school's decision disrespects veterans and current military members. [Source: Associated Press | November 27, 2016 ++]

* VET LEGISLATION *



Enlistment Bonus Payback Update 05 ► H.R. 6316 Introduced

Veterans who received improper reenlistment bonuses from the California National Guard would not have to pay the money back to the Defense Department under a new House bill – H.R. 6316, the Veterans Earned Their Bonuses Act (VET Bonus Act). The legislation, supported by several House Republicans mostly from California, would ensure that those who served in the California National Guard and were overpaid by recruiters between 2004 and 2010 would not have to reimburse the government, unless they committed fraud or did not meet service requirements. The bill also would return with interest any repayments those veterans already have made, would require Defense to notify credit agencies that the debt was not valid, and would provide financial assistance to those who need it.

The Los Angeles Times in October reported that the California National Guard overpaid in reenlistment bonuses to about 10,000 soldiers to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan a decade ago. About 2,000 of 10,000 recipients of the erroneous payments have been asked to return money. The Pentagon suspended its efforts to recoup the bonuses and financial incentives of \$15,000 or more shortly after the news -- which sparked outrage among lawmakers, service members, and vets – broke. The department is reviewing its process for collecting the erroneous payments now, and hopes to resolve all the pending cases by July 1. However, according to another report from the Los Angeles Times, the California National Guard can't locate more than 4,000 of the soldiers involved in the mess.

Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA), the bill's sponsor, said it was "unjust" for the department to hold the service members liable for "a contract that was presented by an agent of the U.S. Army." Denham said the legislation "seeks to right these wrongs and hold the administration accountable for the damage it caused." Republican Rep. Darrell Issa, another California lawmaker who is a co-sponsor of the bill, said that the "vast majority" of the cases involved vets who were offered bonuses and accepted them in good faith. "Many of those affected had their life savings depleted and credit ruined as they worked to repay these debts they never owed," Issa said. The Hill previously reported that Congress knew as far back as 2012 that the National Guard was trying to recoup the erroneous bonus payments made during the Bush and Obama administrations. The problem was not confined to California, but that is where auditors found many of the overpayments. [Source: GovExec.com | Kellie Lunney | November 18, 2016++]

Vet Legislative Issues 2016 Update 01 ► Potential CR Impact

Congressional leaders have decided to kick the can to next year on most major funding issues. Instead of passing a year-end omnibus appropriations bill to fully fund government operations for FY17, the new plan is to pass a continuing resolution (CR) to carry the funding only through sometime in March. That would give the new Administration and Congress a stronger hand in funding negotiations. But it poses three problems.

- First, an extended CR means funding is limited to the FY16 levels and programs. No new contracts could be let, for example, which is a nightmare for those involved in procurement, among others.
- Second, it means the new Congress will have to do double duty. That is, they will have to finalize funding for the current year (FY17) at the same time their first priority is supposed to be building the normal appropriations bills for FY18. Tough duty for appropriations committees and leadership.
- Third, and potentially the most significant for members of the military community, it raises at least some risk the FY 2017 Defense Authorization Bill process may be curtailed in some way.

House and Senate Armed Services Committee leaders have been working for months to resolve the differences between their respective versions of the defense bill, and are nearly ready to complete action on what has been considered a “must-pass” bill. But what if members of the lame duck congress just want to pass a 4-month continuing resolution and get out of town? Will there be enough time for both the House and Senate to bring a final defense bill up for a vote? Could the defense bill (or maybe just selected parts of it) get wrapped into the continuing resolution? What would that mean for the military pay raise, TRICARE reform, TRICARE fees, force levels, and survivor benefits?

At present, House and Senate Armed Services Committee leaders are planning on expeditiously finishing the defense bill and bringing it to the floor in early December. We'll be thankful if they can get that important job done. You can help by sending your legislators a MOAA-suggested message, urging them to make sure Congress passes a final FY 2017 Defense Authorization Bill before the lame duck session adjourns. To access the message go to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=74336626>. [Source: MOAA Leg Up | November 22, 2016 ++]

House Vet Bill Progress ► 30 NOV 2016

The Senate passed several non-controversial House bills before they left for their Thanksgiving recess. These bills have all been given to President Obama for his signature, which should happen before the end of his term.

HR 5392: No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act

This bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a quality assurance document for carrying out the toll-free Veterans Crisis Line (VCL), which shall: (1) outline performance indicators and objectives to improve the VCL, including at backup call centers; (2) include time frames to meet such indicators and objectives; and (3) be consistent with guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget.

The VA shall develop a plan to ensure that each telephone call, text message, and other communications received by the VCL, including at backup call centers, is answered in a timely manner by a person, consistent with the guidance established by the American Association of Suicidology. The plan shall include guidelines for periodic VCL testing.

The VA shall submit the document and plan within 180 days

HR 3471: Veterans Mobility Safety Act of 2015

This bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that an eligible disabled veteran provided an automobile or other conveyance is given the opportunity to make personal selections relating to the automobile or other conveyance.

Minimum standards of safety and quality for adaptive equipment shall include that:

- The provider of any adaptive equipment modification services be certified by a certification organization or the manufacturer of the adaptive equipment;
- Any individual performing such modification services on an automobile be certified by a certification organization, the manufacturer, or the state; and

- The provider of the automobile or adaptive equipment or the provider of the modification services adhere to specified requirements under the Americans with Disabilities act of 1990 and the national highway traffic safety administration federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Note: *This bill was amended to include language permitting the VA to hire licensed hearing aid specialists to fit and repair hearing aids for veterans, instead of requiring them to wait to see one of the few audiologists in the VA system for a procedure that has long been done by hearing aid specialists in the private sector. TREA has supported this issue for almost two full years.*

H.R.4511: the Gold Star Families Voices Act

This bill allows the families of fallen servicemembers to participate in the Veterans' History Project that is being put together by the Library of Congress.

[Source: TREA Update | November 22, 2016 ++]

*** Military ***



Navy Enlisted Rating Titles Update 05 ► Obama Response to Petition

The White House is defending the abolition of Navy ratings, saying it will make sailors more flexible and improve their chances of success in post-military careers. “Organizational changes that require a cultural shift can cause friction during transition periods, but [President Barack Obama] has confidence in the decisions made by U.S. Navy leaders and agrees that the benefits in future years will outweigh growing pains in the next several months,” a White House statement said Wednesday.

The administration was responding to a petition with more than 100,000 signatures opposing changes, announced in September, that over the next few years will replace traditional Navy ratings such as boatswain’s mate and gunner’s mate with military occupational specialties used by other services. “This administration believes that providing widely recognized credentials will improve servicemembers’ chances of success in the private sector,” the statement said. “Modernizing this system provides many benefits within the Navy, such as increased flexibility in training and assignments.” The changes come after Navy Secretary Ray Mabus ordered the review of Navy titles in January as part of a plan to open all positions to women.

Enlisted sailors will, in the future, be addressed only by rank, in the same manner that other members of other services are recognized. For example, lower-ranked sailors will be called seamen, mid-grade enlisted sailors will be addressed as petty officers and the highest-ranking enlisted sailors will be known as chiefs. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Tyler Hlavac | November 15, 2016 ++]

Navy Enlisted Rating Titles Update 06 ► What to Call Each Other???

Some sailors said the decision to take away sailor's job titles genuinely upset the more senior sailors in the division. One airman who did not want to be identified to share candid views said his second and first classes were particularly distraught. "It's a waste," the airman said. "They feel like it takes away from their accomplishments and their identities that they've built over their careers." Another junior sailor said he had little patience for all the bellyaching over the dumped ratings. "It does seem pointless but people just don't like change," said the sailor, who also asked to remain anonymous. "In some ways though I like the idea of having greater career flexibility."

Online the conversation around dumping ratings hasn't died down. On a Navy forum on the link sharing website Reddit (<https://www.reddit.com/r/navy/comments>) , sailors describe the daily annoyances that the ratings execution has brought.

- "Does anyone get annoyed being corrected on addressing Petty Officers, etc. by their old rates?" one Redditor asks, a question that has generated 35 responses to date. "For instance, I was talking with an officer and without thinking, referred to a Petty officer 1st class as HM1," Redditor drm4490 continues. "She says, 'you mean petty officer first class so-and-so?' I mean, even though she's technically right, it rubs me the wrong way when they actually correct you. I also just find it way easier to say three syllables."
- One Redditor said he disagreed with the change but would just be happy when it's one thing or the other. "I've been corrected for using both a generic PO1 X as well as (insert rate here) X. The try-hards are offended by the old and the salty ones are offended by the new," the commenter said. "I'll be happy when everyone gets on board or it's changed back. As nice as it would be to have my rate back, I just want it one way or the other."
- Another sailor said his command has been using the "seaman" and "petty officer" honorifics in formal paperwork but have otherwise ignored the new rules. "Have yet to see anyone in my command get butt hurt over us calling each other by rate," the commenter said. "Most of us have put a half-assed attempt at saying Seaman or Petty Officer and mostly use it jokingly. Only our CO, XO, and CMC have put up a real attempt at not using rates. Normally just use SN or PO when writing emails and doing paperwork for formalities."
- One sailor noted that the change is still causing confusion in simple interactions such as telephone calls. "Talking to a chief on the phone yesterday: 'I'll get airman... seaman so and so... whatever the f--- this new rate bulls--- is, to come open the door for you,'" the commenter recalled. "Chief clearly isn't enjoying this new game."



[Source: Navy Times | David B. Larter | November 18, 2016 ++]

Military 2017 Pay Raise Update 03 ► Budget Extension Impact

Congress' planned four-month budget extension is expected to cause a host of budget headaches for Pentagon planners, but it won't disrupt troops' pay raise in January. House Appropriations officials confirmed they're drafting the continuing resolution legislation — designed to provide a budget bridge from December to April — with a pay raise for troops in mind. Exactly how much that will be is still undetermined. In August, President Barack Obama announced plans to set the 2017 military pay raise at 1.6 percent, 0.5 percent below the expected increase in private sector wages next year. If it stands, the raise will be the fourth in a row where troops' pay hikes fail to keep pace with those of civilian peers. House lawmakers have proposed a 2.1 percent "full" pay raise, but need to carve out more than \$300 million in new funding to pay for the extra increase.

2017 MILITARY PAY PLANS COMPARED

Here are monthly wages for select enlisted and officer pay grades under the Obama administration's proposed 1.6 percent pay raise, which the U.S. Senate approved, and the House of Representatives' proposed 2.1 percent increase.

Rank	2016 pay	1.6%	2.1%	Monthly difference	Yearly difference
E-4 w/ 3 years	\$ 2,267.10	\$ 2,303.40	\$ 2,314.70	\$ 11.30	\$ 136.00
E-5 w/ 6 years	2,797.80	2,842.60	2,856.60	14.00	167.90
E-6 w/ 8 years	3,303.30	3,356.20	3,372.70	16.50	198.20
E-7 w/ 10 years	3,795.60	3,856.30	3,875.30	19.00	227.70
O-2 w/ 2 years	3,900.30	3,962.70	3,982.20	19.50	234.00
O-3 w/ 6 years	5,540.70	5,629.40	5,657.10	27.70	332.40
O-4 w/ 12 years	7,081.50	7,194.80	7,230.20	35.40	424.90
O-5 w/ 16 years	8,158.50	8,289.00	8,329.80	40.80	489.50

2017 military pay plans compared

Earlier this month, Politico reported negotiators had settled on a plan which would have included \$9 billion in extra overseas contingency funding for the fiscal 2017 policy bill, including money for the bigger pay raise. But Obama has threatened to veto such plans in the past, and House Democrats pushed back on the report of a finalized deal. Lawmakers are hopeful that defense budget policy bill will be finalized before the continuing resolution plan, and that the final pay raise decision can be included in the trillion-dollar-plus budget extension. A 1.6 percent pay increase amounts to a \$400 yearly pay boost for most junior enlisted troops and up to \$1,500 more in annual pay for mid-career officers. The larger 2.1 percent pay raise would add about \$150 a year more than the Obama-backed raise for most junior enlisted, and about \$350 annually for mid-career officers.

Outside advocates have argued that while the 2.1 percent pay raise amounts to a small bump in troop's annual pay, it represents a significant message to service members about the government's attention to their family finances. But Pentagon planners have said the small annual trims in expected pay increase are being used to offset decreased spending flexibility in other training and modernization areas. The 0.5 percent pay increase difference is expected to save the Defense Department more than \$2.2 billion over the next five years, money they say is being reinvested in keeping the force strong.

Lawmakers will return to Capitol Hill on Nov. 28, and are expected to spend the next three weeks finalizing measures like the authorization bill and continuing resolution before ending the legislative session. Several lawmakers, including Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., have argued that wrap-up work should include full-year appropriations measures, to ensure new Pentagon programs and initiatives aren't

stalled by a budget extension. But Republican leaders have argued the short-term budget deal will allow more flexibility in planning for incoming President Donald Trump. The continuing resolution is expected to run through March 2017, meaning lawmakers will likely be finalizing the fiscal 2017 federal budget and planning the fiscal 2018 budget at the same time. [Source: Military Times | Leo Shane | November 27, 2016 ++]

Reserve GI Bill Update 11 ► Mobilization | Section 12304b Impact

Nearly 300 Marines came home from their seven-month deployment to Central America this week. They have a few things in tow — wood carvings from local artisans and the grit of experience responding to Hurricane Matthew, among the world's worst recent natural disasters. But the reservists returned without something that most were counting on: seven months of GI Bill benefits. A relatively new and obscure deployment code, a measure the Pentagon created in 2014 to scale back spending on benefits, is the reason. By law, reservists involuntarily mobilized under Title 10, section 12304b, do not receive credit for the GI Bill while they are activated. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is paid out by the amount of active-duty time racked up. Reservists say deployments are in high demand in part because education benefits will grow much faster than relying on drill time. Nearly a million reservists have deployed since Sept. 11, 2001, according to data from the Pentagon's Defense Manpower Data Center.

Every reserve component has used authorization 12304b since its creation; 1,780 reservists from across the military have deployed under the code, according to data from each reserve service branch released to Stars and Stripes. The actual number is certainly higher. That count does not include the Army National Guard. The National Guard Bureau was unable to produce data on mobilizations under that authorization after weeks of requests. The Army Reserves accounted for the largest share with 1,100. The Air National Guard has activated 87 airmen since 2014. The Navy Reserves, with six activations, used authorization 12304b instead of more common authorities to learn its unique procedure and to retain that institutional knowledge, said Cullen James, a Navy Reserves spokesman. James and other Navy spokesmen could not say how the mobilization of individual sailors is made under 12304b, referring questions to Pentagon officials with insight into manpower and personnel staffing issues. Those repeated requests also went unfulfilled.

Capt. Christopher Scholl, director of Navy Reserve public affairs, said sailors are informed the authorization lacks certain benefits when they are mobilized. Susan Lukas, director of legislative and military policy at the Reserve Officers Association, a Washington advocacy group, said 22 NOV that she doubted that many reservists are aware of 12304b. "People go into it kind of blind," Lukas said. The exception has fueled the belief that reservists are not afforded the same benefits as active duty troops. Hubbard estimated only a third of the reservists at Soto Cano knew they would not receive GI Bill accrual time, based mostly on his effort to spread the information.
Money-saving effort

The issue of the 12304b authority starts with the Pentagon. Guard and reserve troops saw repeated deployments during operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, and were mobilized with benefits like pre- and post-deployment Tricare health insurance and GI Bill accrual time, similar to active duty troops. As combat deployments slowed, the Pentagon looked to create mobilization authorities that would fill operational needs worldwide, but also trim the budget, Lukas said. The 12304b authorization was included in the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act and stripped most mobilization and deployment benefits, Lukas said, including the accumulation of GI Bill benefits. The Pentagon started activating reservists under the authorization in 2014, she said. "Mobilization authorities with benefits are expensive," Lukas said. "And the Pentagon did not have the money to offset the cost. Congress gave them exactly what they asked for."

The Pentagon did not produce answers to repeated requests from Stars and Stripes about how and why combatant commands choose to use 12304b instead of other authorities. One reason appears to be the need to balance mobilization with cuts to the active duty force and tighter defense spending. "We need more flexible access to the

reserve component, specifically for emerging missions," Gen. Daniel Allyn, the Army's vice chief of staff, told the House Armed Services Committee in February. The Pentagon's 2017 budget called for doubling reserve mobilizations, in part to ease the strain of operations across the globe, from the fight against the Islamic State group to ramped-up deployments in Europe in the face of growing Russian aggression. That means the use of 12304b is certain to increase in 2017 and beyond, Lukas said.

Cutting education benefits from certain reserve mobilizations is a frustrating evolution for the post-9/11 GI Bill, Lukas said. The benefit pays part or all tuition and a housing stipend based on a sliding scale of active duty time. It was designed as a recruitment and retention tool, she said, and deep cuts may signal to troops that time spent away from civilian careers is not worth the investment. "The reserves are going to move into retention problems because of things like 12304b. The services are slashing manpower. Employment is better on the outside now. How many reasons are there not to join?" she said. "Now there are more."

VA spokesman Randy Noller acknowledged that VA's hands are tied in granting GI Bill credit. "VA supports such a change and a legislative proposal was included in the president's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2017 that would amend the statutory provisions" of 12304b, he said. Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) proposed the National Guard 12304b Benefits Parity Act in May. The bill would grant GI Bill benefits to reservists along with health care and retirement benefits, according to Michael Dale-Stein, a spokesman for Franken. But it has not moved from the Senate's Armed Services Committee since its introduction. "The men and women who serve our country lay everything on the line to protect us, and in return, they deserve access to the support and benefits that they've rightfully earned," Franken said in a statement to Stars and Stripes. "But unfortunately, too many members of the National Guard in both Minnesota and across the country who served on active duty came home and couldn't get important health care and education support," he said.

A joint letter from Franken and Cornyn sent to Defense Secretary Ash Carter in April highlighted the issue. The senators asked Carter for his assistance in the letter, which described Minnesota National Guard troops deployed to Egypt, facing artillery and mortar fire for up to seven months. "Upon their return from duty, they applied for educational benefits only to learn that the Department had directed the Department of Veterans Affairs to issue a denial for active service under Section 12304b," the letter stated. [Source: Stars & Stripes | [Alex Horton](#) | November 25, 2016 ++]

SECDEF ► Carter Plans To Keep Doing His Job Until Replaced

Defense Secretary Ash Carter plans to keep doing his job, according to his spokesman, one day after the head of the Senate Armed Services Committee warned him against shoving through major personnel changes in the final weeks of the Obama administration. "The secretary will continue to carry out his responsibilities as the secretary of defense as he has up to this point, through the end of his term," Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook told reporters on 22 NOV. On Monday, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) wrote a letter to Carter telling him to avoid changing "long-standing policy" as this administration winds down.

"Many of the department's recent actions in this regard have been questionable and misguided, and any effort to continue in that direction during a presidential transition and lame-duck session of Congress would be inappropriate," McCain's letter said. McCain wrote that Congress will work next year "building on the landmark reforms that begun over the past two years" on the military personnel system. "This important, bipartisan work will proceed with the transparency, public scrutiny, and congressional oversight that it deserves. Until that time, please refrain from making and further implementing any major policy changes through executive action," McCain wrote.

Cook responded that he hasn't seen the letter. "I'm not aware if the secretary has read it. But of course, we'll work in collaboration with Congress as the secretary always does. He has a good relationship with Sen. McCain and the

secretary is prepared to carry out his responsibilities as required and will continue to do so." Cook deflected a follow-up question on whether that includes hiring and firing. "The secretary of defense will carry out his obligations as required," Cook said. It was one of a number of deflections Cook made amid a series of dicey issues, including budget planning, the transition to a new administration and reports that Carter and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper want National Security Agency Director Adm. Mike Rogers fired over data breaches.

- On Rogers, Cook said he's "not going to get into private conversations between the president and the secretary of defense."
- On reports that retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis is President-elect Trump's likely pick to lead the Pentagon: "I know you're going to be disappointed to hear that I'm not going to weigh in on potential choices made by the next president-elect with regard to this department and the next secretary of defense."
- Finally, on the status of the fiscal 2018 budget: "You're talking about a fiscal year '18 budget when we don't have a fiscal year '17 budget right now."

When a reporter pointed out that the budget must be finished by December, Cook responded: "We've been focused so much on the current budget situation. Yes, of course, work has been done towards the fiscal year '18 budget. But I'm not going to characterize exactly where it is at this particular moment in time, other than to say that the professionals within this department, including those responsible for the budget, are doing everything they need to ensure a smooth transition. [Source: Washington Examiner | Jamie McIntyre | November 22, 2016 ++]

JCS Chairman Q&A ► Gen. Dunford Sounds Off

After 15 years of war, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford said it's crucial that Americans continue honoring military families. The demographics of the military have changed drastically in recent decades, Dunford said during a leadership luncheon hosted by the National Military Family Association, a member of The Military Coalition. As a young company commander at Camp Pendleton, Calif., in the late 1970s, Dunford said only a handful of his Marines were married. Now more than half of all servicemembers are married, he said, and another 6 percent of them are single parents. "With that changing demographic comes a change in responsibility and change in requirements for support," Dunford said.

Military families are resilient, the chairman said, but their lifestyle can be trying. Frequent moves, training exercises, and deployments affect families. Dunford recalled watching his daughter graduate from college via livestream video from his computer and telling his son they had to move across the country during his senior year of high school. Strong support for military families hasn't always existed, and it's crucial that it remain a priority, Dunford said. MOAA spoke to the Joint Chiefs chairman about some of the challenges facing military families after leadership luncheon. Excerpts from that interview are below, edited for clarity.

Q. You talked about the resilience of military kids, including your own. What's your advice for young officers and military family members dealing with some of the challenges that come with this lifestyle?

A. One thing that I think we found out relatively late were all the services and support that are available. One of the first things I tell young couples that are challenged is to get out there and go to some of these events.

Each of the services, for example, have orientation courses for young spouses. Many times people don't take advantage of that so they don't learn about the services and support that is out there. I'd recommend they do that.

Q. With nearly 300,000 U.S. servicemembers currently deployed, operational tempo remains high. How can you help relieve the burden that has on military families?

A. The most important ingredient for family readiness is predictability, and that's one of the things we're really working hard on. My experience has been that folks can put up with the sacrifice, but it's the unexpected that really

makes it difficult. To the max extent possible, what we're trying to do right now is to make sure that the deployment cycles are predictable for our service people and their families.

Q. With budget cuts and personnel drawdowns, what are the biggest challenges facing troops today that worry you?

A. The thing that keeps me up at night is not giving them the support they need to accomplish the mission, so that's really what we're focused on. We have high-quality men and women, and I'm really proud of that. What I want to make sure is that we're providing them with the training, equipment, and the leadership that they deserve.

Q. As part of those budget cuts, servicemembers and their families have seen their pay raises capped, changes to their retirement and health care policies, and possible housing allowance cuts. Are you concerned that will impact your ability to retain top talent?

A. I wouldn't zero in on any one of those issues because to me, compensation is the perspective of the family holistically. It starts with the conversation the young sergeant or petty officer has at table after four years in the Army, Navy, or what have you.

They're looking at the challenges, the deployments, and their finances. At the end of the day, they need to be able to say, "I really like what I'm doing, I like the people I'm doing it with, and I believe in it." That's the first important piece of the conversation.

The second part of the conversation is, "We can educate our children - the quality at the schools is good, we have proper medical care, and our housing is adequate."

I think if we make sure servicemembers can have that kind of a conversation with their family, we can continue to retain high-quality people.

Q. How can advocacy organizations like NMFA and MOAA help ensure servicemembers and their families have what they need?

A. What the services do and what I can do as a leader only go so far. When you PCS and your kids need to change schools or your spouse needs to change jobs, you have to cut through the bureaucracy. For example, we moved from the West Coast to the East Coast when my son was going to be a senior in high school. Getting the courses set, getting college applications out, and getting teacher recommendations were all challenges we confronted. But because of the policies that have been put in place, it was a lot easier for us than it was for people 20 years ago.

Same thing for spouse employment - my wife was a physical therapist and she had to be relicensed in every single state that we moved to. She had to take a test and pay a fee just to work. Now, we have reciprocity in many states now, and the reason we have that is because these support organizations fought for it.

We've been at war for 15 years, and it would be natural for people to forget the sacrifices made by military families.

I think organizations like MOAA and others advocating on the Hill and frankly reminding the American people of what our families are dealing with is a really important part of the network of support that makes us who we are.

[Source: MOAA News Exchange | Gina Harkins | October 13, 2016 ++]

USS Seawolf (SSN-21) ► One of the Navy's Stealthiest

Sometime apparently in August 2013, the U.S. Navy's nuclear-powered attack submarine USS Seawolf eased out of the port of Bremerton, in Washington State, on what was probably her fifth or sixth deployment since commissioning in 1997. A month later the U.S. Sixth Fleet, in charge of ships in European waters, posted a series of photos to the Website Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cne-cna-c6f/9834438685/sizes/l>) depicting the U.S. ambassador to Norway, Barry White, touring the 350-foot-long Seawolf pierside at Haakonsvern naval base ... in southern Norway. Thousands of miles from Washington State. How Seawolf got to Norway—and what she might have done en route—offer a rare and tantalizing glimpse into some of the most secretive quarters of the most poorly

understood aspects of American naval power. For it seems Seawolf traveled to Norway along a path rarely taken by any vessel—underneath the Arctic ice.



Silent Service:

The Navy doesn't like to talk about its submarines. After all, a sub's biggest advantage is its stealth. And of the sailing branch's roughly 70 undersea boats, Seawolf and her two sister vessels Connecticut and Jimmy Carter are among the most secretive. Google the names of any of the Navy's Los Angeles-class submarines, the most numerous in the fleet, and you'll get hits: Navy statements and photo releases, the occasional news article. But try to look up Seawolf-class vessels and you'll get next to nothing. Her official Website www.seawolf.navy.mil is blocked. The last time Seawolf's exterior appeared in a Navy photo was 2009. That's because Seawolf and her sisters are special. Newer, bigger, faster and more heavily armed than standard attack submarines, the nearly \$3-billion-per-copy Seawolfs have been fitted with hundreds of millions of dollars in unique equipment and are assigned to their own special squadron in Washington State. They deploy for months at a time often without any public notice. The wife of a Seawolf sailor described the boat as "unpredictable."

A steady drumbeat of Navy citations is mute testimony to secret combat missions performed with apparent success. In 2007 Seawolf's 140-man crew earned a Meritorious Unit Commendation—roughly equivalent to a Bronze Star earned in combat—and in 2009 followed that up with a Navy Unit Commendation, equal to a Silver Star. We know what the submarine force as a whole does for a living: gather intelligence, launch cruise missiles at terrorists and rogue states, send commandos ashore for recon and raids. But we don't know which of these missions to attribute to Seawolf. Nor can we say for sure exactly where Seawolf plies her shadowy trade. She's normally assigned to the Pacific Fleet, but even that can change in a pinch.

Puzzle Pieces:

Here's what we do know. In March 2011 Seawolf's sister ship Connecticut was tapped for the rare honor of operating under the Arctic ice for tests. Connecticut and the brand-new Virginia-class sub New Hampshire (<https://warisboring.com/good-news-and-bad-news-in-new-u-s-sub-design-6a2e251be29c#.e8pb8immm>) sailed north of Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, for one of the Navy's infrequent "ICEX" exercises, begun after the submarine USS Nautilus, in 1958, became the first undersea boat to reach the North Pole. Connecticut "worked with the U.S. Navy Arctic Submarine Laboratory and the University of Washington Applied Physics Laboratory to test new equipment and train for under-ice operations in an arctic environment," the Navy announced. The new equipment included "high-frequency sonar for safe Arctic operations and the Raytheon Deep Siren acoustic communications system," the sailing branch added (http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=60127).

We know that Seawolf spent almost three years in drydock starting in September 2009. Contractors did \$280 million in work. And when Seawolf returned to the cold Pacific waters in April 2012, she was "even more capable

and effective than at any time in her 15 years of service," according to Cdr. Dan Packer, her skipper at the time. It's possible Seawolf received the same under-ice gear Connecticut tested in 2011. The Arctic is, after all, a new area of concern for the Navy. With the ice receding, new shipping lanes are opening up and foreign navies are getting more active. "We have some very fundamental interests—security interests—in the Arctic region," Adm. Gary Roughead, then the Navy's top officer, said in 2009.

Chilly Reception:

In any event, it's apparent that Seawolf has crossed over the top of the world for her current deployment. Practically speaking, there's no other way the vessel could have arrived in Norway mere weeks after departing her homeport in Washington State. So what was Seawolf doing under the ice? Most likely simply training ... for fighting under ice. For a submarine crew, going to the Arctic "gives us the opportunity to test our combat systems, our navigation systems, our communication systems and just what it's like to operate in this very challenging environment," Roughead said four years ago. And there are good reasons besides a tradition of secrecy to do so quietly. Consider Moscow's reaction to the 2009 ICEX. "Any action by foreign submarines in the vicinity of Russia's maritime borders naturally demand heightened scrutiny on our part," a Kremlin spokesperson warned. The Russians want to know what America's subs are doing, too.

[Source: The National Interest | David Axe | November 19, 2016 ++]

Gold Star Update 01 ► Family Booed on Flight to Recover Son's Remains

The father of a soldier who was killed in a deadly attack in Afghanistan told Army Times that he and his family were booed by their fellow passengers as they flew to meet his son's remains at Dover Air Force Base. Stewart Perry and his wife and daughter flew from Sacramento to Philadelphia on 21 NOV, with a layover in Phoenix. From Philadelphia, they took ground transportation to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Sgt. John Perry was killed when a suicide bomber detonated his vest on 19 NOV on Bagram Airfield. Pfc. Tyler Iubelt and two American contractors were also killed in the attack. Sixteen American and one Polish service member were wounded.

The American Airlines flight from Sacramento was delayed, leaving about 45 minutes behind schedule, according to Stewart Perry, and time was running out for the family to make their connecting flight in Phoenix. When the plane arrived in Arizona, the captain announced that everyone was to remain seated to allow the Perry family to leave first. "When he made that announcement, there was some hissing and some booing behind us," said Perry, who was sitting in first class.





Staff Sgt. John W. Perry (left), 30, of Stockton, California, and Pfc. Tyler R. Iubelt, 20, of Tamaroa, Illinois, were killed Nov. 12 in a deadly suicide bombing attack on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

Perry, a Marine veteran, doesn't remember the captain telling everyone the reason they had to wait, but he said he does recall the captain mentioning "military personnel." "I believe that the passengers knew there was a Gold Star family on board," he said. "The woman sitting directly behind us touched me on the shoulder and asked if I was the father of the soldier killed in Afghanistan." That leads Perry to believe some kind of announcement was made before he and his family sat down. "It was very disappointing," he said. "It's just enough to put you over the edge."

In Phoenix, the pilot of the connecting flight waited until he and his family were on board, Perry said. Perry said they weren't able to thank that pilot because of the rush, but that the pilot chose to sit there and wait for the Gold Star family. "We might have missed our son's arrival [at Dover] if we had missed that flight," he said. American Airlines was never the problem — it was the disrespectful attitude of some of the passengers on the flight to Phoenix, Perry said.

The Gold Star father said that regardless of whether the passengers knew the reason for the family's urgency, they should have been more tolerant. "Generally, as Americans, we need to be more compassionate to each other and to understand and listen and just stay calm," he said. Perry said people also need to be more respectful of the military. "I'm a civilian now so I can tolerate it and even say something back if I want to," he said. "If a military guy does that, he's in big trouble. They don't need that kind of grief." [Source: ArmyTimes | Charlsy Panzino | November 18, 2016 ++]

USAF Enlisted Promotion System ► Time in Service/Grade Points

Enlisted airmen will no longer get any points based on their longevity in the service or in their current grade when they are considered for promotion. The Air Force has been phasing out time-in-grade and time-in-service points since 2015 as part of a sweeping overhaul of the enlisted performance evaluation and promotion system. That year, their value was cut by one-third, and they were cut by another third in 2016. Beginning with the 2017 master sergeant promotion cycle, according to a 17 NOV release from the Air Force Personnel Center, airmen hoping for promotion to staff, technical, master or chief master sergeant will no longer receive any boost from how long they've served in the Air Force or their current rank. Promotions to senior master sergeant will drop the longevity points in 2018. E-8 promotions are typically announced in March, meaning the 2017 process was too far along to make the change in time-in-grade and time-in-service.

By scrapping longevity points entirely, the Air Force hopes to make the enlisted promotion system based more on how well airmen are actually performing, instead of how long they've been in. When the Air Force announced the second part of the longevity point phase-out in February, it left the door open a crack to delaying or otherwise

altering the final elimination of points, in case its reviews revealed something was wrong. But on Thursday, AFPC confirmed that those points will be eliminated entirely. The elimination of time-in-grade and time-in-service points ties up the last loose end from the Air Force's enlisted promotion overhaul, which was a major priority of outgoing Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Cody.

For years, airmen had complained that the enlisted promotion system was effectively incapable of differentiating between varying levels of performance. There were no limits on how many airmen could receive top performance ratings, for example, and the so-called "firewall 5" became a widely acknowledged problem from the rank-and-file to the top of the Pentagon. The new system sought to kill the firewall 5 by instituting a strict system of quotas, limiting how many airmen could get the top promotion recommendations. Another vast personnel overhaul may be just over the horizon. Lt. Gen. Gina Grosso, the Air Force's personnel chief, said at a forum in October that the service is starting to take a look at how officers are evaluated and promoted, and wants to reform that system as well. [Source: AirForceTimes | Stephen Losey | November 17, 2016 ++]

Diego Garcia Naval Base ► Lease Good Until 2036

Indian Ocean islanders who were forced from their homes decades ago to make way for a U.S. military base have been told by the British government that they can never return. Britain evicted about 2,000 people from the tropical Chagos archipelago, a British colony, in the 1960s and 1970s so the U.S. military could build an air base on Diego Garcia, the largest of the islands. The islanders were sent to the Seychelles and Mauritius, two island nations off Africa's east coast, and many eventually resettled in the U.K. The Chagossians have fought in British courts for years to return to the islands. In June, the Supreme Court rejected their most recent appeal.

The British government announced 16 NOV that it will continue to lease Diego Garcia to the U.S. until 2036. It said it has decided against letting the islanders return "on the grounds of feasibility, defense and security interests, and cost to the British taxpayer." Foreign Office Minister Joyce Anelay said it would be impractical to set up "a small remote community on low-lying islands."



Note: I (EMO) spent my last 2 years in the Navy at NAVCOMMSTA on Diego Garcia. There are only four types of animal life living on the island plus a lot of coconut trees. Land Crabs, wild cats, wild chickens, and wild donkeys all protected by the British government. Natives used to export copra before they were forced to leave. The cats were needed to eat the rats which came ashore from the Copra ships, the donkeys were used to pull the carts loaded with copra down to the ships, and the chickens supplied locals with meat and eggs. No fresh water source other than the rains which form pools in the coral which is enough to support the animal life.

[Source: The Associated Press | Jill Lawless | November 17, 2016 ++]

Trump Election Update 04 ► What Troops Think Poll

Between Nov. 10 and 14, Military Times and Times/Institute for Military and Veterans Families (IVMF) conducted a voluntary, confidential online survey of U.S. service members. The questions focused on the nation's current political climate, the results of the 2016 presidential election and other relevant issues. The survey received 2,790 responses from active-duty troops. A standard methodology was used by IVMF analysts to estimate the weights for each individual observation of the survey sample. The margin of error for most questions was less than 2%. The survey audience was 86 percent male and 14% female, and had a mean age of 29.6 years old. The respondents identified themselves as 71% white, 14% Hispanic, 10% African American, 4% Asian and 9% other ethnicities. Respondents were able to select more than one race.

Despite overwhelming support for President-elect Donald Trump among active-duty troops, one in four service members worries he may issue orders that violate military rules or traditions, according to the Poll. The responses, collected just after Trump's surprise election night victory, come amid uncertainty of what the one-time business mogul's Pentagon will look like, who will lead his national security strategy and whether he can fulfill his promises to boost military spending in coming years. . Among those who voted:

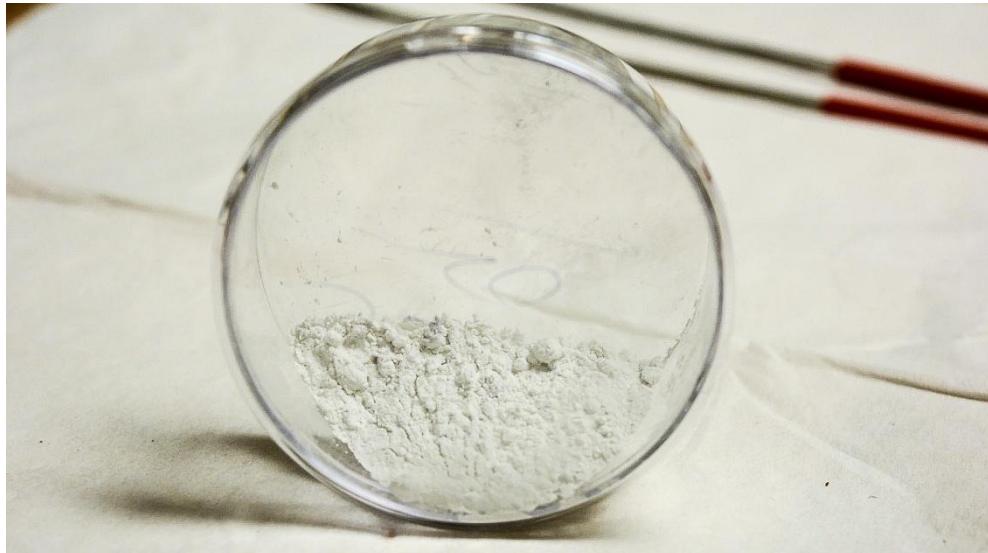
- 51 percent said they supported Trump. Many expressed optimism at his election, predicting a stronger military and better quality of life for service members.
- More than 60 percent said they think the new president will be able to work with Congress to find a solution to defense spending caps, and 56 percent said they believe Trump will improve troops' pay and benefits.
- 54 percent of troops surveyed believe Trump will be able to address the threat posed by Islamic State militants in the Middle East.
- A sizable portion expressed serious concerns about the election of the unconventional, controversial Republican nominee. More than 27% said that having Trump as commander in chief will negatively affect their military job or mission. Among officers, 39% expressed those concerns. Among women, 55% worry their jobs will be adversely affected.
- One in five service members surveyed — and 54% of troops who voted for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton — said they are unlikely to re-enlist with Trump as commander in chief.
- Few troops believe that Trump will be able to end the 15-year-old military mission in Afghanistan during his term in the White House. Only 28% think he can have success in that area, compare to 34 percent who answered "not at all."
- Roughly 80% said they voted in November's election. Another 12% said they didn't because of various barriers to casting their ballot, while 8% said they made the decision not to participate.

Trump's opponents — both Democrats and Republicans — raised similar concerns throughout the presidential campaign. In March, he had to walk back comments indicating he would tell U.S. troops to go after civilian family members of suspected terrorists and use torture to break uncooperative enemy prisoners. In a statement, he vowed that "I will not order a military officer to disobey the law." In September, he hinted that he would dismiss or sideline generals that disagreed with his plans to combat terrorism, comments that upset critics. [Source: Military times | Leo Shane & George R. Altman | November 18, 2016 ++]

Army Fight Against Sand ► Aircraft Hazard

The Army is researching how to fight an enemy that's so small it can slip through the tiny crevices of an aircraft and wreak havoc on the engine. Although this enemy doesn't have advanced technology or weapons, it can bring an

aircraft to the ground. The researchers are fighting sand, but instead of trying to keep it out of an aircraft completely, scientists at the Army Research Laboratory are trying to stop the particles from sticking to the blades of the engine. Typically, the engines have initial particle separators that weed out larger particles of sand, but the smaller particles still make it through, said Anindya Ghoshal, chief scientist for the laboratory's Vehicle Technology Directorate.



Sand Powder

The sand that makes it through the separator is similar to a powder rather than grains of sand found on a beach. After escaping the separator, the fine particles can melt and destroy the ceramic coating that's normally on the engine blades, he said. The blades normally go through hot and cold cycles, which means they also expand and contract. The molten sand particles crack the coating, exposing the bond coating underneath, Ghoshal explained. Once that coating is depleted, the blade temperature goes beyond the capabilities of the material itself and eventually the blade is destroyed, causing loss of the engine. The less air flow the engine has, the less power it has, which can result in a crash.

The research team is studying different kinds of materials to create coatings that can withstand the tiny particles without being damaged. These "sandphobic" coatings would be used in regions where the Army faces brownout conditions, where sand and dust particulates are ingested into the engines. The team of scientists is using a hot particulate ingestion rig to shoot sand into the hot-gas flow and quickly prototype new coating materials. The team also used high-speed imaging to confirm that sand particles are in molten form when impacting the thermal barrier coatings on the blades — the first experiment of its kind in the scientific community, researchers said. "We're looking to develop materials that are capable of withstanding higher temperatures," said Andy Nieto, a postdoctoral fellow at the Army Research Laboratory. The research can also be used beyond the military. Sandphobic coatings can be used on commercial aircraft, as well.

When a volcano erupts, for example, airplanes usually have to avoid those areas. Volcanic ash has an effect on jet engines, as does pollution in cities in China and India, said David McNally, with the lab's public affairs office. Ghoshal said the current strategy of trying to solve the problem of damaged engines is putting a layer on top of the thermal barrier coating that's more sand resistant. "It's not very good because you have a mismatch [of coatings]," he said. "It allows for breaking off." The team is trying to come up with a spray technique that blends different materials together. The target is to have the coating developed in three to five years. It's important research since engine failure from sand and dust particles have led to loss of aircraft and life, said Michael Walock, a physicist on the sandphobic coatings team. "As we go into theater or zones where we think there's pollution or dust or sand, we

send war fighters into hazardous environments," he said. "We want to make them safer and make our Army strong." [Source: Army Times | Charlsy Panzino | November 17, 2016 ++]

Pelvic Protector ► New Harness Protects Groin from Blast Debris

The Army is rolling out a new pelvic protector to shield soldiers from painful and potentially life-threatening injuries caused by the debris, dirt and dust kicked up in an improvised explosive device blast. The blast pelvic protector, a lightweight ballistic harness that protects soldiers from underneath, was designed by a team at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development & Engineering Center. It is meant to avoid the multiple surgeries it takes to remove the debris that commonly gets lodged in a soldier's groin area in the event of a blast. Those wounds are not only painful but can lead to deadly infections.

The piece is meant to improve on the groin-protecting flap that comes with a body armor kit, which can only protect against a fragmentation explosion from the front, said Kristine Isherwood, a mechanical engineer at NSRDEC and the project's lead, in a 15 NOV phone interview with Army Times. "It's meant to mitigate not so much a life-threatening situation as a quality of life," she said. The harness does, however, cover a good portion of the inner thigh, protecting the femoral artery and making it look like a very short set of chaps or a pair of shorts rather than the diaper-like design of some other blast protectors on the market. That design was the key to the whole project, said lead designer Cara Tuttle, because they knew if it looked too ridiculous, soldiers wouldn't wear it.



"The shape of the design came about due to considering soldier acceptability. If something isn't designed with this sort of 'cool' factor, then soldiers are less likely to wear it," she said. "The factor that it looks like a harness and not a diaper, for instance, helps make it more acceptable to soldiers to wear." The team decided early on that it should be worn outside the uniform, rather than as an undergarment or built into uniform pants, for several reasons.

"One clear thing is hygiene issues," Isherwood said. "It's easier to have a separate piece where the guys can launder their trousers separate from this protective equipment. And you can visually confirm that yes, they're wearing it, they didn't forget it over at the laundry."

There are some commercially available blast protection underwear on the market already, but they wouldn't be of use in an Army where many soldiers forgo that layer altogether. "We did look at some boxer-type things that even had a pelvic protector," Isherwood said. "We knew that the hardened cup wouldn't be comfortable." The outerwear also offered the best fit, because it can be adjusted on-the-go and fit snugly against the pants rather than rubbing on

skin. "It's cut not only to allow for mobility but also to allow access to the pockets," Tuttle said. "As far as the fit, it has buckles at the hips, which also have a little bit of elastic there, so you can adjust the buckles to fit pretty snugly. And as they bend and move, that elastic there allows it to flex with the body and helps to maintain the fit." The harness also adds minimal weight and bulk to a combat kit because it's made of layers of Kevlar, woven in a zig-zag pattern, that lay flat but also keep dust and debris from blasting through seams.

The team finished the design in 2012 and handed it over to the product manager for soldier protective equipment at Natick, which helped refine the design and secure the patent for it. Now they're working on fielding the harness, NSRDEC spokesman David Accetta said. Soldiers can expect to start seeing these protectors at the end of fiscal year 2017, said Debi Dawson, a spokeswoman for PEO Soldier. There are also opportunities for the other services to pick it up. "I imagine if they had an interest in it they could talk to PEO [Soldier] about it," Isherwood said. "From a commercial perspective, there's an interest in this type of item for first responders." [Source: ArmyTimes | Meghann Myers | November 16, 2016 ++]

USMC 3-D Printer ► Additive Manufacturing in the Field

The future of Marine Corps logistics took shape last month in the form of a plastic Humvee door handle printed in an Arizona desert. Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 372 successfully generated the replacement part using a 3-D printer under austere field conditions during the Weapons and Tactics Instructor course, a seven-week training school for advanced air and ground tactics aboard Marine Corps Air Station Yuma. "I'm nerdy, so to me this is pretty awesome," Capt. Marc Blair, combat engineer officer with the unit, said in a statement. "Imagine what the battlefield could be like in 15 years."

MWSS-372 became one of the first units in the Marine Corps to experiment with 3-D printing -- also known as "additive manufacturing" -- after Commandant Gen. Robert Neller put out a call to action in September for Marines to begin exploring the new technology that allows a user to design and fabricate parts on the spot. Marine administrative message 489/16 lays out policy guidance on using 3-D printers to fix or replace worn and broken parts, redesign existing parts and conjure up entirely new parts which might do the job better. "Furthermore, [additive manufacturing] can 'print' prosthetics, electronic components, large scale decoys, unmanned aerial vehicles and expeditionary shelters," the MARADMIN states. "The uses and limits of [3-D printing] have only just begun to be discovered."



The potential impact on the Corps is enormous, especially downrange. While high-end items tend to be generally well-stocked, smaller, cheap plastic parts -- like Humvee handles -- are all-too-often harder to come by. Blair chanced upon a 3-D printer demonstration while attending an emerging technologies roadshow held by Marine Corps Systems Command to scope new engineering gear. He recognized its potential, and spearheaded efforts to

procure funding for a 3-D printer for MWSS-372 through Installations and Logistics' Next Log Innovation Cell. "It's a really basic model," said Capt. Kristina Warren, motor transport company commander with MWSS-372, in the release. "It's actually meant for K-12 students in order to get the basics of 3-D printing down." Setting the machine up took three hours the first time, Warren said, but she is confident it would take less than an hour now that they're familiar with it. The print time for the new handle: 45 minutes. "Being able to quick[ly] print a part instead of having to wait for the field supply system could give us some huge capabilities in the long run," she said. [Source: Defense News | Matthew L. Schehl | November 21, 2016 ++]

Petty Officer Advancement List ► Active Duty & Reserve Listing

Over 24,000 sailors have good news to share over Thanksgiving: They earned a petty officer crow or another stripe. What's not included on the list are the many sailors spot advanced by their commands before Oct. 1. However, these advancements were factored into advancement for this cycle. Congratulations to all the selectees!

Active-duty E-6

<u>ABE1</u>	to	AG1
<u>AM1</u>	to	ATO1
<u>AWF1</u>	to	DC1
<u>EA1</u>	to	ETV1
<u>FC1</u>	to	HM1
<u>HT1</u>	to	MA1
<u>MC1</u>	to	OS1
<u>PR1</u>	to	YN1

Active-duty

E-5

<u>ABE2</u>	to	AD2
<u>AE2</u>	to	AM2
<u>AME2</u>	to	ATI2
<u>ATO2</u>	to	AWV2
<u>AZ2</u>	to	BU2
<u>CE2</u>	to	CTN2
<u>CTR2</u>	to	EN2
<u>EO2</u>	to	ETV2
<u>FC2</u>	to	FT2
<u>GM2</u>	to	GSM2
<u>HM2</u>	to	IS2
<u>IT2</u>	to	LS2
<u>MA2</u>	to	MC2
<u>MM2</u>	to	MMN2
<u>MMW2</u>	to	PR2
<u>PS2</u>	to	SO2
<u>STG2</u>	to	YN2

Active-duty

E-4

<u>ABE3</u>	to	ABH3
<u>AC3</u>	to	AE3
<u>AG3</u>	to	AM3
<u>AME3</u>	to	AQ3
<u>AS3</u>	to	ATI3
<u>ATO3</u>	to	AZ3
<u>BM3</u>	to	CM3
<u>CS3</u>	to	DC3
<u>EA3</u>	to	ETR3
<u>ETV3</u>	to	GSM3
<u>HM3</u>	to	IS3
<u>IT3</u>	to	LS3
<u>MA3</u>	to	ND3
<u>OS3</u>	to	SH3
<u>STG3</u>	to	YN3

Reserve

E-6

<u>ABE1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AG1</u>
<u>AM1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ATO1</u>
<u>AWF1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>DC1</u>
<u>EA1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ETV1</u>
<u>FC1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>HM1</u>
<u>HT1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>MA1</u>
<u>MC1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>OS1</u>
<u>PR1</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>YN1</u>

Reserve		E-5
<u>ABE2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AD2</u>
<u>AE2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AM2</u>
<u>AME2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ATI2</u>
<u>ATO2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AWV2</u>
<u>AZ2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>BU2</u>
<u>CE2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>CTN2</u>
<u>CTR2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>EN2</u>
<u>EO2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ETV2</u>
<u>FC2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>FT2</u>
<u>GM2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>GSM2</u>
<u>HM2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>IS2</u>
<u>IT2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>LS2</u>
<u>MA2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>MC2</u>
<u>MM2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>MMN2</u>
<u>MMW2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>PR2</u>
<u>PS2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>SO2</u>
<u>STG2</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>YN2</u>

Reserve		E-4
<u>ABE3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ABH3</u>
<u>AC3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AE3</u>
<u>AG3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AM3</u>
<u>AME3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AO3</u>
<u>AS3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ATI3</u>
<u>ATO3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>AZ3</u>
<u>BM3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>CM3</u>
<u>CS3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>DC3</u>
<u>EA3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ETR3</u>
<u>ETV3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>GSM3</u>
<u>HM3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>IS3</u>
<u>IT3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>LS3</u>
<u>MA3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>ND3</u>
<u>OS3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>SH3</u>
<u>STG3</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>YN3</u>

FTS/canvasser recruiter selections
First, second and third class FTS petty officers and
canvasser recruiter selections

[Source: Navy Times | Staff report | November 23, 2016++]

*** Military History ***



Military History: Bataan & Corregidor ► Battlefield Chronicles

Within hours of their December 7, 1941, attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the Japanese military began its assault on the Philippines, bombing airfields and bases, harbors and shipyards. Manila, the capital of the Philippines, sits on Manila Bay, one of the best deep-water ports in the Pacific Ocean, and it was, for the Japanese, a perfect resupply point for their planned conquest of the southern Pacific. After the initial air attacks, 43,000 men of the Imperial Japanese 14th Army went ashore on 22 DEC at two points on the main Philippine island of Luzon. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the supreme commander of all Allied forces in the Pacific, cabled Washington, D.C., that he was ready to repel this main invasion force with 130,000 troops of his own. To read an account of what happened thereafter refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**WW2 - Bataan & Corregidor**". [Source: Together We Served | November 2016 ++]

World War I Memorial Update 09 ► Reasons Why It is Needed

There is an effort underway by the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission to create a national memorial to the American veterans of World War I in Washington, D.C. Leon Panetta, former Defense Secretary, firmly support this effort. World War I is the only great war of the 20th century that doesn't have a national memorial in the nation's capital. That, in itself, makes it important enough for us to do everything possible to make this a reality. But this memorial is important for a number of other reasons.

First, we have to honor those, and the memory of those, who served our country. World War I involved 5 million men and women who came together in uniform, including 2 million who went overseas and 116,516 who died in the war. We need to take the time to remember their brave sacrifices. As defense secretary, Panetta had the responsibility to deploy men and women in uniform to our battlefields. He was always reminded of the fact that this country is great because there are those men and women who are willing to put their lives at risk, men and women who will fight, and die, for this country. I've always wondered where these brave young people come from, and why they are willing to do this for us. We have to remember them, those men and women, who were willing to sacrifice so much to defend their nation.

Second, it's important that we remember that World War I was really what brought America to the role of world leadership. World War I was the first time the U.S. engaged with the rest of the world and provided the leadership necessary for the rest of the world to unify to confront a common enemy. We continue to bear the responsibility of world leadership today. The reality is that if the U.S. doesn't provide leadership in a very troubled world, no one else will. And so, it was World War I that brought America onto the world stage, creating a role we continue to play.

Third, it's very important that this National World War I Memorial be a reminder for the lessons we need to learn from that war. Panetta and his wife have an institute for public policy, and every year, they conduct lectures there that have a common theme. One of the themes they considered was "100 Years From the Beginning of World War I – 1914-2014." It was basically a forum to discuss the changes that have taken place since 1914-1915, but as he thought about it, and as they had that conversation, they realized that many of the world's flashpoints in 1914 are similar to the flashpoints we confront today: terrorism, nationalism, territorial disputes, fragile alliances. World leadership that wasn't quite able to see what those threats were really about, or how to deal with them in a way that would prevent a world war from happening.

These lessons need to be learned, and need to be remembered. We are living today in a world that has a number of flashpoints: Terrorism. Failed states. People who want to create instability. A new chapter in the Cold War with

Russia. Territorial disputes with China. The threat of cyberwarfare, which has the potential to literally cripple this country. Are we smart enough to deal with all of those challenges, so that we don't find ourselves in another major conflict? Those are lessons from World War I that we need to learn. Memorials help remind us, and provide those important lessons.

Finally, Panetta supports this memorial for personal reasons. His father fought in World War I, in the Italian army. He used to tell his son what it was like in those conflicts, and how brutal it was at that time. He fought in the Piave Valley, and was wounded in that battle. To hear him tell of his experiences, and to remember what kind of sacrifices he made, had a tremendous impact on Panetta during his service in the U.S. Army. A generation later, Panetta's son served in Afghanistan as a member of U.S. special forces. He, too, carried that memory. It's important that families remember those personal sacrifices.



U.S. soldiers climb over a sandbag revetment in France during World War I in 1918

We need to have people in this country understand what war is all about. We forget too quickly. There are people who don't even remember 9/11, much less World War I. We can't afford to forget those conflicts. We can't forget the people who fought them. We can't afford to forget their lessons. If we are to make the right decisions in the future, we better damn well understand the past. [Source: Special to Military Times | Leon Panetta | November 28, 2016 ++]

Women in Military Service Memorial Update 03 ► Needs Your Help

What is the memorial?

The Women in Military Service for America Memorial, commonly known as the Women's Memorial, is in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. More than 150,000 people visit each year, and it's one of the first sights visitors see as they drive toward the entrance of the cemetery. Women who served can also register their name and record their experiences for posterity. More than 300,000 have registered so far since the memorial opened in 1997, and it ensures a place in history for them.

What's inside? The memorial features exhibits and collections, including artifacts dating back to World War I. Medical instruments used by women during the first World War are on display, as well as rare personal photographs and uniforms from the 197,500 women who served during the Vietnam War era. Visitors can also see the Comfort quilt, which was made aboard the Comfort hospital ship during its 2003 deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

How much does it cost to stay open? Retired Army Maj. Gen. Dee McWilliams, president of the memorial foundation, said it takes about \$2.5 million a year to keep the memorial running. The bulk of the cost goes toward paying the rent and office staff. Utilities alone cost the foundation \$10,000 a month.

Is the memorial in danger of closing? McWilliams said that while finances aren't exactly great, the donations and support from others have put the memorial on a brighter path. "Nine months ago, we might be saying we might not be staying open 'til Christmas," she said. "It's not as bad as it used to be, but we're not healthy." Half of the office staff was laid off in order to cut expenses, and the off-site administrative office was downsized.

How can people help? Through a partnership with the AcademyWomen's MilitaryWomen eMentor Community, a fundraiser has begun to raise money for the Women's Memorial. The goal is to raise \$20 million or \$20 from each of the approximately 2 million living women veterans. Visit <https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/11B7O7> to donate. AcademyWomen is a nonprofit professional mentoring and networking organization.

[Source: ArmyTimes | Charlay Panzino | November 29, 2016 ++]



Operation Paul Bunyan ► Korean Poplar Tree Trimming Incident

In the Joint Security Area, near the Bridge of No Return, a 100-foot poplar tree blocked the line of sight between a United Nations Command (UNC) checkpoint (CP No. 3) and an observation post (OP No. 5). The American and South Korean soldiers went off to chop down the tree. Instead, they were chopped into pieces by ax-wielding North Korean soldiers. And what should have been a case of routine landscaping nearly triggered a second Korean War. Thousands of lives could have been lost, and the Korean peninsula devastated as it had been in 1950. All because of a tree, a hot-tempered North Korean lieutenant and the most heavily armed border zone on Earth.

The tale begins on the morning of August 18, 1976, when a United Nations Command work party entered the Joint Security Area in the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea. Their mission was to trim the branches of a poplar tree that was obscuring the view of UNC observers monitoring the Joint Security Area. The five Korean Service Corps civilian workers were escorted by eleven American and South Korean soldiers and two U.S. Army officers, Capt. Arthur Bonifas and 1st Lt. Mark Barrett. Bonifas and Barrett were unarmed due to limits on armed personnel in the area. Yet despite some previous tense encounters with North Korean guards, there was no reason to expect trouble. The tree-trimming had already been scheduled with North Korean representatives.

What happened next, according to the U.S. account, is that a group of fifteen North Korean soldiers arrived, led by a North Korean lieutenant named Pak Chul who had proved belligerent on previous occasions. After watching the trimming for a while, Pak then warned the work party to stop because the tree allegedly had been planted by North Korea's Kim Il-sung. After Bonifas ordered the work to continue, a North Korean truck arrived with twenty

more guards. At a signal by Pak, they jumped the work party. Some of the attackers grabbed axes that the workers had left on the ground. The fight lasted perhaps thirty seconds, but that was enough time for most of the UNC guards to be wounded. Bonifas was beset by several North Koreans and beaten to death. Barrett disappeared, but UNC personnel observed that a North Korean guard would take an ax and disappear into a depression, before coming out a few minutes later and handing the ax to another guard, who would then go down. Eventually realizing what was happening, UNC soldiers went to the depression and found Barrett badly wounded but alive. He died on the way to hospital.



Engineers begin the tree cutting

Pyongyang quickly denounced the incident as a provocation by American imperialist “hoodlums.” “Four persons from our side went to the spot to warn them not to continue the work without our consent,” said a North Korean press release. “Against our persuasion, they attacked our guards en masse and committed a serious provocative act of beating our men, wielding murderous weapons and depending on the fact that they outnumbered us.” Perhaps North Korea believed the “imperialists” were so exhausted from the Vietnam War that they wouldn’t dare go to war in Korea. Perhaps North Korea reckoned that it could get away with killing U.S. soldiers without retaliation, as it had after seizing the spy ship USS Pueblo in 1968, and shooting down an EC-121 spy plane in 1969. Or, perhaps a junior officer, raised in North Korea’s hypermartial atmosphere, simply went mad.

Either way, this time there were consequences. President Gerald Ford authorized **Operation Paul Bunyan**, a show of force intended to show North Korea that America could only be pushed so far. On August 21, just three days after the murders, a team of sixteen U.S. Army engineers went back to the poplar, armed with chainsaws. They were escorted by sixty Joint Security Force soldiers armed with sidearms and ax handles. Hardly an intimidating display of strength. But what stunned the North Korean guards was the line of AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters hovering on the South Korean side of the border. Behind the Cobras were B-52s escorted by U.S. and South Korean F-4 and F-5 fighters. On airfields in South Korea were F-111 strike jets supported by more fighters, while a U.S. aircraft carrier had moved into the area. On the ground and ready to support the new work party were U.S. infantry, armor and artillery.

Meanwhile, the ever-tough South Koreans sprang their own surprise. A sixty-four-man South Korean special forces team supported the work party. They were supposed to be unarmed, relying on their tae kwon do skills if the North Koreans attacked. Understandably, the commandos chose gun fu instead of kung fu: once their truck had crossed into the Joint Security Area, they pulled out hidden guns and grenade launchers. Some had Claymore mines strapped to their chest, detonators clutched in their hands, as they dared the North Koreans to attack.

A young American soldier who escorted the second work party recalled the scene. *There I am, close to two million people stretched all along the DMZ and who knows how many tens of thousands within probably three miles*

of where we are at, nukes in the air (aboard B-52's), who knows how much artillery from both sides concentrated on our location, crazy guys with mines on their chest yelling at the North Koreans to come on over, KPA [North Korean soldiers] less than 100 meters away with machineguns and AK-47's trained on us, and me and my buddies are standing around with axe handles and .45's. I'm looking north at all of the various North Korean bunkers I know about, the ones pointed out to me, and the ones I've watched being built during the last year, expecting at any moment I'll see a puff of smoke and flame, the signal that their artillery has fired. It's almost laughable, probably would be in a movie, but all I'm thinking now is that I hope I can take a couple (KPA) with me.

The North Korean response was to do . . . nothing. The branches of the poplar tree came down. The work party returned home without incident. In one sense, nothing changed. In the forty years since the ax murder incident, North Korea has attacked South Korean ships, shelled South Korean islands, sent commandos to raid South Korean territory, committed numerous acts of terrorism, developed nuclear weapons and is now developing ICBMs that can reach the United States. On the other hand, the message was sent. Push America too far at your own peril. Whether North Korea still remembers that message remains to be seen. For a video on the operation refer to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ifn3qu33Tu8>. [Source: The National Interest | Michael Peck | November 20, 2016 ++]

Military History Anniversaries ► 01 thru 15 DEC

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 DEC**”. [Source: This Day in History <http://www.history.com>this-day-in-history> | November 2016 ++]

Medal of Honor Citations ► Ehlers, Walter D | WWII



*The President of the United States in the name of The Congress
takes pleasure in presenting the
Medal of Honor
to*

WALTER D. EHLERS

Rank and organization: Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division

Place and date: Near Goville, France, 9-10 June 1944

Entered service: Manhattan, Kans. on June 26, 1917

Born: May 7, 1921, in Junction City, Kansas

Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 9-10 June 1944, near Goville, France. S/Sgt. Ehlers, always acting as the spearhead of the attack, repeatedly led his men against heavily defended enemy strong points exposing himself to deadly hostile fire whenever the situation required heroic and courageous leadership. Without waiting for an order, S/Sgt. Ehlers, far ahead of his men, led his squad against a strongly defended enemy strong point, personally killing 4 of an enemy patrol who attacked him en route. Then crawling forward under withering machinegun fire, he pounced upon the guncrew and put it out of action. Turning his attention to 2 mortars protected by the crossfire of 2 machineguns, S/Sgt. Ehlers led his men through this hail of bullets to kill or put to flight the enemy of the mortar section, killing 3 men himself. After mopping up the mortar positions, he again advanced on a machinegun, his progress effectively covered by his squad. When he was almost on top of the gun he leaped to his feet and, although greatly outnumbered, he knocked out the position single-handed. The next day, having advanced deep into enemy territory, the platoon of which S/Sgt. Ehlers was a member, finding itself in an untenable position as the enemy brought increased mortar, machinegun, and small arms fire to bear on it, was ordered to withdraw. S/Sgt. Ehlers, after his squad had covered the withdrawal of the remainder of the platoon, stood up and by continuous fire at the semicircle of enemy placements, diverted the bulk of the heavy hostile fire on himself, thus permitting the members of his own squad to withdraw. At this point, though wounded himself, he carried his wounded automatic rifleman to safety and then returned fearlessly over the shell-swept field to retrieve the automatic rifle which he was unable to carry previously. After having his wound treated, he refused to be evacuated, and returned to lead his squad. The intrepid leadership, indomitable courage, and fearless aggressiveness displayed by S/Sgt. Ehlers in the face of overwhelming enemy forces serve as an inspiration to others.



Ehlers in combat gear prior to being sent overseas and speaking at a 2007 ceremony commemorating the anniversary of D-Day

Walter and his older brother Roland served in the same unit and participated in the fighting in North Africa and Sicily. By D-Day on June 6, 1944, Ehlers was a staff sergeant and squad leader in the 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. His squad, part of the invasion's second wave, waited off shore in a Landing Craft, Infantry, while the first group of soldiers landed. When the first wave became pinned down on the beach, his unit was transferred to a Higgins boat and sent forward early to assist. They fought their way off the beach and by 9 JUN were near the town of Goville, 8 miles inland.[4] On that day, he performed the action noted in his MOH Citation. On July 14,

more than a month after D-Day, Ehlers learned that his brother Roland had died at Omaha Beach when his landing craft was struck by a mortar shell.

Ehlers appeared in the 1955 film The Long Gray Line, starring Tyrone Power. He went on to work for the Veterans Administration, and as a security guard at Disneyland, California. Ehlers died on February 20, 2014 of kidney failure in Long Beach, California. He was 92 years old. He was buried at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California. He is survived by his wife, 3 children, and 11 grandchildren, all of whom are still living. Only one however will carry on the family name, his grandson Gunnar. His Medal of Honor is on display at the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana.

[Source: <http://www.history.army.mil/moh> | November 2016 ++]

WWII Normandy



D-Day in France, June 6th, 1944, and June 6th, 2016

* Health Care *



Diabetes Update 09 ► What's Your A1c?

Steve Biever was slowly dying and nobody knew why. There were blinding headaches, loss of vision and unexplainable pains. Getting out of bed was a chore. Deep depression set in. Then he met Carole Cole, a nurse and certified diabetic educator at the Appleton VA Clinic. "Have you ever had an A1c?" she asked. A1c is a diabetic test to see how well your body controls the amount of sugar in the blood. Normal levels are between 4 and 5.6 percent. Biever's were over 11 percent — far into the danger zone on the glucose scale, with a high risk of severe complications, including organ failure. He was only 43, but his body was attacking itself and shutting down. "Carole saved my life, no question about it," Biever said. "She said, 'Oh my Lord, this should have been tested three years

ago!' But damn it, I never complained. I had all the symptoms — going to the bathroom 10 times a night, shakes, blurry vision, and the first thing I thought was, 'I'm an Army guy. I can handle this.' But then I couldn't handle it."

Out-of-control blood sugar can lead to blindness, kidney failure, loss of circulation, heart disease, stroke and dementia. "I can't take all the credit," VA's Cole said. "Steve was pretty sick and had multiple health problems, plus other issues that weren't diagnosed yet. At first, he was treated for individual symptoms, but the more we start talking and the more he started telling me about all the symptoms, it seemed obvious." Biever is more to the point: "She's my guardian angel. I'm here today because of her." Doctors immediately put Biever on Metformin, a drug to help regulate his blood sugars. Cole told him about the first-ever Diabetes Camp that was scheduled a couple weeks later at Camp American Legion. That was 2012. The camp was the brainchild of Diane Kesler, also a certified diabetic educator and nurse at the clinic, who each year brings Cole and other nurses and staff to manage the program, all on their own time.

Biever has since lost 56 pounds and is an ongoing success story at the annual Diabetes Camp to help Veterans learn about and manage their disease. He was at Camp American Legion in Lake Tomahawk, Wis., this past September, along with 26 other Veterans from the Appleton area who were learning how to understand and manage their diabetes. "I was still so sick and I don't know how she talked me into it. I came up that first year, and couldn't even get out of bed for the first part of it," Biever said. "That's how sick I was. I couldn't even make it to some of the events. I was near death."



Veterans deal with diabetes at unique Diabetes Camp

Biever, who spent three years in the Army and another 10 in the National Guard and Reserve, wasn't always that way. He built a successful DJ company and depended on his energy as part of his career. "It really did sneak up, and nobody expects that," he said. "At first you say you don't feel good, and then it gets worse. I couldn't figure it out. I don't get the flu. I don't get colds. I don't drink. I don't do drugs. And it's really weird because I just lost a friend to diabetes and still didn't realize. "But they call diabetes a silent killer," Biever added. "It's very slow, it's very painful. You lose a toe. Then you lose half a foot. Then you lose a leg. I love life. I'm an actor, or at least I'm trying to be. I run my company, and can't afford to be sick. If you're a fisherman, you don't go fishing for trout in the toilet. You have to get to events like this and get educated."

After staying in bed all day that first Friday, Biever made it out of his cabin Saturday and Sunday to eat and socialize with some of the other Vets. "It was almost like an AA meeting, where people start sharing their stories

and you find out you aren't alone and there might be some hope," he said. "But there is no magic wand. I was told you aren't gonna get better unless you want to make it better. And if you want to make it better, you gotta exercise and eat right. You have to talk to the dietitian." Biever changed his diet. He walks and works out on the cardio equipment at his local gym. And slowly, ever so slowly, the weight dropped and he felt better. He went from 228 to 170 pounds. "Every day you feel a little better, but when you're so sick you don't realize it. It took me two years before I felt like I got my life back." Cole said those who are newly diagnosed have the hardest time working on a diet. "You tell them to go to a dietitian and they will say, 'I'm not going to listen to some skinny person tell me how to eat.' They stay in denial and think it won't matter until they get too sick and then it can be like putting scrambled eggs back together in the shell. The sooner people accept it and work at it, the better their chances."

Even though Cole is retired, she said the Diabetes Camp is one of her favorite times of the year and she never misses it. For Cole, this fight is personal. "My dad died at 65 from diabetes. If he had something like this and if somebody talked to him, maybe he would have listened. Diabetes is the number one cause of heart disease. It's the number one cause of non-traumatic amputations. It's the number one cause of retinopathy blindness." "When you get sick and tired of being sick, then you meet with a dietitian," Biever said. "Too many people are hard-headed. Look at the group photos we take every year. You can see people who came once and didn't come back. You can see how many have died. That could be me." And Biever said he wants to live, so he does what he can, encourages others and still looks forward to that one weekend a year at Camp American Legion. "I can't tell you how much it does for me, as a nurse, to see someone like Steve succeed," Cole said. "This will always be one of my wonderful moments in my career." [Source: VAntage Point | November 15, 2016 ++]

Diabetes Update 10 ► Nutrition, Activity & Medication Balance Vital

Good nutrition is important for any healthy lifestyle, but for diabetics balancing nutrition, activity and medication is vital. Carbohydrates, for example, are nutrients found in bread, milk, starchy vegetables and fruit that turn to sugar in the blood. Other simple carbohydrates found in sweets and sugared drinks are the first to limit when monitoring weight and blood sugar. A person diagnosed with diabetes is lacking insulin or is insulin resistant so that the body can't process these sugars normally. "It's paramount to change nutrition to manage diabetes," said Air Force 1st Lt. Abigail Schutz, the Chief of Clinical Dietetics at Joint-Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. "The body responds well to decreasing total carbohydrates intake for blood sugar management. We also talk about pairing carbs with nutrients such as fiber or protein to control the rate of sugar going into the blood."

Schutz said while she handles a lot of patients dealing with an initial diagnosis of diabetes, she also handles cases where people were initially diagnosed, and did not make the appropriate changes or need a review of the most current recommendations for diabetes management. "There's still a stigma against diabetes. It's super common but people still want to hide it or feel ashamed by it," Schutz said. "It can be managed very easily with some education, and I do think it's important to encourage folks to seek help." Schutz said people tend not to know how the disease works and they go into denial about the need for behavior change. Her role, and the role of other dietitians, is to help clarify all of that.

For example, reading food labels is pretty important to diabetics and there are changes coming from the Food and Drug Administration to highlight different aspects of the food label. They're adding a new section for "added sugars" so consumers will know how much of their calorie intake is being taken up by sugar. This specific label change will help eliminate confusion. In addition Vitamin D and Potassium will be listed. Vitamins A and C will no longer be required on the nutrition label. She said Vitamin D is something many people are deficient in and the identification of potassium on labeling is helpful for people that experience renal issues; which 40% of diabetics suffer from. Some of the other changes include more realistic serving sizes based on what people are actually eating. Larger and bolder fonts for the more important parts of the label like the calorie label and serving size will make it

easier for clients to read. “Label reading is huge in terms of education, especially for somebody dosing insulin,” Schutz said. “Insulin is dosed based on the carbohydrate load, and the ratio is crucial for Type 1 Diabetics. They don’t produce insulin, so they have to count their carbs.” Folks with Type 2 Diabetes also can learn to carbohydrate count for better blood sugar control along with adequate activity and lifestyle changes such as stress management techniques.

She said behavior changes might take an appointment or two, but eventually a healthier lifestyle becomes second nature for people. “Carbs are essential for the body to function. It’s a very common misconception that with diabetes you have to avoid carbohydrates, but actually our goal is just to make it consistent throughout the day. There are no “bad” foods or nutrients. Many times, if you want a food, you can have it. Just reduce the portion size.” Schutz said behavior change can be hard in any circumstance but seeing a dietitian is the right call. “People get diagnosed with diabetes and think their life is over. But that education piece of what this looks like and how it can be managed is really important for quality of life,” she said. “Work with goals that are reasonable and doable or the disease never gets managed. Design behavior around those things.” [Source: Health.mil | J.D. Levite | November 21, 2016 ++]

Medicine Adverse Effects ► Account for 27% of ER Visits

An estimated 1 in 250 Americans lands in the hospital emergency department each year because of a medication-related reaction or problem, a new federal study finds. Among adults 65 and older, the rate is about one in 100, the study authors said. Remarkably, the medicines causing the most trouble haven’t changed in a decade, the researchers noted. Blood thinners, diabetes medicines and antibiotics top the list. These drugs accounted for 47% of emergency department visits for adverse drug events in 2013 and 2014, according to the analysis. Among older adults, blood thinners, diabetes medicines and opioid painkillers are implicated in nearly 60% of emergency department visits for adverse drug events. “The same drugs are causing the most problems,” said study co-author Dr. Daniel Budnitz.

The study doesn’t tease out what went wrong. The reasons likely vary from one drug to the next, said Budnitz, director of the medication safety program at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People on the blood thinner warfarin (Coumadin), for example, must have their blood levels checked regularly due to the major risk of internal bleeding. Problems arise when there is insufficient monitoring or dose adjustment of these so-called anticoagulants, or when drug interactions occur, Budnitz explained. Diabetic patients taking insulin run into trouble when their blood-sugar levels fall too low, he added. If they forget to eat or accidentally administer the wrong dose, they can pass out, fall and break a hip, he said. “It’s hard, often, to do the right thing every single time,” Budnitz said.

While medication safety has improved in hospitals, reducing harm from the medicines people take outside of the hospital remains a challenge, the study authors noted. Ninety percent of U.S. prescription spending occurs in outpatient settings, they said. Older patients often have multiple health conditions requiring complex medication regimens prescribed by different clinicians. This makes them particularly vulnerable, the study suggests. Illness such as diabetes and heart disease become more common with age and are treated with drugs commonly linked to emergency department visits, Budnitz explained. Also, “having chronic illnesses can make adverse events more serious when they do occur,” he said.

Michael Cohen, president of the nonprofit Institute for Safe Medication Practices, said it’s important to document trends in adverse drug events. “They’ve been focusing on opioids, anticoagulants and antidiabetic drugs like insulin or the oral drugs that people take because these are the ones that are most likely to harm people,” Cohen said. Budnitz, along with study lead author Nadine Shehab of the CDC and colleagues, examined data involving more than 42,000 emergency department visits in 2013 and 2014. These cases involved prescription or over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements, homeopathic products or vaccines identified as the reason for the visit. Adverse

drug events included allergic reactions to medicines, taking too much medication, or a child's accidental ingestion of a medicine.

Twenty-seven percent of trips to the ER for drug-related reactions and other health problems were serious enough to require hospitalization, the researchers found. Roughly one-third of visits to the emergency department for adverse drug events occurred among adults 65 and older in 2013-2014, versus one-quarter in 2005-2006. Older adults also had the highest hospitalization rates. Among kids, antibiotics accounted for 56 percent of emergency visits for adverse drug events among children 5 years and under. For kids ages 6 to 19, antibiotics were the most common drugs followed by antipsychotic drugs (4.5 percent), often prescribed for children with disruptive behaviors, the researchers reported.

Overall, an estimated 1.3 million emergency department visits for adverse drug events occurred each year of the two-year study period, Budnitz said. That's up from about 700,000 visits per year in 2005 and 2006, he said. But "it's hard to say that the rate changed or didn't change" because the research team wasn't able to study how much more these medicines are being used, he explained. Budnitz said new Medicare payment incentives may help reduce future adverse events by encouraging doctors to perform specific requirements, such as having patients on blood thinners participate in anticoagulation management programs.

Results of the government-funded study were published 22 NOV in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Dr. Chad Kessler, of the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center in North Carolina, said collaboration is key to reducing these adverse events. "When administrators, physicians and other health care personnel as well as the public recognize how large a problem this is, only then can we take the needed steps to remedy this," said Kessler, co-author of an editorial accompanying the study. [Source: Healthday | Karen Pallarito | November 23, 2016 ++]

Lung Cancer ► Symptoms and Detection

Naval Hospital Pensacola has a new program to screen at risk patients for lung cancer, which is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among men and women according to the American Cancer Society. Lung cancer can be very hard to cure, but early detection can lower the risk of dying from this disease. "If we can find the cancer before symptoms appear, life expectancy is much better," said Navy Cmdr. Mark Seigh, radiologist, Naval Hospital Pensacola. Lung cancer is often preventable because it is related to smoking or second hand smoke. It is possible to develop lung cancer from exposure to radon or other environmental factors, but these are far less common. Screenings are usually done for patients who are between the age of 55 and 80, smoked at least 30 pack years and currently smoke or quit smoking less than 15 years ago. Pack years is the number of cigarette packs smoked every day multiplied by the number of years smoking. "If you have a history of smoking, you should talk to your provider about whether a lung cancer screening is necessary or not," said Navy Lt. Harry Calisch, a physician at NHP.

There may be no symptoms at the onset of the disease. When present, common symptoms of lung cancer may include:

- **Coughing:** This includes a persistent cough that doesn't go away or changes to a chronic "smoker's cough," such as more coughing or pain.
- **Coughing up blood:** Coughing up blood or rust-colored sputum (spit or phlegm) should always be discussed with your doctor.
- **Breathing difficulties:** Shortness of breath, wheezing or noisy breathing (called stridor) may all be signs of lung cancer.
- **Loss of appetite:** Many cancers cause changes in appetite, which may lead to unintended weight loss.
- **Fatigue:** It is common to feel weak or excessively tired.

- **Recurring infections:** Recurring infections, like bronchitis or pneumonia, may be one of the signs of lung cancer.

Advanced stages of lung cancer are often characterized by the spread of the cancer to distant sites in the body. This may affect the bones, liver or brain. As other parts of the body are affected, new lung cancer symptoms may develop, including:

- Bone pain
- Swelling of the face, arms or neck
- Headaches, dizziness or limbs that become weak or numb
- Jaundice
- Lumps in the neck or collar bone region



A patient at Naval Hospital Pensacola prepares to have a low-dose computed tomography test done to screen for lung cancer

The lung cancer screening program at NHP is currently for patients enrolled to care at one of the hospital's Medical Home Port Teams. If a patient is determined to be at risk for lung cancer, their primary care manager will refer them to the Radiology Department to have a low-dose computed tomography test done. The LDCT makes pictures of the insides of a person's lungs. "The LDCT is similar to an x-ray and is the study of choice for lung cancer," said Seigh. "It only takes a couple of minutes and the results will usually be available to the physician that day." The results of the test will be analyzed for signs of cancer and a biopsy may be performed. If cancer cells are found, a treatment plan will be developed between the physician and patient. "If cancer is discovered after the screening, the patient's provider will work with them to develop an appropriate treatment plan," said Calisch. "If discovered early, the chances for beating the cancer are significantly better than if it is discovered later."

The screening program is not a substitute for prevention. The best way to reduce the risk of lung cancer is to not smoke. Quitting smoking can be very difficult, but help is available through your health care provider. Each year, there are over 150,000 lung cancer deaths in the United States according to the American Cancer Society. If you think you may be at risk, contact your health care provider today. [Source: Health.mil | Jason Bortz | November 17, 2016 ++]

Compression Garments ► Do They work?

Compression garments come in a variety of sleeves, socks, shorts, and full-body suits. The amount of pressure, or compression, they provide depends on the type and size of the garment. Compression garments help push blood toward your heart and prevent it from "pooling" or collecting in the compressed areas. Compression sleeves also are

used in clinical settings for those with lymphedema, where blood circulation is poor, or to prevent blood clots. But can they increase your performance and decrease your recovery times? Compression garments have been shown to help blood flow to working muscles during exercise, but that necessarily doesn't translate to better performance. Most studies look at compression socks during running, and most evidence suggests no difference in athletes' performance levels during runs when compared to those not wearing compression socks. In addition, there's no decrease in recovery time or blood-lactate levels. Still, those wearing compression socks report "feeling better" and "less tiredness" in their legs during their runs. They also feel less sore following the exercise bout. And while there might not be an actual benefit of wearing compression gear, if you feel better wearing it—either during or after exercise—then keep doing what works! [Source: Health.mil | November 17, 2016 ++]

Smoking Update 01 ► Effects Are Not Irreversible

Lung disease, heart disease, damage from secondhand smoke and even possible issues with impotence – the ill effects of smoking are well-known. As the 17 NOV Great American Smokeout approaches, it stands repeating: Tobacco does a lot of damage to the body, but the effects can be reversed by simply kicking the habit. "Within 20 minutes of quitting, your blood pressure drops," said Air Force Col. Thomas Moore, a preventive medicine doctor and in charge of health promotions for the Air Force Medical Support Agency. "In a couple of weeks to a few months, your circulation is improving and lung function increases. You will also see decreased coughing and shortness of breath, as well as fewer infections. Longer term, five years after kicking the habit, your risk of dying from mouth, throat and bladder cancers is cut in half. And 15 years after stopping, your risk of heart disease is back to normal. The damage is not irreversible."

That's why the Military Health System (MHS) offers many resources to help active duty, retirees and family members quit the habit. The www.UCanQuit2.org website offers advice on how to take those first steps to crushing out those cigarettes, help finding a local tobacco cessation program, and even live support with expert coaches ready to chat. "Smoking reduces lung capacity, causes blood vessels to narrow raising blood pressure, and causes several cancers, among other things," said Moore. "Besides the immediate effects of lighting up, over time, the cumulative years of doing it can lead to more serious problems, including cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and even osteoporosis. Secondhand smoke is also a likely trigger for an asthma attack in children."

Working with the National Cancer Institute, MHS is looking for winners who can outsmart Big Tobacco. A tobacco trivia contest called **tXtobacco** tests knowledge of the dangers of tobacco use and directs participants to resources for quitting. While designed for active duty service members following basic training (both smokers and nonsmokers), tXtobacco's sponsors are encouraging everyone to take part. The contest aims to reduce the number of military personnel who begin or reinitiate tobacco use. "Quitting smoking can be tough, and it can take a while," said Paul Fitzpatrick, manager of the Defense Health Agency's Quit Tobacco program. "People need all the help they can get. But the more information and resources you have, the more likely you are to succeed." He added after you decide to quit, you need to make a plan and set a quit date, put that plan into action and stick with it.

Fitzpatrick also pointed to the nationwide Cold Turkey Trot, that was held this year on 17 NOV, when military installations around the world hold fun runs and walks to help distract people from cigarettes during the Great American Smokeout. Nonsmokers are encouraged to participate in the future. The event is also a way to burn off a few extra calories going into the Thanksgiving through New Year's holiday season. Moore acknowledged just how tough quitting smoking can be, as the nicotine in tobacco is one of the most addictive substances known. He said that's why it's so important for those in the military and their families to find a way to stop. "Kicking the habit is a high priority for us in military medicine," said Moore. "We're helping develop policies and programs that will help everyone be tobacco free." [Source: Health.mil | November 15, 2016 ++]

Smoking Update 02 ► Smokeless Tobacco

It's a dangerous, addictive habit that rots teeth and can lead to grotesque cancers of the mouth and lip. So, still thinking smokeless tobacco is a healthy alternative to smoking? While it might appear so, putting in a dip or a chew can cause as much harm as lighting up cigarettes. "A lot of the effects smoking has on the body – causing blood vessels to narrow raising blood pressure and causing several cancers – are the same for smokeless tobacco," said Air Force Col. Thomas Moore, a preventive medicine doctor and in charge of health promotions for the Air Force Medical Support Agency. "Smokeless tobacco contains nicotine, one of the most addictive substances known." That's why. Moore recommends against turning to smokeless tobacco as an alternative to lighting up a cigarette



Health Effects of Smokeless tobacco ++:

- Contains at least 28 carcinogens –
- Related to increased risk of oral cancer, esophageal cancer and pancreatic cancer –
- May increase heart disease, gum disease, and oral lesions such as leukoplakia (precancerous white patch)
- Users of smokeless tobacco and users of cigarettes have comparable levels of nicotine in the blood
- Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, responsible for 480,000 deaths every year
- DoD spends more than \$1.6 billion each year on tobacco related medical care
- Tobacco companies have increased marketing of smokeless tobacco products as cigarette smoking decreased. Five major smokeless tobacco manufacturers spent 451.7 million on advertising and promotions in 2011. That year manufacturers sold 122 million pounds of smokeless tobacco with 2.94 billion in sales revenue
- DoD Cigarette smoking cessation effort has been successful (50% to 20%), but not smokeless tobacco

Unfortunately, Moore said, while smoking rates in many parts of the military are lower than those reported among civilians, use of smokeless tobacco is actually higher among those in active duty ranks. He said this could be because smokeless tobacco still provides many of the same kicks, such as the nicotine boost, without many of the socially unacceptable parts, such as secondhand smoke. In addition, it might be easier for troops in the field and even in an office to use smokeless tobacco without anyone else really knowing. The biggest hurdle might be the fact that smokeless tobacco contains two to three times more nicotine than cigarettes.

To help everyone kick the habit, MHS has many resources to help active duty, retirees and family members. www.UCanQuit2.org offers advice on how to take those first steps to crushing out cigarettes and spitting out that chew for the final time. UCanQuit2.org also helps in locating a local tobacco cessation program, and even live support with expert coaches ready to chat. Working with the National Cancer Institute, MHS is looking for winners who can outsmart Big Tobacco. A tobacco trivia contest called **tXtobacco** tests knowledge of the dangers of tobacco

use and directs participants to resources for quitting. The contest aims to reduce the number of military personnel who begin or reinitiate tobacco use. “Whether it’s smoking or smokeless tobacco, we want to provide people with all the resources they need to quit,” said Paul Fitzpatrick, manager of the Defense Health Agency’s Quit Tobacco program. “The more knowledge you have and the better the resources, the more likely you are to succeed.”

He added after people decide to quit, you need to make a plan and set a quit date, put that plan into action and stick with it. Moore said kicking the tobacco habit is a high priority for military medicine. “We know that if given the right information and the right help to make good choices, our military members, retirees and their families will choose a tobacco-free lifestyle,” said Moore. [Source: Health.mil | November 15, 2016 ++]

TRICARE in U.S. Territories ► Medicare Requirement

If you are a retiree living overseas and are nearing Medicare entitlement, you must purchase Medicare Part B in order to keep TRICARE. In the U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), Medicare works as it would if you were in the U.S. This means both Medicare and TRICARE will pay on claims for covered services. You must sign up for Medicare Part B as soon as you are eligible to avoid a break in coverage or a late enrollment penalty. If your sponsor is still on active duty, you may delay your Part B enrollment without penalty. In the U.S. territories, Medicare covers many of the same services as TRICARE Overseas Program Standard. For services covered by Medicare and TRICARE, Medicare pays first and TRICARE pays last. Medicare doesn’t generally cover health care you get outside the U.S., the U.S. territories or aboard ships outside U.S. territorial waters. Go to www.tricare.mil/tfl or download the TRICARE For Life Handbook at www.tricare.mil/publications for more information. [Source: TRICARE Health Matters | Issue 2 | November 2016 ++]

TRICARE Overseas Program Update 22 ► Traveling to the U.S.

If you’re traveling in the U.S., you can still use your TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP) Standard benefit. If you need primary care or urgent care, go to any TRICARE-authorized provider just like you would in your overseas location. Need to fill a prescription? You can use any available TRICARE Pharmacy Program option when traveling, but be sure your Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System information is current. To fill a prescription, you need a valid uniformed services ID card or Common Access Card. If you need emergency care while traveling in the U.S., call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.

When you get care from a TRICARE network provider in the U.S., the provider files the claim with the TOP claims processor for you. If you get care from a TRICARE-authorized non-network provider, you may have to pay up front and file a claim with the TOP claims processor. Save your receipt as proof of payment and be sure to put your overseas address on the claim. Always file claims with the TOP claims processor using the mailing address assigned for your home area, not with the stateside regional contractor in the region where you are traveling. Submitting your claim to a stateside regional contractor may result in your payment being delayed.

For additional claims-filing information, go to www.tricare-overseas.com. In the U.S. and U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), nonparticipating non-network providers may charge up to 15 percent above the TRICARE allowable charge. You are responsible for paying this amount in addition to any deductible and cost-shares. [Source: TRICARE Health Matters | Issue 2 | November 2016 ++]

TRICARE Aeromedical Evacuation ► Coverage Restrictions

Coverage of Aeromedical Evacuation Aeromedical evacuation (air evacuation) is the use of aircraft for travel to a location where you can get needed health care. Air evacuations are only approved when medically necessary and appropriate, usually because adequate medical care for your condition isn't available where you are. Previously, air evacuation was only covered for active duty service members and those using TRICARE Prime options. Now, under the new TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP) contract, air evacuation is covered for all active duty family members (ADFs), including those in TOP Standard.

International SOS Government Services, Inc. will arrange air evacuations for TOP Prime beneficiaries, TOP Prime Remote beneficiaries, active duty service members who are deployed to an overseas location in a temporary duty status or in an authorized leave status and all TRICARE-eligible ADFMs traveling in an overseas location (regardless of enrollment status). If you have TOP Standard and are not an ADFM, you must pay for air evacuation up front and file a claim to get money back (less any cost-shares). TOP Regional Call Centers aren't required to schedule evacuations, coordinate with providers, get medical records or coordinate payment for non-TOP Prime or non-TOP Prime Remote beneficiaries. Coverage is only to the nearest location with the appropriate facilities, which may also be overseas. [Source: TRICARE Health Matters | Issue 2 | November 2016 ++]

TRICARE & OHI Update 04 ► OHI Disclosure Mandatory

TRICARE beneficiaries with other health insurance (OHI) must disclose their OHI coverage information. It's important to make sure your OHI is reflected accurately in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). For all beneficiaries other than active duty service members, TRICARE is the last payer to all health care benefits and insurance plans, except for Medicaid, TRICARE supplements, the Indian Health Service and other programs and plans as identified by the Defense Health Agency. Overseas, OHI includes traveler's insurance, study abroad insurance for students and overseas national health insurance programs. OHI applies to health care services received from civilian providers and at military hospitals and clinics. You can report your OHI through the following:

- Online: Fill out the overseas TRICARE Other Health Insurance Questionnaire at www.tricare.mil/forms .
- By phone: Call your TRICARE Overseas Program Regional Call Center.
- In person: Visit your military hospital or clinic or TRICARE Service Center.

Follow your OHI's rules for filing claims and file your claims with your OHI first. If there is an amount your OHI doesn't cover, you or your provider can file the claim with TRICARE to get money back. It's important to meet your OHI's requirements. If your OHI denies a claim for failure to follow its rules, such as getting care without prior authorization, TRICARE may also deny your claim. Visit www.tricare.mil/ohi for more information about using your TRICARE benefit when you have OHI. [Source: TRICARE Health Matters | Issue 2 | November 2016 ++]

Portion Size Control ► Beware the Holidays

The Holidays will be here soon, and with it the temptations that come with everyone's favorite dishes. So as we gather with friends and family to celebrate, we should be mindful of portion sizes. Prediabetes puts people at increased risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. It has been estimated that without weight loss and

moderate physical activity, 15-30 percent of people with prediabetes will go on to develop type 2 diabetes within 5 years.

According to National Institutes of Health (NIH), a portion is an amount of food you choose to eat for a meal or snack, while a serving is a measured amount of food or drink, such as one slice of bread. This means a single portion can actually consist of multiple servings. Over the past 20 years average portion sizes have grown so much that sometimes there's enough food for two or three people on one plate. The NIH calls this portion distortion. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), you can practice portion control in a number of ways:

- When eating out you can split an entrée with a friend or eat half of the food on your plate and ask for a “to go box” for the rest.
- When eating at home, serve food on individual plates instead of putting the serving dishes on the table to discourage overeating.
- When you eat in front of the TV, put the amount you plan to eat in a bowl or container instead of eating directly from the package.

If you are hungry, try a healthy snack. It will help to prevent overeating later. For more information on portion control and nutrition check out www.choosemyplate.gov. If you have questions, you may be able to talk to a nutritionist at your military hospital or clinic. You can also visit the Health and Wellness page of the TRICARE website <http://www.tricare.mil/LiveWell> for tips and resources to help you live a healthier life. [Source: TRICARE Communications | Healthy Living | November 14, 2016 ++]

Child Medical Care ► Decision On When to See A Doctor

When is it a good idea to go to the doctor?

When children have a fever, the cause is usually a harmless viral infection. They are only rarely seriously ill. It is good for parents to know which symptoms could be signs of a serious illness, though. Many parents of children who have a fever feel worried and ask themselves the following questions: Is it something serious? Should we go to the doctor? Does the fever need to be lowered? Parents are in the best position to judge whether their child is behaving abnormally – for instance reacting differently to them or to a toy. The child may be much less active, feel very unwell or stop drinking. Their judgment and experience are very important, and can also be of help to the doctor.

When is it important to seek medical advice?

- If you feel unsure and worried, it is better to see a doctor. Some parents call the child's doctor in situations like this. It may be possible to clarify small issues over the phone. But doctors often prefer to see the child and perform a thorough examination.
- If you suspect that your child has a childhood disease, it is a good idea to see a doctor. Childhood diseases are often associated with a typical rash. If, for instance, children who live nearby or go to the same kindergarten as your child have chickenpox or scarlet fever, your child may have that infection too. The doctor can then tell you what the treatment options are, and whether your child is contagious and needs to stay home.
- If your child has had a febrile seizure, it is definitely important to see a doctor. When children have a febrile seizure, their muscles contract, making their arms and legs twitch. Their body may become unnaturally stiff and rigid. Although most febrile seizures are harmless, this can be quite frightening.
- It may be a good idea to go back to see the doctor again if the child's condition worsens or if particular symptoms worry you.

How You Can Tell if it is Serious.

If a child has one or more of the signs described in the table, she or he may have a serious illness and needs to see a doctor. If the doctor's practice is closed, or if the child needs medical attention on the weekend, the after-hours care services of hospitals or children's hospitals are available. You will find the addresses of local services in the phone book, on the Internet, in your doctor's practice or by contacting your health insurance company, for instance. It can be helpful to make a list to help you react quickly if you need to. If you need urgent medical care, you can call the emergency services for an ambulance. The emergency telephone number is 112 in Germany and many other European countries, and 911 in the U.S. Following are the possible signs of a serious illness:

Fever in babies:

- The baby is less than three months old and has a body temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or more.
- The baby is between three and six months old and has a body temperature of 39°C (102.2°F) or more.

Apathy:

- When spoken to, the child hardly responds or does not respond at all.
- The child no longer smiles.

Inactivity and sleepiness:

- The child can't be woken, doesn't stay awake, or only wakes up after several attempts.
- The child is noticeably inactive and still.

Paleness and rash:

- The child is very pale or white as a sheet.
- His or her skin is blotchy or looks blue.
- The child has a reddish rash.

Crying: The child cries weakly, shrilly or constantly.

No appetite: The child refuses to eat or drink.

Shortness of breath and wheezing:

- The child cannot get enough air or opens their nostrils very wide when breathing in.
- Unusual rattling sounds can be heard from the child's chest whenever he or she breathes in.
- The child groans when breathing.
- The child is very short of breath.
- The child is between six and twelve months old and takes more than 50 breaths per minute.
- The child is older than twelve months and takes more than 40 breaths per minute.
- If the child is taking more than 60 breaths per minute he or she needs to be taken to the doctor immediately.

High pulse rate: The child has a racing heart or a high pulse:

- More than 160 beats per minute in children under the age of one.
- More than 150 beats per minute in children between the ages of one and two.
- More than 140 beats per minute in children between the ages of two and five.

Stiff neck: The child has a stiff neck, i.e. problems moving their chin towards their chest.

Other noticeable changes and abnormal events:

- The child has a seizure. This might be a febrile seizure, which is usually harmless, or a symptom of another medical condition.
- An arm, leg or joint is swollen.
- The child urinates less.
- A baby's fontanel bulges outward. The fontanel is the "soft spot" or gap that babies have in the upper front part of their skull when they are born. It closes on its own by the time they are about two years old.
- The child has the chills.
- The child does not have the strength to walk or stand.

- The child shows signs of paralysis. For instance, they may have difficulties moving one side of their body or face.

[Source: Informed Health Organization | NOV 2016 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 375 ► Portion Control | Open Enrollment | Mental Health

Portion Control -- The holidays will be here soon, and with it the temptations that come with everyone's favorite dishes. So as we gather with friends and family to celebrate, we should be mindful of portion sizes. According to National Institutes of Health, a portion is an amount of food you choose to eat for a meal or snack, while a serving is a measured amount of food or drink, such as one slice of bread. This means a single portion can actually consist of multiple servings. Over the past 20 years average portion sizes have grown so much that sometimes there's enough food for two or three people on one plate. You can practice portion control in a number of ways.

- When eating out you can split an entrée with a friend or eat half of the food on your plate and take the rest home.
- When eating at home, serve food on individual plates instead of putting the serving dishes on the table to discourage overeating.
- When you eat in front of the TV, put the amount you plan to eat in a bowl or container instead of eating directly from the package.

For more information on portion control and nutrition check out www.choosemyplate.gov. And if you have questions, you may be able to talk to a nutritionist at your military hospital or clinic. You can also visit www.TRICARE.mil/LiveWell for tips and resources to help you live a healthier life.

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Open Enrollment -- It's the time of year to enroll in or change your health insurance plan. www.Healthcare.gov has open enrollment from November 1st, 2016 to January 31st, 2017, for 2017 health coverage. Most TRICARE beneficiaries don't need to worry about open enrollment. But, if you're a beneficiary who isn't eligible for TRICARE coverage, has lost or is losing coverage or if you qualify to purchase a TRICARE premium-based health plan, then you can use this open enrollment period to see if there are better health coverage options for you and your family.

- To see your health coverage options outside of TRICARE, go to www.Healthcare.gov. When you use the portal indicate you don't have coverage so you can see if you qualify for financial assistance.
- Follow the instructions under the "Individual and Families" tab to get your health insurance estimate. Your estimate includes available plans, premiums and cost shares.
- After you explore the marketplace plans, you can use TRICARE.mil to compare TRICARE premium based coverage and costs to the marketplace plans. You can also compare TRICARE plans online at www.TRICARE.mil/compare.

If you decide to enroll in a non-TRICARE plan, you'll need to submit a disenrollment request to your TRICARE regional contractor. Don't disenroll from TRICARE coverage until you confirm the start date of your new coverage so that you are not penalized for gaps in coverage. Don't forget that the Affordable Care Act requires most Americans, including TRICARE beneficiaries and Defense Department employees, have Minimal Essential Coverage. Most TRICARE plans meet this requirement, but if you want to explore health care options outside of TRICARE, make sure to visit HealthCare.gov during open enrollment.

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Mental Health -- Holidays are a time when families come together to eat good food and spend quality time together. They're also a time of additional stress — whether you're worried about money, hosting the largest family get-together of the year, or travelling long distances. The American Psychological Association has helpful tips to help your stay mentally healthy through the holidays.

- First, you can't do everything alone. Everyone will benefit from you taking some time for self-care. Your break can be as simple as taking a walk, going for a massage, or taking time to read a new book. Make sure to get a full night's rest as often as possible. Slowing down will actually give you more energy.
- No holiday celebration is perfect, so make sure your expectations are realistic. A burned dinner can be an opportunity to show your resilience and flexibility. Mistakes are often what make memories! Remember that holidays are special because you're with your loved ones. You don't need elaborate decorations or gourmet food to create a cherished memory.
- If you are feeling anxious, talk to your friends and family. Open and honest communication will help you find a solution for your stress. Also consider seeing a psychologist or other trained mental health professional if holiday stress is getting you down.

TRICARE recently updated its mental health coverage and reduced many of its mental health care cost shares and copayments. Learn more at www.TRICARE.mil/mhcare. As always, if you have a mental health emergency go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

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The above is from the TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin, an update on the latest news to help you make the best use of your TRICARE benefit. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | November 18, 2016 ++]

Tendonitis ► Tips to Treat

If you've ever trained for Physical Fitness (PFT) and Physical Readiness (PRT) tests, a long-distance race, or other exercise routines, you've likely experienced pain. It might be a common, chronic overuse injury known as tendonitis. The good news is there are things you can do to help reduce your risk of tendonitis. Tendons connect your muscles to your bones and help you move by "pulling" on the bones when your muscles contract. Damage or inflammation can occur from repetitive activities, motions, or sudden movements that put too much stress on your tendons. Knees, elbows, and wrists are all common areas of pain associated with tendonitis because they're often used in repetitive movements. Pay attention to your body. Warning signs can include pain, swelling, and loss of range of motion. Here are some tips to help prevent tendonitis.

- Maintain a healthy diet and weight, and check out HPRC's Nutrition section for helpful nutrition tips at <http://hprc-online.org/nutrition> .
- Pay attention to your posture and make sure that you use proper form, especially when lifting and moving heavy objects.
- Maintain a well-rounded exercise routine, which includes muscular fitness, flexibility, mobility, and cardiovascular endurance.
- Make sure to incorporate rest and cross-training days to let your body recover.

Already have tendonitis? Here are some tips to help you get back into your workout routine:

- Alternate exercise to rest the affected area. Instead of running, try biking or swimming to rest possible patellar (knee) tendonitis. Visit HPRC's RX3 Knee Pain section on knee exercises and other rehab resources at <http://hprc-online.org/physical-fitness/rehab/for-the-service-member-1/knee-pain-1> .
- Ice the affected area to reduce pain and swelling.

- Ask your healthcare provider about physical therapy and anti-inflammatory medications, which also can provide some relief.

Note: *See your doctor right away if you experience fever, redness or warmth in the affected area, or pain in multiple locations.*

[Source: Health.mil | November 28, 2016 ++]

* Finances *



Property Values ► Rising Sea Levels Impact

Ah, for a home within earshot of the crashing waves and easy access to the sand and tide pools! Many of us dream of buying property near the water. Since waterfront is limited and desirable, it generally just increases in value. Right? But many people don't realize that investing in waterfront property now may lose them money, in much the same way as splurging on an expensive car would: depreciation. The reason? Rising sea levels are eroding the long-term value of such properties. "Once impacts become noticeable, they're going to be upon you quickly," William V. Sweet, a scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Silver Spring, Maryland, told The New York Times. "It's not a hundred years off — it's now."

Sea levels are rising, according to scientists, due to global warming, as rising atmospheric and ocean temperatures melt polar ice caps and glaciers. Even skeptics of the phenomenon may find it difficult to argue with the "sharp jump in this nuisance flooding," currently impacting the East Coast and Gulf Coast. Expect more flooding in those areas and the West Coast, too, according to The Times report. So does that mean you will find your oceanfront property literally under water the next time you visit? Not this week or this month, but likely sooner than you'd think. And that means the property you counted on to appreciate in value — perhaps to fund your retirement or leave as a hefty legacy for your children — may be sunk. In a way, the loss of millions of dollars in property may be the tip of the loss iceberg.

National Geographic reported that even "in the absence of something nasty" — think of an iceberg breaking loose and causing widespread havoc — rising oceans are poised to flood lush oceanfront homes. "The threat will never go away; it will only worsen. By the end of the century a hundred-year storm surge like [Hurricane] Sandy's might occur every decade or less," reported National Geographic. "Using a conservative prediction of a half meter (20 inches) of sea-level rise, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates that by 2070, 150 million people in the world's large port cities will be at risk from coastal flooding, along with \$35 trillion worth of property — an amount that will equal 9 percent of the global GDP."

Some good news is that these losses are still several years away, so there is time to sell. And demand is still high. Even a few months after Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast in the fall of 2012, experts told Bloomberg that property values rebounded. And there's no immediate end in sight to demand for waterfront property. "A silver lining is that everything will be redone," real estate agent Nathan Colmer told Bloomberg soon after Hurricane Sandy hit. "The whole area gets rejuvenated." Jed Kolko, the chief economist for the real estate website Trulia agreed, telling

Bloomberg "the longer-term effect on prices typically from a big disaster is that prices go up because some housing stock is destroyed, but there is still demand among people to live in that area." For a video on the subject go to https://youtu.be/_j0mtWieMD4. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Nancy Dunham | November 14, 2016 ++]

Overtime Rules Update 01 ► Judge Blocks Obama Overtime Rule

A Texas judge on 22 NOV threw out President Obama's new rule intended to force companies to pay workers more overtime. Federal law says employees must be paid time and a half once they work more than 40 hours in a week. However, businesses may exempt workers from the requirement if their duties are "managerial" in nature and their reach a certain salary threshold. In May, the Labor Department announced that that threshold, previously \$23,000 annually, would rise to more than \$47,000 on 1 DEC. Because it was an administrative reinterpretation of an existing rule, the change does not require congressional approval. The rule would mean that about 4 million more workers would be eligible for overtime. [Source: Washington Examiner | Sean Higgins | November 22, 2016 ++]

Car Maintenance ► A Stitch in Time Saves \$\$\$

Getting a new car can cost the equivalent of a year's after-tax salary. After spending that much on four wheels and an auto body, you'd think it would run trouble-free for a decade. That's a lovely dream. The reality is that regular maintenance and eternal vigilance are required. That way, a small issue won't turn into a huge, expensive problem. Staying on top of maintenance pays off in the long run. Today's cars will easily last 200,000 miles if you take care of them. It's not too hard to remember oil changes, because the folks who do them usually put a reminder sticker on your windshield. But you need to discipline yourself to take care of other issues. Here are seven easy fixes that make a big difference.

1. Respect the 'check engine' light

That "check engine" light could mean something as simple as a loose gas cap. Or, it could be an issue with the oxygen sensor, which costs about \$250 to fix. You need to know which one it is, so don't ignore that illuminated warning. Put off fixing the O2 sensor, and two things can happen: decreased mileage and a big fat repair bill later on. So get that light checked out.

2. Replace the air filter

Speaking of oxygen: There's an air filter on your car, and from time to time (probably once a year) it needs to be replaced. This is a fairly simple job. Let Edmunds.com walk you through it if you're up for a DIY project. But either way, make sure it gets done, even if you have to pay somebody to do it. Failing to make the change can result in a mechanic's bill of \$400 or more.

3. Fix the PCV valve

Mileage still bad? Engine somewhat sputtery? Spend \$100 to fix your PCV valve (positive crankcase ventilation). It's no fun to part with a C-note, but major engine damage could result if you ignore the fix.

4. Repair a windshield crack

Suppose the vehicle in front of you flings a piece of gravel straight into your windshield. The resulting ding isn't pretty, but it isn't a big crack. So, you decide to ignore it. Don't. The small chip can expand into a giant crack that impedes your vision and ultimately creates a need for a new windshield. The sooner you repair a ding, the better, since rain can drive dirt into the crack and make it harder to fix.

5. Properly inflate tires

When was the last time you had the tire pressure checked? Fewer service stations provide this service these days, so buy a pressure gauge and check it yourself. Properly inflated tires mean better gas mileage. Underinflated tires wear out faster and may be more susceptible to blowouts, according to Edmunds.com.

6. Pay attention to puddles

See a puddle under your car? Be afraid. Be very afraid. Then get your vehicle looked at right away. Whether you're leaking oil, transmission fluid, antifreeze or gas, this is something that needs fixing now. Some experts suggest that before you get into your vehicle, you should take a minute to walk all the way around it. Look for those puddles and also take a gander at the tires to see if they seem low. This would also be a good time to do the penny test to determine whether the tread is still good and to check your auto's fluid levels.

7. Don't put off scheduled maintenance

Some folks believe that scheduled maintenance translates into "another way the dealer can gouge me." In addition, being carless even for part of a day can be a major hassle for many people. It can be tempting to put off oil changes and other maintenance. But ignoring your ride can cost you. Maybe it drives just fine right now, but perhaps you have just been lucky. Picture yourself standing by the side of the highway, waiting for a tow. Now picture it late at night and/or in the winter. Besides, remember how much you spent to buy that vehicle? For maximum return on your investment, follow the manufacturer's maintenance schedule and keep an eye on things in between. Your reward could be 10 years or more without an auto payment.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Donna Freeman | November 16, 2016 ++]

Tax Burden for Missouri Retired Vets ► As of NOV 2016

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. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in Missouri:

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 4.225% (prescription drugs exempt; food is taxed at 1.225%) Cities and counties as well as special taxing districts (such as fire districts) may impose a local sales and use tax that may raise the total tax to about 6.625%.

Gasoline Tax: 35.70 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 41.70 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: 0.17 cents/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Low – 1.5%; High – 6.00%

Income Brackets: Nine. Lowest – \$1,000; Highest – \$9,000

Personal Exemptions: Single – \$2,100; Married – \$4,200; Dependents – \$1,200

Standard Deduction: Single – \$6,300; Married filing jointly – \$12,600.

Medical/Dental Deduction: Federal amount. Individuals may subtract from their federal adjusted gross income, qualified health insurance premiums and long-term care premiums, to the extent their premiums paid were not reimbursed by their employer, or excluded from their federal adjusted gross income.

Federal Income Tax Deduction: The state allows a deduction on your individual income tax return for the amount of federal tax you paid. The deduction is for the amount actually paid as indicated on your federal tax form. For individual filers the amount cannot exceed \$5,000. For joint filers the ceiling is \$10,000.

Retirement Income Taxes: Missouri resident taxpayers are allowed a state income tax deduction for Social

Security benefits received by individuals 62 years of age or older, Social Security disability benefits, and non-private retirement system benefits received by individuals 62 years of age or older, to the extent these benefits are included in federal adjusted gross income. To view the Social Security/Social Security Disability deduction chart and the public pension exemption eligibility chart go to <http://dor.mo.gov/personal/whatsnew/index.php#ssd>

Public Pension Exemption: Married couples with Missouri adjusted gross income less than \$100,000 and single individuals with Missouri adjusted gross income less than \$85,000, may deduct up to 65 percent of their public retirement benefits, to the extent the amounts are included in their federal adjusted gross income. The deductible percentage of their public retirement benefits will increase each year. Married couples with Missouri adjusted gross income greater than \$100,000 and single individuals with Missouri adjusted gross income greater than \$85,000, may qualify for a partial exemption. Taxpayers who also qualify for the Social Security or Social Security Disability Deduction, must reduce their public pension exemption by the amount of the Social Security or Social Security Disability Deduction.

Retired Military Pay: The state allows 15 percent of military pension income to be exempt from Missouri state tax. This tax deduction will increase 15 percent annually until January 1, 2016, when all military pension income will be tax free.

Military Disability Retired Pay: Retirees who entered the military before Sept. 24, 1975, and members receiving disability retirements based on combat injuries or who could receive disability payments from the VA are covered by laws giving disability broad exemption from federal income tax. Most military retired pay based on service-related disabilities also is free from federal income tax, but there is no guarantee of total protection.

VA Disability Dependency and Indemnity Compensation: VA benefits are not taxable because they generally are for disabilities and are not subject to federal or state taxes.

Military SBP/SSBP/RCSBP/RSFPP: Generally subject to state taxes for those states with income tax. Check with state department of revenue office.

Property Taxes

Residential property is assessed at 19% of its fair market value. Personal property is assessed at rates ranging from 5% to 33.3%. [The Missouri Property Tax Credit Claim](#) gives credit to certain senior citizens and 100 percent disabled individuals for a portion of the real estate taxes or rent they have paid for the year. The credit is for a maximum of \$750 for renters and \$1,100 for owners who occupied their home during the period being claimed. The actual credit is based on the amount of real estate taxes or rent paid and total household income.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

Since the IRS will no longer allow a state death tax credit for deaths occurring on or after January 1, 2005, no Missouri estate tax is imposed. Therefore, no estate tax return must be filed for deaths occurring on or after January 1, 2005.

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For information about moving to Missouri, refer to <http://www.dor.ms.gov/Pages/default.aspx>. For further information about state taxes, visit the Missouri Department of Revenue site. <http://dor.mo.gov/new2mo.php>

[Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#Minnesota> NOV 2016 ++]

* General Interest *



Notes of Interest ► 16 thru 30 NOV 2016

- **Magic.** Every magician likes to involve a pretty girl in his magic tricks but it's not often that the pretty girl is also a magician herself. Check out <https://youtu.be/sKns1uatyNg>.
- **Card Tricks.** On the Tonight show Magician David Blaine shares with host Jimmy Fallon some simple card tricks at <https://youtu.be/Z8Ws4PEky28>
- **USAF Band.** Check out this very unusual rendition of Joy to the World performed by the U.S. Air Force Band - <https://youtu.be/-cKE8pyfcZc> .
- **Federal Employees.** Veterans make up almost one-third of the federal workforce, up 5 percentage points since President Obama took office, according to new data released by OPM on Veterans Day. That translates into more than 623,000 veterans working in civilian federal posts, 31 percent of the 2 million individuals working in civilian government jobs.
- **IRS.** When you do not have your family enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), DoD cannot accurately report your healthcare coverage to the Internal Revenue Service. Starting last year, the DoD reported health care coverage of its service members and their dependents to the IRS. This report allows the IRS to determine which families had minimum essential coverage (MEC) as required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA).
- **Replacement Documents.** Refer to the following on guidance:
 - Military Records: <http://themilitarywallet.com/replace-lost-military-service-records/>
 - DD 214 (Proof of Service): <http://themilitarywallet.com/how-to-get-a-copy-of-your-dd-form-214/>
 - Military Awards/Decorations: <http://themilitarywallet.com/replace-military-medals-awards-decorations/>
 - Dog Tags: <http://themilitarywallet.com/replacement-dog-tags/>
 - Cold War Recognition Certificate: <http://themilitarywallet.com/cold-war-recognition-certificate/>
- **Reserves Bonuses.** California lawmakers in the House and Senate offered legislative proposals 17 NOV that would allow nearly 10,000 California National Guard soldiers to keep improper enlistment bonuses they were paid during the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan a decade ago.
- **COLA.** The October CPI is 235.732, starting the fiscal year 0.3 percent above the FY 2016 COLA baseline. This is the first time in 4 years the October CPI didn't start below the baseline. As a result, this fiscal year is starting off more than a full percentage point above last year, in just the first month. But it's only one month. The last time the October CPI started this strong, it ended the year with a 1.5% COLA. The CPI for November 2016 is scheduled to be released on December 15, 2016.
- **Facebook.** Do you get your news from Facebook? Lots of people do. The problem is that it is not news. And very often it is completely fake designed only to stir up emotions. <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/18/13665938/fake-news-pepsi> explains a lot.
- **Bob Hope Christmas.** Bob Hope was without a doubt one of the greatest entertainers of all time. A wonderful look at some special moments Bob spent with the troops during his many Christmas performances can be seen at https://youtu.be/SR9TSxp_okc.
- **Taps Trumpet Solo.** Go to <https://youtu.be/0OGO--In9NI> to hear taps like you have never heard it played before.
- **Enlisted Advancement.** Of the 100,742 sailors that passed their advancement exams this fall, 24.5% will move up a paygrade, according to the latest petty officer quotas released 21 NOV. Across the force, all pay grades are seeing an increase in chances to move up. Only for reserve full-time support E-6s saw a dip in their advancement chances.
- **Troops/Recruiters.** U.S. military personnel can now request to carry concealed handguns for protection at government facilities, according to new Defense Department NOV directive issued in response to a series of deadly shootings over the last seven years. While service members already were authorized to carry weapons as part of specific job responsibilities, the new policy allows them to apply to carry their privately

owned firearms “for personal protection not associated with the performance of official duties,” the directive says.

- **TBI Podcast.** The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center launched its first podcast, The TBI Family. This podcast provides caregivers of service members and veterans with TBI with information on traumatic brain injury and links caregiver resources. It also shares caregiver stories. To access this 32 minute episode go to https://soundcloud.com/user-384724233/the_tbi_family_101.
- **USS Zumwalt.** The US Navy said their new, high-tech destroyer Zumwalt, enroute to its homeport San Diego, suffered an engineering casualty 21 NOV while passing through the Panama Canal and had to be towed to a berth. The casualty occurred as she passing through the lower half of the canal, and the ship was towed through the Miraflores locks at the southern, or Pacific end, to Rodman, a former US base once known as the Balboa Naval Station.
- **RP-U.S. Military Cooperation.** The chiefs of the Philippine armed forces and U.S. Pacific Command said 22 NOV the two countries' military ties remain robust, with both sides committed to their alliance and cooperation on maritime security, counterterrorism and humanitarian aid.
- **Manila RP.** An improvised bomb found 28 NOV in a trash bin near the U.S. Embassy and detonated by police has the same design as one used by local sympathizers of the Islamic State group in a 2 SEP bomb attack that killed 15 people in southern Davao city, the Philippine police chief said.
- **Russia-Japan Relations.** A Russian military newspaper says that Moscow has deployed new anti-ship missiles on Pacific islands that are controlled by Russia but also claimed by Japan. The disagreement over the islands, seized by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II, has kept the two countries from signing a peace treaty formally ending their wartime hostilities.
- **Miss You Daddy.** Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XvRQGDsIqs> to hear how a slain policeman's daughter keeps in touch with her father.
- **DoD Firearms Policy.** The Pentagon has cleared the way for servicemembers to carry privately owned firearms on Defense Department property, reversing a longstanding rule that barred personal weapons from its facilities.
- **VADIP Premiums.** Monthly premiums for veteran's dental care under VADIP vary by insurance provider (Delta Dental or MetLife), plan type, and ZIP code. For 2016 using zip code 92128 the lowest premium and minimal plan coverage was \$17.22 whereas the highest premium and maximum plan coverage was \$63.35. To establish your cost to meet your needs refer to <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP>.
- **Chinese Navy.** China's first aircraft carrier is now ready to engage in combat, marking a milestone for a navy that has invested heavily in its ability to project power far from China's shores.



GTMO Prison Update 07 ► What Will Trump Do?

Will President Donald Trump put pen to paper on Inauguration Day and declare the Guantánamo Bay prison Barack Obama couldn't close officially open for business? Will he order his Secretary of Defense to start searching the globe for "some bad dudes" to put there? Today, 20 of the last 60 war-on-terror prisoners are cleared for release, all sent to the remote base in southeast Cuba during the presidency of George W. Bush. The Obama administration is still actively pursuing places to send them with security assurances that satisfy Secretary of Defense Ash Carter. But a former Bush-era official responsible for detainee policy at the Pentagon, Cully Stimson, predicts the transfers will stop the day Trump takes office 20 JAN, just two days shy of eight years after Obama ordered his administration to shut down the detention center at Guantánamo Bay. "If you're not off the island by the moment he's sworn in, I don't think you're leaving for a while unless he decides otherwise. That's the president's prerogative," said Stimson, who runs the National Security Program at the Heritage Foundation.

This summer Trump told the Miami Herald that he disagreed with some of Obama's release decisions. "Terrible people" got out and should not have been released, he said, offering no examples. At the time, however, a former prison hunger striker, Syrian Abu Wa'el Dhiab, had disappeared from his host country, Uruguay, only to turn up in Venezuela — stirring concern in Congress about monitoring mechanisms for freed Guantánamo prisoners. "As far as Guantánamo is concerned," Trump said, "I want to make sure, 100 percent sure, that if we're going to release people, No. 1 they are going to be people that can be released and it's going to be safe to release them. We have plenty of bad ones out there and I would use them for that."

Guantánamo staff have long described the captives as well versed in American politics, thanks to free cellblock TV that offers satellite news programs such as Russia Today and Iran's Press TV. Election night was no different. "Many detainees did stay up and watch the election results" in Camp 6, says Army Lt. Col. John Parks, the Guantánamo prison spokesman the day after the elections. Their reaction? None that the colonel could discern. For his part, Trump has campaigned to grow it — "load it up with some bad dudes" — and make it cheaper, at one point suggesting that might be accomplished by using Cuban labor through renegotiation of diplomatic relations. He didn't elaborate on that idea. But Trump, a real estate builder, might have heard about the whopping \$66 million price tag for the base's future 275-pupil K-12 school — driven up because both the labor force and supplies have to be imported.

As for the prison, with just 60 captives, an estimated \$445 million annual budget for detainee operations and up to 2,000 detention center staff, critics of the operation crunch the per-prisoner costs to \$7.58 million a year. Trump promised on the campaign trail in February to do it for a "tiny, tiny" fraction. "Maybe in our deal with Cuba we get them to take it over and reimburse us." "Loading up" requires answering some hard questions about presidential authority. It turns out that Obama didn't have the authority to unilaterally close it. Now adding to the population would likely invite a court challenge from Guantánamo critics regarding who can be lawfully held there after a dozen years of both legislative and federal court intervention. Stimson, a captain in the Navy Reserve Judge Advocate Corps, reminds that the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, essentially a declaration of war on Osama bin Laden and his Taliban hosts, allows the Pentagon to hold al-Qaida and its affiliates as war prisoners at Guantánamo. That's "a narrow class of individuals," he says, urging a "prudent, multi-step analysis" on whether to pursue wider authority to put Islamic State captives there.

At the Center for Constitutional Rights, legal director Baher Azmy said 11 NOV the civil liberties group that has championed detainee rights at Guantánamo since nearly the day the prison opened would look to challenge detention of an Islamic State captive there in federal courts. "Legally, there is no reasonable way an ISIS detention could be justified under the law that justifies the current detentions. That turns on the AUMF, a connection to 9/11," Azmy said, noting that based on candidate Trump's campaign rhetoric the New York firm might find itself re-litigating already presumed settled questions. The first order of business, he said, would be getting access to any new

Guantánamo captive, making sure he is not kept incommunicado like the Bush administration did in the first years before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Guantánamo captives do get to challenge their detention in federal courts.

As for whether Trump will rescind Obama's Jan. 22, 2009, closure order on Inauguration Day, a legacy item that Congress systematically thwarted through blocking legislation, that really depends on whether he makes that a priority. Brookings Institution Senior Fellow John Hudak, who has studied executive orders, says it's simply a matter of someone senior in the administration deciding this is a Day One action item for Trump's desk in the Oval Office soon after he's sworn in. It could be as simple, Hudak said, as drafting a document "saying that Guantánamo Bay will remain open and will continue operations there." It could also be as simple as a directive to the Department of Defense: "Don't close it," he said. Hudak points to the long tradition of the Global Gag Rule on the U.S. Agency for International Development. Started by President Ronald Reagan, it requires foreign organizations involved in family planning policies to certify that they will not promote or perform abortions as a condition of receiving federal funds. It was rescinded by President Bill Clinton, reinstated by Bush, and rescinded again by Obama.

Guantánamo policy watchers say they will be looking for what the White House tells the Pentagon to do about the Periodic Review Board that Obama created with the mandate of reviewing the files of uncleared, uncharged captives. International Red Cross leadership had been advocating for this for years, especially at the height of a crippling hunger strike, to provide the captives not just hope but a Geneva Convention-style format for reviewing their status. Obama began his administration with a pause at the war court, called military commissions. That led to withdrawal of charges, reform of the system and a delay in the start of the current death-penalty trials. Stimson said he has seen nothing "from the candidate Trump that he's skeptical of commissions; I'm not sure he or his team would have an interest in pausing commissions."

In his August interview Trump also left open the possibility of bringing U.S. citizens to the detention center for trial by military commission, something that by law is expressly meant for foreigners. Stimson encouraged the new administration to undertake "a very vigorous discussion by the lawyers in the know about whether that would be prudent and how that will affect the other detainees at Gitmo who are not U.S. citizens." [Source: Miami Herald | Carol Rosenberg | November 11, 2016 ++]

Waterboarding ► Reinstatement Hurdles

President-elect Donald Trump has been backing waterboarding and his pick for CIA director has called those who have done it "patriots" not "torturers." Yet a Trump administration faces steep legal and legislative hurdles to reinstate the interrogation practice that simulates drowning. Under a law approved last year, all government employees, including intelligence agents, must abide by Army guidelines for interrogating prisoners — guidelines that don't permit waterboarding. Those rules are subject to review, but it's not clear if they can be revised to allow the practice. If the Trump administration were to try to change the law or the guidelines, the effort would run into bipartisan opposition in Congress. The most formidable obstacle there would be a fellow Republican, John McCain. The Arizona senator, who was beaten as a prisoner of war in Vietnam in the 1960s, adamantly opposes waterboarding. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he would be well-positioned to block any attempt to revive it.

McCain has clashed before with Trump, who during the campaign claimed the former Navy pilot wasn't a war hero because he had been captured. At a security conference in Canada last weekend, McCain indicated he was ready to take on Trump again as begins another six-year term after winning re-election. "I don't give a damn what the president of the United States wants to do or anybody else wants to do," McCain said. "We will not waterboard. We will not do it." Waterboarding and other harsh methods were used in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to try to obtain useful information from terrorist suspects. Many intelligence, military and law enforcement officials

say the practice is ineffective as well as immoral. They say it breaks down trust between the suspect and interrogators and often prompts a detainee to say anything to stop the harsh treatment.

But Trump, who revved up his supporters with tough talk against Islamic State extremists, pledged to interrogate terrorist suspects with waterboarding and a "hell of a lot worse." "Don't tell me it doesn't work," Trump said. "Torture works, OK folks?" Trump's nominee for CIA is Rep. Mike Pompeo, a conservative congressman from Kansas who has criticized President Barack Obama for "ending our interrogation program," which Obama did not do. Pompeo criticized the release of the Senate's 2014 report on harsh interrogation of detainees and argued that the CIA program operated within the law. "Our men and women who were tasked to keep us safe in the aftermath of 9/11 — our military and our intelligence warriors — are ... not torturers, they are patriots," Pompeo said then. The views of Trump's other nominees are more opaque.

- Trump's national security adviser, Retired Army Lt. General Michael Flynn, has not ruled out the use of waterboarding. "If the nation was in grave danger from a terrorist attack involving weapons of mass destruction, and we had certain individuals in our custody with information that might avoid it, then I would probably OK enhanced interrogation techniques within certain limits," he told Politico in October.
- Trump's pick for attorney general, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) was one of a few senators who voted against bipartisan anti-torture provisions in 2005 and 2015. But in 2008, Sessions said: "I am glad we are no longer utilizing waterboarding. I hope we never have to do it again." That was before the rise of IS militants.
- On 22 NOV, Trump told The New York Times that he asked retired Marine Gen. James Mattis, a strong prospect for defense secretary, about waterboarding and was surprised to hear Mattis does not favor it.

Waterboarding has been prohibited since 2009. Two days after taking office, Obama issued an executive order prohibiting all government employees from using any interrogation method that wasn't spelled out in the Army Field Manual, a military how-to guide. Wanting to ensure that no future president could tear up the order, McCain teamed up with Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) to turn it into law. Their anti-torture amendment was adopted in a 78-21 bipartisan vote and became law late last year. The law requires the Army to conduct a review of the field manual every three years in consultation with the attorney general, the FBI director and the director of national intelligence. The first review deadline is Dec. 19, 2017, during Trump's first year in office. It's not clear if the review could result in changes allowing waterboarding or other harsh interrogation methods.

The best interrogation methods build rapport with suspects, according to the High-Value Detainee Group, a team of the nation's top interrogators who deploy to question detainees around the world. The group recently issued a report on the best interrogation practices, based on the latest behavioral and social science research. Human rights advocates have long fought against any resumption of harsh interrogation techniques. They say the intelligence community stands firmly against it and point to a comment made this year by former CIA Director Michael Hayden. He said: "If any future president wants (the) CIA to waterboard anybody, he better bring his own bucket, because CIA officers aren't going to do it."

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Continuing to peel back some of his harsher campaign rhetoric, President-elect Trump is now backing off his support for the waterboarding interrogation technique. In an interview with The New York Times on 23 NOV, Trump cited the anti-waterboarding comments of retired Gen. James Mattis, a top candidate for secretary of Defense. "He said, 'I've never found it to be useful,'" Trump said, adding that Mattis told him of interrogations in general: "'Give me a pack of cigarettes and a couple of beers, and I'll do better.'" Trump added: "I was very impressed by that answer." [Source: The Associated Press & USA Today | Deb Riechmann & David Jackson | November 22 & 23, 2016 ++]

USS Sequoia ► Presidential Yacht Sold for Zero dollars

The years of Delaware court fights over the presidential yacht, USS Sequoia, appear to be over. But the-once stately vessel, called by some "America's most famous boat," has spent the time rotting in a Virginia shipyard and will likely require millions of dollars in repairs and possibly an exterminator before it can safely set sail again. The good news for its new owners is they won't owe a penny to the previous owners following a long Chancery Court battle over possession of the historic ship. The judge in the case, Vice Chancellor Sam Glasscock III, wrote a 21-page opinion released this week that sums up the vessel's recent plight.

"The Sequoia, an elderly and vulnerable wooden yacht, is sitting on an inadequate cradle on an undersized marine railway in a moribund boatyard on the western shore of the Chesapeake, deteriorating and, lately, home to raccoons," wrote Glasscock in the opinion. It was a sad state for a ship where Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, among other presidents, hosted dignitaries and friends. Glasscock ruled that FE Partners, a Washington, D.C., investment group that specializes in historic ship restorations could purchase the Sequoia at an adjusted price of zero dollars. The decision capped years of legal wrangling over ownership and finally, the purchase price of the ship. The vessel was owned by Sequoia Presidential Yacht Group LLC. Washington Attorney Gary Silversmith was the principal owner and offered the vessel for charters along the Potomac River until it was pulled for repairs.



"FE Partners is committed to restoring and preserving the Sequoia in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard so that future generations of Americans will be able to enjoy the storied past of this magnificent yacht," said Richard Graf, general counsel of FE Partners in an email. Earlier this year, marine experts estimated the cost of repairing the national landmark to seaworthy condition ranged from an estimated \$400,000 to upwards of \$4 million if the hull has to be significantly rebuilt. Once that work is complete, the value of the repaired and seaworthy former presidential yacht would be between \$7.8 million and \$13 million, said Earl McMillen III, founder of McMillen Yachts in Newport, R.I.

The historic yacht, designed by John Trumpy and built at the Mathis Yacht Building Company of Camden, N.J., in 1925, is in dry dock in Deltaville, Va. The yacht had earlier been awarded to FE Partners, LLC, based on another Chancery Court decision. In this latest decision, Glasscock was asked to decide the value of the yacht and whether the former owner, Sequoia Presidential Yacht Group LLC was owed money for the vessel. The deal was complicated because FE Partners loaned money to the Sequoia Group to make repairs. If the loan soured, FE had an option to purchase the yacht for \$7.8 million. It was Glasscock's task to assess the costs and outstanding debts. He

concluded that FE Partners owed the Presidential Yacht Group, owned by Washington attorney Gary Silversmith, nothing in exchange for the yacht.

"I find under the contracts that Silversmith was obligated to maintain the vessel such that it was safe, structurally sound and fully equipped for its intended use as a Potomac River cruise vessel," Glasscock wrote. Instead, he found there was little evidence that happened, based on testimony from Silversmith's expert. "I am left with only one side's expert reports and testimony that bear on the question of the cost of Silversmith's obligation to maintain the Sequoia ... Silversmith did not direct his expert to do an inspection that would allow him to answer the pertinent question, which is what would it take to put this vessel" in shape to meet the loan contract provisions, Glasscock wrote. Meanwhile, FE Partner's experts told a sad tale of the condition of the yacht, describing rotting wood and a structural decline that was so significant it changed the shape of the hull.

For the last year and a half, the Sequoia has been on blocks in the boatyard. Initially, it was protected from the elements by shrink wrap but that covering was removed. The damage done while dry stored is a fraction of what already haunts the vessel. McMillen said there is extensive rot in the hull and several of the structural blocks which make up the hull are cracked. It should have new wiring, new plumbing and new marine-grade air conditioning. His total estimated cost to repair the boat ranged from \$3.9 to \$4.2 million. He recommended it be slid onto an oceangoing barge and shipped to Rhode Island for repairs. The area has the expert shipwrights needed to do the work, he said. In her present condition "would you ever put passengers on her?" asked an attorney for FE Partners. "No," McMillen said. "Would you ever put her in the water?" the lawyer asked. "No," McMillen said.

Silversmith, during the court hearing, questioned whether there weren't capable boatyards along the Chesapeake Bay where the work could be done at less cost. Restoring and repairing wooden boats is "a lost art," McMillen said. "I think, quite frankly, that's why they don't build wooden boats anymore. They are wonderful works of art." The Sequoia's history makes it more than just an aging wooden boat. Franklin Delano Roosevelt hosted Winston Churchill on its deck; John F. Kennedy celebrated his last birthday on board the Sequoia; and Richard M. Nixon spent a night in 1974 with a bottle of whiskey at a shipboard piano before he resigned the presidency. The 104-foot wooden vessel has changed hands several times in recent years since President Carter had it sold at auction in 1977 for \$286,000.

It fell into disrepair before it was purchased and restored by its current owner, Silversmith, a Washington lawyer and real estate developer. Silversmith said he paid \$1.9 million in 2000, and sank millions into repairs. Silversmith operated the boat for charter on the Potomac River for many years. He said that he had been maintaining and caring for the boat all along and even took it to the Chesapeake Maritime Museum in St. Michaels for repair. The boat was regularly hauled out of the water for maintenance. Silversmith did not respond to a request for comment. His attorney declined to comment. FE Partners was expected to issue a statement later. [Source: The (Wilmington, Del.) News Journal | Molly Murray | November 16, 2016 ++]

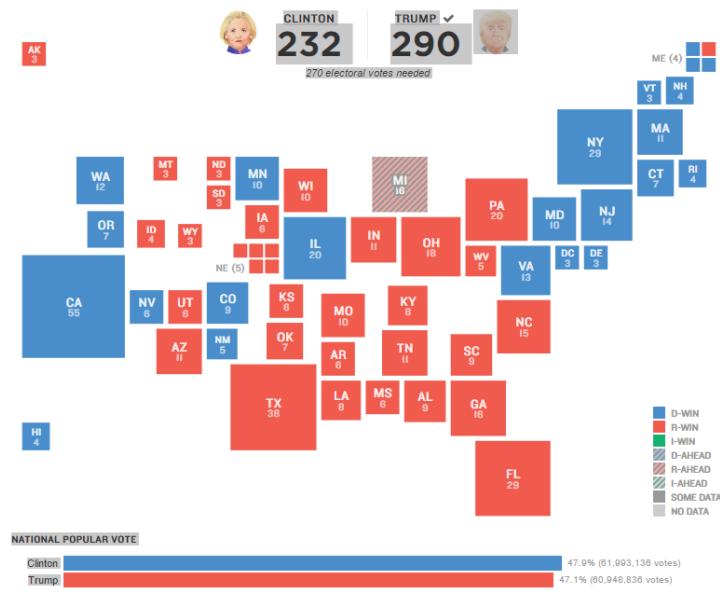
Electoral College Update 01 ► Elimination Potential

Every four years, the Electoral College creeps back into the lives of American voters. In some presidential elections, the strange, indirect system used to select the next U.S. president can feel like a formality that doesn't seem to matter much. In other elections, it matters very much indeed. This is one of those years. On 8 NOV, Donald Trump surpassed the necessary electoral votes to become the nation's president-elect. But if you look at the popular vote, which is the direct number of votes cast, Hillary Clinton beat Trump by about 1 million votes. He's the fifth person to win the presidency this way. The most recent was George W. Bush in 2000. The other three times all happened in the 1800s.

It's been an extremely divisive election, and a lot of people this year are having trouble accepting the outcome. Some — like California Sen. Barbara Boxer — have argued in the wake of the results that it's time to get rid of the current system altogether. The Democrat introduced legislation 15 NOV that would abolish the Electoral College and use the popular vote instead to determine the presidency. She has public opinion behind her. According to a 2013 Gallup poll, 63% of Americans would get rid of the electoral college. "This is the only office in the land where you can get more votes and still lose the presidency," Boxer said in a statement. "The Electoral College is an outdated, undemocratic system that does not reflect our modern society, and it needs to change immediately." But this is not exactly a realistic proposal. Abolishing the Electoral College would require an amendment to the U.S. Constitution — which would need a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and the Senate, and then it would have to be ratified by 38 states.

More than likely, Boxer is proposing this legislation to raise awareness. Democrats have won six of the past seven popular votes, but have lost the Electoral College twice in that time. In addition to the proposed legislation, there are several petitions floating around the Internet calling for an end to the Electoral College. One from www.MoveOn.org has nearly 550,000 signatures. Another petition from the liberal blog www.DailyKos.com has nearly 780,000 signatures. That one doesn't advocate for a constitutional amendment. Instead, it advocates for The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, which is an agreement that would have states award their electoral votes to the winner of the popular vote. The idea is that once enough states buy in, the electoral votes that are actually coming from the popular vote would exceed 270 and circumvent the electoral college without ever changing the Constitution. So far, according to FiveThirtyEight [<http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/why-a-plan-to-circumvent-the-electoral-college-is-probably-doomed>], 10 states plus D.C. have signed on to this agreement, for a total of 165 electoral votes. But all of the participating states are solidly Democratic — so they're not actually making much progress.

As NPR's Ron Elving explained, the Electoral College works this way: The candidates on each state ballot must indicate presidential electors who will vote for them if they win the state's popular vote. Those electors are the people who actually vote for the president directly, and they meet about a month after the election to do so. The number of electoral votes each state gets is determined by its number of House seats and Senate seats. Most states have a winner-take-all system for their electoral votes. This system, where the state's popular vote winner gets all the electoral votes, dates back to the early 1800s.



The Electoral College in general stems from the idea that the people should not be trusted to vote directly for their president, as Elving reported. Critics say it encourages candidates to devote their time only to a few swing states and allows for the possibility of a tie. It also allows for what happened this year — a candidate winning the vote of the people, but still losing the presidency. This year, the electors won't vote until 19 DEC, and they aren't legally bound to the candidate for whom they said they'll vote. Some opponents of the system are trying to capitalize on that aspect of the Electoral College, rather than trying to get rid of it entirely. A www.Change.org petition with nearly 4.5 million votes is "calling on the Electors to ignore their states' votes and cast their ballots for Secretary Clinton." In that scenario, they would become what is known as faithless electors. It seems unlikely, though, that electors pledged to Trump would switch to Clinton rather than to another Republican. Trump himself has criticized the system of which he is now a beneficiary. In a 2012 tweet, he called the system a "disaster for a democracy." [Source: NPR | Meg Anderson | November 17, 2016++]

RP Ferdinand Marcos ► Heroes' Cemetery Burial Prompts Outrage

The burial of former Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the country's Heroes' Cemetery has prompted outrage from opponents. Ousted and exiled in 1986, he died in the US in 1989. His body was brought back in 1993 and later put on display in his home city of Batac. He is accused of torturing, abducting and killing thousands of opponents, as well as looting billions of dollars from the country. The surprise burial angered opponents. Planned in secret, the funeral in the capital Manila came earlier on the same day as nationwide protests against what were thought to be only plans to move the late leader's body.



The burial is an emotive issue in the Philippines, where a large part of the country views Ferdinand Marcos' 20-year rule as emblematic of the worst abuses of power. The country's vice-president, human rights lawyer Leni Robredo, was among the critics, flatly declaring "Marcos is no hero" on Twitter. Activist Bonifacio Ilagan, who was tortured under Marcos, told the Associated Press news agency the former leader was being buried "like a thief in the night". But the late leader's eldest daughter, Imee Marcos, governor of the family's home state Ilocos Norte, thanked the country's president on social media for allowing the burial to happen.

President Rodrigo Duterte, who was supported by members of the Marcos family in his presidential campaign, gave permission for the burial in August, calling Marcos a "Filipino soldier". The Philippines' Supreme Court approved the move in November. Mr Marcos' reign still divides Filipinos, decades after his death. The ceremony was described as "very simple" and "just a family affair" by Police Chief Superintendent Oscar Albayalde, who helped manage security for the event. He said it was not a state funeral, although the late leader was given full military honours, including a 21-gun salute. Reporters were barred from attending. The Philippines vice-president split with President Duterte over the burial.

Marcos and his wife, Imelda, ruled the Philippines for 20 years, with the country under martial law for much of that time. More than a million people took to the streets in 1986 to overthrow them in what became known as the People Power Revolution. Despite this, the family later returned to the Philippines and political life, portraying the former leader's reign as a period of security, order and grand construction projects. It is an argument that has resonated with many. His son, Ferdinand "Bong Bong" Marcos Jr, came very close to winning the vice-presidency in May's elections. He told the BBC his father's reputation had helped, not hindered his campaign. [Source: BBC News | November 18, 2016 ++]

Holiday Waist Maintenance ► Dietician Tips To Retain Great Taste

The holiday season is here again and with it comes an abundance of social occasions, family parties and office potlucks. We're surrounded by food at every turn – and not just any food – decadent desserts, appetizers and main dishes that only come around once a year. These limited-edition foods should be enjoyed, but eating extravagantly for 1 to 2 months can strain a healthy lifestyle.

As a registered dietitian at the [Malcom Randall VA Medical Center](#) in Gainesville, Florida, I suggest to Veterans I work with that they have a [holiday game plan](#) so they can enjoy their favorites without the weight gain. You could follow the guidelines at file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/N25_RestaurantTips.pdf from the VA's MOVE weight management program for navigating restaurants and potlucks. Here's some other strategy for eating at events:

- **Assess all options:** Browse all the food before putting anything on your plate.
- **Fill up on veggies:** Pile half of your plate with vegetables, usually from a salad or veggie tray.
- **Prioritize:** Decide on the top three foods you wish to indulge in and take a small portion of each.



And let's not forget the family recipes. We are committed to preparing these every year during the holidays, regardless of calorie-content. Most recipes have some wiggle room you can take advantage of to reduce the amount of fat, sugar, and calories without sacrificing the taste or integrity of the dish.

If the Recipe Calls for: ~~ Try This Instead:

- Whole milk ~~ Skim, 1% milk, 2% milk
- Cream ~~~ Whole milk or half & half
- Butter, Margarine, Shortening, Lard ~~~ Use 25% less than the recipe calls for; or try a half butter/half canola oil
- Mayonnaise ~~~ Light or low-fat mayonnaise; nonfat, plain Greek yogurt
- Sour Cream ~~~ Nonfat, plain Greek yogurt; low-fat sour cream
- Cream Cheese ~~~ Light cream cheese; Neufchatel cheese
- Cheese ~~~ Reduced-fat cheeses; choose a sharper variety and use 25% less
- 1 Egg ~~~ 2 Egg whites; 1/4 cup egg substitute; 1/4 cup silken tofu
- Fat/oil for greasing pan ~~~ Cooking spray

- 1 Ounce baking chocolate ~~~ 3 Tbsp. cocoa powder plus 1 Tbsp. coconut oil
- Ground Beef ~~~ 90/10 Ground beef or less; Ground skinless turkey/chicken
- Ground meat (meatloaf/meatballs) ~~~ Replace 25-50% of meat with shredded zucchini & carrots
- Sausage ~~~ Lean ground beef; chicken or turkey sausage
- Bacon ~~~ Low-fat turkey bacon, lean ham, Canadian bacon
- Regular Broth or Bouillon ~~~ “Unsalted” broth or bouillon
- Bread crumbs/crushed crackers ~~~ Whole wheat bread crumbs; wheat bran; ground oatmeal
- Oil in baked goods ~~~ Applesauce; fruit purees such as prunes or bananas
- Gravy ~~~ Chill, then skim off the fat that rises to the top
- Salt ~~~ Try garlic & onion powder to add flavor to a savory dish; Use $\frac{1}{4}$ of the salt the recipe calls for and add more to taste

If you have questions about making a recipe healthier or developing a holiday game plan, your dietitian is ready to help! Just ask your primary care provider or Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) for a referral today. Happy Holidays! [Source: VAntage Point | November 21, 2016 ++]

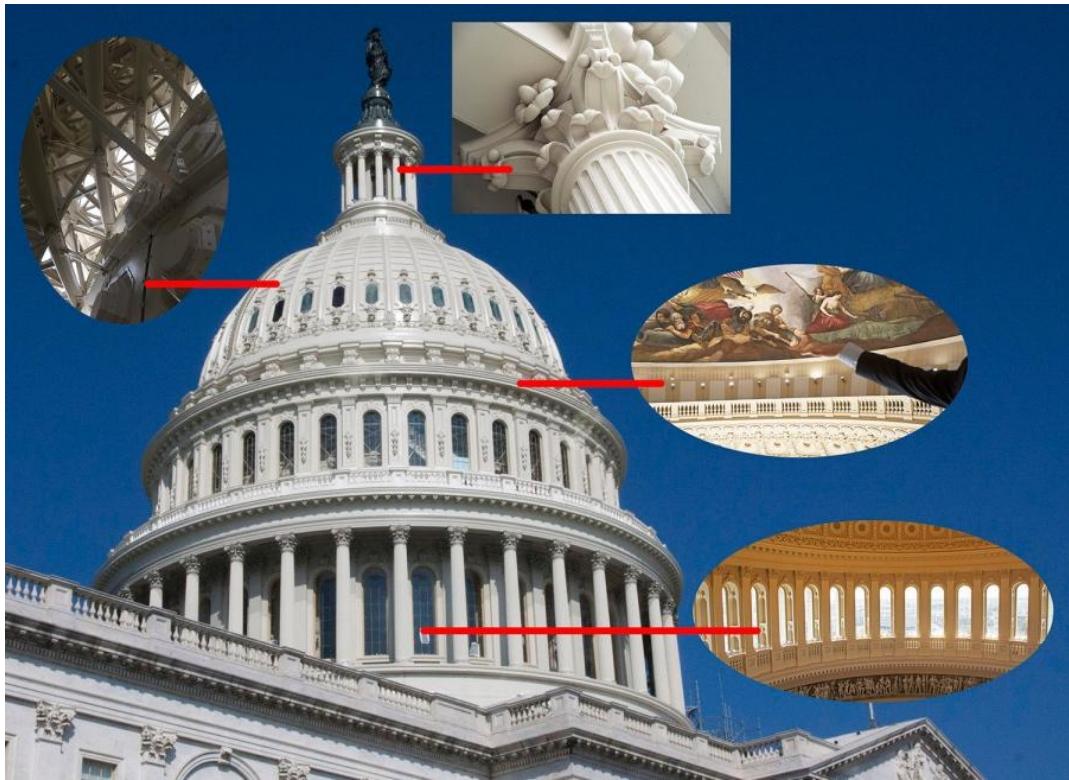
Capitol Dome ► Inauguration Day will See a Restored Dome

A restored Capitol dome will gleam behind President-elect Donald Trump on Inauguration Day in January. For over a year, the dome on the U.S. Capitol building was surrounded by more than 6,000 pounds of netting, 1.1 million pounds of scaffolding and two miles of decking. Fourteen layers of paint had to be removed and some of the original restored for the final look. More than 1,300 cracks and deficiencies were repaired in the dome. The total cost of the restoration since it began in the spring of 2014 was \$96 million.

It was a time-consuming project: For example, an individual scroll on top of a column had 18 individual castings that had to be worked with, a few sent to a special foundry in Salt Lake City to be recast. “I’m so proud of the team that worked through the night in blizzards and blistering sun,” Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers said. And for disappointed tourists and photographers looking for a pristine view of an American architectural icon, the wait is finally over.

“We call the Capitol and [its] west front ‘our nation’s stage,’” said Ayers. A tour of the restoration this week started in the crypt of the Capitol — the area where George Washington was originally going to be entombed until his will dictated that he be buried at Mount Vernon. The tour headed to the Bullfinch Staircase, a winding staircase that opens to a skylight. That, too, had been restored to how it looked in the mid-1800s. The Bullfinch staircase leads to a new level, and the first glimpse of an iron world behind the sleek, familiar interior design of the rotunda. When entering the area, a small dome — the one with artwork visible from the rotunda on its other side — is to the right. The second, larger dome that is visible from the outside hides the smaller one. In between the two domes — where visitors walked — you can see the drainage system and air vents.

According to Joe Abriatis, the construction manager, about 100 people a day worked on the project, though thousands were involved with it overall. Even the windows had been taken out during the restoration process. On one level alone there are 36 windows, each with 20 panes. The tour ended with a visit to a small balcony near the tholos balustrade. The outside walkway rings the columns directly underneath the Statue of Freedom. The breathtaking view of the National Mall from so high up quiets the typical city sounds of sirens and people. For a moment, politics is lost in the wind, the only sound on the balcony.



Though the cornerstone for the Capitol Building was laid in 1793 — during the first large public event in the federal city — the dome would not be added until decades later. The dome on the Capitol is believed to be the largest cast-iron dome in the world. Work on it started in 1857 with iron columns being installed. More than 150 years later, restoration workers in 2015 found some memories of the original workers hidden in the dome:

- Montgomery C. Meigs, an 1836 West Point graduate, oversaw the building of two wings of the Capitol Building as well as the dome. On the ironwork inside the dome, Meigs — the Army's Civil War quartermaster general, who was also critical in the development of Arlington National Cemetery — stamped his name on the iron.
- A worker named Al Ports carved his name into the plaster.
- A crowbar was left behind.

By 1866, the interior artwork "Apotheosis of George Washington" was completed. Almost 100 years later, in 1959, the dome went under extensive restoration, including the installation of bronze window frames and repairs to the drainage system. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Meredith Tibbetts | November 17, 2016 ++]

Landmines Update 01 ► Casualties Rise 75% as Removal Funding Declines

Despite a global treaty that bans land mines, casualties from those weapons and other unexploded munitions lurking in current and past war zones rose sharply last year to the highest point in a decade, a monitoring group said in its annual report. The group, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, also said that financial contributions toward efforts to remove land mines plunged by nearly a quarter last year. It was the third consecutive annual decline in funding, imperiling a pledge by treaty members to complete mine clearance by 2025. In another setback to the treaty's goals, the number of countries and areas where land mines are known to exist rose to 64 last

year, from 61 in 2014, the report said. It attributed the increase to the use of antipersonnel mines in Nigeria, including improvised mines, and to new data on mines that had already been present in Palau and Mozambique.

The casualty increase was primarily from the armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, according to the report, which said better availability of data on victims was also a factor. It said that 6,461 people were known to have been wounded or killed by land mines and other explosive remnants of war in 2015. That was a 75 percent increase from 2014 and the highest reported casualty total since 2006's figure of 6,573. "The decade-high number of new casualties caused by land mines and unexploded ordnance, and the continued suffering of civilians, more than a third of whom were children, proves again that these indiscriminate weapons should never be used by anyone," said Loren Persi Vicentic, one of the editors of the annual report, Landmine Monitor 2016.

The land mine treaty, which took effect in 1999, bans the use of mines and other victim-activated explosive devices placed on or under the ground. They are designed to detonate when a person unwittingly walks over them or is nearby, and they can remain lethal even after lying dormant for many years. Land mines have long posed a safety threat to civilians, particularly children, who step on the explosives or find them, sometimes well after a conflict has ended. Landmine Monitor 2016 was released in advance of the 15th meeting of countries that have signed the treaty. The meeting was to begin 28 NOV in Santiago, Chile. At least 162 countries have signed the treaty. Thirty-five countries remain outside the treaty, including China, Russia and the United States. Most of them do not use or produce land mines.

The United States has stated that it will observe the "key requirements" of the treaty with the exception of the Korean Peninsula, where the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South remains one of the most heavily mined areas in the world. The Obama administration has said that the Defense Department is working on land mine alternatives in the Demilitarized Zone, which presumably would help create the conditions for the United States to join the land mine treaty formally. The United States remains the world's leading funder of humanitarian demining work around the world, providing about \$154 million last year to 40 countries and more than \$2.6 billion in at least 95 countries since 1993, according to the State Department's latest annual report on American efforts to eradicate unexploded remnants of war. Those efforts include disarming and destroying old American bombs from the Vietnam War era that still pose deadly hazards in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Stan Brown, the director of the State Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, which helps oversee the American-funded demining work, told reporters last week that the agency was sending two observers to the Santiago meeting of land-mine treaty members. More than 50 countries manufactured land mines before the treaty, a number that has since dwindled to 11. The Landmine Monitor report said the most active producers were India, Myanmar, Pakistan and South Korea. [Source: The New York Times | Rick Gladstonenov | November 22, 2016 ++]

Trump Election Update 03 ► Security Clearance Requirements

The campaign is finally over, but the questions continue to come in. In the aftermath of one of the most contentious political campaigns in recent history many people have expressed concerns about the president and the security clearance process. Here are three of the most recently asked questions, along with their answers.

1. Does the President Have a Security Clearance? (And related: What happens if President-elect Donald Trump can't pass a security screening?)

The president of the United States is not subjected to a background investigation and doesn't hold a security clearance in the traditional sense. That may sound strange at first, given the fact that even a chef at the CIA requires a top secret security clearance. But because the president is the person who actually establishes classification procedures, he or she can declassify something at any point. Procedure aside, it simply wouldn't be practical for the

president to undergo a traditional background investigation process. Particularly considering the logistics nightmare if a background investigator flagged issues – let's say previous issues with classification procedures or an ongoing lawsuit, for instance.

2. Can a person run for president even if they can't hold a security clearance?

There are only a few legal requirements for running for president. You must be at least 35 years old, must be a naturalized citizen, and a resident of the US for 14 years. Meeting the eligibility requirements for a security clearance is not one of the requirements. It would take a change to the US Constitution for there to be any suitability or security requirements for the president.

3. Is it common for the president's family to get security clearances?

Historically, though rarely, there have been presidential family members who have had official positions within the White House. But just as the rules about access to classified information for Members of Congress are traditionally grounded in experience, shaped by “needs and concerns,” so are the rules for a president’s family members. Presidential spouses, for instance, don’t undergo a security clearance background investigation but are absolutely privy to classified information (simply by knowing their spouse’s schedule!). And many first ladies, from Hillary Clinton to Nancy Reagan, have shaped not just White House decorating but also presidential policy. “Did I ever give Ronnie advice? You bet I did. I’m the one who knows him best, and I was the only person in the White House who had absolutely no agenda of her own—except helping him,” Reagan famously wrote in *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan*.

The roles of first families are still more steeped in tradition than policy, which means Ivanka Trump likely won’t be submitting her SF-86 for review any time soon. But requiring security clearances for presidential advisors -- even family members -- wouldn’t necessarily be bad. While a security clearance grants access to classified information based on need-to-know, it also establishes penalties for failing to protect classified information and ensures individuals are educated on clearance policy.

[Source: GovExec.com | Lindy Kyzer | November 11, 2016 ++]

Winter Driving ► Tips To Help Keep You Safe

Winter weather can wreak havoc on roadways. That makes learning how to safely drive in snowy and icy conditions vital. And it's not just those who live in the North or Midwest who need winter driving skills. Whether you live in Alaska or Alabama, here are some tips to help keep you safe.



- Winter defensive driving is more than just maintaining control on snowy, icy roads. It begins long before you get into your car, buckle your seat belt or start your engine. Before all that, you need to be planning,

doing things like checking the weather forecast and listening to the radio or TV for announcements about accidents, highway closings and road advisories. If this information is not available on the radio, call your state's highway patrol for up-to-date information. If you have access to the Internet, you can go to the National Traffic and Road Closure website and click on your state for road conditions.

- When planning your route, avoid roads that can become dangerous during winter. Also, let someone know your plans so authorities will know where to begin looking if you become stranded. A tragic example of failing to do that is the Kim family. In November 2006, they took the wrong exit off Interstate 5 in Oregon and decided to try to reach their destination by a camp road that appeared to offer an alternate route. The road, however, was not maintained during the winter and they soon became lost. As the family spent the night in their vehicle, they were trapped by a winter storm. After waiting six days to be rescued, the father tried to hike to reach help. While the rest of the Kim family was ultimately rescued, the father died of hypothermia after hiking more than 11 miles in the snow. Straying from their driving plan proved fatal for this family.
- Although the Kim family is an unfortunate example, it's not just mountain roads that pose a danger. Being exposed to both above and below freezing temperatures, bridges and overpasses freeze first and are susceptible to black ice. Because of that, it's important to reduce your speed when approaching bridges or overpasses and avoid braking while passing over them.
- As you drive on wintry roads, always accelerate easily, turn cautiously, brake carefully and leave plenty of distance between you and the other cars. The normal two-second following rule used when driving on clear highways needs to be expanded to five or six seconds during wintry conditions.
- If you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle, it's important to not become overconfident. While four-wheel-drive provides better traction than two-wheel-drive on snowy roads, it does nothing to improve your braking ability. Also, some four-wheel-drive systems can actually send you out of control in icy conditions.
- You also need to make sure your car is ready for winter's adverse weather conditions. First, ensure your tires have enough tread to grip the road adequately. Depending on the weather conditions where you live, you may want to consider mounting snow or studded tires to get the best traction. Take the time to speak with a tire professional or consult your automobile owner's manual.
- Also, make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition, not cracked or worn. Check your windshield washer reservoir and make sure it's filled with a quality washer fluid designed for winter temperatures. And remember, you have to see through both sides of your windshield, so take the time to clean the inside too.
- As funny as it sounds, you need your air conditioner to run effectively during winter. Air conditioners are very useful in removing condensation and frost from the inside of windows. Simply set the temperature on warm when doing this - something many cars do automatically when you choose the defrost setting.
- Headlights help other cars see you and allow you to better see the environment where you're driving. To get the most out of your headlights and taillights, make sure they are clear of snow. Consider replacing the bulbs before winter begins and remember to always use your low beams when snow is falling.

While winter accidents can never be completely eliminated, preparing your vehicle and driving carefully will lessen the odds you'll end up waiting for a tow truck or ambulance. After all, don't you have better things to do this winter? [Source: Health.mil | November 23, 2016 ++]

Paraprosdokians ► Figures Of Speech w/Unexpected Endings

- ❖ If I had a dollar for every girl that found me unattractive, they'd eventually find me very attractive.

- ❖ I find it ironic that the colors red, white, and blue stand for freedom, until they're flashing behind you.
- ❖ Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation towards the local swimming pool, so I gave him a glass of water.
- ❖ Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
- ❖ I'm great at multitasking; I can waste time, be unproductive, and procrastinate all at once.
- ❖ If I can smile when things go wrong, I have someone in mind to blame.
- ❖ Take my advice — I'm not using it.
- ❖ My wife and I were happy for twenty years; then we met.
- ❖ Hospitality is the art of making guests feel like they're at home when you wish they were.
- ❖ Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes.
- ❖ Ever stop to think and then forget to start again?
- ❖ Women spend more time wondering what men are thinking than men spend thinking.
- ❖ He who laughs last thinks slowest.
- ❖ Is it wrong that only one company makes the game Monopoly?
- ❖ Women sometimes make fools of men, but most guys are the do-it-yourself type.
- ❖ I was going to give him a nasty look, but he already had one.
- ❖ Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
- ❖ I was going to wear my camouflage shirt today, but I couldn't find it.
- ❖ If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
- ❖ Sometimes I wake up grumpy; other times I let her sleep.
- ❖ If tomatoes are technically a fruit, is ketchup a smoothie?
- ❖ Money is the root of all wealth.

[Source: Reddit | <https://www.reddit.com/r/Jokes> | November 11, 2016 ++]

Have You Heard? ► That F'ing Marine! || A Lesson on UP

The family of a retired Marine Master Gunnery Sergeant with 37 years in the Corps reluctantly decided that at age 92, he needed more care than they could provide. The only decent place close to their home was a nursing home for retired soldiers. They approached the facility and were told that, while Army vets got first choice, they would take vets of the other services if there happened to be an opening; which, by good fortune, there was.

A week after placing the retired Marine there, his sons came to visit. "How do you like it here, Pop?" they asked. "It's wonderful," said the old Jarhead. "Great chow, lots to do, and they treat everyone with great respect."

"How so, Pop?" "Well, take Harry, across the hall, 88 and was in the Air Force. He hasn't worn the uniform in 30 years, but they still call him 'General.' Then George, down the hall, used to lead the Army band. Hasn't conducted a note in 40 years, but they still call him 'Maestro!'. And Bob used to be a surgeon in the Navy, has not operated on anyone in 20 years, but they still call him 'Doctor' "

"That's fine for the other guys, Pop, but how do they treat you?" "Me? They treat me with even more respect. I'm 92, haven't had sex in 10 years, and they still call me 'That F'ing Marine!'"

-o-o-O-o-o-

A two-letter word in English has more meanings than any other two-letter word, and that word is 'UP.' It is listed in the dictionary as an [adv.], [prep], [adj.], [n] or [v].

It's easy to understand UP, meaning toward the sky
or at the top of the list, but when we awaken in the morning, why do we wake UP?

At a meeting, why does a topic come UP? Why do we speak UP, and why are the officers UP for election (if there is a tie, it is a toss UP) and why is it UP to the secretary to write UP a report?

We call UP our friends, brighten UP a room, polish UP the silver, warm UP the leftovers and clean UP the kitchen. We lock UP the house and fix UP the old car.

At other times, this little word has real special meaning. People stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses.

To be dressed is one thing but to be dressed UP is special.

And this UP is confusing: A drain must be opened UP because it is blocked UP.

We open UP a store in the morning but we close it UP at night. We seem to be pretty mixed UP about UP!

To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of UP, look UP the word UP in the dictionary. In a desk-sized dictionary, it takes UP almost 1/4 of the page and can add UP to about thirty definitions.

If you are UP to it, you might try building UP a list of the many ways UP is used. It will take UP a lot of your time, but if you don't give UP, you may wind UP with (UP to) a hundred or more.

When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding UP. When the sun comes out, we say it is clearing UP. When it rains, it soaks UP the earth. When it does not rain for a while, things dry UP. One could go on and on, but I'll wrap it UP, for now . . . My time is UP!

Oh . . . One more thing: What is the first thing you do in the morning and the last thing you do at night?

U P!

Did that one crack you UP? Don't screw UP. Send this on to the people you look UP in your address book . . . Or not . . . it's UP to you. Now I'll shut UP!





Typical Chicago Rainy Day



**This guy dreamed of having two sons.
His dreams came true - eventually!**

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Notes:

1. The Bulletin will be provided as a website accessed document vice direct access until further notice. This was necessitated by SPAMHAUS who alleged the Bulletin's size and large subscriber base were choking the airways interfering with other internet user's capability to send email. SPAMHAUS told us to stop sending the Bulletin in its entirety to individual subscribers and to validate the subscriber base with the threat of removing all our outgoing email capability if we did not. To avoid this we notified all subscribers of the action required to continue their subscription. This Bulletin notice was sent to the 20,327 subscribers who responded to that notice and/or have since subscribed. All others are in the process of being deleted from the active mailing list.
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8. Articles within the Bulletin are editorialized information obtained from over 100 sources. Provided at the end of each article is the primary source from which it was obtained. The ++ indicates that the information was reformatted from the original source and/or editorialized from more than one source. Because of the number of articles contained in each Bulletin there is no way that I can attest to their validity other than they have all been taken from previously reliable sources. My staff consists of only one person (myself) and it is a 7/10-12 endeavor to prepare and publish. Readers who question the validity of content are encouraged to go to the source provided to have their questions answered. I am always open to comments but, as a policy, shy away from anything political. Too controversial and time consuming.

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RAO Bulletin Editor/Publisher:

Lt. James (EMO) Tichacek, USN (Ret) Tel: (858) 432-1246 Email: raoemo@sbcglobal.net

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RAO Baguio Director:

SMSgt Leonard (Len) D. Harvey, USAF (Ret) PSC 517 Box 4036, FPO AP 96517-1000, Tel: 63-74-442-3468;
Email: lenharvey@live.com.ph

RAO Baguio Office: Red Lion Inn, 35 Leonard Wood Road, Baguio City, 2600 Philippines

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