

RAO BULLETIN

1 November 2021

PDF Edition



THIS RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE BULLETIN CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

Pg	Article	Subject
* DOD *		
04 ==	DoD Lawsuit ----	(\$50K Offer on \$1M Suit Declined by Former Yokota Hospital Patient)
06 ==	DoD Security [02] ----	(To Keep Them Clearance Holders Now Subject to Continuous Vetting)
08 ==	Contaminated DoD Sites [01] ----	(Groundwater at 13 in Gulf Area Contains Forever Chemicals)
09 ==	DoD Civilian Work Force [02] ----	(Pentagon and House Lawmakers Disagree on Too Many)
11 ==	Military Treatment Facilities [03] ----	(Moving Patients Out May Cause Them Harm)
14 ==	Afghan Withdrawal [19] ----	(SIGAR IG Pressured By State, DOD to Redact Reports)
15 ==	POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials ----	(Reported OCT 16 thru 31, 2021 Twelve)
* VA *		
18 ==	VA Claims Backlog [170] ----	(2,000 New Processors Being Hired to Help With Looming Spike)
19 ==	Covid-19 Misinformation [07] ----	(VA Will Not withhold Benefits for Those Refusing Shots)
20 ==	VA Care ----	(IG Warns Of 'Broken Culture' Regarding Patient Safety)
21 ==	VA Veteran Services ----	(Employee Covid Vaccine Mandate Compliance Concerns)
22 ==	VA Veterans Homes [06] ----	(California's Vets Forced to Leave to Seek Aid in Dying)
25 ==	Disability Indemnity Compensation [14] ----	(VFW House Hearing Testimony on H.R. 3402)
26 ==	VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ----	(Reported 16 thru 31 OCT 2021)
29 ==	VA Manila OPC ----	(Announcements & Reminders 22 OCT 2021)

*** VETS ***

- 37 == Vet Jobs [276] ---- (DoD Killed Off Troops To Teachers Program)
- 39 == Burn Pit Toxic Exposure [88] ---- (Burn Pit-Related Disability Claims Filing Assistance)
- 40 == PTSD Punitive Discharges [07] ---- (Traumatized Vet's To Receive another Navy Look)
- 41 == Vet Hiring Fairs ---- (Scheduled As of NOV 01, 2021)
- 42 == U.S. Capitol Riot [19] ---- (Army Soldier James P. Mault Charged)
- 44 == U.S. Capitol Riot [20] ---- (Iraq War Vet Leffingwell Pled Guilty)
- 45 == RIP My General ---- (Collin Powell!)
- 45 == Obit: Colin Powell ---- (OCT 18, 2021 | Army Retiree, NSA, CJC & Secretary of State)
- 48 == WWII Vets 272 ---- (Joseph Quirk Jr. | Escapee from France)
- 50 == WWII Vets 273 ---- (James Harvey | Tuskegee Airman & Top Gun Trophy Winner)
- 53 == Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule ---- (As of NOV 01, 2021)
- 53 == Homeless Vet Treatment ---- (Panhandling Arrest Leads to Service Dog's Death)
- 55 == State Veterans' Benefits ---- (Mississippi 2021)

*** VET LEGISLATION ***

- 56 == Senate Vet Bill Progress ---- (16 thru 30 OCT 2021)
- 57 == SGLI/VGLI [20] ---- (H.R.3793/S.2794 | Supporting Families of the Fallen Act)
- 58 == VA Prostate Cancer Program [19] ---- (S.2720/H.R.4880 | Prostate Cancer Treatment/Research)

*** MILITARY ***

- 60 == Navy Covid Discharge Plan ---- (Unveiled For Sailors Who Refuse Vaccine)
- 61 == Texas National Guard ---- (Tuition Assistance Cutbacks)
- 64 == Military Myths & Legends [05] ---- (Did WW II Soldiers Mutiny after V-J Day)
- 65 == Military Overseas Taxation [02] ---- (Bavaria Tax Collectors Going After American Base)
- 66 == UFO Reporting [01] ---- (Air Force Vets Return to Newly Attentive Washington)
- 69 == Military Fraud & Abuse [07] ---- (MLS Executive Pleads Not Guilty to Bribery Charges)
- 70 == Military Fraud & Abuse [08] ---- (Marine Officer Critical of Senior Leaders)
- 72 == Military Family Hunger [03] ---- (Lawmakers Concerned By Reports of Thousands)
- 75 == Russian Drones ---- (Sarna & Seadrone)
- 76 == Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang ---- ('Wilco' thru 'XBT')

*** MILITARY HISTORY ***

- 77 == WWI ACE Rickenbacker's WWII Ditching ---- (21 Days Lost at Sea)
- 78 == WWII Battle of Moscow ---- (2 October 1941 – 7 January 1942)
- 80 == Profiles in Courage ---- (John Paul Jones)
- 82 == Battle of Saint-Mihiel ---- (First Large-Scale Attack of WWI Led By the United States)
- 84 == Whiskey on the Rocks ---- (Cold War Russia-Sweden Sub Incident)
- 86 == Medal of Honor Awardees ---- (Rodney Maxwell Davis| Vietnam)
- 88 == Medal of Honor Awardees ---- (Kenneth D. Bailey | WWII)
- 90 == Military History Anniversaries ---- (01 thru 15 NOV)
- 90 == Every Picture Tells A Story ---- (Tracers)

91 == WWII Bomber Nose Art [85] ---- (Lady Luck)

*** HEALTH CARE ***

91 == Low Salt Diet ---- (Tips for Dining Out)
94 == Philips Respironics Recall ---- (CPAP & BiLevel PAP Devices for Sleep Apnea)
95 == TRICARE Pharmacy Network ---- (Walmart Out, CVS In)
97 == TRICARE Pharmacy Network [01] ---- (Walmart Says It Was Blindsided by Ouster)
98 == Aging [04] ---- (Fall & Fracture Prevention)
101 == Covid-19 Precautions [05] ---- (CDC New Health Alert on Pregnancy)
103 == Covid-19 Variants [01] ---- (B.1.630 Detected in Louisiana)
104 == Covid-19 Variants [02] ---- (Those of Concern & Interest as of OCT 2021)
106 == Cancer Risk [02] ---- (Higher for USAF Fighter Pilots, Crews)
108 == Heart Failure [06] ---- (Air and Noise Pollution Linked to Increased Risk)
109 == Liver Disease [04] ---- (Acute Liver Failure)
112 == Sleep [14] ---- (Myths That Could Explain Why you're So Tired)

*** FINANCES ***

114 == COLA Summary ---- (Retirement, VA Disability, SBP and SS Recipients in 2022)
115 == SSA COLA 2021 [01] ---- (5.9% for 2022 Insufficient to Restore Senior's Buying Power)
116 == SSA COLA 2021 [02] ---- (How a High COLA Really Impacts Social Security Income)
117 == Tax Credits [02] ---- (Advance Child Tax Credit Eligibility 2021)
119 == Widowhood & SSA ---- (Financial Impact)
120 == Health Insurance ---- (Competition Dwindling)
121 == Covid-19 Treatment [13] ---- (Hospitalized Patients Could Owe Thousands)
122 == Dental Costs [05] ---- (What You Can Expect to Pay in 2021)
122 == Inflation [01] ---- (CPI Jump from September 2020 to 2021)
123 == Bacon ---- (How Much More does it really Cost now?)
126 == Text Message Scams [01] ---- (Wrong Number? Don't Even Text Back)
127 == Holiday Scams [06] ---- (Shoppers Burned by Ads for Holiday Décor)
128 == Tax Burden on Oregon Vets ---- (As of OCT 2021)

*** GENERAL INTEREST ***

133 == Notes of Interest ---- (16 thru 31 OCT 2021)
134 == GTMO Detainees [06] ---- (Majid Khan Gives First Public Account of CIA Torture)
135 == Afghan ISIS-K [01] ---- (Intelligence Assessment on Their International Strike Capability)
137 == Taiwan-China Dispute [13] ---- (Biden's Comment on U.S. Support Commitment)
138 == U.S. Taiwan Relations [01] ---- (Pentagon & White House Revise Austin & Biden Responses)
140 == China's Offensive Capability [09] ---- (Nuclear-Capable Hypersonic Glide Vehicle Test)
142 == Cleaning Myths ---- (These Will Ruin Your Things)
144 == News of the Weird ---- (OCT 16 thru 31, 2021)
146 == Vocabulary ---- (Some Words to Enhance Yours | 211031)
147 == Have You Heard or Seen? ---- (A Soldier Died Today | Corny Jokes 3 | Think Toons)

*** ATTACHMENTS ***

Attachment – Mississippi State Veterans’ Benefits (Updated)
Attachment – Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 15 NOV (Updated)
Attachment – Rickenbacker Lost At Sea

NOTE

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

*** DoD ***



DoD Lawsuit

\$50K Offer on \$1M Suit Declined by Former Yokota Hospital Patient

Eight years after a surgeon at this base in western Tokyo left a laparotomy towel inside Angie Perry's abdomen, the Air Force has offered to settle her medical malpractice claim for \$50,000. Perry, a former Army spouse now living in Vancouver, Wash., discovered the towel and had it removed five years after her cesarean section at Yokota in 2013, according to Perry and records she provided. She is seeking \$1 million in compensation. "There is no doubt in my mind if that towel wasn't found, it would've killed me," she told Stars and Stripes on 15 SEP. "I'd rather not take anything than settle."

Mistakes of this type are not uncommon in Defense Department hospitals, although they have declined since 2016, when DoD began tracking them in its annual Tricare program report. That year, the Pentagon identified 18 cases of objects left in patients by surgeons and 38 cases of surgeons operating on the wrong patient, performing the wrong procedure or operating on the wrong body part. In 2020, DoD hospitals reported 17 instances of a foreign object being left inside a patient after surgery, according to the annual DoD report on its Tricare health-care program. The report identified another 21 cases of the wrong patient, the wrong procedure or the wrong body part.

Until recently, patients at the receiving end of a military surgeon's mistake had little recourse to compensation. A provision in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets policy and spending priorities for the Pentagon, ended the 70-year ban on suing the DoD for medical

malpractice. In December 2019 then-President Donald Trump signed the Richard Stayskal Military Medical Accountability Act into law, allowing active-duty members to file medical malpractice claims against the DoD.

However, the new law has a two-year statute of limitations, and does not allow service members and their families to sue medical facilities at bases overseas, although they may file claims. "Overseas patients may bring administrative claims for malpractice against the DoD under the Military Claims Act," a Pentagon spokesperson, Maj. Charlie Dietz, told Stars and Stripes via email Oct. 5. "Congress would need to change the law for patients to bring lawsuits."

Perry remembered her surgery at Yokota as chaotic. The surgeon assigned to her was fresh out of training, according to the resume of the physician, who no longer works at the base. "At one point, the surgeon couldn't stop the bleeding and things got a little frantic in the surgery room where the nurses were pleading with the surgeon to let them go ask another surgeon to come and assist," Perry said. "I thought for certain I was going to die right there." Nonetheless, Perry went home with her new, healthy baby. But she said she suffered a series of chronic health problems until a CT scan in 2018 discovered the metal tag on the towel left in her abdomen five years prior.

For three years Perry said she experienced pain that interfered with her bonding with her child. She felt as though her digestive system had shut down, and because her bladder no longer functioned properly, she wore diapers. Despite 27 doctors' appointments while living in Japan, Perry said she never found the cause for her agony. "I was getting into fights with my husband because he was so angry and believed I turned into a hypochondriac," she said. "He didn't understand why I was addicted to going to the doctor ... I had never experienced pain like this before." Five years, six gastrointestinal specialists and several emergency room visits later, a doctor in Washington State did a scan of Perry's abdomen and found the laparotomy towel. It was removed on Oct. 31, 2018, along with a part of her small intestine, Perry said.

In July, the Yokota legal office offered to settle Perry's claim for \$50,000, according to a letter it sent her. "We do recognize that a laparotomy pad was discovered to have been retained in the abdomen, which may have caused some pain," the letter states. "Although abdominal pain is a symptom of a retained laparotomy pad, pain is subjective and by Oct. 22, 2013, Ms. Perry had no abdominal pain." Perry hired a medical malpractice attorney in Texas in April 2019 to file a claim against Yokota. She said she does not intend to accept the settlement offer from Yokota and is now seeking different representation.

"My bladder still doesn't work, there's a lot of scar tissue, it caused a huge wedge between my husband and me," she told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday. "The stress of knowing every single day that something was wrong with me, but I couldn't get a doctor to listen to me. It took away the first five years where I should have been enjoying the new baby, but I was so weak that my health consumed every waking moment. I believe, after everything I have been through, it is what I deserve." A spokesperson from Yokota Air Base said the 374th Medical Group and the base's legal department cannot speak about Perry's case. "We cannot provide the details on an

individual's specific case in the interest of protecting personal privacy or avoiding impact to a potential ongoing investigation," Tech Sgt. Taylor Workman told Stars and Stripes via email Sept. 21.

Perry's wasn't the only case of her kind at Yokota. Lamia Lahlou, a former Arabic linguist for the Army, had a similar experience. After her C-section from the same surgeon as Perry at Yokota in September 2013, she started experiencing chronic abdominal pain and digestive issues. She said her doctors told her it was part of the recovery process. "I was in so much pain that I thought maybe they put my organs in wrong," she told Stars and Stripes in a phone interview 20 SEP. Lahlou said she was told by Yokota doctors her pain was psychological and was referred to the mental health clinic. "I felt like I was being told I was crazy," she said. "But I thought that maybe they were right. I believed that doctors knew better."

In the U.S. for Thanksgiving that year, Lahlou called a doctor because, she said, she could no longer stand the pain. A CT scan revealed a mass of infection along with cotton balls left inside Lahlou's abdomen from the C-section. Doctors also found a 21-cm abscess and leftover materials. She had five surgeries and part of her bladder removed. She decided to stay in the U.S. rather than return with her husband to Japan. "This story for me is very personal, because what was meant to be the arrival of my second baby resulted in so much pain and suffering and, at the end, my divorce," she said.

Lahlou started the process of filing a claim against the Yokota medical group in 2014 but could not find an attorney to take her case, she said. She ultimately dropped her claim. Lahlou said she encourages anyone who experiences a similar situation to persist in finding answers. "If I didn't fly back to the U.S. and kept being seen at Yokota, what could have resulted?" Lahlou said. "I could have easily died, and what would my parents have gotten? An 'Oops, sorry?'. If you are in pain, keep seeking answers. We know our own bodies." [Source: Stars and Stripes | Erica Earl | October 21, 2021 ++]

DoD Security

Update 02: To Keep Them Clearance Holders Now Subject to Continuous Vetting



Traditionally, the agency that bestows security clearances on government employees re-investigates those candidates on a cyclical basis, checking on their credit reports, criminal

histories and so on, once every several years. But a new vetting process means the Defense Department, and employees of dozens of other government agencies, will continuously scan background check databases and have any new events sent straight to investigators. The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) announced 5OCT that all DoD clearance holders are now part of its continuous vetting program.

This means that if an employee comes under criminal investigation, or forecloses on a home, multiple agencies will ping DCSA with the news immediately. At the same time, DCSA software will automatically scan those databases for new information. Previously, the agency did background checks every five to 10 years on roughly 4 million DoD clearance-holders, which meant that it could be years before an event that would disqualify someone from holding a security clearance was caught.

For instance, DCSA direct William K. Lietzau told reporters 5 OCT, continuous vetting recently picked up an employee with a fugitive arrest warrant for attempted murder and assault. “The key is that the alert information developed through the DCSA continuous vetting system was received and validated five and a half years before the subject’s next periodic reinvestigation,” he said, meaning DoD might not have know about it for another half-decade. In that case, automatic scanning of databases caught the event, rather than an investigator having to vet each individual manually.

Similarly, he said, in Jan. 2021 DCSA got a warning about an employee who was under investigation for ties to a terrorist organization, three days after the person had been enrolled in the system. Otherwise, it might have been eight years before a reinvestigation found that potential affiliation. “This alert identified that the subject was under active investigation by another government agency for potential terrorism activities, including a plan targeting United States facilities, and ties to known or suspected terrorists,” Lietzau said, adding that the threat wasn’t related to the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. He did not specify which organizations the examples came from.

The effort feeds directly into DoD initiatives to monitor extremist affiliations and behavior, including the objective to be better able to intervene. That could eventually include monitoring social media activity. “We already have several pilot programs we’re working on, to look at the value of social media, and how you can look at it — whether it’s an event-driven look at social media; whether it’s a regular, continuous look at some social media; or whether it’s a one-time, when they’re investigated, look at social media,” Lietzau said. “There’s different ways you could use some of the social media search capabilities that are out there. We’re still right now analyzing how much value we think there is.”

It will be up to DoD policymakers to decide whose social media might be searched and in what way, he said. In addition to service members and many DoD civilians, DCSA is working to enroll the rest of the federal government. So far, 30 agencies have signed on, Lietzau said. Those include VA, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Health and Human Services Department and the

General Services Administration. Eventually, as part of a broader effort subbed Trusted Workforce 2.0, all periodic investigations will be completely replaced by the National Background Investigation Services, a personnel vetting system still under development. The goal is to have the entire federal government on that system by the end of 2023. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Meghann Myers | October 5, 2021 ++]

Contaminated DoD Sites

Update 01: Groundwater at 13 in Gulf Area Contains Forever Chemicals

High levels of toxic chemicals, known as “forever chemicals,” have been found in groundwater from at least 13 Department of Defense sites in the Gulf of Mexico. According to Environmental Working Group (EWG), perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances — known as PFAS — have been found to adversely affect Gulf fish and residents who subsequently consume any contaminated seafood.



The 13 defense department sites that have had serious levels of PFAS contaminations detected are Silverhill Navy Outlying Field, Correy Station, Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Hurlburt Field AFB, MacDill AFB, Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, NAS Pensacola-Bronson Field, NAS Pensacola-Saufley Field, Tyndall AFB, Gulfport Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport Regional Airport, Keesler AFB, and NAS Corpus Christi.

Reports cited by EWG show that the levels of PFAS contamination detected from these sites are hundreds of times higher than groundwater safety standards in states such as California and Vermont. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), PFAS have been used in the United States since the 1940s, and there is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects, although most studies have been conducted on animals. Studies conducted

on laboratory animals cited by the EPA have found that PFAS such as perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) can cause reproductive and developmental issues, tumors, negative effects on the immune system and liver and kidney diseases.

PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe. Everyday sources of PFAS include kitchenware and pizza boxes, and on DOD sites they are commonly found in firefighting foams. While there are currently no federal regulations regarding standards of PFAS contamination in groundwater, President Joe Biden's Environmental Justice Plan includes a pledge to establish "enforceable limits for PFAS in the Safe Drinking Water Act."

These recent contamination discoveries underscore the need for a swift PFAS cleanup by the Department of Defense, Jared Hayes, a policy analyst at the Environmental Working Group, wrote in his recent report regarding DOD sites and PFAS contamination. "Even at very low doses of PFAS in drinking water, our service members and their families are at risk of the suppression of their immune system and an elevated risk of cancer, increased cholesterol, and reproductive and developmental harms, among other serious health issues," Hayes said in his analysis.

Although PFAS contamination in the Gulf is not solely the fault of defense department sites — contamination is suspected from hundreds of industrial sites throughout the region — recent DOD records show that levels of PFAS in groundwater from these 13 sites are reaching maximum detections ranging from 718 parts per trillion (ppt) to 877,000 ppt. For context, states such as Michigan have set drinking water standards and groundwater cleanup criteria at 8 ppt for PFOA and 16 ppt for PFOS.

DOD assessments additionally show that PFAS may be present in the groundwater at several other Gulf sites. Results from detection tests have not been released for NAS Key West, Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, Panama City Naval Surface Warfare Center Division and NAS Pensacola-Ellyson Field.[Source: MilitaryTimes | Rachel Nostrant | October 14, 2021 ++]

DoD Civilian Work Force

Update 02: Pentagon and House Lawmakers Disagree on Too Many

The number of civilian workers compared to military service members is the highest in the history of the Pentagon, and that's unsustainable, according to Rep. Ken Calvert of California, the top Republican on a key defense panel. But the Pentagon begs to differ. Top personnel officials rebutted Calvert during testimony at a House hearing 26 OCT and defended the department's 790,000 civilians as key to the defense of the country.

Calvert, the ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee's defense panel, said the Pentagon should reduce the number of civilians by automating a raft of jobs and responsibilities, similar to what's happened in private manufacturing and shipping across the country. "I don't see

how we can afford to maintain the current civilian workforce into the future if we're forced to balance those costs with procurement and research efforts, which are absolutely necessary," he said. The House Appropriations panel was hearing Pentagon testimony on the defense workforce and considering ways the department could use funding to shore up training, recruitment and retention of troops, as well as how to sustain the defense industrial base.

Artificial intelligence could be used to eliminate human civilian jobs in military health care management, intelligence analysis, financial management, and supply chain logistics, Calvert said. The changes could "save a lot of money -- billions of dollars -- and gradually, not having to fire anybody, but just gradually bringing down the workforce and closing obsolete systems and processes," he said. Calvert didn't provide details on his savings estimate, which could potentially come from an annual defense budget of over \$700 billion.

Gil Cisneros, the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told Calvert it is "just not proper" to direct cuts to the civilian workforce based on an arbitrary comparison to service members. "I do not believe we can put a ratio or a number on the amount of civilians that we have," said Cisneros, who served as a Navy officer and lawmaker who sat on the House Armed Services Committee. "The civilian workforce that we have at the Department of Defense is an integral part in the defense of our nation. They play critical roles in the work that we do."

- The Department of the Navy is always assessing its workforce to get the right mix, but the metric it's focused on is not the ratio of troops to civilians but whether the services can compete on the battlefield, said Meredith Berger, the senior official performing the duties of Navy under secretary. "We capitalize Sailors, Marines, Civilians, and it is because of their contribution," Berger said.
- The Army, the largest of the service branches, has a 4:1 ratio of soldiers to civilians, and that number has been relatively unchanged for the past five years, said Christopher Lowman, senior official performing the duties of Army under secretary.
- The service plans to study how new technologies such as artificial intelligence could affect the civilian workforce. The Air Force is not currently incentivizing civilian retirements but plans to study whether it could be needed in some areas -- it's more focused on recruiting and keeping personnel with high-tech skills, said Gina Ortiz Jones, the under secretary of the Air Force.

Calvert said the Defense Department and military branches are among the largest enterprises in the world and should not be immune to the larger trends in the U.S. of companies streamlining workforces. No one should argue that civilians are not important, but also no one believes they should outnumber troops, he said. "But it's growing in that direction," he added. "It seems like there's always a reason not to look, especially at the middle-management structure within the Department of Defense."

[Source: Military.com | Travis Tritten | October 26, 2021++]

Military Treatment Facilities

Update 03: Moving Patients Out May Cause Them Harm

Shifting more military patients to local civilian hospitals could result in “significant harm” to these patients, according to a new study funded by the Defense Department. That was the conclusion of researchers after comparing the quality and safety of patient care at military treatment facilities with those at local civilian hospitals — facility by facility. Researchers found that on average, military patients received better outcomes in MTFs, compared to military patients who were treated in local civilian hospitals.

It’s the first time researchers have conducted a deep dive to compare the quality of care in MTFs and local civilian hospitals, said Tracey Perez Koehlmoos, professor of preventive medicine and biostatistics at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and principal investigator in the research. And it could put a hurdle in the path of ongoing reform efforts within the Military Health System, which have included moving an unknown number of patients to the civilian purchased care system under Tricare.

The research “is really a good news story that highlights the high quality of care available in our military treatment facilities,” said Koehlmoos, who is director of the USUHS Center for Health Services Research. “Military treatment facilities as a whole remain among the best performing hospitals for patient safety in the U.S.,” said Koehlmoos. The study also highlights an area where the Defense Health Agency might work to “incentivize a higher quality of care through the Tricare benefit,” she said, which would benefit all patients in the local community, not just Tricare beneficiaries. Reducing access to military treatment facilities by as little as 10 percent of the current population could result in “significantly worse” surgical mortality rates, medical mortality rates and patient safety, the study found.

The study, titled, “**In Defense of Direct Care: Limiting Access to Military Hospitals Could Worsen Quality and Safety**” was published 4 OCT in the journal Health Services Research. Researchers from Yale and Harvard also worked on the analysis. The researchers were tasked to examine how reforms within the Military Health System are likely to affect the quality of care in the system. They examined current data for MTFs and civilian hospitals in the local areas that treated Tricare patients; and also national civilian adult inpatient claims. They included only patients ages 18 to 64 years old. Then they conducted simulations on what the quality indicators might look like under various proposed scenarios of reducing access to military treatment facilities.

“It’s gratifying to see that MTFs compare favorably with civilian hospitals when it comes to patient outcomes,” said Eileen Huck, government relations senior deputy director for the National

Military Family Association. “However, the report raises concerns about what will be the impact on beneficiaries as more of them are shifted to the purchased care system.” Researchers:

- Compared data from 502,252 admissions of adult military beneficiaries at 37 military treatment facilities (326,076 admissions) and surrounding civilian hospitals (179,176 admissions under the Tricare purchased care system).
- Used Military Health System data from fiscal years 2016 to 2018 to compare patients’ outcomes in MTFs with those of military Tricare patients treated in local civilian hospitals.
- Compared MTF patients’ outcomes with the broader national civilian adult inpatient admissions, using calendar 2017 hospital data, which fell into that military inpatient data period.
- Conducted simulations for patient outcomes in hypothetical scenarios where defense officials reduced access for patients by 10 percent, 20 percent, or 50 percent nationwide. In the 10-percent scenario, researchers estimated 170,000 to 190,000 beneficiaries age 18 to 64 could be moved out of MTFs to the civilian hospitals.
- Simulated the outcome if MTF access were restricted to active-duty only, with no retirees, reservists or dependents. In this most extreme scenario, researchers estimated it would be up to 1.9 million adult beneficiaries ages 18 to 64 who would be affected.
- Simulated the outcome if the worst-performing MTFs were removed. The study doesn’t name those MTFs, but the information could be provided internally only to DoD, if requested, Koehlmoos said.
- Didn’t examine the issue of numbers of providers. The researchers excluded beneficiaries age 65 and older because they receive health insurance through Medicare. They also excluded children because of insufficient numbers of cases.

“This research highlights a risk we’ve been concerned about, that when beneficiaries are moved out of MTFs, they may not have access to quality care,” said Karen Ruedisueli, director of health affairs for the Military Officers Association of America. The point that MOAA has been trying to make, she said, is that “access to care is not the same as access to quality care. “If military families and retirees must be moved out of MTFs in order to improve the focus on readiness, it must only be done in areas where we know beneficiaries can still access quality care in the civilian community.” The research “underscores that this is very complicated, and it’s not something that’s going to be done quickly,” she said.

Among the findings in which researchers measured metrics for inpatient quality and inpatient safety, using the quality metrics endorsed by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality:

- In region-specific comparisons, in 30 out of 37 regions, beneficiaries experienced better patient safety at MTFs, compared to local civilian hospitals. The study doesn’t specify those regions.

- MTFs on average had better outcomes in four out of 11 inpatient-quality indicators, and in five out of nine patient safety indicators, compared to local civilian hospitals. Most of the other indicators were about the same. “This really highlights the quality of care in the military treatment facilities,” Koehlmoos said. One example was the heart failure mortality rate. In local civilian hospitals, the rate was 32.3 deaths per 1,000 admissions, compared to 27 per 1,000 in MTFs.
- In the broader comparison to hospitals nationwide, the study found MTFs had “significantly better” condition-specific rates in eight out of 11 inpatient quality metrics; and in seven out of nine patient-safety indicators. Again, most of the other indicators were about the same. The civilian hospital data analyzed came from the Nationwide Readmissions Database, which includes hospitalizations for patients in the 28 participating states, regardless of age or insurance. Those records account for more than 18 million annual hospitalizations, 60 percent of U.S. population and 58 percent of all U.S. hospital admissions, the researchers noted.
- The simulations estimated that reducing access to MTFs by as little as 10 percent of the nationwide beneficiary population “could result in significantly worse surgical mortality, such as 0.7 percent increase in [coronary artery bypass graft] mortality.” It could result in an increase of medical mortality, such as a 1.3 percent increase in heart failure mortality.
- The simulations showed that limiting access to active duty military only could increase adverse patient safety events for the rest of the beneficiary population by 23 percent. For example, researchers projected that post-operative respiratory failure rates could increase by 13.6 percent.

In 2016, Congress enacted major reforms to the military health care system, including organizational changes. DoD notified Congress in 2020 of plans for realignment of MTFs, and to shift toward active-duty-only access at certain MTFs, which has already been happening. Defense officials also have been planning to cut the number of medical billets, “to increase the number of operational billets needed for lethality,” according to DoD documents. In August, a DoD report to Congress noted they’ve ratcheted down the numbers they had planned to cut.

Previous research has shown that the quality of care was the same or better in MTFs compared to civilian hospitals, regardless of whether the volume of cases is high, medium or low. “This work seconds that original work, that things are either the same or better in direct care,” Koehlmoos said. “People often make it a rainy day when they talk about the Military Health System, but we’re really a model for the nation on how to deliver equitable, affordable health care to your population,” Koehlmoos said. “For those of us who have been studying this, there are so many great lessons that can be taken from the military health system and shared with the rest of America. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | October 21, 2021 ++]

Afghan Withdrawal

Update 19: SIGAR IG Pressured By State, DOD to Redact Reports



John Sopko

The inspector general charged with reviewing U.S. involvement in Afghanistan said 29 OCT that he has faced recent pressure from the State Department to redact some of their reports while noting the Pentagon classified much of its work detailing the failings of the country's own military forces. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), John Sopko, referenced numerous attempts to "impede" his work, adding that "U.S. agencies have not made honest reporting easy for SIGAR."

Sopko's comments, published on SIGAR's website, came at the Military Reporters & Editors Association annual conference, where the inspector general details multiple efforts by State to get SIGAR to redact information from its reports, including removing all mentions of former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. "Shortly after the fall of Kabul, the State Department wrote to me and other oversight agencies requesting to 'temporarily suspend access' to all 'audit, inspection, and financial audit ... reports' on our website because the Department was afraid that information included in those reports could put Afghan allies at risk," Sopko said.

"But despite repeated requests, State was never able to describe any specific threats to individuals that were supposedly contained in our reports, nor did State ever explain how removing our reports now could possibly protect anyone since many were years old and already extensively disseminated worldwide. Nevertheless, with great reservation, I acceded to State's initial request because it was made at the height of the emergency evacuation from Afghanistan." After Sopko complied, State returned with another request, this time passing along a spreadsheet listing some 2,400 items it wanted redacted — something SIGAR reviewed and "found all but four to be without merit."

"Given how hard the Department reportedly was working to evacuate Americans from Afghanistan and resettle Afghan refugees, I was surprised they found the time to go through every one of our reports and compile such an exhaustive list," he said. "Upon reviewing their request, it quickly became clear to us that State had little, if any, criteria for determining whether the information actually endangered anyone," he added. Among the requests was a plea to remove

the name of a USAID official who publicly testified before Congress in 2017 and whose testimony is still posted on the committee’s site. It also asked SIGAR to remove Ghani’s name from all of its reports. “While I’m sure the former President may wish to be excised from the annals of history, I don’t believe he faces any threats simply from being referenced by SIGAR,” Sopko said.

Sopko’s speech also detailed past efforts from the Department of Defense (DOD) going back to 2015 to restrict information on the performance of the Afghan security forces, purportedly at the request of the Afghan government. Sopko said that information would have been important to share with lawmakers and blunted widespread surprise over the rapid fall of the country’s security forces to the Taliban. “In essence, [it was] nearly all the information you needed to know to determine whether the Afghan security forces were a real fighting force or a house of cards waiting to fall. In light of recent events, it is not surprising that the Afghan government, and likely some in DOD, wanted to keep that information under lock and key,” Sopko said.

“This information almost certainly would have benefited Congress and the public in assessing whether progress was being made in Afghanistan and, more importantly, whether we should have ended our efforts there earlier. Yet SIGAR was forced to relegate this information into classified appendices.” Sopko ended with a call to DOD declassify this information now that the U.S. has withdrawn. “DOD should immediately make available to SIGAR and the public the information restricted at the request of the Ghani government, for the simple reason that there no longer is a Ghani government and the Afghan security forces have already completely collapsed,” he said. Neither the State Department nor DOD responded to request for comment. [Source: The Hill | Rebecca Beitsch | October 29, 2021 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials

Reported OCT 16 thru 31, 2021 | Twelve

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

For a listing of all missing or unaccounted for personnel to date refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil> and click on ‘Our Missing’. Refer to <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories>

for a listing and details of the 141 accounted for in 2005. If you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict or have an inquiry about MIAs, contact:

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

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



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

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

LOOK FOR

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Alan E. Petersen, 23**, of Brownton, Minnesota, was assigned to 345th Bombardment Squadron, 98th Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Peterson was serving as a bombardier crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. He will be buried on Oct. 30, 2021, in Glencoe, Minnesota. Read about Petersen at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2703297/airman-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-petersen-a>

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Pete Turk, 20**, was assigned to the battleship USS California, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS California sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 104 crewmen, including Turk. Interment services are pending. Read about Turk at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2806993/uss-california-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-turk-p>.

-- **Army Staff Sgt. William R. Linder, 30**, Piedmont, South Carolina, was assigned to Company E, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 16, 1944, after his unit was part of the Hürtgen Forest offensive, near Hürtgen, Germany. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. He will be buried Oct. 29, 2021, in Anderson, South Carolina. At

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2791119/soldier-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-linder-w> read about Linder.

-- **Army Pvt. Emmet W. Schwartz, 24**, of Dover, Ohio, was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division. He was reported killed in action on Dec. 27, 1944, by an artillery blast while his unit was part of an effort to capture Obermaubach, Germany. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. He will be buried Nov. 18, 2021, in New Philadelphia, Ohio. At <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2714505/soldier-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-schwartz-e/> read about Schwartz.

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class James O. McDonald, 25**, of Levelland, Texas, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including McDonald. He will be buried Jan. 19, 2022, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. At <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2790843/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-mcdonald-j> read about McDonald.

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Walter C. Stein, 20**, of Cheyenne, Wyoming, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Stein. He will be buried on March 23, 2022, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. Read about Stein at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2579871/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-stein-w>.

-- **Army Cpl. Robert C. Agard, Jr., 19**, of Buffalo, New York, was assigned to 2nd Platoon, 24th Reconnaissance Company, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 19, 1950, while conducting a night recon patrol with his unit near Tejon, South Korea. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. He will be buried May 30, 2022, in Elmira, New York. At <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2367910/soldier-accounted-for-from-korean-war-agard-r> read about Agard.

-- **Navy Mess Attendant 1st Class Octavius Mabine, 21**, of Portsmouth, Virginia, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Mabine. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. At <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2560787/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-mabine-o> read about Mabine.

-- **Navy Ship's Cook 1st Class Rodger C. Butts, 47**, of Portsmouth, Virginia, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Butts. He will be buried in Newton, Pennsylvania. The date has yet to be determined. Read about Butts at

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2388686/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-butts-r>.

-- **Navy Fireman 2nd Class Edward E. Casinger, 21**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Casinger. Interment services are pending. At <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2815285/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-casinger-e> read about Casinger.

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Hal J. Allison, 21**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Allison. Interment services are pending. At <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2815305/uss-oklahoma-sailor-accounted-for-from-world-war-ii-allison-h> read about Allison.

-- **Army Sgt. Howard R. Belden, 19**, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. Read about Belden at <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/2816347/soldier-accounted-for-from-korean-war-belden-h>.

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

* VA *



VA Claims Backlog

Update 170: 2,000 New Processors Being Hired to Help With Looming Spike

Veterans Affairs leaders are bringing on more than 2,000 claims processors to deal with an expected spike in overdue cases that could push the department's claims backlog to its highest level in seven years. Department officials are also planning to use mandatory overtime for thousands of already-working claims staff and emergency coronavirus pandemic funding to help stem the problem. Even with that, Veterans Benefits Administration officials expect it to take two and a half years to bring the backlog back down to pre-pandemic levels. But they also are insisting veterans waiting on their claims to be processed should not panic.

“We don’t want people to worry when they see that number,” said Mike Frueh, VA’s Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits. “We want veterans to keep filing their claims.” As of the end of September, the claims backlog — the number of cases that have been pending for more than four months — was at 208,000. That’s almost triple the typical monthly backlog total from before the start of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020. Officials said office closures caused by the pandemic steadily drove up the backlog total for much of last year. The problem was further exacerbated by several court decisions and new laws mandating additional benefits for troops exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, which added to the total volume of cases being added to the VA system.

That’s also why VA officials know another backlog spike is coming. About 70,000 claims related to new benefits rules for Parkinsonism, bladder cancer and hypothyroidism linked to poisoning from the chemical defoliant are due to hit the four-month mark at the end of October. Frueh said officials estimate the backlog will reach more than 260,000 then. But Frueh said officials are processing cases at a record rate, and do not expect the backlog to reach the same challenges as in 2013, when an influx of new benefits swelled the total to more than 600,000. Thousands of those cases lingered in the VA system for years without resolution.

Officials don’t expect the same difficulties this time, although Frueh acknowledged it will likely take until early 2024 to fully return to pre-pandemic levels. “We are the front door to VA benefits and services,” he said. “This is a natural consequence of people filing more claims.” The department processed more than 1.5 million claims in fiscal 2021, the most ever. But they also received about 1.7 million claims, and expect the number to rise even higher with the recent benefits changes. The short-term hiring of 2,000 new claims workers — the largest such effort by the department ever — will provide long-term relief to the claims processing problems. However, it will take months before those staff are fully trained and able to handle standard workload amounts.

Since May, the benefits administration required 20 hours of mandatory overtime a month to deal with the backlog spikes. Those requirements will continue for the foreseeable future, Frueh said. In a statement, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the department remains “committed to ensuring timely access to benefits and services for all veterans.” On the VA web site https://www.benefits.va.gov/reports/detailed_claims_data.asp more information on the backlog is available. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | October 13, 2021 ++]

Covid-19 Misinformation

Update 07: VA Will Not withhold Benefits for Those Refusing Shots

A Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Georgia sent an emergency email alert 22 OCT about a false news story on a satirical site that veterans are misconstruing as true. The false article

states President Joe Biden ordered the VA to withhold health care benefits from veterans who refuse to receive coronavirus vaccines. The story was published by DelawareOhioNews.com, which describes itself as a satire and parody entertainment website.

The Carl Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin, Ga., issued the email alert to inform veterans that the article is not true. “It’s sick,” the email reads. “There is nothing funny about spreading false stories of stripping our heroes of their hard-earned benefits.” The false article was posted online in September. It was shared widely after a Republican lawmaker from Iowa, Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, tweeted about it. Along with a link to the story, she tweeted: “If true, this is insane!” As of 22 OCT, Miller-Meeks’ tweet had not been deleted, despite the story being marked as satire.

In a legal statement on its website, DelawareOhioNews.com states “all stories herein are parodies (satire, fiction, fake, not real) of people and/or actual events.” The VA urged people to stop sharing the false article. “The president has not and will not withhold benefits to veterans who choose not to be vaccinated,” said Terrence Hayes, the VA press secretary. “The spread of this misinformation is extremely detrimental to our veterans and their families and should cease immediately.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | October 22, 2021 ++]

VA Care

IG Warns Of ‘Broken Culture’ Regarding Patient Safety

A federal watchdog on 27 OCT blasted the “broken culture” at the Veterans Health Administration in regards to patient safety and said major reforms are needed to protect the lives of vulnerable individuals who rely on the medical system. Dr. Julie Kroviak, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections at the Veterans Affairs Inspector General’s office, said during testimony before the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, said:

- “Despite employing hundreds of thousands of qualified and dedicated clinical and support staff, some leaders across various levels of VHA do not consistently ensure the safety of the veterans they serve.”
- “Changes to VHA patient safety are necessary and overdue. But they are impossible without the dedication of strong leaders who recognize that a cultural transformation is required to support meaningful and sustainable change.”

Veterans Affairs officials said that work is underway, to include the expansion of “high reliability” patient safety training to all department medical centers in coming months. “Our VHA governance board begins each day of our meeting with a safety review from the field,” said Renee Oshinski, assistant health under secretary for operations at VHA. “Sometimes there are individual errors. Sometimes there are system problems. But they are all issues that we see, fix and share across the system, so that we avoid these errors in the future.”

The scathing report from the inspector general’s office comes after a series of high-profile tragedies related to poor patient care practices at VA medical centers, including the conviction last spring of a former nursing assistant at a department hospital in West Virginia for the murder of at least seven patients. Following that incident, the inspector general’s office found “serious pervasive and deep-rooted clinical and administrative deficiencies” at the Louis A. Johnson Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia. Kroviak said her office has seen similar but less dramatic issues throughout the medical system. Her office found at least 21 incidents over the last two years where officials promised prompt reviews of adverse patient health events but instead failed to formally assess what went wrong.

She pointed to insufficient transparency of problems as a key issue in implementing reforms, and insufficient accountability by senior leaders who fail to make changes. VA officials insisted that they are working to improve the system, but lawmakers were skeptical of their response. “The tone of the testimony this morning seems to be one of defensiveness, not an organization that has taken a hard look at itself and embraced the kind of humility and individual accountability it is seeking from its frontline employees,” said Rep. Julia Bownley (D-CA), chair of the committee’s panel on health issues. “That needs to change.”

Several panel members expressed concern that the department has not had a Senate-confirmed VHA leader since January 2017, which may be leading to the lack of focus on safety issues. VA leaders earlier this month launched a new commission to review candidates for the post. Browley promised more investigation into the issues in coming months to ensure that patient safety issues are being prioritized, with or without that position being filled. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | October 27, 2021 ++]

VA Veteran Services

Employee Covid Vaccine Mandate Compliance Concerns

Republican members of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee are seeking answers from the Department of Veterans Affairs about what might happen if a large portion of the agency’s workforce refuses to receive coronavirus vaccines. VA Secretary Denis McDonough issued a mandate during the summer requiring employees to receive a coronavirus vaccine or face termination. The agency started the disciplinary process last week for some workers who haven’t complied.

In a letter to McDonough on 27 OCT, the nine senators expressed concern that VA services would be affected. “Congress must assess the impact this policy is having on the ability for veterans to receive care and benefits from VA,” they wrote. Most VA health care employees had until 8 OCT to comply with the mandate, and the rest of the workforce has until 22 NOV to provide proof of vaccination. Congress has not yet received information from the VA about

vaccination rates among its employees, the senators wrote. McDonough told reporters last week that about 70% of employees have shared their vaccination status with the VA, but the department didn't provide data about how many employees had been vaccinated. McDonough said he would provide updates on those numbers as they became available.

The senators asked in their letter that McDonough share information about how many employees are not in compliance with the mandate and how many have received exemptions, as well as the number of workers going through the disciplinary process. The senators also asked whether the agency has done an assessment about the effects of mass-terminations on VA services. During a news conference last week, McDonough said VA officials are trying to determine the locations and job duties of employees who might refuse vaccines. The agency could use its authority to move other VA employees to regions where hospitals and clinics could become short-staffed. "We're looking really hard at it," he said. "We're trying to get a sense as best we can where people might be and what the nature of employment might be so we're in a position to do that."

The letter Wednesday was led by Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas, the top Republican on the committee. During a hearing 27 OCT on an unrelated topic, Moran asked a VA official about the vaccination data. Ronald Burke, deputy undersecretary for policy and oversight with the Veterans Benefits Administration, said only that it was "certainly not something I'm prepared to comment on today." "As we're talking about your ability to deliver services, your workforce is important," Moran said. "And I think it's important for us to have the necessary resources to meet the needs of veterans. It would be useful for me and the committee to have an understanding of what the VA's intentions are if it's unable to keep the workforce in place." Moran and the other senators asked the VA provide the information by 5 NOV. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | October 28, 2021 ++]

VA Veterans Homes

Update 06: California's Vets Forced to Leave to Seek Aid in Dying

They served the nation on distant and often hostile shores, putting their bodies and minds in harm's way for their country. Now, in the twilight of their lives, the residents of Napa County's Yountville Veterans Home are asking for the option to end their lives if they are terminally ill, in peace, at home, in their own bed. The 625 residents and their spouses are denied access to the state's aid-in-dying law. A group representing residents of the home went to court to try to change that.

Life-ending medication is also off-limits to the other 2,000 aging and disabled veterans and spouses at the state's facilities in Fresno, Barstow, Redding and other cities. That's because California's End of Life Option Act conflicts with federal law – so the state's veterans agency bans it, fearing the loss of millions of dollars in federal funding. Without the same rights afforded other

Californians under the Act, the veterans' only option is to leave – or stay, and risk misery. If the veteran leaves, their spouse must leave too, and cannot return.

- “I’ve watched three of my friends die here, who were in pain and suffering. It’s unacceptable,” said Jim Thomas, 86, a decorated Vietnam War-era U.S. Air Force officer and pilot who lives with his wife, Jensena, 80, at Napa County’s Yountville Veterans Home, the oldest and largest residential setting for vets in the nation.
- ”The last thing someone needs, when you’re terminally ill, is to be told you need to move out. And you can’t protect your spouse,” said Thomas, one of the residents who sued to try to end the policy. While he’s still in good health, he wants future access to the option. “You’re already suffering.”



Jim and Jensena Thomas

They don’t want to ask friends, children or grandchildren to take them in during such a sad and profoundly personal experience, which also requires many procedural steps to execute, added Jensena. And leaving means the surviving spouse loses not only a partner but their home. The Yountville home, a red-tiled Mission Revival complex nestled against the oak-studded Mayacamas Mountains, offers an affordable retirement for aging, disabled or homeless veterans of World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, War in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Founded in 1884, the home has a year-long wait for admission; the average age of residents is 80.

The home offers a secure retirement for Jim Thomas, who as an Air Force captain, flew missions to Japan, Southeast Asia and remote Pacific Islands. Awarded two Commendation Medals for meritorious achievement, he repeatedly navigated big Douglas C-124 propeller transport planes, dubbed “Old Shakey,” through perilous fog. Once, after his plane’s engine exploded over the ocean and he lost navigational abilities, he safely landed the aircraft on a small atoll. Another time, after taking off with a dangerously overloaded cargo of anti-aircraft Nike missiles, he saved his crew by narrowly missing a cliff.

Now his life is quieter and cozier, in a room decorated with matching blue bedspreads, stuffed teddy bears, Bibles and family photos. On the wall hangs a pair of faded pink pointe shoes, a memento from Jensena’s career as a professional ballerina. “One of the reasons we moved here is to ensure that my wife,” a breast cancer survivor, “had a place to live for the rest of her life,” he said.

Fellow plaintiff James Musson, a former special agent with the U.S. Army Intelligence Corps in Frankfurt, Germany, also cherishes his room. On display is his Vietnam War-era military dog tag, a diploma from the Intelligence School and his discharge papers. “It’s home. It’s familiar,” said Musson, 79, who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, interstitial lung disease, shoulder bursitis, and gout. “You look out and see the gorgeous campus and the grand Napa Valley. It doesn’t really get any better than that.” Musson also worries that if veterans leave the home to die, they would lose the right to be buried in its historic 11-acre cemetery, a resting place for combatants dating back to the Seminole Wars. The cemetery accepts only the interment of the Veteran Home’s residents and their eligible dependents. “It’s important to me because it’s not just for myself, but for other home members,” said Musson.

The aid-in-dying ban was enacted within weeks of passage of the state’s aid-in-dying law. The law – inspired after East Bay resident Brittany Maynard, 29, had to move to Oregon to end her life and prevent suffering from brain cancer – was created specifically to allow California residents who are terminally ill to obtain drugs to hasten their death, and to die at home. California’s Department of Veterans Affairs, known as CalVet, issued an emergency regulation stating that any terminally ill resident intending to take the drug “shall discharge from the Veterans Home.” If a veteran changes their mind, they could be readmitted, it says.

CalVet homes are not required to participate in the law, used by 1,816 Californians since it went into effect in 2016, said Simona Taylor, deputy attorney general for CalVet, at a hearing earlier this month at Napa County Superior Court. The end-of-life law has a specific “opt-out” provision, she noted. “No facility, no physician, can be mandated to provide that service,” said Taylor. “There is not a right for anyone to receive medical aid-in-dying in any particular place.”

The problem, according to CalVet officials, is that the state’s law conflicts with federal law. They say the agency could lose funding if it violates the 1997 Assisted Suicide Funding Restriction Act, which prohibits money from being used “to pay for items and services (including assistance) the purpose of which is to cause (or assist in causing) the suicide, euthanasia, or mercy killing of any individual.” Though funded largely by the state’s taxpayers, about one-quarter of the homes’ total budget comes from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The veterans would not use CalVet physicians, staff or resources to obtain and use the life-ending drugs, said attorney Matthew Vafidis of the San Francisco firm Holland & Knight LLP, who represents the veterans. Instead, the residents would hire outside physicians. The end-of-life law’s “opt-out” provision, he added, was intended for facilities with religious objections, such as Catholic hospitals, not state agencies. Vafidis said CalVet could honor the vets’ wishes and still comply with federal rules by keeping any end-of-life funds in a separate operational and financial system. But in an August court brief, state attorneys said it’s not practical to create and maintain an account paid for solely by non-federal funds, and dedicated solely to aid-in-dying care.

So far, the court is siding with the state. In a tentative ruling issued 13 OCT, Judge Monique Langhorne of Napa County Superior Court said, “this is an emotionally and morally charged issue,

but I have to set that aside and focus on the law,” The veterans say they are now deciding their next step, in the time they have left. Already, one of the original plaintiffs has died, after a slow decline from congestive heart failure. “It’s kind of a hopeless feeling,” said Jensena. “Can you imagine going to a dreary hotel room? No.”

Like California, Colorado and Vermont require residents of veteran homes to leave the facilities if they wish to end their lives, according to Kaiser Health News. In Washington, veterans can stay if the facility allows it, according to Judy Kinney of End of Life Washington. [Source: The Mercury News | Lisa M. Krieger | October 24, 2021 ++]

Disability Indemnity Compensation

Update 14: VFW House Hearing Testimony on H.R 3402

The rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid to the survivors of service members who died in the line of duty or to veterans who died from service-related injuries or illnesses has only minimally increased since the benefit was created in 1993. Currently, DIC is paid at 43 percent of 100 percent permanent and total disability, while all other federal survivor programs are paid at 55 percent. The VFW supports this legislation to increase DIC payments to survivors, reaching parity with payments made to surviving spouses of other federal employees.

This legislation also addresses the need to protect survivors, who may also be caregivers, in cases where the veteran is totally disabled for less than the arbitrary period of ten years and dies from a non-service-connected condition. Currently in those cases, the survivors would not receive DIC. The VFW supports this legislation to provide benefits in these situations, gradually starting at five years and increasing to the full amount at ten years. This would extend DIC eligibility to more survivors and ease some of the financial burdens with which they suddenly may be faced.

We do, however, have requests for clarification regarding the bill as it is currently written. As it is not explicitly stated, we want to ensure that the increase to DIC is the same for the base pay for all recipients of the benefit, even those receiving added amounts such as the 8-year provision, Aid and Attendance, Housebound allowance, transitional benefit, and the DIC apportionment rate. We would also like clarification that the date of January 1, 1993, included in the Individuals Described section would not exclude any current group of eligible DIC recipients from the increase.

Additionally, the VFW recommends making an exception to the ten-year time frame for payments to the surviving spouses of veterans who die from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), as the average life expectancy following diagnosis is two to five years. In May 2021, Representative Jahana Hayes (D-CT), along with Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL) and Representative Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), introduced the companion bill H.R. 3402 to S.976. If you

would like to see the payment raised, Gold Star Wives of America (GSWA) is asking everyone to contact their congressional representatives to get S.976 & H.R.3402 passed. Editable At <https://www.goldstarwives.org/Legislative-News> form letters are available for download on their website. [Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | October 25, 2021++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse

Reported 16 thru 31 OCT 2021

Raleigh, N.C. – A Raeford, NC woman was sentenced 15 OCT to 12 months and a day imprisonment and ordered to pay \$90,003 in restitution for committing wire fraud involving an elderly veteran in her care. On July 6, 2021, McNeill pled guilty to the charge.

According to court documents, **Tracey McNeill**, 51 years old, between February 2015 and February 2017, fraudulently obtained VA and OPM benefits by executing a power of attorney (POA) over a disabled veteran, W.R., who served in the U.S. Army, and worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 41 years. The investigation revealed that McNeill arranged for the victim, who had dementia, to move into her home in February 2015, and then directed the VA and OPM to deposit W.R.'s benefits into McNeill's bank account between April, 2015, and December 2016. W.R. passed away on December 6, 2016. In total, OPM deposited \$61,318, and the VA deposited \$11,151 into her account. A financial analysis showed that most of the funds were spent on McNeill's personal expenses, including rent, utilities, credit card payments, and personal purchases. Further, McNeill completed Beneficiary forms listing herself as the beneficiary of the victim's retirement and life insurance benefits. OPM disbursed W.R.'s life insurance proceeds in the amount of \$17,533 to McNeill. [Source: DoJ Eastern District of North Carolina | U.S. Attorney's Office | October 14, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Detroit, Michigan —Former Cleveland VA Medical Center Supervisor Sentenced to 37 Months and Ordered to Pay More Than \$1.25 Million in Restitution for Theft and Kickback Scheme. **William H. Precht**, 54, of Kent, Ohio, was sentenced 14 OCT by Judge Donald C. Nugent to 37 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$1,259,390.66 in restitution after Precht pleaded guilty to theft of government property and participating in a bribery and kickback scheme that enriched himself and caused the Cleveland VA Medical Center to suffer a loss of nearly \$200,000. Precht pleaded guilty in March of 2021 to a 28-count indictment charging him with theft of government property, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and honest services fraud, wire fraud and false statements relating to health care matters.

According to court documents, from October of 2010, through January of 2019, Precht worked as an Inventory Management Specialist and later as a Supervisory Management and Program Analyst at the Cleveland VA Medical Center. Through his positions at the VA, Precht could

order medical supplies, purchase capital equipment and monitor requests for equipment purchases. Using his position and his VA employee log-in information, Precht registered a purported vendor (Vendor-1) as a Small Disadvantaged Business and Veteran-Owned Small Business in the VA vendor system. Beginning in October of 2010, Precht used his VA purchase card and other employee cards to purchase purported medical supplies from Vendor-1, a company he controlled, in the amount of approximately \$1,066,348.

In addition, from May of 2015 through January of 2019, Precht conspired with **Robert A. Vitale**, a medical sales representative for multiple companies that conducted business with the Cleveland VA, to devise a scheme in which Precht would receive kickbacks and other items of value, in exchange for steering VA business and other monetary awards to Vitale. In order to conceal his schemes, Precht provided false and misleading information to VA employees about reasons for ordering medical supplies and falsified patient records. As a result, the Cleveland VA suffered a loss of \$193,042.66. Robert. A. Vitale pleaded guilty to a Bill of Information on October 13, 2021, for his role in the scheme. [Source: DoJ Northern District of Ohio | U.S. Attorney's Office | October 14, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Baltimore, Maryland — A federal criminal complaint charges **William Rich**, age 41, of Windsor Mill, Maryland, for allegedly fraudulently obtaining a total of more than \$1 million dollars in Veterans disability benefits and Social Security Administration disability benefits by falsely claiming that he was a paraplegic. The criminal complaint filed on October 12, 2021, and was unsealed 13 OCT upon Rich's arrest.

The criminal complaint alleges that Rich misrepresented his physical condition in VA disability compensation claims, in communications with the VA and during medical examinations in pursuit of VA disability benefits, purporting that he is paralyzed and unable to walk. As a result, Rich has allegedly received more than approximately \$800,000 in VA benefits to which he was not entitled, including disability compensation, special monetary and caregiver assistance compensation, as well as medical care and subsidies for medical equipment. In addition, the criminal complaint alleges that Rich received more than \$240,000 in Social Security Administration (SSA) Disability Insurance Benefit payments.

According to the criminal complaint, Rich served in the United States Army from on or about September 22, 1998 to February 27, 2007, sustaining injuries on August 23, 2005, while serving in Baqubah, Iraq. As a result of those injuries, in 2007 the VA rated Rich one hundred percent disabled due to the "loss of use of both lower extremities..." The VA disability compensation program provides tax-free monetary benefits paid to veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. The amount of disability compensation a veteran receives is commensurate with their service-connected disability rating. Rich was also awarded special monthly compensation for paraplegia and given allowances for a caregiver. Rich also received SSA Disability Insurance Benefit payments.

As detailed in the criminal complaint, approximately six weeks after Rich's injuries, he had begun to make substantial progress toward recovery, and was no longer paralyzed. In particular, a report from Rich's annual physical examination dated October 7, 2005 stated that an MRI on August 24, 2005 revealed "no [spinal] cord impingement" or "[spinal] cord abnormalities" and noted that Rich's "...paralysis has resolved somewhat and at present he is able to move his lower extremities." A subsequent report, dated December 5, 2006, indicated Rich was able to perform certain essential daily activities with "complete independence" or "modified independence" such as using the bathroom and "locomotion."

However, according to the affidavit, later records documenting a subsequent exam conducted on October 11, 2007 stated, "Since his accident, he has been paralyzed in both lower extremities; has been confined to a wheelchair..." The examining physician, who noted that he did not have access to Rich's complete claims file, and so did not review Rich's medical history or observe the earlier report, also did not order an x-ray, stating he "did not feel that it was worth the trauma to him of manipulating him around." Based on this examination, Rich was granted permanent disability from VA.

In 2018, the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an audit of certain claims and learned of conduct by Rich inconsistent with his purported condition. VA OIG opened an investigation into possible fraud in Rich's claim for VA benefits. According to the affidavit, over the next two years, VA OIG Special Agents (SAs) conducted surveillance and observed of Rich walking, going up and down stairs, entering and exiting vehicles, lifting, bending, and carrying items—all without visible limitation or assistance of a medical device, including a wheelchair.

The affidavit further alleges that throughout the course of their surveillance, the only time agents observed Rich use a wheelchair was in connection with VA medical appointments. In particular, on five occasions between March 2019 and February 2021, VA OIG SAs allegedly observed Rich either loading his wheelchair into the trunk of his car before or after a VA medical appointment, using a wheelchair at VA appointments, or wheeling himself from a VA medical appointment to his car, and then loading his wheelchair into the car. According to the affidavit, a review of Rich's publicly available social media accounts revealed multiple images of Rich standing, with no indication that he is bound to a wheelchair, as well as an image Rich took of himself standing in front of a mirror at a gym, as well as videos of Rich lifting weights.

In addition to monthly benefits Rich received from the VA, according to the affidavit, Rich also received grants from the VA for "Automobile and Adaptive Equipment," and "Specially Adapted Housing." In particular, the affidavit alleges that Rich used the funds intended for the purchase of a specially adapted vehicle to buy a BMW 645ci luxury sports coupe. If convicted, Rich faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison for wire fraud and a maximum sentence of 10 years in federal prison for theft of government property. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other

statutory factors. On October 13, 2021, Rich had an initial appearance in United States District Court in Baltimore and was ordered to be released pending trial.

A criminal complaint is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by criminal complaint is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings. [Source: DoJ District of Maryland | U.S. Attorney's Office | October 14, 2021 ++]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Buffalo, New York -- U.S. Attorney Trini E. Ross announced 15 OCT that **Strock Contracting, Inc.**, of Cheektowaga, NY, has agreed to enter into a consent judgment with the United States for \$4,752,000 to resolve claims that it violated the False Claims Act. The United States filed an action in federal court alleging that Strock Contracting profited financially after fraudulently obtaining federal contracts intended to benefit service-disabled veterans.

In order to be eligible for contracts that are reserved for service-disabled-veteran-owned small businesses, firms must be both owned and controlled by a service-disabled veteran. The United States alleged that Strock Contracting, which was not owned or controlled by a veteran, recruited a service-disabled veteran to create a pass-through company, known as Veterans Enterprises Company, Inc. (VECO), which the company and its owner, Lee Strock, actually controlled.

In its complaint, the United States alleged that the company carried out this scheme by directing VECO to submit false certifications of eligibility to the government, which allowed Strock Contracting to obtain substantial profits on numerous federal contracts which should have been awarded to eligible companies. Strock Contracting allegedly profited from these contracts through phony loans, sham lease agreements, and other deceitful financial arrangements. [Source: DoJ Western District of New York | U.S. Attorney's Office| October 15, 2021 ++]

VA Manila OPC

Announcements & Reminders 22 OCT 2021

VA Manila will have staff available by phone, email and secure message this weekend for Veterans to schedule COVID-19 booster doses. Right now, these boosters are for Veterans who received 2nd doses of Pfizer vaccine at VA Manila between May 10 - May 29, 2021. If you fit into this category and want to schedule a booster appointment for November 20, December 4, or December 5, you can call the VA Manila OPC this weekend to get scheduled - +63 (02) 8550-3888, Option 2, Option 5, or #MyVA (#6982), Option 2, Option 5. If you received a 2nd dose of Pfizer after May 29, or received a J&J Vaccine in June or July, please do not call this Clinic this weekend. We will be releasing additional information in the coming weeks about special booster doses for you. We are fully planning to be able to offer booster doses to all eligible Veterans who would like one. Thank you.

SCHEDULING OF COVID-19 BOOSTER DOSES AT VA MANILA FOR PFIZER VACCINE RECIPIENTS FOR DATES IN NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

VA Manila has received an additional shipment of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to administer to eligible Veterans. These vaccine doses will be administered to Veterans who received the second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine at VA Manila between May 10, 2021 and May 29, 2021. VA Manila will be providing booster doses to this group first, as nearly all these Veterans were in CDC vaccine priority group 1B or 1C, being older than 65 with chronic medical conditions.

Based on the CDC and FDA guidelines, these individuals are eligible to get a 3rd dose of COVID-19 vaccines 6 months after the completion of their second vaccine dose. To accomplish this, VA Manila will be holding 3 mass vaccination drives on the following days:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Saturday, November 20	09:00AM – 2:30 PM	VA Manila Outpatient Clinic Pasay City, Metro Manila
Saturday, December 4	09:00AM – 2:30 PM	VA Manila Outpatient Clinic Pasay City, Metro Manila
Sunday, December 5	09:00AM – 2:30 PM	VA Manila Outpatient Clinic Pasay City, Metro Manila

Veterans who received the second COVID-19 vaccine between May 10 and May 29, 2021 are encouraged to receive their additional vaccine dose during one of the three mass vaccine clinic dates above. As this is Pfizer vaccine and requires more time to prepare the doses for Veterans, VA Manila will not be offering this vaccine on a walk-in basis as we were able to do with Johnson/Johnson vaccines in the past. All Veterans wishing to receive a booster dose must have a vaccine appointment scheduled.

To schedule a COVID-19 vaccine, please follow one of these three steps:

1. **SCHEDULE BY TELEPHONE:** VA Manila will have telephone staff working this weekend, Saturday and Sunday, October 23 and 24, between the hours of 8A and 3P if you would like to call this weekend and get scheduled for your booster dose. You can call the Outpatient Clinic at: +63 (02) 8550-3888, first press option 2 to reach the Outpatient Clinic, and then press option 5 to schedule a COVID-19 vaccine appointment. You can also use VA Manila’s toll-free phone from your Philippine mobile number (Sun, Smart, Globe): #MyVA (#6982). You may experience longer than normal hold times this Saturday and Sunday as we expect high demand for scheduling. You can also contact the Clinic during normal working hours next week to schedule your vaccine.
2. **SCHEDULE BY EMAIL:** Veterans who would prefer can send an email with their preferred date and time for their booster vaccine dose to the following email: ManilaCOVIDVaccine@va.gov. Please include your cellular phone number with your email so that staff may reach you if they have any questions. We will try to schedule you within one hour of your suggested appointment time.

1. **SCHEDULE BY MYHEALTHEVET SECURE MESSANGER:** Lastly, Veterans may prefer to send a message to your medical provider about scheduling a booster vaccination date. Please be sure to include your preferred date/time in the body of your request message. We will try to schedule you within one hour of your suggested appointment time. A member of our team at VA Manila will reach out to you to confirm your appointment.

REMINDERS AHEAD OF YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER APPOINTMENT:

On the day of your scheduled COVID-19 booster appointment,

1. Please bring your previously issued CDC COVID-19 vaccine administration card that was provided to you during your first two vaccine appointments by the VA Manila OPC. The Clinic will record your booster dose on this same card.
2. Unless it is absolutely necessary for your mobility, we ask that you not bring a spouse/companion with you to the Clinic during your booster appointment. This will help to ensure we have sufficient space in our waiting rooms and can ensure social distancing inside the clinic
3. Please be here 15 minutes before the scheduled appointment time. There is no reason to arrive earlier than 15 minutes before your scheduled time.
4. Please cancel and reschedule your appointment if you feel any of the following COVID-19 symptoms in the days leading up to your scheduled booster appointment:
 - Shortness of breath, chest pains
 - Fever
 - Dry cough
 - Tiredness
 - Aches and pains
 - Sore throat, and/or
 - Rash
5. There is still limited parking options available in front of the Manila Outpatient Clinic due to ongoing construction of the Roxas Blvd Service Road by the Pasay City Municipal Government. We recommend Veterans have their driver provide door-to-door service and drop and pick up Veterans for their vaccine appointments. Those who are driving themselves may be able to find parking north of the Clinic adjacent to Cuneta Astrodome at the intersection of Roxas Boulevard and A. Arnaiz Avenue.

ANSWERS TO SOME ANTICIPATED FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: I received my COVID-19 vaccine from a VA facility in the United States or from a local provider in the Philippines. Am I eligible now to get a booster dose at VA Manila now?

A: Not at this time. VA Manila received a limited supply of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines this week, so we are targeting these vaccines to our most at risk populations. VA Manila fully expects to receive additional quantities of COVID-19 vaccines in the weeks and months ahead and should be able to offer a booster dose to all enrolled Veterans who would like one.

Q: I received the Jansen / Johnson & Johnson Vaccine at the VA Manila Clinic in June or July 2021. Am I eligible to receive a booster dose now?

A: Not at this time. The US CDC and FDA just gave final approval to booster doses for Moderna and J&J vaccine recipients at a meeting yesterday (10/21/2021) in the United States. VA is still reviewing the changes that were approved to the Moderna and J&J Emergency Use Authorization. As these guidelines are reviewed by VA's National clinical leadership team in Washington, DC,, additional details will be forthcoming in the next several weeks about how Moderna / J&J vaccine recipients can receive an additional/booster dose.

Q: Can my spouse receive a booster dose from VA Manila when I receive mine?

A: No. It has been determined that VA Manila does not have the legal authority to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to spouses, caregivers, and non-service-connected Veterans who are outside of the United States. VA Manila will only be able to provide additional/booster COVID-19 vaccines to service-connected Veterans going forward.

Q: Can I walk in to receive my vaccine on any of the dates listed above?

A: No. Pfizer vaccines require more intensive preparations than the J&J vaccines, so we must have all Veterans scheduled for a vaccine appointment if they wish to receive one. Please use one of the methods shared above, phone, email, or secure message, to schedule your vaccine today.

Q: How early should I arrive for my vaccine appointment?

A: We ask all Veterans not to arrive more than 15 minutes ahead of their scheduled COVID-19 vaccination appointment during our mass vaccination clinic days. We will be having close to 400 people coming to the Clinic to receive their vaccines, and space and seating in our waiting rooms will be at a premium. There is no need to arrive for your vaccine at 8AM if you are not scheduled until 11:00AM. No more than 15 minutes early, please.

Also, if you are planning to bring a companion, helper, or caregiver, please do not bring them into the Clinic unless it is necessary.

Q: I haven't gotten a COVID-19 vaccine yet but I would like one.

A: Please email VA Manila at ManilaCOVIDVaccine@va.gov and provide your name, current address, current mobile number, and date of birth. A member of the clinic's staff will contact you. While we may not have additional supplies to vaccinate you right now, we are anticipating additional COVID-19 vaccine supplies in the future and will keep your name on file. You may also wish to get vaccinated from your LGU/Municipality. Over the months of September and October, the Philippines has received a significant amount of COVID-19 vaccines, and vaccines should be readily available in most areas now.

UPDATES ON VA MANILA OPERATIONS – OCTOBER 2021

VA Manila continues to press forward with expanding our face-to-face appointment availability at the Clinic. With this, we continue to see an increasing number of Veterans scheduled for and coming to in-person appointments, and I must admit, it's great to see so many familiar faces again after the long absence due to the pandemic. We had a nice crowd in our lobby today, and if this keeps up, I will plan to resume my Friday Town Halls with Veterans soon.

I am also happy to report that we have placed an order for delivery of additional COVID-19 Pfizer vaccines, and are anticipating delivery over the next few weeks. This supply of vaccine will be targeted to Veterans who received their Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines at the Clinic during April/May 2021. We are planning to administer booster doses for eligible Veterans starting in November. Only those Veterans who received both doses of their Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at VA Manila will be contacted for booster doses. VA is following CDC guidelines with administering booster doses. Please note, at this time, CDC has only authorized booster doses for individuals who received the 2-dose Pfizer vaccine more than 6 months ago. Booster doses for recipients of the Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, or who were locally vaccinated in the Philippines with Sinovac, Astra-Zeneca, or Gameyla have not yet been approved by the US CDC or FDA to receive booster doses at this time. We are closely following approvals and guidance as it is made available to healthcare providers, and we will continue to keep the Veteran community apprised. Veterans with questions about COVID-19 vaccines can continue to email us at: ManilaCOVIDVaccine@va.gov.

I wanted to take a moment also to remind all Veterans that VA Manila is not a COVID-19 treatment facility. We do not offer COVID-19 testing capabilities and have very limited capabilities to provide urgent medical care. We have been strictly enforcing health and screening protocols for the safety of our staff and visitors to the Clinic. If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms (including fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of taste/smell, body/headache, and/or nausea/vomiting), please do not come to the VA Manila Clinic. Also, if you have had close contact with a known or suspected individual with COVID-19, please follow Philippine guidelines and isolate yourself. In the event you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or are a close contact, VA Manila can try to reschedule your appointment to one of our virtual care options (such as telephone or Virtual Video Connect – VVC), or we can reschedule your appointment to a later date.

We are redoubling our screening efforts for all Veterans and visitors who are coming to the Clinic. I know many of us have become fatigued from the constant temperature checks and health status questions when going anywhere in public in the Philippines, but I would please ask for your help ensure the continued health and safety of our staff and visitors to the Clinic. We are counting on you to please do your part to help keep our frontline workers and your fellow Veterans healthy.

ACCESSING YOUR OWN MEDICAL RECORDS VIA MY HEALTHEVET

At https://connectedcare.va.gov/sites/default/files/MHV_Trifold-Brochure.pdf an online informational brochure on MHV is available.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Veterans have reported it can be difficult to get copies of their medical records from the Outpatient Clinic. Our Release of Information department has been working diligently to turn around requests for medical records as quickly as possible. For

many Veterans, accessing their health records online is a faster and more secure method, and can provide all your needed information with just a few clicks of a mouse or taps of your finger on your smartphone.

MANAGE YOUR HEALTH RECORDS

Forgot the name of a prescription medicine? Can't remember the date of a surgery? Use My HealtheVet to access your VA medical records and organize your personal health information. Members registered in My HealtheVet can manage their health by using My HealtheVet's Blue Button feature to customize a report or access their VA Health Summary. The VA Blue Button feature helps you better manage your health care needs and communicate with your health care team. With the VA Blue Button feature, you can:

- Customize and download a report (as a PDF or text file) to share with your VA and non-VA providers
- Print a report or summary to take a copy to your next appointment
- Send an electronic version of your self-entered information in Secure Message to your VA health care team
- Build your Personal Health Record (PHR) by self-entering your personal information or data that you have tracked

Start building your PHR by self-entering your personal information, such as your health history, emergency contacts and medications. You can monitor your vital signs and use the journals to track your diet and physical activity. Even if you are not a Veteran, you can take advantage of this convenient way to organize your information.

If you are a Veteran who receives care from VA, you can access your VA medical records and create a customized report that can also include your self-entered data. Many Veterans can also include a copy of their military service information from the Department of Defense (DoD). Several smartphone apps are also available through a variety of non-VA sources. While VA does not endorse specific apps, there are now creative, secure and easy-to-use ways of viewing Blue Button data. Search for Blue Button in your smartphone apps library to learn more.

The VA Health Summary:

- Is a Continuity of Care Document (CCD) that contains specific information?
- Provides a summary of your health information that can be used to review your medical record and to share essential information with your health care providers
- Allows health information that is in one health care system to be electronically exchanged with another health care system that is providing care

You can get your VA Health Summary information in two file formats: An easy to read and print PDF and an XML format that can be read by computer systems. To use the VA Blue Button feature and access the VA Health Summary, you must be registered on My HealtheVet as a VA Patient and have a Premium account. A Premium account can be obtained by a My HealtheVet

member who has an Advanced account. Learn more about upgrading your My HealtheVet account through Upgrading to a Premium My HealtheVet Account at <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/upgrading-your-my-healthvet-account-through-in-person-or-online-authentication>. If you do not have a My HealtheVet account, take time and register today.

Look for the VA Blue Button icon on the My HealtheVet home page after you log in to customize a report or health summary.

OTHER VA MANILA OUTPATIENT CLINIC UPDATES

1. **Upcoming Holidays At VA Manila** - The U.S. Embassy, along with the VA Manila Regional Office and Outpatient Clinic, will be closed in recognition of the following upcoming public holidays:

- US Columbus Day Monday, October 11, 2021
- PH All Saints Day Monday, November 1, 2021
- PH All Souls Day Tuesday, November 2, 2021
- US Veterans Day Thursday, November 11, 2021
- US Thanksgiving Day Thursday, November 25, 2021

NOTE: Plan and order your refills 10 workdays in advance of holiday closures. Air21 is also closed on these holidays so medications will be delayed if you fail to request refills 10 days in advance. If you run out of medications for a service-connected condition, you can buy the medicine from a community pharmacy and file a claim for reimbursement from the FMP.

2. Virtual Veterans Day Event Planned For 11/11/2021

VA Manila is working with our colleagues at the US Embassy to finalize plans for our annual Veterans Day Commemoration to honor the service of all Veterans. While COVID-19 will again keep us from gathering, this virtual program will be available through a variety of social media accounts and streaming services. We will share the final details of the event in the next few weeks. However, you may want to consider being connected with the US Embassy on social media now to stay up-to-date on information for American Citizens in the Philippines. Here are a few recommended adds/follows:

- @USEmbassyPH US Embassy in the Philippines (Twitter)
- @USAmbPH Charge d’Affaires, a.i. Heather Variava (Twitter)
- USEmbassyPH US Embassy in the Philippines (Facebook)

3. Foreign Medical Program Updates

VA’s Foreign Medical Program has been making progress at improving the timeliness of claims processing. As of today, FMP is processing claims received on July 15, 2021, and opening mail received on October 4, 2021. Veterans with questions about their claims’ status are welcomed to contact FMP directly: VHA Office of Community Care, Foreign Medical Program (FMP), PO

Box 469061 Denver, CO 80246-9061 USA Toll-free phone: +1 (877) 345-8179 Fax: +1 (303) 331-7803 Email: Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS) Email: hac.fmp@va.gov

Veterans in the Philippines can also contact VA Manila's local telephone numbers and transfer to FMP phone numbers in the United States without international long-distance charges. VA Manila Main Telephone Number: +63 (02) 8550-3888b or VA Manila Toll Free Number: #MyVA (#6982) – any mobile in the PH. FMP can be reached by selecting option 4. Their hours of operation in Denver, Colorado when converted to Philippine Standard Time are 8:05 pm to 6:45AM Monday evening to Saturday Morning.

4. Planning To Travel To the United States? -- Veterans planning to travel to the United States and want to continue medical treatment should call the clinic's traveling coordinator +63-02-8550-3888, and press option 2. VA Manila has a traveling Veteran coordinator, and we can facilitate your care with her counterpart at the VA Medical Center of your choice in the United States. Your VA Manila provider will recommend coordination when needed care with an alternate VA facility near you is required. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks lead time to ensure appointments are prearranged upon your arrival.

5. Veterans Crisis Line -- The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified and caring Department of Veteran Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. To learn more about the Veterans Crisis Line or to chat online, go to <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> and click on the appropriate link.

REMINDERS ABOUT CLINIC POLICIES / PROCEDURES

1. NO VALID GOVERNMENT ID/NO ENTRY/NO EXCEPTIONS:

The U.S. Embassy Regional Security Office no longer permit employees, Veterans, attendants, and family members to enter a U.S. Embassy facility to include the VA Manila Regional Office and Outpatient Clinic without a valid government picture ID. Family members and attendants over the age of 14 will also need to provide a valid government ID.

2. COMPUTER LAPTOPS PROHIBITED:

The U.S. Embassy including VA Manila no longer permit Veterans, attendants and family members to enter a U.S. Embassy facility with a computer laptop. Do not bring any large electronic device as the U.S. Embassy guards nor are VA staff permitted to accept or store the device.

3. OTHER PROHIBITED ITEMS:

Visitors, attendants and family members are prohibited from bringing into a U.S. Embassy facility including VA Manila weapons of any kind to include pocket knives, cameras, recording devices, and large electronic devices. Veterans, attendants, family members and visitors are prohibited

from taking photos inside the facility and are prohibited from leaving their personal belongings in the reception lobby.

4. **LIMITING COMPANIONS:**

VA Manila continues to request that Veterans with appointments only bring companions / spouses to the Clinic when it is necessary, and that this is limited to one companion per Veteran. As our Clinic sees more Veterans in person, we are finding some extremely busy times when our lobby seating area may be at capacity. To follow physical distancing recommendations from the US CDC, we have reduced our seating in the lobby by close to 40%. We greatly appreciate your cooperation.

Daniel Gutkoski, MHA

Clinic Manager, VA Manila Outpatient Clinic
US Embassy to the Philippines, Seafront Compound
1501 Roxas Boulevard, 1302 Pasay City, Metro Manila
Direct: +63 (02) 8396-3735 Toll Free: #MyVA (#6982)

*** Vets ***



Vet Jobs

Update 276: DoD Killed Off Troops To Teachers Program



Veterans advocates are scrambling for ways to revive the military’s 28-year-old Troops to Teachers initiative after Defense Department officials officially closed down the transition assistance program earlier this month. The program, originally administered through the Department of Education, was designed to help veterans interested in education jobs by providing

up to \$10,000 of financial support and coordination with state officials on placement in schools in need of teachers. About 23,000 individuals have taken part in the program since 1993. The program costs about \$15 million per year.

But earlier this month, Defense Department officials announced they were ending the program completely and shifting resources to “higher priority programs more closely aligned to the National Defense Strategy.” Some current participants may still receive partial support through their individual states until May 2022, but defense officials will no longer be involved. Pentagon leaders had signaled the closure as early as last fall, and had threatened to dissolve the program several times in past years. But until now, lawmakers had kept the program alive and continued to fund the operation, despite Pentagon objections.

Now veterans groups are asking Congress to intervene again. In a recent letter to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, officials from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Student Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans and Veterans Education Success urged lawmakers to reverse the Defense Department’s decision. “Studies have shown that Troops to Teachers educators fill thousands of vacancies in high-needs schools and subject areas; are more likely to not relocate after they are employed as teachers; are considered effective instructors; have high job and life satisfaction; and even have a positive effect on increasing student likelihood to serve,” the groups wrote.

“Allowing the Troops for Teachers program to sunset would go against America’s critical need to support our children’s education.” The program costs about \$15 million annually. Senate lawmakers have already included the money and a mandate for four more years of the program in their draft of the annual defense authorization bill, but the House passed its version of the policy measure last month without any language on the program. The two chambers will have to sort out a compromise in upcoming negotiations on the policy bill. Meanwhile, the Troops to Teachers program will take in no new applicants this year, and will have to be fully rebuilt if it is reauthorized by Congress.

“There is a reason that Troops to Teachers has thus far stood the test of time: It is a signal to our service members that they can continue to serve in their local communities after hanging up the uniform, and that’s a message that we need to sustain,” said John Kamin, legislative associate for the American Legion. “The Department of Defense might not think this is a policy priority, but it is certainly one for The American Legion.”

The Senate provision on the program also requires defense officials to submit a report on the effectiveness of the program, to help determine whether it should continue past spring 2025. Negotiations with House lawmakers on the final defense authorization bill language are expected to start next month. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | October 14, 2021 ++]

Burn Pit Toxic Exposure

Update 88: Burn Pit-Related Disability Claims Filing Assistance



A nonprofit veterans legal organization has created a program to help veterans file claims for illnesses related to burn pits and airborne pollutants found in combat zones. The National Veterans Legal Services Program, or NVLSP, announced 18 OCT that its new Burn Pits Claims Assistance Program will represent former service members seeking disability benefits for diseases that may have been caused by the fumes and chemicals emitted from open-air waste disposal sites used in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, as well as pollution from oil well fires and other hazards in the first Persian Gulf War.

The announcement follows a move in August by the Department of Veterans Affairs to designate three respiratory illnesses as presumed to be related to burn pit exposure: asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis. Presumptive illness status allows veterans to skip a portion of the process to apply for benefits, eliminating the need for them to prove their injuries and illnesses are directly caused by their military service. NVLSP leaders say the burn pits were known to emit chemicals and pollutants that caused respiratory illnesses in addition to various types of cancer and, since the VA has denied more than 75% of disability claims based on burn pit exposure, affected veterans need help. "The Burn Pit Claims Assistance Program is a natural extension of [National Veterans Legal Services Program]'s legal expertise and tenacity in fighting for veterans and their families to ensure they receive the life-changing benefits they need and deserve," Paul Wright, the program's executive director, said in a press release Monday.

The VA maintains an Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry for troops to report their deployment history, exposure and any illnesses they believe may be related to their military service (<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp>). The voluntary registry contains the information of 240,000 members deployed during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and New Dawn to 11 countries, the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Red Sea. Open air burn pits were used in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Djibouti to dispose of household garbage, medical waste, plastics and industrial refuse throughout U.S. combat operations during the past 30 years.

Veterans say they have rare illnesses, including constrictive bronchiolitis; cancers that are rare in young people, such as glioblastoma and pancreatic cancer; chronic skin conditions; and other

diseases related to living and working near the vast burn pits, the largest of which was 10 acres across. The VA, however, does not cover as part of its burn pit program other respiratory diseases or many types of cancer that veterans and advocacy groups say also are being diagnosed at high rates in vets. VA officials say they will consider expanding the list of burn pit-related illnesses that may be eligible for fast-tracked compensation and health benefits but are currently reviewing the science to determine whether there's proof the conditions are linked.

Veterans organizations have worked for years to expand the list of conditions presumed to be related to chemicals used during the Vietnam War as defoliants, most famously Agent Orange, and expand eligibility to more veterans. Seventeen diseases are now officially linked to Agent Orange, including three that were added to the list this year. Numerous veterans organizations have employees on staff who can help veterans to file federal disability claims. Groups with veterans service officers include the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, Disabled Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the American Legion.

The National Veterans Legal Services Program originally was established by attorneys to help veterans appeal less-than-honorable discharges. It has represented veterans in various disputes with the federal government, including a ruling that Vietnam vets who served on ships off the coast of Vietnam should receive retroactive benefits for Agent Orange exposure. The group has created a website (<https://www.nvlsp.org/what-we-do/burn-pits-claims-assistance-program>) for veterans to apply for assistance for burn pit claims and says priority will be given to veterans who contact it before 30 NOV. The organization will send the veteran an application, Privacy Act waiver and form to help its workers obtain military medical records needed to file a claim.

Spokeswoman Patty Briotta said the group will thoroughly review each application received. "Our organization has been representing veterans in VA service-connected disability compensation cases for 40 years," she said in a press release. "We understand the large burden that navigating the world of VA benefits often places on veterans, and we do not take these cases lightly." [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime | October 20, 2021 ++]

PTSD Punitive Discharges

Update 07: Traumatized Vet's to Receive another Navy Look

The U.S. Navy has agreed to review more than nine years' worth of "bad paper" discharges given to thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder or certain other trauma-related health conditions. That announcement follows preliminary court approval 19 OCT of a settlement of a 2018 lawsuit alleging that a Navy board had improperly denied a Marine Corps veteran's request for a better discharge status. The suit was filed by Tyson Manker and the National Veterans Council for Legal Redress. Manker, who served from 1999 to 2003

and earned multiple awards and commendations, received an Other-Than-Honorable Discharge for smoking marijuana.

The settlement would require the Navy to review discharge status upgrade applications made to the Naval Discharge Review Board between March 2, 2012, and the effective date of the settlement. The review applies to Navy and Marine Corps veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan era who were given general or other-than-honorable discharges and were partially or fully denied upgrade relief, the Navy said 20 OCT. The settlement also expands reapplication rights for eligible applicants who were discharged and received an adverse review board decision between Oct. 7, 2001, and March 2, 2012, the Navy said. In addition, the Navy agreed to provide discharge review board members and staffers with annual training in PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, military sexual trauma and other behavioral or mental health conditions, according to the settlement.

In the lawsuit, Manker contended that the review board had unfairly rejected his request for a discharge status upgrade despite evidence that he had developed post-traumatic stress disorder and a traumatic brain injury after returning from deployment to Iraq in 2003. The board adjudicates applications from Navy and Marine Corps veterans seeking to upgrade their general or other-than-honorable discharges. Those discharges, also known as “bad paper,” stigmatize veterans and keep them from receiving health care, education and other military service benefits.

Other service branches also are under scrutiny for similar discharges, including the Air Force, which was sued in September by two veterans claiming discrimination against service members with mental health conditions. Manker’s lawsuit argued that among other failings, the board was not complying with a 2014 memorandum from then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directing military review boards to consider PTSD and related conditions as mitigating factors in an Other-Than-Honorable condition of service. A teleconference on the settlement agreement is scheduled 16 DEC, the Navy’s statement said. [Source: Stars and Stripes | Alison Bath | October 15, 2021 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs

Scheduled As of NOV 01, 2021



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program employment workshops are available in conjunction with hundreds of their hiring fairs. These workshops are designed to

help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring. To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering (if indicated) for the hiring fairs which are shown on the Hiring Our Heroes website <https://www.hiringourheroes.org> for the next month. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date Listings of upcoming Vet Job Fairs nationwide providing location, times, events, and registration info if required can be found at the following websites. Note that some of the scheduled events for the next 2 to 6 weeks have been postponed and are awaiting reschedule dates due to the current COVID-19 outbreak. You will need to review each site below to locate Job Fairs in your location:

- <https://events.recruitmilitary.com>
- <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/events/hiringfairs>
- <https://www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs>

[Source: Recruit Military, USCC, and American Legion | October 31, 2021 ++]

U.S. Capitol Riot

Update 19: Army Soldier James P. Mault Charged



Screenshots of James P. Mault allegedly show him, pictured here in a hard hat, spraying a chemical agent in the direction of law enforcement

The FBI had already received an anonymous tip that **James P. Mault** breached the Capitol building during the 6 JAN riot in Washington, D.C., when the 29-year-old joined the Army this summer. Mault, who most recently served as a specialist in the 82nd Airborne Division, was also interviewed by FBI agents on 18 JAN in his home state of New York, months before he re-enlisted after a break in service.

Background screenings, to include checking the FBI's Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization file, were conducted, but officials didn't see any red flags, Army spokesman Lt. Col. Gabriel J. Ramirez said in an email to Army Times. "The Army was unaware of any involvement Spc. Mault may have had in the incidents on January 6 or of any information disqualifying him at the time of his enlistment," said Ramirez. "This screening includes identification checks and verification, criminal background checks, a sex offender query,

fingerprints sent to the FBI, local police checks, and checks of local court documents.” During his Jan. 18 interview with FBI agents, Mault admitted he attended the Jan. 6 rally, but denied wrongdoing. He said he had been caught up in the crowd as the mass of people pushed him closer and closer to the Capitol, according to a federal criminal complaint.

The complaint was unsealed after Mault was finally arrested 6 OCT at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and charged with several federal offenses, including assaulting, resisting or impeding officers using a dangerous weapon or inflicting bodily injury. “Mault claimed to have no choice but to move forward because of the press of people behind him,” the complaint stated. “Mault ended up right next to an entrance to the Capitol Building but denied entering the Capitol Building. Mault also denied assaulting anyone or damaging property.”

Later, though the complaint does not state when, FBI agents reviewed body camera footage from a D.C. police officer that showed Mault spraying a chemical agent at officers on the afternoon of 6 JAN. Screenshots included in the criminal complaint showed Mault spraying the chemical agent while wearing a hard hat covered in union-themed stickers. “Mault received a small canister of a chemical agent from an unknown male in the crowd,” the complaint reads. “Mault then pointed the canister with his left hand in the direction of law enforcement officers.” Mault’s hard hat, which helped identify him, carried a sticker from Mault’s union, Ironworkers Local 33 of Rochester, New York, according to the complaint.

“Mault claimed that he wore his hard hat from work because he was aware of ANTIFA attacking Trump supporters after events in Washington, D.C., and the helmet would provide some level of protection,” the complaint reads. Mault was a prior-service soldier, having been in the New York Army National Guard from 2016 to 2020, according to 18th Airborne Corps spokesman Col. Joe Buccino. Mault re-joined active duty as a combat engineer, Buccino added. “We really don’t know about what happened,” Buccino said of the circumstances that allowed Mault to re-enlist. “It’s not something we’d have any visibility on.”

Background checks for new recruits occur during the enlistment process, before troops arrive at their first unit. The checks even include a tattoo screening for symbols or brands that are extremist, indecent, sexist or racist. But Ramirez, the Army spokesman, said there was nothing that would have prevented enlistment in Mault’s file. “The Army will continue to work with the FBI and other entities with inputs into the pre-screening process to obtain relevant information to inform Army enlistment decisions,” Ramirez said.

More than 600 individuals have been arrested across the country for crimes related to the breach of the Capitol building and the riot, according to the Justice Department. As of this article’s publication, 75 people charged after the riot — 12 percent — have military experience, according to George Washington University’s Program on Extremism. That number includes 70 veterans, two National Guard troops, two reservists and one active duty service member. [Source: ArmyTimes | Kyle Rempfer | October 14, 2021 ++]

U.S. Capitol Riot

Update 20: Iraq War Vet Leffingwell Pled Guilty



A former National Guard member who served in Iraq pleaded guilty on 26 OCT to a felony charge of assaulting a U.S. Capitol police officer during the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump. **Mark Leffingwell**, 52, of Seattle, was arrested on federal riot-related charges shortly after 6 JAN, but was released on bail after a brief period in detention. Leffingwell pleaded guilty to attacking Capitol Police officer Daniel Amendola during the assault on the U.S. seat of government, although he said at Tuesday's hearing before U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson that he pushed two police officers after they pushed him and then pushed one of them again.

Defense lawyer Mark Carroll confirmed to the court that Leffingwell pushed two policemen during the riot and "he shouldn't have done it." Leffingwell told the court: "I shouldn't have gone in (to the Capitol) . . . I was not trying to attack." Jackson said the charge to which Leffingwell pleaded guilty carried a prison term of up to eight years and a fine of up to \$250,000. But the judge said federal sentencing guidelines recommended Leffingwell serve a prison term of 24 to 30 months and pay a fine of between \$10,000 and \$95,000. The judge tentatively set Feb. 10 for sentencing.

More than 660 defendants face charges for the Capitol assault in which supporters of Trump attempted to stop Congress from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's November 2020 election victory. Trump has falsely claimed he lost because of widespread voter fraud. Later on 6 JAN, U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden set June 13, 2022, for the trial of Kevin and Hunter Seefried, a father and son from Delaware who face felony riot charges. Prosecutors say that shortly after entering the Senate side of the Capitol, Kevin Seefried was photographed holding a Confederate flag. Prosecutors also cited video posted on Twitter that they said shows Hunter Seefried punching out glass in a Capitol complex window. The Seefrieds have pleaded not guilty to all charges. [Source: Reuters | Mark Hosenball | October 26, 2021 ++]

RIP My General

Collin Powell!

I'm a 73 year old Vietnam Combat Engineer veteran. My greatest memory of General Powell, was when he came with the Bob Hope Show, to entertain the troops! The only thing was only the elite troops, were invited, and they only came to the Big, safe and secure bases to entertain! While we majority Black combat troops, stationed deep in the jungle, in the boonies, as we called it back then. Gen. Powell gathered up some Black Stars, I definitely remember Greg Morris, from Mission Impossible, and a beautiful black star, by the name of Judy Pace! He also gathered up a group of beautiful Black Sistas that danced in the show! A band from Stax Records, and loaded them on a C-130 and brought them to a little in the jungles of Vietnam, called Vuoc Bien!

We were just putting down an air strip, so that larger planes, could land and bring more war equipment and troops in to fight the war. He thought enough of us to bring us a taste of soul that we were missing! He and the others played dominoes, card game called Bid Wiz, that almost all Black people love to play. We ate, danced and laughed, and had one of the greatest days of my life. Before he left he asked us was there anything the military could do to make life, a little more pleasant for us? I got some guys together and we made out a list of things that we couldn't by for Black guys, at the PX , like a pick for our Afro's, because the only combs they had, were those little thin tooth combs, that could do nothing for our hair! We also told him, we needed some Afro Sheen, to gloss up our Fro's, we asked for some grease called Murray's, and a stiff brush, for those of us who wore our hair short, and wavy. We also asked for some Black magazines, like Jet and Ebony!

Two weeks, after he left, we received cases of everything we asked for and more! Thank You General Powell, for bringing a little joy to some Black GI Brothers lives! R.I.P. 🏠👐📺 My General! [Source: Reddit.com | Veterans | October 18, 2021 ++]

Obit: Colin Powell

OCT 18, 2021 | Army Retiree, NSA, CJC & Secretary of State

He was both the first African-American chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Secretary of State. He was a beloved military leader and trailblazer who served under Democrat and Republican president and whose legacy also includes a now-infamous speech that helped pave the way for the Iraq war. In the morning of 18 OCT, Colin Powell died of complications related to COVID-19, according to his family. He was 84.



Powell's rise to military and diplomatic prominence began in New York City. Born Colin Luther Powell to Jamaican immigrants in Harlem on Apr. 5, 1937, Powell grew up and was educated in New York City. Upon graduation from the City College of New York in 1958, Powell commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. For the first 29 years of his 35-year military career, Powell established himself as a superb Army officer serving served two tours in Vietnam and stints in South Korea and West Germany.

In 1987 Powell's career received a significant boost when then-President Ronald Reagan appointed him deputy National Security Advisor. His success as deputy led to Reagan naming Powell his National Security Advisor in 1988. "I thought it was a stroke of genius to recommend him for the job, one of my best decisions," former Vice President Dick Cheney told the University of Virginia. "When I think back now on my time there, it's not possible to conceive of my tour without Colin Powell as an integral part of it."

After being elected president in 1989, George H.W. Bush chose Powell to chair the Joint Chiefs, making him the first African-American to hold the position. During his tenure as chairman, Powell oversaw dozens of crises, including the invasion of Panama in 1989 and Operation Desert Storm in 1991. While then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein claimed that Desert Storm would lead to the "mother of all battles," it quickly turned into a rout of Iraq forces. According to former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who during Desert Storm was President George H.W. Bush's Deputy National Security Advisor, images of carnage from the battlefield had a profound impact on Powell, a combat veteran of Vietnam.

"And Colin, basically at one of our meetings, and I can't remember the day, essentially said, 'This is turning from a military conflict into a rout and from a rout into a massacre, and the American army does not do massacres,'" Gates said. "He said, 'I think that we will have completed our objectives and be prepared to stop within 24 hours.' Then the next day, he came in, and we started talking about a cessation of fighting." After President Bill Clinton was elected President in 1992, Powell remained chairman of the Joint Chiefs under the new Democrat-led administration, a position Powell held until he retired after 35 years on active duty in 1993.

Tony Lake, National Security Advisor under President Clinton, remembered Powell as a source of sober advice and experience as Lake assumed his duties in the White House. “Colin had been one of the first people I’d talked to when I came to Washington to take on the job,” Lake told UVA. “I remember his confirming my view of how to deal with the press. I mean, this is Colin Powell, hero of Desert Storm, even though he kind of opposed it— And he’d been national security advisor and all that.”

After Powell’s retirement, his centrist politics and public popularity led to speculation that he would run for office. However, Powell never did. Powell told CNN in 2009 that his wife was fearful of the impact that politics might have on their family life and declined to pursue that path. “But I was a soldier. That wasn’t my concern,” Powell told CNN. “I never found inside of me the internal passion that you’ve got to have to run for elected office.” Instead of a political run following his retirement from active duty, Powell founded “America’s Promise,” an organization focused on helping at-risk children. Although he eschewed a run at elected office, it did not mean Powell was finished serving in government. In Dec. 2000, President George W. Bush nominated Powell for Secretary of State.

On Jan. 20, 2001, the Senate confirmed Powell’s unanimity, making him the first African-American Secretary of State. According to the State Department, Powell intended to focus his time as Secretary of State on strengthening global alliances and reform at state. However, the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, soon shifted to focus of the nation, and Powell, to prosecuting the Global War on Terror. Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Powell was at the center of one of the more controversial moments in U.S. history. On Feb. 5, 2003, he gave a speech at the United Nations regarding potential Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction.”

Later, Powell told PBS that he appeared before the UN and spoke about “biological vans” and chemical weapons based on was in the National Intelligence Estimate. Additionally, Powell said that he and others worked for four days prior to his appearance at the UN and removed information that wasn’t “double and triple sourced.” “I made the case with the director of central intelligence sitting behind me. He and his team had vouched for everything in it,” Powell said. However, within weeks, Powell said that the Central Intelligence Agency let Powell know that the case he had laid before the UN began to fall apart. Powell described this development as “deeply disturbing” as Congress approved an Authorization for the Use of Military force against Iraq in Oct. 2002.

“You have to remember that at the time I gave the speech on Feb. 5, the president had already made this decision for military action,” Powell said. “The dice had been tossed. That’s what we were going to do.” Ultimately, Powell lamented what he called an “intelligence failure” and that his appearance at the UN was an effort to continue working towards a diplomatic solution with Iraq, rather than make a case for war. “I understood the consequences of that failure and, as I said, I deeply regret that the information — some of the information, not all of it — was wrong,” Powell told Al-Jazeera in 2011 regarding his 2003 presentation before the United Nations.

While Powell noted that his speech before the UN “blotted” his record, overall, his legacy is remembered by many as one of leadership, statesmanship, and mentoring future generations of defense leaders. While on an overseas trip in the Republic of Georgia, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin delivered an emotional statement to traveling press on the death of Powell, noting his role as the first African-American Secretary of State and a man who was “respected around the globe” in that role. “The world lost one of the greatest leaders that we have ever witnessed,” Austin said. “Alma [Powell’s wife] lost a great husband, and the family lost a tremendous father. And I lost a tremendous personal friend and mentor.”

Former Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey stated his “friend and mentor” Powell, whom Dempsey said was also “a superb soldier, statesman, and lifelong public servant.” According to former President Barrack Obama, “Everyone who worked with General Powell appreciated his clarity of thought, insistence on seeing all sides, and ability to execute. And although he’d be the first to acknowledge that he didn’t get every call right, his actions reflected what he believed was best for America and the people he served.”

Current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mark Milley also issued a statement in which he said, “He was an inspiring and dedicated Army officer, having served 35 years in uniform and concluding his military career as the 12th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was a model for the Chairmanship, the Joint Staff, and the Nation.” Monday afternoon President Joe Biden issued a proclamation in which Biden declared that the American flag will be flown at half-staff through Oct. 22 to recognize Powell’s “life of service.” “He believed in the promise of America because he lived it,” Biden said. “And he devoted much of his life to making that promise a reality for so many others. He embodied the highest ideals of both warrior and diplomat.”

Powell is survived by his wife Alma, three children, and grandchildren. [Source: MilitaryTimes | James R. Webb| October 18, 2021 ++]

WWII Vets 272

Joseph Quirk Jr. | Escapee from France

Army Air Force former tail gunner Joseph Quirk, who was 86 in 2006 with a family of ten grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, remembered serving in the 446th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force during World War II. On November 14, 1943, at age 23 he had left Africa in a B-24, bound for England with thirteen other men. The Germans intercepted their radio communications and dictated false directions, leading them straight through occupied France. The plane was shot down over Brest. “It burst out in fire,” Quirk said. “It burned back to the tail. They told us to bail out. I was always prepared to jump.” So, he did.



As he floated to the ground, he remembered seeing and hearing children, who scurried as he approached. “At dusk, several men came out looking for me,” Quirk said. “They found me in the weeds. I didn’t know if I was caught.” “Comrade,” they called, making him think, “Maybe it’s all right.” He was taken to a garage and then to some apartments. He was constantly moved. “They were afraid to keep me,” Quirk said. “They had to appear as friends and acquaintances,” His daughter Eilleen Young explained. At one apartment complex, he had a collaborator living beneath him and a Nazi soldier living above him.

Quirk remembered, Andree Viroit Peel as Rose, which was her code name. She headed the Resistance in her hometown of Brest. By day, she ran her beauty salon, selling perfume to German soldiers. The rest of her time she devoted to the Resistance. Through her efforts 99 other Allied servicemen were able to escape France. He recalled once being told to follow her, wearing a large hat, down a crowded French street. Then, on the night of December 1, 1943, he was told by one of his keepers to get ready to go. Escapes were tricky, occurring when the tide was right and the moon in the right quarter. Quirk said he was taken to the beach on this cold, moonless night. He and several others had to swim against strong currents to a nearby island, about 300 meters away. There, they were told to await a signal. They heard someone shout, “Ahoy,” but Quirk said they didn’t know if it was friend or foe. So, they waited and heard it a few more times before they decided to respond.

Directed down the shore, Quirk found his way to one of three rowboats. “The boat I had had a hole in it,” Quirk said. But he lucked out — the other two boats broke apart. In Quirk’s boat he pushed with one hand and bailed water with the other. When it arrived at the waiting British gunboat, a final wave crashed over it, capsizing it into the sea. Quirk grabbed onto a rope thrown over the side of the boat and was flipped onto the deck by a British sailor. “They were within minutes of the gunboat going up and going back. Decades later, Quirk is still thankful. “These English sailors had a lot of courage to come that close into German waters,” he said. Thirty-two men were rescued that night.

Peel was eventually exposed to the Germans and sent to the Ravensbruck and Buchenwald concentration camps, where she stayed until the Allied liberation, after which she returned to a bombed-out Brest. So, she and her mother relocated to Paris and opened a restaurant, where she eventually met her British husband. Quirk was finally able to begin his trek home to the United States on Christmas of 1943, after he was positively identified as an American. “I didn’t arrive until two days later,” he said. “I was afraid my mother was going to have a heart attack.”

When word spread he was home, Quirk said he was met with a line out the door. “They kept coming,” he said. “I don’t know how many times I told the story.” And he was still telling it, as his family treasured the piece of parachute that landed him, as well as a dog-tag-sized piece of his plane. Mr. Quirk, a lifelong Collingdale, PA resident, worked as a production supervisor for the Boeing Co. for 38 years. He died at home of age related illness on Nov. 21, 2010. His tale was so compelling that British filmmaker William Ennals wove it into his 2006 film *Rose*, a documentary about the French secret agent instrumental in his escape. [Source: The Journal | Kathleen E. Carey | Spring/Summer 2006 ++]

WWII Vets 273

James Harvey | Tuskegee Airman & Top Gun Trophy Winner



James Harvey doesn’t want to be known as the first Black fighter pilot to fly in Korean airspace. He doesn’t want to be known for his Distinguished Flying Cross or the 11 Air Medals he earned in combat. And he doesn’t want to be known for his time as a commander, a test pilot or an officer reporting to the head of NORAD. Harvey, one of the few members of the Tuskegee Airmen still living, wants to be remembered for an honor that eluded the public eye for nearly 50 years: winner of the first “Gunsmoke” aerial shooting competition in 1949.

The 98-year-old retired lieutenant colonel spoke to Air Force Times ahead of a 21 SEP ceremony here to honor his legacy as a flying ace, hosted by AARP and Raytheon. Harvey first imagined himself as a pilot as a child in Nuangola Station, a rural area outside of Wilkes-Barre in eastern Pennsylvania. “I sat in my front yard, and I saw this flight of P-40s fly over in formation,” he said. “I said, ‘I’d like to do that one day.’” He said he tried to enlist in the Army Air Corps in January 1943, as World War II was in full swing. Despite the impending Allied invasions of Axis-controlled North Africa, Italy, France and others, the military turned him down.

“They said they weren’t taking enlistments at that time,” he said. He believes it was because he is Black. Still, Harvey was drafted into the Army a few months later. He headed first to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, for basic training and then to engineer training, where he learned to bulldoze and set up airfields in the jungle. But he still wanted to be in a cockpit. He reapplied to become an

aviator and completed the exam at Washington's Bolling Field to attend pilot training school. "There were 10 of us that took the exam: nine whites and myself. Two of us passed," Harvey said.

He became one of about 1,000 Black men trained in Tuskegee, Alabama, from 1941 to 1946 who were the first African American military pilots in American history. The Tuskegee Airmen encompassed more than 14,000 Black men and women who worked in a range of aviation and office jobs in those squadrons and groups, and others who were stationed at their bases. Joining the segregated military gave Harvey his first taste of racism, he said. With no desire to participate in the growing civil rights movement and no television to watch it at home, Harvey waged his own campaign to be seen as equal inside the Army Air Corps.

The self-described perfectionist and loner talks about his military service in simple terms: "I'm out there to do my job the best I can." That yielded a career in 12 aircraft over 22 years: the PT-19, BT-13, AT-6 and T-33 training planes; the early propeller-driven P-40, P-47 and P-51 fighters and bombers; and the jet-powered F-80, F-86, F-89, F-94 and F-102 fighters, according to Harvey's personal website <http://www.tuskegetopgun.com>.

He learned to fly at Moton Field and Sharpe Field, Alabama, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. After graduating as a second lieutenant in October 1944, Harvey flew P-47 Thunderbolts with the 99th Fighter Squadron at Godman Army Airfield, Kentucky. Despite the 99th's earlier support in Allied operations across Europe and North Africa, Harvey never got the chance to head to Europe or Japan before World War II ended in 1945, according to the VA. In 1949, however, the recently formed Air Force convened a new kind of competition: the "Gunsmoke" air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery meet at what is now Nellis AFB, Nevada, with separate events for conventional-engine and jet-powered planes.

Each fighter group was directed to hold a shoot-off and pick the three highest-scoring pilots to represent them in the first-ever "Top Gun" contest, Harvey said. The 332nd Fighter Group at the former Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, tapped Capt. Alva Temple of the 301st Fighter Squadron, 1st Lt. Harry Stewart of the 100th Fighter Squadron, and Harvey to participate, with 1st Lt. Halbert Alexander of the 99th as an alternate. Their competitors flew more-advanced P-51 Mustangs and F-82 Twin Mustangs against the Tuskegee Airmen's older P-47s in events ranging from aerial gunnery at 12,000 and 20,000 feet to dive bombing, low-altitude skip bombing, rocket firing and panel strafing, according to a 2012 Air Force release.

"Capt. Temple scored six for six, Stewart scored six for six, and I scored six for six" on skip bombing, Harvey said in the release. "The next day was rocket firing; Temple had six for six, Stewart had five for six, and I had five for six." The Black pilots led after both aerial gunnery events and faltered during the dive bombing portion, but maintained their lead long enough to win the inaugural Fighter Gunnery Award trophy. Then their victory faded into history, according to Harvey.

Harvey said Air Force-related records, like the Air Force Association's annual almanac, failed to list their achievement. For example, the 1996 almanac lists Lt. Calvin Ellis from Langley AFB's

4th Fighter Wing and Lt. William Crawford from the 332nd FW at Lockbourne as the 1949 Gunsmoke winners. Ellis is inscribed on the trophy as a jet-class winner; Crawford isn't on the trophy. Stewart helped bring the information to light again in the 1990s so the Tuskegee airmen's win would be properly acknowledged, the service said in 2012.

The trophy disappeared for decades, Harvey said, but turned up in storage in the early 2000s and is now on display at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. It bears the names of Harvey and his teammates, the airmen who won the jet-class competition in 1949 and the two winning teams in 1950. The trophy lists Temple as a major, Stewart as a captain and Harvey as a lieutenant.

The 99th was desegregated and disbanded in July 1949, following President Harry Truman's 1948 order to integrate the armed forces. Later that year, Harvey deployed to Misawa Air Base in Japan to fly F-80 Shooting Stars — the first U.S. jet fighter — during the Korean War. There, he was named a flight commander before heading to now-closed George Air Force Base, California, to become an instructor and test pilot with the 94th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, according to his personal website. By 1960, he had moved on to serve as a flying safety officer with NORAD, a fighter training officer at the now-defunct Northeast Air Command headquarters on the island of Newfoundland, Canada, and in leadership positions at the 1st Fighter Group and 71st Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Selfridge AFB, Michigan.

At the end of his military career, Harvey was assigned to another NORAD region headquartered at Truax Field, Wisconsin, working for the commanding general and his staff. He retired from military service in 1965. In the corporate world, he climbed the ladder in sales at Oscar Mayer until retiring in 1980 as the company's first Black distribution center manager in Denver, Colorado.

Asked what it means to him to see that barrier broken, Harvey grew upset. For him, the accomplishments of Brown and other Black generals are a reminder of what the Black community endured when a 1925 Army War College report declared them inferior to their white counterparts. "All the congressmen had read the report, all the Army commanders had a copy of the report, and all that report did was reinforce the racist attitude that they had toward us," Harvey said. "We had to overcome all that stuff, and we did." The report, released two years after Harvey was born but nearly two generations before Brown's time, has been proven wrong again, the older man said.

Harvey has continued his efforts to educate the public about his winning Gunsmoke team as he outlives most other Tuskegee Airmen, including Alva Temple and Halbert Alexander. But he wants his legacy to be made of humble stuff: He did his best; he was kind; he had a sense of humor; he was a good person. "If it comes, it comes," he said of death. "But I expect to delay it ... many more years." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Rachel S. Cohen | September 29, 2021 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule

As of NOV 01, 2021

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

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

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

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

[Source: Retiree/Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | October 31, 2021 ++]

Homeless Vet Treatment

Panhandling Arrest Leads to Service Dog's Death



Service dog Sunshine (left) and with Joshua Rohrer (center) & Pvt. First Class Joshua Rohrer and two of his fellow soldiers (right) posing for a photo in a 642nd Military Intelligence Battalion's photo album

Joshua Graham Rohrer, a homeless veteran in North Carolina, says he was wrongfully arrested and mistreated by Gastonia police officers, who also tased his service dog Sunshine, sparking support from those who witnessed the incident. The Gastonia Police Department told Military Times that although Rohrer will go to court for the charges against him, the department is now looking into the incident to “determine if the conduct of our officers was appropriate.” Rohrer

deployed to Kuwait and Iraq from October 2004 to November 2005 with the Kentucky Army National Guard. He suffers from service-connected post-traumatic stress disorder, and his 2-year-old Belgian Malinois Sunshine was his Veterans Affairs-prescribed treatment, according to an official letter from the VA provided to Military Times by Rohrer.

Rohrer was standing on a median near a Gastonia shopping center with Sunshine on 13 OCT when a 911 caller contacted police. While Rohrer wasn't bothering anybody, having Sunshine with him was his way of using sympathy to get money from people, the caller said, according to a copy of the audio call. Even though Rohrer wasn't armed or harassing passersby, according to witnesses at the scene, the encounter would ultimately end with his arrest and Sunshine's death. He said he wasn't doing anything illegal on 13 OCT. "I was just standing there, waving at people, when this lady waved me over and offered me money," Rohrer told Military Times. "I was accused of falsely using my dog to get money from people and asking people for money but that's not true."

Rohrer said that as soon as he took the money offered to him, the police drove up, "aggressively, with the lights on and everything." The officer asked for Rohrer's ID card and told him that she'd be giving him a ticket for panhandling. The act, which falls under the term solicitation in North Carolina state law, is considered illegal if an individual verbally panhandles at night, or at any time of day when within 20 feet of a financial institution, outdoor dining area or transit stop. Rohrer argued that he wasn't doing anything wrong, and the officer on scene called for back-up. Police asked Rohrer to produce a valid state ID, which Rohrer said he didn't have, stating that he only had a VA card.

Justyn Huffman and Nydia Conley witnessed Rohrer's arrest, telling local TV station WCNC that they saw officers surround Rohrer during the 13 OCT encounter. "The officer asked him for his ID," Huffman said. "He wasn't moving fast enough so he tried to reach into his pocket to get his ID. They slammed him up against the car and they put cuffs on him." Sunshine, responding to his distress, jumped up on the hood trying to help him, Rohrer said. "She was just doing her job, licking me and trying to calm me down," Rohrer said. "The cops starting yelling at her and me, telling me to get her to settle down but they wouldn't allow me to physically get control of her." Rohrer said Sunshine nipped at one of the officer's ankles as she was hopping down from the hood of the car, prompting the officer to tase her.

"We're out here screaming, 'Don't shoot the dog! Don't shoot the dog!'" Huffman said. Huffman said Sunshine ran to a nearby store with one of the taser prongs dangling off her body while police took Rohrer to the back of the car and "slammed him on the pavement." "It was really traumatizing," Conley said. "I've never seen anything like that." According to the police report, Rohrer was arrested on charges of solicitation and resisting arrest.

As he was taken away by police for booking, Rohrer said he begged the officers to let Sunshine come with him. He cited a North Carolina statute that affords people with disabilities the right to keep their service dogs with them, especially in cases where the individual's health is at risk.

“They laughed at me,” he said. “I begged them to bring her to me or to give her to an officer to take with them but they wouldn’t listen, they didn’t care.”

Rohrer never saw Sunshine again. While his friend and fellow veteran Dave Dowell was able to get his hands on the service dog that night, she later slipped her leash and ran away while Rohrer was still in jail. He was released the next day after posting bail and facing more insensitive treatment by the police, saying they laughed at him and continually told him how horrible of a person he was, Rohrer claimed. He immediately began searching for his dog. After nearly two days, Sunshine was found in nearby Shelby, where Dowell lives. She had been hit by a car and killed. “I begged them not to separate us,” Rohrer said. “They didn’t care about me or about her or about the fact that I needed her.”

Rohrer’s grief over losing Sunshine almost killed him, Dowell said to Military Times. According to Dowell, Rohrer took off into traffic after learning Sunshine was gone, and tried throwing himself in front of any car that he could. “He absolutely lost his mind,” Dowell said. Losing Sunshine and facing the allegedly rough and careless treatment of the police left Rohrer feeling hopeless enough that he “just wanted to die,” he said. After Dowell and Shelby police were able to subdue Rohrer, he had to be treated at the VA Medical Center in Asheville for injuries suffered during the PTSD episode caused by losing Sunshine. Bended Knee Outdoors, a non-profit corporation in Granite Falls, North Carolina, has been providing Rohrer with housing since his 16 OCT release from the medical center, Dowell said.

Rohrer said he wanted to share his story to draw attention to how he was treated. “I’m just blown away that this could happen to a veteran and service dog team, or anybody really, homeless or not,” he said. “I just lost my ability to believe in and function in society,” Rohrer said. “I cannot function without a service dog and they stole that from me. I don’t know how I’m going to recover from this.” Dowell and Rohrer said that his case was recently accepted by the Veterans Justice Outreach program, which works “to identify justice-involved Veterans and contact them through outreach, in order to facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point.”

The program doesn’t provide legal counsel, but it does help point veterans in the right direction, according to their website. “He has an army of people behind him now,” Dowell said, “but he doesn’t have his battle buddy anymore.” According to the Facebook group, “Support Joshua Rohrer and Sunshine Rae,” a protest is scheduled to take place in front of the Gastonia Police Department 29 OCT. [Source: ArmyTimes | Rachel Nostrant | October 27, 2021 ++]

State Veterans’ Benefits

Mississippi 2021

The state of Mississippi provides a number of services and benefits to its veterans. To obtain information on these refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**State Veteran’s Benefits –**

MS” for an overview of those in the below categories. They are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below plus the state’s current position on veteran issues refer to MOAA’s www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/statereportcard www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/statereportcard & <https://www.msva.ms.gov>:

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

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

*** Vet Legislation ***



Senate Vet Bill Progress

16 thru 30 OCT 2021

The Senate passed S. 796, Protecting Moms Who Served Act of 2021. This legislation would require VA to coordinate maternity care programs with community providers to meet the unique needs of pregnant and postpartum veterans. It would also require a report on maternal mortality rates, and racial and ethnic disparities in care. The bill, which passed the House in May, now heads to the president’s desk for signature.

-o-o-O-o-o-

Senate Passes Buddy Check Bill: The Senate passed S. 544, to direct VA to designate one week each year as “Buddy Check Week.” This legislation would promote outreach and education concerning wellness checks for veterans. In addition, VA would provide scripts as well as online

and in-person training for veterans to facilitate successful buddy checks. Bill sent to the House on 8 OCT.

[Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | October 18, 2021 ++]

SGLI/VGLI

Update 20: H.R.3793/S.2794 | Supporting Families of the Fallen Act

The Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs have not kept up with inflation. The current coverage for both is \$400,000 and has not been updated since 2005. With soaring inflation, it is time for SGLI and VGLI to catch up: The Supporting Families of the Fallen Act will increase this important coverage to \$500,000. If the round number increase causes you concern, as it does for most military planners and budget programmers, your instincts are correct. For perspective, this U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator indicates that \$400,000 in January 2005, when accounting for inflation, would be worth approximately \$575,000 in September 2021.

Although this legislation will fall short of a complete adjustment for inflation, getting lawmakers to make this adjustment is important progress and could lead to further legislation requiring automatic adjustments. "The Supporting Families of the Fallen Act is long overdue and will authorize Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) to catch up with inflation," said Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret), president and CEO of the Military Officers Association of America. "This legislation is ultimately about supporting the families of servicemembers, and MOAA looks forward to growing bipartisan support for this important modernization of life insurance."

Reps. Chip Roy (R-TX) and Mike Levin (D-CA) introduced this bipartisan legislation (H.R. 3793) in the House, along with Reps. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) and Elissa Slotkin (D-MI). All are members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "Veterans and active duty servicemembers across the country should rest assured that if anything happens to them, their families will be supported," Roy said. "That is why as the representative for thousands of military and veterans families ... I introduced the Supporting Families of the Fallen Act to update the decades-old life insurance policy and give families across the country peace of mind."

Levin said the bill would provide "a long overdue increase in death benefits to ease financial hardships for our Gold Star Families and other military families. I am proud to introduce this bill with Rep. Roy to expand monetary relief for the loved ones of those who give their lives for our nation. We must honor their service and sacrifice by passing this bill as soon as possible." The Senate's companion bill, S. 2794, was introduced in September by Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-AL). "Our military families support our warfighters in the dangers of battle and through the most difficult times," Tuberville said. "We hope they never receive that horrible call, but when one of

our servicemembers pays the ultimate sacrifice, their family should be taken care of. This legislation is one way to ease their financial worries and hopefully alleviate the peripheral stress that comes with mourning the loss of a loved one.”

Although both the House and Senate versions were introduced relatively late in the legislative session, this legislation will have time to grow co-sponsors throughout the remainder of the 117th session of Congress. These co-sponsors will carry over to the next half of the 117th Congress, and it remains important for legislators to hear from constituents. With midterm elections on the minds of many lawmakers, a phone call in addition to a letter is an effective way to influence elected officials. Use MOAA’s Capital Hotline – 866-272-MOAA (6622) – a toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol switchboard, to connect with your legislators' offices. Following is a suggested letter to forward to your legislators:

o-o-O-o-o-

Subj: Adjust SGLI and VGLI for Inflation With the Supporting Families of the Fallen Act

Dear Rep.  or Sen. _____,

I am writing to ask you to co-sponsor H.R. 3793  S.2794, the Supporting Families of the Fallen Act, which will adjust the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs for inflation.

When we lose a servicemember in the line of duty, it is important we provide financial support for their family. The SGLI and VGLI programs have not been adjusted since 2005 and should be raised from the current level of \$400,000 of coverage to \$500,000 to account for soaring inflation. SGLI and VGLI are important insurance programs relied upon by the currently serving and veterans communities.

This legislation is ultimately about supporting the families of servicemembers. I am asking you to show your support for our uniformed services and veteran communities by signing onto the important adjustment of life insurance included in H.R. 3793  S.2794

*Sincerely,
Your Name
Your Address*

[Source: Military Officers Association of America | Mark Belinsky | October 19, 2021 ++]

VA Prostate Cancer Program

Update 19: S.2720/H.R.4880 | Vet’s Prostate Cancer Treatment & Research Act

On 13 SEP U.S. Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Jon Tester (D-MT) introduced the **Veterans Prostate Cancer Treatment & Research Act** legislation to expand treatment and research of prostate cancer to help diagnose and treat veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). H.R.4880 has previously been introduced by Rep. Neal Dunn (R-FL-2) in the house on 30 JUL 2021. The Senate’s Committee on Veteran Affairs held hearings on S.2720. The bills would:

- Expand upon the current VA and Prostate Cancer Foundation partnership.

- Require the VA to establish and publish an interdisciplinary clinical diagnosis and treatment pathway in the VA National Surgery Office, in collaboration with the VA National Program Office of Oncology, the VA Office of Research and Development and VA Primary Care for all stages of prostate cancer, from early detection to end of life care.
- Give the VA the authority to collaborate with other research entities on creation of clinical pathway including the National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) and the Department of Defense.
- Require the VA to establish a prostate cancer program utilizing the clinical pathway mandated in this legislation, which will receive direct oversight from the VA Undersecretary of Health, include yearly program implementation evaluation, be metric and data driven, and include an education plan for patients and providers.
- Direct the VA to produce a plan to Congress detailing funding through the VA Office of Research and Development for supporting prostate cancer research to make certain no funding included is duplicative.
- Direct the VA to submit a report to Congress on the barriers and challenges associated with creating a national prostate cancer registry to include recommendations for centralizing data about veterans with prostate cancer in an effort to improve outcomes and research.

[Source: TREA Washington Update | October 22, 2021 ++]

Congressional Resources

Member's Contact Info & Vet Bill Status

If in doubt as to your legislator's online contact info or who they are, the below websites provide ALL legislator's names with contact info to facilitate the copying and forwarding of suggested letters to them, asking them questions, or seeking their assistance:

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

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



Navy Covid Discharge Plan Unveiled For Sailors Who Refuse Vaccine

The Navy has announced the formation of a COVID Consolidated Disposition Authority to separate sailors who refuse to comply with the mandatory vaccination policy. Active-duty sailors must receive their final dose of the vaccine by 14 NOV — and those in the Navy Reserve by Dec. 14 — in order to meet the deadlines for fully vaccinated status, which are 28 NOV and 28 DEC, respectively. The shot deadlines provide a two-week buffer for sailors to become fully immunized against COVID-19.

“In order to maximize readiness, it is the policy goal of the U.S. Navy to achieve a fully vaccinated force against the persistent and lethal threat of COVID-19,” a naval administrative message released 12 OCT states. For those who don’t comply, the Navy is standing up the COVID Consolidated Disposition Authority to “ensure a fair and consistent process” handling separation determinations, and has tapped Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. John Nowell Jr. and Chief of Naval Reserve Vice Adm. John Mustin to head the effort. Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. William Lescher is in charge of nonjudicial punishment and courts-martial.

“Commands shall not allow those refusing the vaccine to promote/advance, reenlist, or execute orders, with the exception of separation orders, until the CCDA has completed disposition of their case,” the NAVADMIN said. “Transfer orders may be cancelled by Navy Personnel Command.” Commanding officers have been tasked with tracking those who deny the vaccine and will confirm that those sailors have had an initial counseling, or “Page 13.” Reporting seniors also must submit a special evaluation or fitness report no later than 30 days after a sailor rejects the vaccine to document circumstances of the rejection and other misconduct information related to the Uniform Code of Military Justice Article 92, that is, failure to comply with a regulation, the guidance said.

Administrative actions against sailors who deny the COVID-19 vaccine or won’t be fully vaccinated by the deadline may commence immediately if the sailor doesn’t already have a pending or approved exemption request. Sailors could receive as low as a general discharge under honorable conditions if they are separated only for their vaccine refusal. A Navy news release on

the guidance notes that this potentially causes the sailor to become disqualified from some veteran benefits. Sailors may apply for an exemption from the vaccine on medical or religious grounds.

The Navy says 94 percent of active-duty sailors and 89 percent of the total force are fully vaccinated, while 99 percent of active-duty sailors and 94 percent of the total force have received at least one COVID-19 shot, according to figures released 13 OCT. More than 65 service members across all branches have died due to complications from COVID-19, according to Pentagon data, with at least 14 of those from the Navy. That number grows to nearly 165 when factoring in Navy civilians, dependents and contractors.

“Tragically, there have been 164 deaths within the Navy family due to COVID-19, far exceeding the combined total of all other health or mishap related injuries and deaths over the same time period,” the NAVADMIN said. “144 of these were not immunized and 20 had an undisclosed immunization status.” Service leaders have voiced strong support for the vaccine, noting that the vaccine is imperative to protect the force and paves the way for normalcy.

“We would not send our folks into combat without flak and Kevlar,” Navy Surgeon General Rear Adm. Bruce Gillingham said at a panel at the the Sea Air Space symposium in August. “The enemy this time is a virus, and we have a biological body armor for them to take and use to protect them ... this is biologic body armor. Put it on, be protected.” [Source: NavyTimes| Diana Stancy Correll | October 14, 2021 ++]

Texas National Guard

Tuition Assistance Cutbacks



The Texas National Guard is massively expanding its state active duty mission at the U.S.-Mexico border, with “thousands” of troops already there and “thousands more on the way” via unit-level involuntary mobilizations, Texas Military Department officials confirmed to Army Times. Even as the border mission, dubbed Operation Lone Star, expands, Texas has slashed its tuition assistance budget by more than half — to roughly \$1.4 million — to comply with a state-mandated budget reduction. The benefit cut for soldiers comes after the Texas legislature provided

a \$300 million funding boost for the Texas Military Department's border mission amid a record-high year for Border Patrol apprehensions.

National Guard troops in a state active duty status — such as those assigned to Operation Lone Star — are considered state employees and are not subject to the Posse Comitatus Act, which restricts the use of the U.S. military for law enforcement. But the troops' duty status also means they are not accruing federal benefits like the G.I. Bill, and they will be ineligible for healthcare or disability benefits from the Veterans Administration for any injuries incurred during the mission.

To support the increased demand on Guard resources, the state has started involuntarily activating thousands more troops in recent weeks, state officials confirmed to Army Times. "There are now thousands of Texas National Guard and Texas State Guard service members in the border region, with thousands more on the way," said Maj. Martha Nigrelle, a Texas Military Department spokesperson. Nigrelle declined to provide specific numbers, citing operational security. "In the last two months, the need for our support to this mission has increased," she explained. "Therefore, due to the operational needs and at the direction of the Governor, the number of service members assigned to this mission has also increased."

Army Times spoke with soldiers on the border who said that in some cases, they had less than a week's notice to settle their civilian affairs and report for border duty. The mission will last for months, the soldiers said, but it was not immediately clear how long the state intends to keep them at the border. Nigrelle also noted that there is "nuance" to the involuntary activations, saying that "in some cases, interested service members are able to volunteer for certain missions, relieving others who have challenges meeting [their] service obligations."

What is clear, though, is that many of the troops called up in recent weeks have yet to receive copies of their orders and have been experiencing significant pay issues. One soldier, who spoke with Army Times on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly, said he was on mission for four weeks before he received his first paycheck Sunday. Negrelle, the Texas Military Department spokesperson, said that the pay system, which was initially overwhelmed by the activations, has caught up. "For the month of September, all personnel have either received their pay through direct deposit or should be in receipt of a physical check," she explained. "Additional delays are not expected going forward."

However, the troops called to state active duty can still expect much less in terms of state education benefits. The National Guard's state-specific tuition assistance benefits, which vary across the country, generally offset the majority of in-state tuition costs at state universities for qualifying Guard members. The benefits are a major recruiting and retention tool that are commonly considered to be a necessary cost of doing business amid an era of increased state-specific missions for the Guard. A soldier tired of repeated state active duty call-ups can theoretically avoid them and continue to serve by transferring to the Army Reserve or Air Force Reserve, but state tuition benefits are an alluring reason for many to stick with the National Guard.

But the Texas National Guard, in its effort to comply with a legislature-mandated funding cut of five percent, has gutted its tuition assistance benefit to balance the books, according to budget documents available online and an email announcing the changes obtained by Army Times. Before the cuts, the state offered \$4,500 in reimbursement per semester to virtually all Texas Guard troops who were working full-time towards their first undergraduate degree or their first graduate or professional degree. That cost the state just over \$3 million combined in fiscal 2020 and 2021, which pales in comparison to the \$300 million that the Texas legislature authorized to fund Guard troops on the border in fiscal 2022 and 2023. But for fiscal 2022 and 2023, the state tuition assistance budget has been slashed by 54 percent to just under \$1.4 million, Nigrelle confirmed.

Retired Master Sgt. Manuel Flores, the state tuition assistance coordinator, announced the changes to the force in a 13 OCT email. The sudden funding cut pulled the rug out from Texas Guard troops who may have been depending on the reimbursement — cutting the standard TA award to \$1,000 and establishing a new priority list for who gets money and who doesn't. The state now only has the money to make \$1,000 awards to 714 students against a total Texas National Guard end strength of more than 20,000 troops.

“The bottom line is that our budget has been dramatically cut for the next 2 years,” Flores said. “This change in budget requires us to adjust the method we use in assigning award amounts. As unpleasant as it is to change our methods after the school year has already begun, it is unfortunately unavoidable.” As a result, he said, graduate students should expect to receive no state tuition assistance, and it's “highly likely” that undergraduates will not receive more than \$1,000. The maximum award is now \$2,250.

The Texas Military Department itself requested the cuts, according to a legislative budget request available online. And in the department's list of unfunded priorities for the legislature to consider funding above the budget request, restoring the tuition assistance budget came in sixth place, behind such pressing requirements as establishing a state parachute team. “We will continue to assess and advocate for important benefit programs, like State Military Tuition Assistance, as we prepare requests for the next legislative session,” said Nigrelle. “Decisions made concerning legislative appropriations are outside the purview of this agency.”

But some students involuntarily activated for Operation Lone Star say that the state's words won't pay their tuition bills. “Cutting my TA by half probably means I'm gonna have to take some private loans to pay for school,” said one soldier who had to withdraw from his fall semester courses due to the activation. “Fuck this.”

[Source: ArmyTimes | Davis Winkie | October 26, 2021 ++]

Military Myths & Legends

Update 05: Did WW II Soldiers Mutiny After V-J Day



On May 8, 1945, the Allies accepted the formal surrender of Nazi Germany. The capitulation of the last Axis power in Europe marked the end of World War II there. The war in the Pacific, however, was still raging. American troops, along with the rest of the Allies, began to reorient their forces to concentrate on fighting the Japanese. But they didn't have to work for very long. Just a few months later, the Japanese Empire also surrendered. On August 15, 1945, the Japanese forces officially surrendered, and World War II was finally over. The Allies had won the war.

Over the course of four years, the United States had enlisted, trained, equipped, and shipped some 7.6 million men and women overseas. They had done their duty, and they were ready to go home - they wanted to make it home by Christmas. Unfortunately, four months was not enough time to move millions of men from the four corners of the globe back to their stateside homes. Many GIs were not able to spend Christmas Day with their families, and they began to get restless. To make repatriation fair, the War Department came up with a points system that measured how long a troop had been in service, how long they had been deployed overseas if they saw extensive combat duty, and if they were parents. The more points you had, the more likely you would be home sooner rather than later.

Everyone generally agreed the system was fair, but with no war left to fight and so many men in uniform, there simply wasn't enough work to keep everyone in the U.S. military busy and occupied as the War Department made plans for getting them back to the United States. They were homesick and bored, and the politicians back home weren't helping. They were under intense pressure from their constituents. By January 1946, thousands of American GIs were taking to the streets while in uniform, marching in protest of being kept so long away from their homes and families. Many carried placards expressing their anger and frustration at their commanders and their government.

In the December 1966 issue of the *Journal of American History*, author R. Alton Lee wrote that the actions soldiers took to protest the delays could easily qualify as a mutiny - an offense punishable by death under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So did the GIs who won World War II for the United States "mutiny?" Technically, they did, but did the U.S. Government treat them like mutineers? No. President Truman, Congress, and the War Department increased their efforts to get as many men back home as soon as possible. By March 1946, demobilization progressed enough that the protest at home and abroad ended.

Military Overseas Taxation

Update 02: Bavaria Tax Collectors Going After American Base Personnel

A U.S. military family in Bavaria is being targeted by German tax investigators, possibly signaling an expansion of a controversial tax collection operation to a state where tens of thousands of Americans are based. Earlier this month, Sandra Johnson, a German with a U.S. green card, opened her mail to find a letter from the Ansbach finance office demanding information about her husband, a Defense Department civilian. The questionnaire, which resembled those that have been sent to active-duty military and other DOD personnel based some 160 miles away near Ramstein Air Base, was the first known to have been issued to a military family in Bavaria.

Tax officials wanted to know how long the Johnsons had been in Germany, and they sought proof that the family intended to leave in the future. The tax office also told Johnson she needed to hand over her husband's U.S. tax records for inspection. She said the stress is unbelievable. "And you are basically left to deal with it by yourself," she added. Such questionnaires have been used to collect information and eventually open formal tax cases against American military members. The stakes for families locked in such disputes have been high: threats of imprisonment and property confiscation, years-long court fights and six-figure tax bills.

The U.S. government says the situation amounts to a violation of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, which is designed to put military income off limits to local tax collectors. But so far, the U.S. government has been powerless to stop it even though the matter has gotten the attention of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "While we do not comment on diplomatic exchanges, the embassy and the military commands continue to work closely in concert to address what we believe is a misinterpretation of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement," the U.S. Embassy in Berlin said Thursday in a statement. "The Department of Defense and Department of State remain engaged and are trying to reach a resolution of this long-standing issue."

German tax offices have argued that language in the SOFA treaty justifies their actions. If military members aren't in Germany "solely" for their jobs, they could be subjected to German tax for the same income on which they're already paying U.S. taxes, German authorities say. German tax collectors have built cases against Americans based on circumstances such as marriage to a German, tour extension, property purchases or enrollment of a child in a German school. To avoid German income tax, Americans with a SOFA visa must prove they plan to leave the country. Yet tax offices have continued to pursue military personnel even after they have left Germany.

The Ansbach finance office declined to answer when asked how many tax cases are pending against U.S. military members. “The tax office does not keep separate records of U.S. soldiers or members of the U.S. military who are stationed in the area under the NATO Forces Statute,” the Ansbach office said in a statement Friday. They added that “the taxation of U.S. soldiers and members of the U.S. military has always been in compliance with the regulations of the NATO troop statute.” While U.S. forces are based all over the world, Germany is the only foreign country in which U.S. forces are at risk of having their military paycheck taxed. German tax offices also have factored in housing allowances and on-base benefits like discounted gasoline, commissary shopping privileges and access to base gyms.

In the area around Ramstein Air Base, where most cases against Americans have centered so far, tax offices have imposed an annual flat penalty in the range of \$15,000 to \$20,000 based on benefits alone before looking at pay and housing allowance, according to private tax consultants, attorneys and affected military personnel. “I’ve read about other people who have been in this situation, and I looked at it as weird and frightening,” Johnson said. “I wonder how many more people it’s going to be. These are families’ lives that are being messed with.” Johnson said the Army legal office on post in Ansbach told her there was nothing it could do to help.

The U.S. military in Europe also has said it can’t get involved in individual tax cases, and Army legal officials have advised people to hire private attorneys. U.S. European Command and U.S. Army Europe and Africa, which oversees SOFA matters in Germany, have been unable to provide any protection for personnel. Thus far, the guidance by the Army’s legal office has been that military members should do their best to stay off the radar of tax authorities by not registering with a local town hall and not filing jointly if a German spouse needs to pay taxes.

Johnson, a German citizen who works as a contractor on base, said she caught the Ansbach tax office’s attention because she was required to file local taxes. Even though she filed singly rather than jointly, as allowed by German law, she was met with the demand to hand over her husband’s U.S. tax records. Johnson said she’s been forced to retain a lawyer to try to keep the German version of the IRS at bay. While the couple has been in Germany since 2018, they were in the U.S. for 10 years prior to their arrival, she said. And Johnson said they plan to return there in two years. “I don’t take anything from the Germans,” she said. “I want nothing from them.”

[Source: Stars and Stripes | John Vandiver| October 18, 2021 ++]

UFO Reporting

Update 01: Air Force Vets Return to Newly Attentive Washington

Three aging Air Force veterans came to Washington, D.C., on 19 OCT to again tell their strange and extraordinary stories. A fourth veteran was piped into the National Press Club conference by

video feed from the Ozark Mountains in Missouri. Each veteran's story is different, but all share one central claim: In the 1960s, UFOs tampered with nuclear weapons managed by the Air Force, both terrifying and mystifying the airmen who experienced the encounters. Some remained silent for decades, they say.

And none has captured the attention of Washington, even as reports of Navy encounters with unknown flying objects have splashed across national headlines and pushed UFOs back into the political mainstream for the first time in decades. "I waited 40 years before I opened my mouth, and that's a long time," said David Schindele, a retired captain who served as a nuclear missile launch control officer at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota. "I had this terrible secret on my mind for all that time, and I felt such great relief to finally admit to my friends and close relatives what I experienced in the Air Force."

Other accounts, such as the story told by veteran Robert Salas of a glowing red-orange craft hovering at the gate of a Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile silo in Montana, have been told for decades and folded into the growing universe of UFO lore. Salas was part of a similar press conference in the same downtown press club in 2010. Through the years, the government remained indifferent at best to decades-old reports of saucer craft toying with the world's most powerful weapons during the Cold War. The Air Force funded a university study commonly known as the Condon Report in the 1960s, which found no evidence to support the claims -- and recommended against further studies.

But it is a different Capitol for Salas and his fellow true-believer veterans in 2021. The UFOs they claim appeared in the 1960s have been eclipsed by the more recent accounts of Navy witnesses and fighter jet footage of what the Pentagon now calls unexplained aerial phenomenon, or UAP. Salas has spent years gathering other Air Force veterans who have signed witness affidavits describing their own alleged encounters decades ago. He claims the evidence shows UFOs appeared at various times and took 20 Minuteman ICBMs off-line at sites in the central U.S. over an eight-day period.

- "Never had we seen a situation like this," Schindele explained. Schindele said he and his commander visited a missile launch site near Minot in September 1966, and eight airmen there told him that 10 missiles at silos in the vicinity all went down with guidance and control malfunctions when an 80 to 100-foot wide flying object with bright flashing lights had hovered over the site.
- Salas, who was a first lieutenant stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana, in 1967, said he was on duty as a deputy missile combat crew commander deep in the underground nuclear missile control room. The site's flight security controller called from above ground and was panicked and shouting, Salas claims. "He said there was a large glowing, pulsating red oval-shaped object hovering over the front gate," according to Salas' affidavit. As he woke his commander, he claims alarms went off showing nearly all 10 missiles shown in the control room had been disabled.

- Robert Jacobs, who attended the UFO press conference via video link from Missouri, said he was a first lieutenant in the Air Force and stationed at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, in 1964 when he was asked to set up a telescope video camera to capture an Atlas rocket test. He claims the video showed a disc-shaped craft flew up to the dummy warhead as it traveled about 8,000 mph over the Pacific Ocean, circled it and shot it with several beams of light. "It went around the top of the warhead, fired a beam of light down on the top of the warhead," Jacobs said Tuesday. After circling, it "then flew out the frame the same way it had come in." Jacobs, who once shopped around the story and eventually sold it to the National Enquirer tabloid, said the film footage was cut and taken at the time by two men in gray suits, and his commander ordered him not to talk about it.

Meanwhile, the UAP cockpit footage from Navy encounters in the Pacific in 2004 and Atlantic in 2015 appear to back up eyewitness accounts from pilots who reported a craft that looked like a giant white "Tic Tac" flying without wings or propulsion systems, and a flying cube inside a clear sphere that passed between two fighter jets. The encounters by naval aviators, first revealed in 2017, were followed by official acknowledgment from the Navy. The disclosures caused alarm on Capitol Hill, where some lawmakers worried China or Russia had leapfrogged U.S. defense technology. Congress ordered a report in June on what was known about UAPs.

The initial assessment from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence was inconclusive, saying not enough data exists to determine the nature of UAPs but that they may present a national security risk. Salas called it a stunning admission. The veterans gathered at the press conference Tuesday pointed to the ODNI report as a potential breakthrough in their own unacknowledged accounts. "I have certainly never seen anything like this before," Salas said of the report. "This is real. It's not visionary, it's not swamp gas, and so where do we go from here?"

For the Pentagon, it means reorganizing to better collect and analyze UAP data. Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks ordered up a plan and potential overhaul of the UAP Task Force headed by Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro. The Pentagon has declined to provide any public updates on the process. The Navy deferred any questions for Del Toro this week and said only the Pentagon could speak on the issue. Whether Salas, Schindele, Jacobs and other Air Force veterans who had made similar claims will succeed in convincing others to take their assertions seriously remains a question mark.

"Have we been ignored? For God sakes, we've been shut up and silenced," Jacobs said. "We've been ridiculed; we've had our lives disrupted. This is more than just being ignored. We've been treated like imbeciles."

[Source: Military.com | Travis Tritten| October 19, 2021 ++]

Military Fraud & Abuse

Update 07: MLS Executive Pleads Not Guilty to Bribery Charges

A defense contractor accused of slipping envelopes stuffed with more than \$30,000 in cash to a U.S. Navy official appeared Monday in federal court in Washington and pleaded not guilty to a charge of bribery. **Frank Rafaraci**, 69, the chief executive of Multinational Logistics Services (MLS), a major U.S. Navy contractor, was arrested 27 SEP on the Mediterranean island of Malta in an operation jointly planned by U.S. and Maltese authorities. He voluntarily returned to the United States on 18 OCT to face the charge against him and was released on \$5 million bond.

Until recently, MLS played a key role in U.S. Navy operations worldwide, having been awarded about \$1.3 billion in contracts to service U.S. warships in foreign ports since 2010. The Navy stopped doing business with MLS after Rafaraci's arrest last month. In an affidavit filed as part of a warrant for Rafaraci's arrest, a federal agent for the Defense Criminal Investigative Service accused MLS of defrauding the Navy of at least \$50 million by inflating invoices for port services between 2011 and 2018. The allegations against Rafaraci and MLS resemble the "Fat Leonard" scandal that has rocked the Navy since 2013. In that case, a rotund Malaysian defense contractor, Leonard Glenn Francis, pleaded guilty to bribing scores of Navy officials with cash, prostitutes and extravagant meals so he could overcharge the Navy for port services in Asia.

According to court records and interviews, federal authorities have been scrutinizing MLS for the past five years. One of the lead investigators is also a senior agent in the Fat Leonard case. The Navy relies on private contractors to resupply and refuel its vessels in ports around the globe. Much of the investigation into MLS remains under wraps. According to court papers, an unnamed U.S. Navy official pleaded guilty in June to taking bribes from Rafaraci. But the official's identity and his criminal case file remain under seal because he is cooperating with the government. Court papers allege that Rafaraci met with the unidentified Navy official at the Diplomat Hotel in the Persian Gulf kingdom of Bahrain in August 2015, handed over an envelope stuffed with \$20,000 in cash and told the official to "keep up the good work." The official worked as a liaison officer for the U.S. 5th Fleet, which is headquartered in Bahrain.

In 2018, Rafaraci met the same Navy official at a Miami hotel and passed him another envelope that contained \$13,500, court records show. Rafaraci, a dual U.S.-Italian citizen, voluntarily arrived in the United States for his court appearance after the Justice Department's efforts to extradite him from Malta hit a wall. U.S. officials had sought to keep him in custody after his 27 SEP arrest, arguing that he was a flight risk. But judges in Malta released him and ruled that U.S. and Maltese law enforcement authorities had not followed proper legal procedures.

Michael R. Sherwin, an attorney for Rafaraci, said the executive was arrested in Malta "as a result of a lure operation." Although Rafaraci could have continued to contest the U.S. extradition request, Sherwin said, his client has been cooperative. "He told me he wanted to face and interface with the Department of Justice to answer all these questions," Sherwin said Monday in federal court. "He wanted to talk to the United States and resolve this matter."

U.S. Magistrate Judge G. Michael Harvey approved Rafaraci's release 18 OCT on \$5 million bond on the condition that he surrender his passports, not leave Washington, stay away from the Italian Embassy and submit to electronic monitoring. Federal authorities had originally charged Rafaraci with conspiracy to commit bribery, wire fraud and money laundering, as well as one count of bribery. But the indictment unsealed Monday charged him only with bribery. During Rafaraci's hearing, U.S. prosecutor Justin D. Weitz said the decision to drop three of the charges reflected "some things that have happened over the last few weeks" but did not elaborate. [Source: The Washington Post | Craig Whitlock & Spencer S. Hsu | October 18, 2021 ++]

Military Fraud & Abuse

Update 08: Marine Officer Critical of Senior Leaders



Marine officer Stuart Scheller was relieved of duty for calling out brass over Afghanistan.

When Lt. Col. Stuart Scheller walked into a Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, courtroom 15 OCT, he looked relaxed and was smiling. The infantry Marine had been fired from his job, and later charged with six violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, for a series of viral social media posts that criticized senior leaders over their handling of the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. "I feel good," Scheller said as he walked in to learn his sentence. He came back outside to add, "we'll see what they do."

Less than an hour later, he walked out without a word after Col. Glen Hines, the Marine Corps judge who decided his sentence, rejected the prosecution's requested punishment and sharply criticized the Corps' handling of the case. Hines said Scheller's videos in their full context showed a man who appeared "to be in pain," "confused" and "significantly frustrated," rather than a rogue and potentially-violent Marine, that his lawyers argued was depicted in the charge sheets. The judge described alleged leaks to the press and the command's pretrial confinement order as raising

the “specter of unlawful command influence.” It was not officially argued or determined in court, however, whether senior Marine Corps leaders were responsible for the media obtaining these documents.

The previous day, Scheller had pleaded guilty to all charges against him as part of a plea agreement with the Corps, concluding a saga that began when he took to social media 26 AUG to demand accountability from senior leaders for their perceived failures in Afghanistan. He continued to make social media posts and videos against the wishes — and later orders — of his chain of command, ultimately finding himself locked in the brig. Scheller was convicted of violating:

- Article 88 (contempt toward officials),
- Article 89 (disrespect toward superior commissioned officers),
- Article 90 (willfully disobeying a superior commissioned officer),
- Article 92 (dereliction in the performance of duties),
- Article 92 (failure to obey an order or regulation) and
- 27 specifications of Article 133 (conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman).

Hines directed a forfeiture of \$5,000 pay for one month, noting the mitigating circumstances. He would have taken two months of pay, but the judge awarded Scheller credit for his nine days in the brig. The forfeiture of the pay was the only aspect the judge had power over, due to the pretrial agreement. Prosecutors had requested that Scheller forfeit \$5,000 of pay a month for six months, in addition to a letter of reprimand. Scheller will also resign his commission under the agreement and receive an honorable discharge or general under honorable conditions as part of the agreement, so long as Navy Secretary Carlos del Toro signs off on the character of the discharge, prosecutors said.

Tim Parlatore, Scheller’s attorney, said that the judge’s decision sends a message to senior leaders. “When senior leaders [or] certain people decide to take certain actions like leaking medical records, like putting somebody in pretrial confinement [when there is] no risk of flight, there should be consequences,” he said. The Marine Corps confirmed the letter of reprimand and forfeiture of pay. Training and Education Command Spokesman Capt. Sam Stephenson declined to comment on the outcome of the case.

The money is unlikely to be an issue for Scheller despite him losing his retirement benefits through the resignation. He has raised more than \$2.5 million through controversial former Navy SEAL Eddie Gallagher’s Pipe Hitter Foundation. That money, according to the foundation’s website, is to be used not only for his legal defense, but also emergency relief funds, relocation expenses and transition out of the military, possible loss of military benefits and retirement, and family support for his wife and three children.

The judge, who said he had not seen Scheller’s viral videos before the trial, did not completely absolve the Marine of culpability for his actions, though. Hines singled out Scheller’s violation of Article 88 for contempt of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in his 26 AUG video. Article 88 —

which criminalizes “contemptuous words” against certain civilian leaders — is extremely “serious” and “corrosive,” Hines said, and can “degrade public trust” in the military and its civilian authorities.

Scheller’s historic conviction appears to be only the second known court-martial for Article 88 since the Uniform Code of Military Justice was adopted in 1950, based on a review of legal literature by Marine Corps Times. Most officers who toed the line of Article 88 receive corrective action other than punitive. During the Vietnam War, an Army lieutenant was convicted of violating Article 88 after carrying a sign calling then-President Lyndon B. Johnson a fascist.

The Marine also deserves blame for the saga playing out in the public sphere, resulting in a media circus that doesn’t occur for “99 percent” of other courts-martial, the judge said. But the Corps’ proposed punishment for Scheller’s transgressions, for which everyone in the courtroom agreed he should be held accountable, paled in comparison to the mitigating factors, Hines explained. In a trial where post-sentencing time in the brig was not even an option, the command’s decision to lock Scheller up while awaiting trial was “a very rare thing,” Hines said. He also revealed that the Marine signed his plea agreement while in the brig. Hines blasted apparent leaks of documents that included Scheller’s medical records, as attorney Parlatore claimed at trial, as “very disturbing,” “unfair” and “illegal.”

Scheller didn’t comment as he left the courtroom, but Parlatore was pleased, as were his co-counsel, Brian Ferguson and Jeremiah Sullivan. “I think that the judge’s decision was very fair — he definitely considered all of the facts,” Parlatore told gathered reporters after Hines pronounced the sentence. “I think that this is a good adjustment [to the prosecution’s recommended sentence], and so we’re very pleased with the result here.” [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Davis Winkie| October 15, 2021 ++]

Military Family Hunger

Update 07: Lawmakers Concerned By Reports of Thousands



The Senate Appropriations Committee, in a report this week accompanying its new Defense spending bill, expressed concern over reports of thousands of military families suffering from

hunger. “Studies have found that one in eight military families were food insecure prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and this number has now grown to one in five,” the report said. In June, the House Appropriations Committee’s comparable report had called the development “alarming.” And both appropriations reports demanded more data from the Pentagon on the problem’s extent.

Neither committee’s finding has drawn public attention. But their statements form the latest sign of quietly growing congressional worries that, in the world’s richest country, with an annual defense budget of about three quarters of a trillion dollars, the lowest-ranking American military personnel, especially if they have multiple dependents, often do not earn enough to adequately eat. While Congress might benefit from more data of the kind sought by appropriators, anti-hunger

“While there is nothing wrong with gathering data per se, we don’t need to — and cannot — wait any longer for concrete policy solutions,” said Josh Protas, vice president of public policy at MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. “Even before the pandemic, which hit military families’ hard and increased unemployment among military spouses, food pantries operated on or near every military installation in the United States. We need not wait for another report to know that military families around the country are struggling and that a military family basic needs allowance would help them put food on the table.”

‘Basic needs allowance’

Protas was referring to provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act bills in both chambers. Both bills would give some troops a “basic needs allowance” to ensure no servicemember’s income falls below 130 percent of the poverty line. Critics say the Senate’s version is not generous enough. The Senate bill would cost around \$1 million a year, giving about 500 families an average of \$200 a month, while the House bill would help 3,000 families with \$400 a month on average, costing just over \$14 million per year, according to Congressional Budget Office figures.

For context, the president’s fiscal 2022 request for defense spending is \$753 billion, and Congress may provide more than that. The Biden administration has indicated it is uncertain whether to support the House or Senate versions. Two dozen military family groups wrote the president last week urging him to back the House bill. Meanwhile, a measure by Reps. Sanford D. Bishop Jr. (D-GA) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-NB) would create a special new nutrition assistance program for military families.

Calls for more data

The House Appropriations Committee report, published in late June with the fiscal 2022 defense bill, said the problem of hunger in the military is growing and that reservists are particularly affected. “While servicemembers and their families may have access to government food assistance, their ability to qualify can vary by program and location, forcing servicemembers to seek charitable food assistance or limit the ability to eat healthy or nutritious food,” House appropriators wrote. “The coronavirus pandemic and its economic repercussions have only magnified the problem of food insecurity experienced by military families.”

U.S. Census Bureau data indicate hunger among guardsmen and reservists is more than double the national rate, the House report said. “For National Guard and reserve personnel, the past year of near constant deployments to respond to the pandemic, civil unrest, and natural disasters has exacerbated the problem of food insecurity,” the House appropriators wrote. This week’s Senate Appropriations Committee report, meanwhile, asked the Pentagon to provide two assessments on the issue.

- One must describe how a future crisis, such as another pandemic, could exacerbate the problem and what the Defense Department might do to ameliorate it.
- The other is a report on the prevalence of food insecurity in the military, including data on servicemembers’ use of federal nutrition programs, steps the Pentagon is taking to improve the situation and the effects on military recruitment and readiness.

However, two years ago — in the fiscal 2020 NDAA — Congress already required the Pentagon to report on the extent of food insecurity in the ranks, including how many servicemembers or their dependents are receiving nutrition aid, eating reduced price school meals or using food banks. The report was due in May 2020 but has yet to arrive, aides have said. The House Appropriations Committee report requested that the NDAA-required assessment be provided not just to the Armed Services Committee but also to appropriators.

Five years ago, the Government Accountability Office recommended that the Pentagon start collecting more and better data on the problem. Defense Department officials later told GAO that Pentagon figures showed only a “very low percentage” of troops were having trouble feeding their families. Senate appropriators, in their new report, seemed to take issue with that conclusion. The Senate report said lawmakers are concerned by the Pentagon’s “lack of data” on the problem and “the apparent disparity between Department of Defense data, as characterized by senior leaders, and the findings of assistance organizations and polling experts.”

‘Food insecurity’

A six-question survey written by the Department of Agriculture is the standard way of reckoning whether someone has adequate access to nutrition. The survey questions how often in the last year a person has not eaten enough, not eaten a balanced meal or gone hungry for lack of money. If a respondent answers enough questions in the affirmative, the person is deemed to be suffering from food insecurity or, at the extreme end of the scale, hunger.

The statistic indicating that one in five military families is food insecure today comes from a 2021 survey by the Military Family Advisory Network. In that study — and in a 2019 survey by the same group that had put the number at one in eight families — respondents were drawn from the entire military community. Nearly half those questioned were not currently serving but were veterans, retirees or spouses. Regardless, in the 2019 survey, researchers broke out just the answers provided by active-duty personnel and found that 15 percent of them were food insecure — and the majority of that group also qualified as hungry. And, by all accounts, the pandemic has made the problem worse in the two years since then.

If accurate, that suggests that food insecurity is a massive problem in the U.S. military. Nearly 1.4 million people serve in the active-duty military services. Fifteen percent of that total would be over 200,000 people. Even if that figure were to be seen as overstated by a factor of 10, then some 20,000 servicemembers, not to mention dependents, have trouble putting food on the table — as compared to the 500 families aided by the Senate bill and 3,000 by the House bill, according to CBO’s reckoning.

Shelley Kimball, director of research at the Military Family Advisory Network, said the survey is not the only source of information about the problem. “We host food distribution events throughout the year for military families, and we have wait lists from families who want to participate,” Kimball said. “We see the need with our own eyes.” Protas of the MAZON group says the call for more studies should not substitute for action. “How many hungry military families are acceptable?” he asked.

[Source: Stars & Stripes | John M. Donnelly | October 22, 2021 ++]

Russian Drones

Sarna & Seadrone

Under-Ice Aquatic Drone

Russia is working on a UAV able to operate under ice for up to three months. Called the Sarna, the first prototype is expected to be out this year with a target serial production date for 2024. Deputy head of physical and technical research direction of the Advanced Research Fund Viktor Litvinenko pointed out the unparalleled technology of the Sarna: “Today we do not know any analogues with the ability to work for about three months without surfacing.” The Sarna will be able to dive up to 1 km (0.62 miles) and cover a distance of 8,000 kilometers (4,971 miles). According to Interfax, a prototype of the Sarna drone under development will be ready this year, while serial production will begin in 2024.



Water Take-off Rescue Drone

Russian engineers from the company ‘Shooting From The Air’ have developed a rescue unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) able to take off from water, TASS reported. Called the Seadrone, the UAV is able to withstand extreme weather conditions and even traverse the Arctic. The idea behind the Seadrone project was to address some of the most prevalent problems in drone use, such as the inability to land or take off in water as well as the ability to withstand harsh weather conditions. The Seadrone can also operate from -22°F to 131°F without freezing or overheating. The Seadrone’s maiden flight was conducted in the Kara Sea, where the drone was tested in a mock rescue situation on a simulated drowning victim. Test results showed that “in conditions of salt fog, strong wind and sub-zero temperatures a Seadrone automatically detected a man and returned to the deck of the vessel.”



[Source: www.thedefensepost.com | Hercules Reyes | September 30, 2021 ++]

Navy Terminology, Jargon & Slang

‘Wilco’ thru ‘XBT’

Every profession has its own jargon and the Navy is no exception. Since days of yore the military in general, and sailors in particular, have often had a rather pithy (dare say ‘tasteless’?) manner of speech. That may be changing somewhat in these politically correct times, but to Bowdlerize the sailor’s language represented here would be to deny its rich history. The traditions and origins remain. While it attempted to present things with a bit of humor, if you are easily offended this may not be for you. You have been warned.

Note: ‘RN’ denotes Royal Navy usage. Similarly, RCN = Royal Canadian Navy, RAN = Royal Australian Navy, RM = Royal Marines, RNZN = Royal New Zealand Navy, UK = general usage in militaries of the former British Empire

WILCO - WILl COmply. May only be used by unit commanders (ship COs, aircraft commanders, etc.).

Willy Pete – Ordnance which contains White Phosphorus. From the old phonetic alphabet, ‘William Peter.’

Winchester – Radio proword for "out of ammunition," whether completely, or for a particular ammunition type, e.g. "Cowboy two-six is Winchester twenty mike-mike (20mm gun ammo)."

Wind Tunnel - Typically, an area of a ship where the ship’s movement and natural winds combine with ship's architecture to cause significant air movement. Commonly used on old '27-Charlie' aircraft carriers, but also applied to more modern vessels.

Winger - (RCN) Mate, buddy, or pal.

Wings - The insignia of an aviator. Represented as wings flanking a shield surmounting an anchor, or in the case of NFO's, two crossed anchors. "Getting (one's) wings" – achieving the status of a qualified aviator.

Wire - (1) Nautical term for what a civilian would call a cable or wire rope. (2) Cross-deck pendants of the arresting gear aboard a carrier. Numbered from aft forward, 1 to 4. In older, straight-deck carriers (ca. WWII and Korean War), there could be as many as 20 or more wires.

Wire Rope – Wire strands wound around a core of rope. Not as strong as cable, but more flexible.

Wog – (1) short form of POLLYWOG (q.v.). (2) (UK) Term of derision for non-white native personnel.

Woop – USNA slang for West Point cadets. Rhymes with "poop."

WOXOF - Pronounced "walks-off". FAA/Aviation weather report terminology for 'visibility zero, ceiling zero, sky obscured by fog'. See CLOBBERED.

Wrap - (RM) Give up. "He's just wrapped his tits."

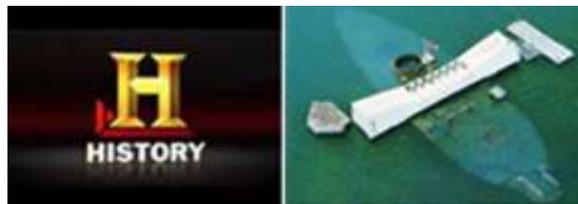
WTD - WaterTight Door.

WTF - "What/who/where the fuck?" Sometimes spoken as "What the fuck, over?" (WTFO), or spoken phonetically, "Whiskey Tango Foxtrot."

XBT – eXpendable BathyThermograph. A device for measuring water temperature profiles, and thereby predicting sound velocity differences and sonar performance.

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

*** Military History ***



WWI ACE Rickenbacker's WWII Ditching

21 Days Lost at Sea

One of the most intriguing stories to emerge during World War II occurred just shy of a year after the Pearl Harbor attack and involved an American icon. The incident captured the attention of the free world and has been described as the first American epic of the war. Captain Edward Vernon Rickenbacker had gained fame as a daring racecar driver before becoming the United States' top-scoring fighter ace of World War I and a Medal of Honor recipient. After the war he delved first into the automobile industry and then wound his way back to aviation, eventually becoming

president of Eastern Air Lines. Rickenbacker was a strong voice for aviation, on several occasions testifying before congressional committees about actions he felt would be detrimental to both military and civilian aviation.

In late 1942 Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Army Air Forces chief of staff General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold asked the 52-year-old airline executive to travel to the Pacific theater as a \$1-a-day nonmilitary observer. His mission was to evaluate and report on the status of U.S. Army Air Forces combat units stationed there. His itinerary included visits to Australia, New Guinea and Guadalcanal. Rickenbacker was accompanied on the mission by his aide, Colonel Hans Adamson. On October 20, 1942, they climbed aboard a well-worn Boeing B-17 in Hawaii that had been converted into a transport plane.

The B-17 was crewed by Captain William Cherry Jr. of Abilene, Texas, pilot; Lieutenant James Whittaker of Burlingame, Calif., co-pilot; Lieutenant John De Angelis of Nesquehoning, Pa., navigator; Private John Bartek of Freehold, N.J., engineer; and Sergeant James Reynolds of Fort Jones, Calif., radio operator. Also along was Staff Sgt. Alexander Kaczmarczyk from Torrington, Conn., an enlisted airman who was returning to his outfit in Australia after recovering from a lengthy illness. The plane was also loaded with a large number of bags of high-priority mail and secret documents.

Thanks to a broken hydraulic line, the takeoff on the 20th had to be aborted. All onboard plus luggage, mail bags and navigation equipment were transferred to another B-17. They finally took off at 1:30 a.m. on October 21, bound for island 'X' (so designated for security reasons; actually Canton Island), about 1,800 miles to the southwest. But they would never reach that destination. Their plane with its 7 occupants would ditch in the Pacific Ocean. To read how they survived afloat in 3 rafts for 21 days refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Rickenbacker Lost At Sea**" [Source: History Net | Billy A. Rea | October 2021 ++]

WWII Battle of Moscow

2 October 1941 – 7 January 1942

Operation Barbarossa, the German Russian invasion plan, called for the capture of Moscow within four months. On 22 June 1941 Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union surprising the Red Army. They destroyed most of the Soviet Air Force on the ground, and advanced deep into Soviet territory using blitzkrieg tactics. They destroyed entire Soviet armies trapping large Soviet formations in "cauldrons", subduing these pockets and taking hundreds of thousands of prisoners. The German Army Group North moved towards Leningrad, Army Group South took control of Ukraine, and Army Group Centre advanced towards Moscow.



Soviet anti-aircraft gunners on the roof of the Moskva Hotel

By July 1941, Army Group Centre crossed the Dnieper River, on the path to Moscow. On 15 JUL they captured Smolensk, an important stronghold on the road to Moscow. At this stage, although Moscow was vulnerable, an offensive against the city would have exposed the German flanks. In part to address these risks, and to attempt to secure Ukraine's food and mineral resources, Hitler ordered the attack to turn north and south and eliminate Soviet forces at Leningrad and Kiev. This delayed the German advance on Moscow. When that advance resumed on 30 SEP, German forces had been weakened, while the Soviets had raised new forces for the defense of the city. By October, it seemed realistic (on paper) that Germany would be able to take Moscow by year's end, but the Germans were ill-equipped for fighting in winter, and the German offensive ground to a halt before Moscow.

Although the Wehrmacht's offensive had been stopped, German intelligence estimated that Soviet forces had no more reserves left and thus would be unable to stage a counteroffensive. This estimate proved wrong, as Stalin transferred over 18 divisions, 1,700 tanks, and over 1,500 aircraft from Siberia and the Far East. The Red Army had accumulated a 58-division reserve by early December when the offensive proposed by Marshal of the Soviet Union General Georgy Zhukov and Deputy Minister of Defense Marshal Aleksandr Vasilevsky was finally approved by Stalin. Even with these new reserves, Soviet forces committed to the operation numbered only 1,100,000 men, only slightly outnumbering the Wehrmacht. Nevertheless, with careful troop deployment, a ratio of two-to-one was reached at some critical points.

On 5 DEC, Zhukov launched his planned counteroffensive against the freezing German troops with massed artillery leading the counterblow. Adolf Hitler ordered the German Fourth Army, which was exposed to Soviet attacks, to hold its ground. General Heinz Guderian's battered panzer group was pushed back from Tula and across the Oka River. Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's Fourth Panzer Group was also in danger of being outflanked as the Soviets pushed forwards. Klin was liberated on 15 DEC, the German encirclement of Tula was lifted, and the German front had been pushed west by 200 miles.

The Germans adopted "hedgehog" tactics, in which they would retreat from one fortified defensive position to another, slowing their retreat and allowing for them to assemble reserves as

reinforcements. The Germans inflicted heavy losses on the Soviets and denied the Russians road and rail junctions that were necessary for the advance. However, the Germans depended on the Luftwaffe for supplies, so their supply lines were overstretched. In the interim the United States was sending supplies to the USSR. On 17 DEC, Hitler fired army commander-in-chief Walther von Brauchitsch for allowing unauthorized withdrawals to occur and himself took command. However, he was unable to halt the Soviet advance, and the sent By 7 January 1942, the Germans had been sent reeling back from Moscow, and the Soviets prepared for a series of counterattacks.

Russian casualties totaled 1,029,234 during both the Moscow defense and offense phases of the battle. For Germany it was estimated at 581,000 killed, missing, wounded and captured. Both German and Soviet casualties during the battle of Moscow have been a subject of debate, as various sources provide somewhat different estimates. Not all historians agree on what should be considered the "Battle of Moscow" in the timeline of World War II. While the start of the battle is usually regarded as the beginning of Operation Typhoon on 30 September 1941 (or sometimes on 2 October 1941), there are two different dates for the end of the offensive. In particular, some sources exclude the Rzhev offensive from the scope of the battle, considering it as a distinct operation and making the Moscow offensive "stop" on 7 January 1942—thus lowering the number of casualties.

On the Russian side, discipline became ferocious. The NKVD blocking groups were ready to shoot anyone retreating without orders. NKVD squads went to field hospitals in search of soldiers with self-inflicted injuries, the so-called 'self-shooters' - Those who shot themselves in the left hand to escape fighting. A surgeon in a field hospital of the Red Army admitted to amputating the hands of boys who tried this 'self-shooting' idea to escape fighting to prevent them from getting shot immediately by punishment squads. In the first three months, blocking detachments shot 1,000 penal troops and sent 24,993 to penal battalions. By October 1942, the idea of regular blocking detachments was quietly dropped; by October 1944, the units were officially disbanded. [Source: https://historica.fandom.com/wiki/Battle_of_Moscow | October 2021 ++]

Profiles in Courage

John Paul Jones



In 1905, Gen. Horace Porter, the U.S. Ambassador to France, was on a quest. This mission required an old map of Paris, the help of an anthropologist, thorough research of the history of France's capital city, and most importantly, sounding probes. Porter was led through the city until he reached what was once St. Louis Cemetery. Using the sounding probes, he and his team looked underground for lead coffins. They found five and, once unearthed, they opened three of them. The third contained what Porter was searching for: the remains of Revolutionary War hero John Paul Jones.

Jones began his career in Scotland, where he learned the ways of merchant ships and slowly worked his way up in the ranks. He assumed his first command in 1786 after the captain and first mate of his brig died of Yellow Fever. In his time as a Captain, he fought off two mutinies, killing one of the mutineers with a sword and fleeing to Virginia to avoid a trial in an Admiral's Court. He immediately fell in love with his new home, and the soon-to-be United States was better off for it. Not much is known about the first few years he spent in the colonies, but what is known is that he volunteered for service in the nascent Continental Navy in 1775. He was the first to raise the U.S. flag, the Grand Union Flag, over a U.S. Navy ship.

Jones assumed command of a sloop, USS Providence, while the first 13 home-built ships of the U.S. Navy were under construction. Aboard the Providence, he ferried troops and supplies around the colonies and captured 16 enemy ships. In 1777, he assumed command of the newly-constructed USS Ranger. The Ranger set sail for France with the vague orders of assisting American interests wherever possible. He remained in France until 1778 when the French joined the War of Independence on the American side. As the Ranger departed France, the flagship of French Captain Count Toussaint-Guillaume Picquet de la Motte fired the first official salute to an American vessel.

But John Paul Jones wasn't heading back to fight the British in North America. He was about to take the fight to British waters - and he was going to strike a blow for American independence on Britain's home soil. Jones and the Ranger raided English shipping in the Irish Sea for months before he and his crew decided to hit Great Britain at home. Just after midnight on April 23, 1778, two boats carrying Jones and 15 men landed on the shores of Whitehaven, England. The attackers were going to set the town, and the merchant fleet docked there ablaze.

The Americans spiked the guns that made up the town's defenses and set about lighting the fires, but their lanterns had run out of fuel, making the fires hard to ignite. The men went to a local pub to acquire more but stayed for a drink, which delayed the attack. By the time they actually began lighting the fires, the townspeople were alerted to the Americans' presence, and they were forced to retreat. Once again aboard the Ranger, Jones and his crew set out to capture the Royal Navy sloop HMS Drake, which had taken British sailors aboard - sailors meant to be used to capture the Ranger. Jones made haste toward the Drake and captured it after an hour-long battle. The capture of the Drake was one of the Navy's most important victories at sea during the Revolutionary War, but John Paul Jones was yet to have his most important moment.

Jones was given command of the USS Bonhomme Richard, as well as a squadron of five ships. He led the Americans into the Irish Sea as Royal Navy ships pursued them. The squadron was sailing into the North Sea as they encountered a British merchant fleet off the coast of Flamborough Head. There, two armed escorts, the HMS Serapis and an armed hired ship, the Countess of Scarborough, met Jones and his ships. The Merchant fleet escaped, but the Bonhomme Richard met Serapis at Flamborough Head. Jones locked the two ships together, and his Marines cleared the enemy deck while shooting from the topsails.

As two other ships from Jones' squadron engaged and subdued the Countess of Scarborough, the crew of the Bonhomme Richard engaged the crew of Serapis. One of Jones' ships, the USS Alliance, fired two broadsides into the melee, damaging both ships. The Bonhomme Richard was on fire, and the Serapis could not free itself from the Americans. Unable to withdraw and unable to fire at either ship, the captain of the Serapis realized he had been beaten and struck his colors, surrendering to the determined Jones and his crew. The Bonhomme Richard was allowed to sink, and Jones took command of the Serapis. He received a gold medal from the Continental Congress and the title of Chevalier from King Louis XVI in France.

Jones fell out of favor with Congress by the end of the war and was in need of employment. So he took command of ships in the Russian Navy during its 1787 war against the Ottoman Empire. In 1792, Jones was appointed U.S. Consul to Algiers, but before he could take the position, he was found dead at home in Paris. He was just 45 years old. His body was interred in a royal plot at Paris' St. Louis Cemetery, but after the French Revolution, the royal plot was forgotten and the cemetery lost to history.

When Gen. Horace Porter began looking for the famous patriot in 1905, all he knew was that Jones' body had been preserved in alcohol and buried in a lead coffin in the cemetery. After finding his remains, Jones was repatriated to the United States aboard the USS Brooklyn, an armored cruiser. Jones was reinterred at the United States Naval Academy presided over by then-President Theodore Roosevelt. Today, the body of America's first naval hero lies in a marble and bronze sarcophagus and the academy's chapel. [Source: TWS Dispatches Newsletter | October 2021 ++]

Battle of Saint-Mihiel

First Large-Scale Attack of WWI Led By the United States.

The United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917, when it declared war on Germany. The declaration came after a series of provocative acts from the German military and diplomatic corps. U.S. troops arrived in Europe by June 1917 but were largely ill-prepared for the kind of fighting taking place on the western front. For months, American soldiers were used to augment French and British forces in Europe. As training improved and the number of veteran U.S. troops

increased, Americans reasserted control of their forces. By September 1918, Gen. John J. Pershing had taken command of the American First Army and would lead them into combat at Saint-Mihiel.



Gen. John J. Pershing

Pershing was leading the largest American offensive operation ever assembled for combat in the first time American troops were deployed to defend a foreign country. The Germans had captured Saint-Mihiel early on in the war, and its position cut a hole in the French Army's line of communications and railways between Nancy and Verdun. Pershing believed that attacking the Saint-Mihiel salient would not only restore those lines, but it would also be devastating to the German Army and its plans. Moreover, he believed that he could use the town of Metz to push into Germany.

The American Expeditionary Force at Saint-Mihiel comprised 14 divisions of more than 550,000 men, hundreds of tanks, and aircraft with thousands of artillery guns. They were also backed up by four French Divisions of 110,000. It would be the first large-scale attack of World War I, led by the United States. Facing them were 500,000 entrenched German soldiers. Worst of all, the weather was not favorable to the Americans. Driving winds and heavy rains turned the roads to mud and forced U.S. soldiers to walk in deep mud themselves. Even American tanks had trouble getting to the lines. The German lines were a defense in depth with rows of trenches, barbed wire, tank obstacles, and more, all peppered with machine-gun nests.

Americans did have one thing in their favor: raw talent. The AEF was a virtual who's who of American military history. On top of being led by Gen. Pershing, the U.S. First Army featured young officers Douglas MacArthur, Billy Mitchell, Hunter Liggett, George Marshall, and two tank battalions led by then-Lt. Col. George S. Patton. Saint-Mihiel also featured the largest allied air effort of World War I. 1,481 aircraft performed aerial reconnaissance, close-air support, and night bombing missions, along with pursuit fighters from four allied nations.

When the attack was launched on September 12, 1918, it came in a three-pronged attack all along the 25-mile salient. The U.S. force was so large, it moved in corps, and only three divisions were held in reserve. In the middle of the line were French colonial troops intended to keep the Germans busy as three corps of American troops enveloped the salient along its flanks. Then, remaining troops would drive on to capture Metz. The Americans caught the German Army in

the process of a retreat, so its defenses were less organized than expected, and its artillery was out of place. The American I Corps, which attacked the right flank of the salient, reached its first objective by noon the same day. It reached its second objective the next day. By September 13, all the plan's objectives had been captured.

The pincers movement to the sides of the salient linked up by the next day, IV and V Corps linked up at the French village of Vigneulles. By September 15, the French colonial forces marched into Saint-Mihiel and captured 4,000 German defenders. The American victory at Saint-Mihiel didn't just come because the Germans were disorganized at the start of the battle. Gen. Pershing meticulously planned every aspect of the assault and empowered his battlefield commanders to take bold action. Leaders like Patton and MacArthur led their troops from the front lines and took direct control of their movements.

The Americans had done what the allies were unable to do for the previous four years, dislodging the Germans from Saint-Mihiel and relinking the supply lines between Nancy and Verdun. Although they were not able to advance on Metz due to supply problems caused by weather, American forces proved themselves in battle with their European allies – and enemies.

It didn't come without cost, either. Some 4,500 soldiers were killed in the fighting at the Saint-Mihiel salient, with another 2,500 wounded. It was a harbinger of the fight to come. After the fight for Saint-Mihiel, American troops, now seasoned veterans, were moved all along the front in preparation for an assault that would become known as the Meuse-Argonne Offensive – the deadliest battle in American military history. [Source: TWS Dispatches Newsletter | October 2021 ++]

Whiskey on the Rocks

Cold War Russia-Sweden Sub Incident



S-363 grounded

In October 1981, the Soviet submarine S-363 accidentally hit an underwater rock about 6.2 mi from the main Swedish naval base at Karlskrona, surfacing within Swedish waters. The boat's presence coincided with a Swedish naval exercise, testing new equipment, in the area. Swedish

naval forces reacted to the breach of sovereignty by sending an unarmed naval officer aboard the boat to meet the captain and demand an explanation.

The sub's captain initially claimed that simultaneous failures of navigational equipment had caused the boat to get lost (despite the fact that the boat had already somehow navigated through a treacherous series of rocks, straits, and islands to get so close to the naval base). The Soviet Navy would later issue a conflicting statement claiming that the boat had been forced into Swedish waters due to severe distress, although the boat had never sent a distress signal, and instead attempted to escape.

The Swedes were determined to continue investigating the circumstances of the situation. The Soviet captain, after a guarantee of his immunity, was taken off the boat and interrogated in the presence of Soviet representatives. Additionally, Swedish naval officers examined the logbooks and instruments of the submarine. The Swedish National Defence Research Institute also secretly measured for radioactive materials from outside the hull, using gamma ray spectroscopy from a specially configured Coast Guard boat. They detected something that was almost certainly uranium-238 inside the submarine, localized to the port torpedo tube.

Uranium-238 was routinely used as cladding in nuclear weapons and the Swedes suspected that the submarine was in fact nuclear armed. The yield of the probable weapon was estimated to be the same as the bomb dropped over Nagasaki in 1945. Although the presence of nuclear weapons on board S-363 was never officially confirmed by the Soviet authorities, the vessel's political officer, Vasily Besedin, later confirmed that there were nuclear warheads on some of the torpedoes, and that the crew was ordered to destroy the boat, including these warheads, if Swedish forces tried to take control of the vessel.

As the Soviet captain was being interrogated, the weather turned bad and the Soviet submarine sent a distress call. In Swedish radar control centers, the storm interfered with the radar image. Soviet jamming could also have been a factor. As the Soviet submarine sent its distress call, two ships coming from the direction of the nearby Soviet armada were detected passing the 12-nautical-mile limit headed for Karlskrona. This produced the most dangerous period of the crisis and is the time where the Swedish Prime Minister Thorbjörn Fälldin gave his order to "Hold the border" to the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, General Lennart Ljung.

The coastal batteries, now fully manned as well as the mobile coastal artillery guns and mine stations, went to "Action Stations". The Swedish Air Force scrambled strike aircraft armed with modern anti-ship missiles and reconnaissance aircraft knowing that the weather would not allow rescue helicopters to fly in the event of an engagement. After a tense 20 minutes, General Ljung called Prime Minister Fälldin again and informed him that it was not Soviet surface ships but two German merchant ships. The submarine was stuck on the rock for nearly 10 days. On 5 NOV it was hauled off the rocks by Swedish tugs and escorted to international waters where it was handed over to the Soviet fleet.

At the time, the incident was generally seen as a proof of widespread Soviet infiltration of the Swedish coastline, and U.S. commentators encouraged Sweden to deploy incident weapons to deter future infiltration. On the basis of an investigation carried out after the incident, the Swedish government concluded that the submarine had entered Swedish waters knowingly, in order to conduct illegal activities. In an interview in 2006, Vasily Besedin, the political officer on board, gave a different picture. The vessel had dual navigation systems, a well-trained crew and the captain Pyotr Gushchin was amongst the best. On board was staff officer Joseph Avrukevich who was trained in security techniques. Besedin claimed the incident was caused by an error in calculations by the navigation officer. Besedin was however a political officer with no training in submarine operations.

The area in which the Soviet submarine ran aground was at the time a restricted military zone where no foreign nationals were allowed. The exact location served as one of only two routes that could be used to move bigger ships from the naval base in Karlskrona to open water. This incident is popularly known in the West as "Whiskey on the rocks" (the rock-grounded submarine being a Whiskey-class submarine). In the Soviet Navy the submarine came to be known as "Swedish Komsomolets", a pun on both the incident and the then widespread tendency to give the submarines Komsomol-themed names.

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_submarine_S-363 | October 2021 ++]

Medal of Honor Awardees

Rodney Maxwell Davis| Vietnam



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

MEDAL OF HONOR

To

Marine Corps Sgt. Rodney Davis

Ranks and organizations: 2d Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines,
1st Marine Division

Places and dates: Quang Nam Province, Republic of Vietnam, September 6, 1967

Entered service: Summer 1961

Born: April 7, 1942, Macon, Georgia



Marine Sgt. Rodney M. Davis had planned to make a career out of the Corps before the war in Vietnam started. Unfortunately, he never came back from his Southeast Asia deployment, but the bravery Davis showed there earned him the Medal of Honor and a legacy that wouldn't be forgotten.

Davis was born April 7, 1942, in Macon, Georgia. His father, Gordon, served in the Navy during Davis' childhood, so Davis often helped his older brother take care of their two younger brothers and sister. Davis graduated from Peter G. Appling High School in May 1961. By the end of that summer, he had enlisted in the Marine Corps. He initially served as a rifleman at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, before doing a three-year tour of duty in England. At some point during the early days of his military career, Davis married Judy Humphrey. They had two young girls by the time he was sent to serve with the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division in Vietnam in August 1967. "I knew that going to Vietnam was something he wanted to do," Judy Davis said years later. "He was a military man, and that was his career."

In early September 1967, the 1st Marine Division was tasked with protecting locals in the southern part of the Que Song Valley from intimidation during upcoming elections. When one of its companies was attacked by a much larger North Vietnamese force, Davis' unit, Company B, was called in to help fight the enemy. After about a day, the enemy retreated, and Company B was ordered to follow them on a search-and-destroy mission known as Operation Swift. On Sept. 6, 1967, Company B was attacked, and Davis' 2nd Platoon was pinned down. He and several other men were in a trench trying to repel the enemy soldiers. Despite the grenades and small-arms and mortar fire coming at them, Davis moved through the trench to encourage his fellow Marines, all while continuing to fire and throw grenades back at the encroaching enemy.

Eventually, a grenade landed in the trench amid the men. Without hesitation, Davis threw himself on top of the device, absorbing all of its energy as it exploded. The 25-year-old, who had only been in Vietnam for one month, died instantly. But his sacrifice saved several of his fellow Marines, who were able to hold their vital position until the enemy finally withdrew from the area. According to John D. Hollis, who authored a book about the Marine hero, 48 members of Davis' platoon went into Operation Swift. By the end of Sept. 6, only 11 remained. However, by the time the operation ended, the North Vietnamese had given up their quest to take over that part of the Que Song Valley.

On March 26, 1969, Davis' family attended a ceremony at the executive office building next to the White House, where Vice President Spiro Agnew presented the Medal of Honor to Davis' widow. Davis' remains were taken back to the U.S. and buried in Linwood Cemetery, an all-Black cemetery in his hometown.

According to the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Davis' mother passed on having him buried at Arlington National Cemetery so his family would be close enough to visit his grave. However, the CFCG said that the cemetery had fallen into disrepair by 2010, and Davis' grave was affected. That bothered some Marines who noticed it, so they raised more than \$80,000 to repair the cemetery and have a monument erected. The excess funds were used to create the Sgt. Rodney M. Davis Medal of Honor Scholarship in his memory, which is administered by the CFCG.

Perhaps the largest tribute to Davis was the commissioning of the USS Rodney M. Davis in 1987. The guided-missile frigate served the Navy for 28 years. It was the first Navy ship to be commissioned in honor of a Black Medal of Honor recipient. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmohs.org> | Katie Lange | September 6, 2021 ++]

Medal of Honor Awardees

Kenneth D. Bailey | WWII



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

MEDAL OF HONOR

To

Maj. Kenneth D. Bailey

Ranks and organizations: Major U.S. Marine Corps, Company C, 1st Marine Raider Battalion

Places and dates: Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, September 12 - 13, 1942

Entered service: Summer 1935

Born: Oct. 21, 1910, in Pawnee, Oklahoma

Presentation Date & Details: March 24, 1943 at the White House to Mrs. Kenneth D. Bailey by President Franklin D. Roosevelt



There were a lot of World War II "firsts" in 1942, as the U.S. sent its first special operations force to launch the country's first amphibious offensive. That operation, known as the Guadalcanal campaign, captured strategic islands from the Japanese and kept vital lines of communications open for Allies in the Pacific. The campaign also earned Marine Corps Maj. Kenneth D. Bailey the Medal of Honor.

Bailey was born Oct. 21, 1910, in Pawnee, Oklahoma, but his parents eventually moved to Danville, Illinois, where he grew up with two older brothers and two younger sisters. According to the Kenneth D. Bailey Academy, a school named in his honor, Bailey was about as active as a teenager could get. He swam and played football for Danville High School, where he was also a member of the student council, the glee club and the yearbook staff. He even spent some of his high school years with the Illinois National Guard. Bailey attended the University of Illinois, where he participated in ROTC all four years. Shortly after graduating with a degree in agriculture in 1935, he was commissioned into the Marine Corps.

The young Marine's first six years were spent serving at Quantico, Virginia; Parris Island, South Carolina; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and as part of a Marine detachment on the USS Pennsylvania. In 1941, Bailey had worked his way up the ranks to become a company commander of the 5th Marines, which was redesignated the 1st Marine Raider Battalion when the U.S. entered World War II. It was the first special operations force in the U.S. military. In April 1942, Bailey and his battalion were sent to war in the Pacific, and he was promoted to major the next month. By August 1942, Bailey's unit had landed on Tulagi in the Solomon Islands. There, he earned the Silver Star for leading Company C of the 1st Raider Battalion in battle, despite suffering serious wounds.

After capturing Tulagi, the battalion was moved to Guadalcanal to defend Henderson Field, a crucial airfield. The campaign's most notable fight, the Battle of Edson's Ridge, took place on Sept. 12-13, 1942, and that's when Bailey earned the nation's highest military honor. On Sept. 12, the battalion was tasked with protecting a ridge to keep Japanese forces from pushing inland through dense vegetation to reach the airfield. By nightfall, the enemy had begun shelling the airfield's perimeter and attacked three times, just to be pushed back at each attempt. The next morning, upon orders from battalion commander Lt. Col. Merritt Edson, Bailey reorganized Company C and got into position as the reserve battalion between the main line of defense and the airfield. Company C represented the last line of defense against the superior enemy forces.

Within an hour, the company was threatened by enemy fighters who had pushed into a gap in the main line of defense. But Bailey's men didn't give in. They fended off the threat while improving their own precarious position. Bailey then used every weapon he had to cover the main line forces as they withdrew due to the assault. Despite a head wound, Bailey repeatedly led his men into fierce hand-to-hand fighting that lasted 10 hours. Finally, the Japanese forces gave up. Bailey's ability to protect the airfield despite the intense barrage of fighting proved to be an invaluable asset to Edson. For their courage under fire, both men earned the Medal of Honor.

Unfortunately, Bailey didn't survive to receive his in person. The Marine Corps major died less than two weeks later on Sept. 26 while fighting Japanese forces along Guadalcanal's Matanikau River. He was a month shy of his 32nd birthday. Bailey was initially buried on Guadalcanal, but his remains were moved and reinterred in Springhill Cemetery in his hometown of Danville in June 1948. On March 24, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented the Medal of Honor to Elizabeth Bailey, the major's widow, at a

ceremony at the White House. The medal is currently kept at the Vermilion County War Museum in Danville.

Aside from the school that bears his name, Bailey has had two Navy ships named in his honor. The construction of the first, a destroyer escort, was canceled in 1944. Instead, the Gearing-class destroyer USS Kenneth D. Bailey received his name. It was commissioned in July 1945 and deployed across the world for more than 20 years. [Source: DOD News & <https://www.cmoahs.org> | Katie Lange | September 13, 2021 ++]

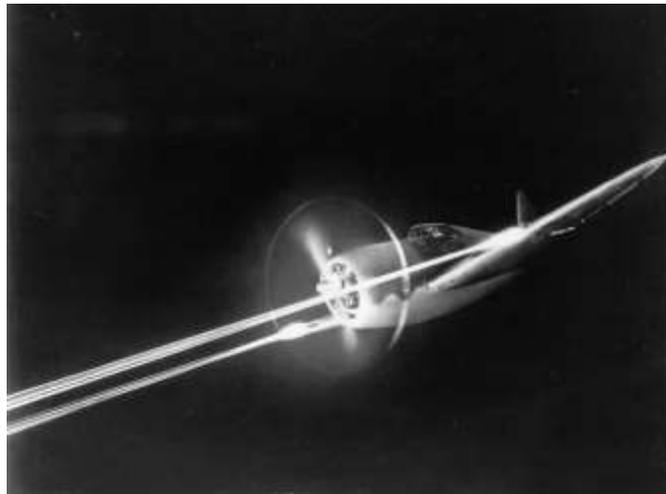
Military History Anniversaries

01 thru 15 NOV

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

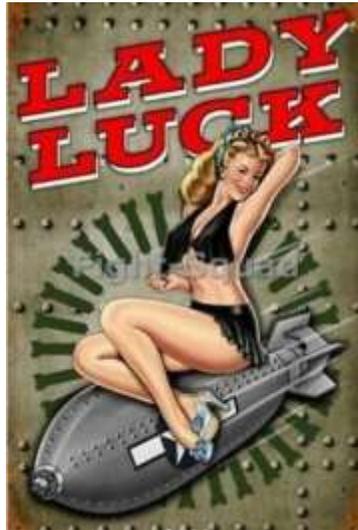
Every Picture Tells a Story

Tracers



There are many photographs of fighter aircraft test firing tracer rounds from their guns during nighttime, usually jacked up on a test bed and shooting into a gun butt. It made for a dramatic publicity shot. Here, however, an American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt lets loose with its fifty calcs while flying tight formation on the photo ship.

WWII Bomber Nose Art [85] Lady Luck



* Health Care *



Low Salt Diet Tips for Dining Out

We all know too much sodium is a dietary danger, but the Food and Drug Administration wants restaurants and food companies to take action. The FDA recently issued voluntary guidelines aimed at reducing sodium levels in prepared foods over the next two and a half years. Driving the new effort: The recommended daily sodium allowance is 2,300 milligrams, but the FDA says the average American consumes about 3,400 mg. Whether you're on a low-salt diet or just want to be proactive, these tips can help you get a head start on lowering your salt intake when you're dining out.

Know the 'Salty Six'

The American Heart Association has a "Salty Six" list of foods that contribute the most sodium to the average American diet. Bay Area nutritionist Carly Wertheim says these foods may not be what you expect, either. "You may be surprised by the foods that make the list: breads and rolls, pizza, sandwiches, cold cuts and cured meats, soup, and burritos and tacos." The list at

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/salty-six-infographic> also recommends ways to cut down on sodium within these categories.

Limit Fast Food

In general, fast food is the worst option for those looking to limit sodium. Holland Matheson, a Bay Area nutrition specialist, warns that these quick meals, produced "in bulk ahead of time" are tricky because they're "injected with sodium additives to increase shelf life." Yikes. So, Wertheim says, "Salads are probably going to be your best bet." Also, fast-food nutritional information is readily available; don't ignore it. Check out "Which Fast Food Salad Is the Best" at <https://blog.cheapism.com/best-fast-food-salad/#slide=2>.

Salty Meats

Matheson cautions, "If your meats are smoked, cured, or processed, you can bet they have a lot of sodium injected into it for added flavor." That means a lot of comfort-food favorites are best skipped, Wertheim says, "Avoid lunch meats, sausage, bacon and hot dogs. Choose freshly cooked chicken, turkey, or fish instead."

Salty Non-Meats

Meat isn't the only salt bomb, though. Vegetarians and fans of condiments should keep an eye out, as well. "While delicious, pickles, olives, sauerkrauts, and other fermented foods are often high in sodium as well," Wertheim says.

Go for Plants

In general, plant-based foods will have less sodium than animal-based foods. Think veggies, whole grains, fruits, legumes, raw nuts, and seeds. Wertheim explains, "Not only are plant-based foods naturally low in sodium, they contain potassium, which helps to balance sodium levels in the body. Sodium and potassium are like two peas in a pod. They work together to maintain a healthy blood pressure." However, there is reason to use caution, she says. "Check with your doctor before raising potassium levels, as it can be harmful to those with impaired kidney disease or heart failure, or taking certain medications." Check out "Where to Find Plant-Based Fast Food" at <https://blog.cheapism.com/plant-based-fast-food>.

Whole is Healthier

No matter where you're dining, seek out whole foods to cut down on sodium. "Sodium is highest in processed foods and fast foods," Wertheim says. "Food manufacturers add salt to enhance flavor and create that feeling of 'Oh, I just want one more bite.' The opposite of a processed food is a whole food — a food that is as close to the way nature made it as possible." Check out "25 Easy Recipes for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables" at <https://blog.cheapism.com/25-dishes-make-most-summer-produce-13674>.

Snack Smarter

When you're hungry between meals and go to your local coffee shop for a hot beverage and a snack, less-processed foods are always better. "Try a whole piece of fruit, like an apple, pear, or

banana with a small handful of raw, unsalted nuts or seeds. The fat and protein from the nuts and seeds will help you feel fuller longer, and they have a crunch," Wertheim recommends.

Breakfast Better

This whole-foods guideline can be used for every meal. If you're dining out for breakfast, "Rather than choose a muffin or bacon egg sandwich, try oatmeal, plain eggs, or a smoothie," Wertheim suggests. Check out "Unhealthy Fast Food Breakfasts — and What to Order Instead" at <https://blog.cheapism.com/unhealthiest-fast-food-breakfasts>.

Where to Go

Some restaurants will be easier to navigate for those who are trying to cut their sodium intake. "Look for more farm-to-table restaurants that keep the menu simple," Matheson says. If a restaurant is proud of their ingredients, they often keep things simpler, steering clear of heavy seasoning.

Watch for Salty Seasoning

If you're eating at a made-to-order restaurant, communication is key. Tell your server that you are on a low-sodium diet and request that no salt be added to your food, Matheson recommends. Wertheim agrees: "Tell them that you'd appreciate fresh herbs or dried spices as seasonings to your food in place of salt."

Preparation is Key

Even if you order a plate of veggies for dinner, be careful that you're ordering veggies prepared in the simplest manner. "Vegetables should be raw, grilled, or steamed," Matheson recommends. Check out <https://blog.cheapism.com/vegetable-recipes-for-veggie-haters>.

Be Clear and Polite

As you're ordering, start a friendly dialogue with your server on the options — what would they recommend for a low-sodium diet? As Matheson says, "When we eat out at restaurants, we're unsure of all the ingredients in our foods and ingesting many unknowns." So, let the experts do the work. Ask about available substitutions, too. "When it comes to fine dining, most likely they will be able to accommodate your requests," she says.

Low-Salt Lunch Tricks

If you're at a fast-casual spot for lunch, with customizable bowls and salads, it's easy to optimize flavor without getting too much salt. "Utilize different textures to make your brain feel more satisfied," Wertheim says. "Crunch goes a long way." Try nuts and seeds in salads, or raw, whole veggies. Avoid cheese and processed meats, or at least keep them to a minimum.

Let Your Palate Travel the World

At your favorite lunch spot, don't be afraid to go for international flavors. "Try cumin, paprika, oregano, and lime for a Latin twist, or basil, parsley, garlic, and lemon for something more Mediterranean," Wertheim recommends. "These global flavor profiles will help keep your meals interesting and satisfying while on a low-sodium diet."

Sideline the Sauces

Ask for sauces on the side, or just avoid them when possible. "Add a squeeze of lemon or lime juice, or a splash of vinegar for acidity," Wertheim recommends. "The sour flavor adds a high note to foods, brightening flavor." Instead of salad dressing, you can always ask for oil and vinegar on the side.

Sidestep the Side Dishes

Your entree isn't always the sodium culprit. Keep an eye on those side dishes, too. Rather than fries, bread, or chips, ask for a piece of fruit or a salad.

Portion Control is Key

While the experts have many recommendations for simple, lower-sodium substitutions, sometimes it's a special occasion and you just need a burger. Consider splitting it with your future self — ask the server to bring you half and box up the rest for later. Then you get all your favorite flavors, but fewer grams of sodium in one sitting.

[Source: Cheapism | Christine Clark |October 15, 2021++]

Philips Respironics Recall CPAP and BiLevel PAP Devices for Sleep Apnea



One of all Philips devices manufactured prior to April 26, 2021.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and Tricare are notifying patients of a worldwide recall on certain machines used to treat sleep apnea, a potentially serious sleep disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts. Patients suffering from sleep apnea often snore loudly and feel tired even after a full night's sleep. The recalled devices include CPAP and BiLevel PAP devices manufactured by Philips Respironics prior to April 26, 2021. More than 3.5 million devices have been recalled worldwide.

The VA has said that about 600,000 veterans were issued devices that have been recalled, Tricare also has notified physicians and patients of the recall, but has no figures on how many

patients are affected. Patients using a Philips device that may be affected by the recall should contact Philips Respironics directly at <https://www.philipssrcupdate.expertinquiry.com> or call 877-907-7508 for a listing of all machines affected by the recall, warnings and care instructions, as well as details on how to receive a replacement device. The replacement will be issued free of charge, however supply issues may slightly delay some shipments. VA patients also can contact their care team via phone or email using MyHealthVet <https://www.va.gov/health-care/secure-messaging> for assistance. Tricare users can contact their personal physician for more details.

Interior sound-reducing insulation in machines affected by the recall could break down, allowing small pieces of foam and dust to enter the air hose and breathing mask. However, according to the VA, physicians recommend patients with affected machines continue to use the old machine until a new one is received, saying any potential risk is less than the risk of going untreated. Patients should consult their physician for more details.

Philips Respironics states that the likelihood of foam breakdown is higher in devices that are more than three years old, are used in high-heat (more than 95 degrees) and high-humidity environments or that were routinely cleaned with an ozone-cleaning device. Replacement devices will be sent directly to the patient from the manufacturer. However, some veterans will have their replacement devices sent from Philips to the VA for calibration before issuance. see the Philips Respironics recall website <https://www.usa.philips.com/healthcare/e/sleep/communications/src-update> for more details. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | October 15, 2021 ++]

TRICARE Pharmacy Network

Walmart Out, CVS In



After three years, Walmart is leaving Tricare's pharmacy network -- a departure that pharmacy benefit manager Express Scripts says is a result of the retail giant's reluctance to offer "more highly competitive discounts" to military health beneficiaries. At the same time CVS Pharmacy will return to the Tricare network after a five-year hiatus, a change Express Scripts spokeswoman Jennifer Luddy said 20 OCT would expand choice within the network.

Effective Dec. 15, 2021, Walmart and Sam's Club will no longer be a part of the Tricare pharmacy network, and CVS will be included among the list of network retail pharmacies where Tricare users can fill their prescriptions. "This change provides more competitive rates for the Tricare pharmacy benefit and expands quality, convenient pharmacy choices nationwide," Luddy said in a statement to Military.com. Walmart and Sam's Club have more than 5,300 locations nationwide, according to Walmart's website.

Walmart joined the Express Scripts network in 2018, signing a three-year contract to provide prescription services to the pharmacy benefit management company's clients, including Tricare and the Defense Health Agency. The contract expires in December and Walmart and Sam's Club will be removed from the network, Luddy said. Walmart did not return a request for comment by publication. Meanwhile, CVS, a company that left the Tricare network in 2016, also after negotiations failed, will return to the network, giving beneficiaries access to its nearly 10,000 pharmacy locations, including inside many Target stores.

Under the agreement, as of 15 DEC, all prescriptions filled at a Walmart will be considered non-network. Beneficiaries will have to pay the full cost of their medication up front and file a claim with Tricare for partial reimbursement. Having access to Walmart pharmacies has been especially convenient to military families who live in rural or remote areas that may lack a chain pharmacy. But Luddy said Walmart "declined several opportunities to offer more highly competitive discounts to continue to serve Tricare beneficiaries."

As a pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts serves as somewhat of a middleman, overseeing the Defense Health Agency's pharmacy program, determining the reimbursement rates to retail pharmacies that fill patient prescriptions, and billing the government in turn. It also is responsible for transactions involving the government purchase of medicines for military installations and provides the Tricare mail-order pharmacy program. In the past decade, the Defense Health Agency has increasingly encouraged -- and in some cases, required -- beneficiaries to fill their prescriptions at no cost at military pharmacies or use the mail-order system to fill long-term prescriptions at lower cost.

Pharmacy copays have risen substantially over the past 10 years, in large part due to cost but also as required by Congress as part of a cost-cutting measure to the defense medical budget. In 2011, 30-day prescriptions of generic medications and brand-name drugs could be purchased at a network pharmacy for \$3 and \$9 copayments, respectively, while medications not in Tricare's formulary cost \$22. The mail-order system offered generic medications at no cost and brand-name formulary drugs for a \$9 copayment for 90-day prescriptions. This year, Tricare beneficiaries pay \$11 for a 30-day supply for a generic drug and \$33 for a brand-name medication at retail pharmacies. Non-formulary drugs not listed in Tricare's list of covered medications cost \$60. Copayments for the mail-order pharmacy run \$10 for a generic prescription and \$29 a brand-name drug for a 90-day script. And the rates are expected to rise next year.

Luddy said that Express Scripts will be reaching out to patients who take specialty medications to help them transfer their prescriptions without a gap in coverage. According to Express Scripts, the Tricare pharmacy network covers 56,000 stores, including chains such as Walgreens and Rite Aid and supermarkets like Kroger and Publix. Tricare provides coverage to 9.6 million beneficiaries worldwide. [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime | October 20, 2021 ++]

TRICARE Pharmacy Network

Update 01: Walmart Says It Was Blindsided by Ouster

Days before Tricare pharmacy benefits manager Express Scripts announced that Walmart is leaving the Tricare network, the retail giant had inked a "multi-year" deal to remain, according to a company spokesman. The spokesman said late 22 OCT that Walmart was "surprised" to learn that its pharmacy contract had been terminated, adding that the company and Express Scripts signed an agreement 30 SEP for it to remain in the network.

"We value our Tricare and [Defense Department] customers and are disappointed in Express Script's decision and we have requested more information from them to understand their decision," Luke Kleyn, a vice president at Walmart, said in an email to Military.com. "We have asked Express Scripts to honor the agreement we both recently signed." Kleyn said the new contract would have allowed military beneficiaries to continue all their prescriptions at Walmart and Sam's Club for the next several years. "We hope to come to a resolution to continue as a pharmacy provider for the Tricare network," he added.

An Express Scripts spokesperson did not directly address questions from Military.com about the negotiations and the deal described by the Walmart executive, but issued a statement citing pricing as the reasoning behind ending its relationship with Walmart. "Walmart's rates were not competitive enough to stay in the network and we are removing them effective Dec. 15, 2021," spokesperson Jennifer Luddy said in an email. She said that more than 6% of Tricare beneficiaries fill prescriptions at Walmart or Sam's Club, meaning approximately 600,000 people have used the stores for their medications. She added that Express Scripts is "helping beneficiaries ensure an easy transition."

Walmart first signed an agreement with Express Scripts in 2018 to provide brand-name prescription medications to beneficiaries who use Tricare and other insurance plans that use the pharmacy benefits management company. Walmart also provides many generic medications to all customers -- regardless of insurance -- through a program that provides 30-day prescriptions for \$4 and 90-day prescriptions for \$10. Military beneficiaries still will be able to use that program even if Walmart leaves the network, company officials said. But the change means prescriptions for brand-name and specialty medications not offered through Walmart's discount program will be

considered non-network. Beneficiaries will have to pay the full cost of their medication up front and file a claim with Tricare for partial reimbursement.

Last week, Express Scripts began notifying Tricare beneficiaries who use Walmart or Sam's Club pharmacies that their stores would no longer be in their retail pharmacy network as of 15 DEC. The letter includes three local network pharmacy options and instructions on how to transfer prescriptions. Those who fill specialty medications at Walmart or Sam's Club also will receive a letter as well as a phone call from Express Scripts to help them transfer their prescriptions. According to Express Scripts, these beneficiaries will have a 30-day grace period to transfer their prescriptions.

As a pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts serves as a middleman, overseeing the Defense Health Agency's pharmacy program, including management of the retail pharmacy network, Tricare's mail order pharmacy, claims reimbursement, and beneficiary and pharmacy support services. In July, the Defense Department awarded a contract to Express Scripts worth up to \$4.3 billion over the next seven years to continue as Tricare's pharmacy benefits manager. Luddy said 25 OCT that pharmacies set reimbursement rates for medications, and Express Scripts negotiates discounts, conducting "continuous evaluations of the network to ensure best value and care for the Department of Defense, beneficiaries and taxpayers, and to pass on more savings to the government." [Source: MOAA | Patricia Kime | October 27, 2021 ++]

Aging

Update 04: Fall & Fracture Prevention



A simple thing can change your life—like tripping on a rug or slipping on a wet floor. If you fall, you could break a bone, like thousands of older men and women do each year. For older people, a break can be the start of more serious problems, such as a trip to the hospital, injury, or even disability. If you or an older person you know has fallen, you're not alone. More than one in three people age 65 years or older falls each year. The risk of falling—and fall-related problems—rises with age.

The fear of falling becomes more common as people age, even among those who haven't fallen. It may lead older people to avoid activities such as walking, shopping, or taking part in social activities. But don't let a fear of falling keep you from being active. Overcoming this fear can help you stay active, maintain your physical health, and prevent future falls. Doing things like getting together with friends, gardening, walking, or going to the local senior center helps you stay healthy. Many things can cause a fall.

- Your eyesight, hearing, and reflexes might not be as sharp as they were when you were younger.
- Diabetes, heart disease, or problems with your thyroid, nerves, feet, or blood vessels can affect your balance.
- Safety hazards in the home or community environment.
- Scientists have linked several personal risk factors to falling, including muscle weakness, problems with balance and gait, and blood pressure that drops too much when you get up from lying down or sitting (called postural hypotension).
- Foot problems that cause pain and unsafe footwear, like backless shoes or high heels, can also increase your risk of falling.
- Confusion can sometimes lead to falls. For example, if you wake up in an unfamiliar environment, you might feel unsure of where you are. If you feel confused, wait for your mind to clear or until someone comes to help you before trying to get up and walk around.
- Some medications can increase a person's risk of falling because they cause side effects like dizziness, sleepiness, or confusion. The more medications you take, the more likely you are to fall.

The good news is, there are simple ways to prevent most falls. If you take care of your overall health, you may be able to lower your chances of falling. Most of the time, falls and accidents don't "just happen." Here are a few tips to help you avoid falls and broken bones:

- **Stay physically active.** Plan an exercise program that is right for you. Regular exercise improves muscles and makes you stronger. It also helps keep your joints, tendons, and ligaments flexible. Mild weight-bearing activities, such as walking or climbing stairs, may slow bone loss from osteoporosis.
- **Have your eyes and hearing tested.** Even small changes in sight and hearing may cause you to fall. When you get new eyeglasses or contact lenses, take time to get used to them. Always wear your glasses or contacts when you need them. If you have a hearing aid, be sure it fits well and wear it.
- **Find out about the side effects of any medicine you take.** If a drug makes you sleepy or dizzy, tell your doctor or pharmacist.
- **Get enough sleep.** If you are sleepy, you are more likely to fall.

- **Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.** Even a small amount of alcohol can affect your balance and reflexes. Studies show that the rate of hip fractures in older adults increases with alcohol use.
- **Stand up slowly.** Getting up too quickly can cause your blood pressure to drop. That can make you feel wobbly. Get your blood pressure checked when lying and standing.
- **Use an assistive device if you need help feeling steady when you walk.** Appropriate use of canes and walkers can prevent falls. If your doctor tells you to use a cane or walker, make sure it is the right size for you and the wheels roll smoothly. This is important when you're walking in areas you don't know well or where the walkways are uneven. A physical or occupational therapist can help you decide which devices might be helpful and teach you how to use them safely.
- **Be very careful when walking on wet or icy surfaces.** They can be very slippery! Try to have sand or salt spread on icy areas by your front or back door.
- **Use the right shoes.** Wear non-skid, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes, or lace-up shoes with non-skid soles that fully support your feet. It is important that the soles are not too thin or too thick. Don't walk on stairs or floors in socks or in shoes and slippers with smooth soles.
- **Always tell your doctor if you have fallen** since your last checkup, even if you aren't hurt when you fall. A fall can alert your doctor to a new medical problem or problems with your medications or eyesight that can be corrected. Your doctor may suggest physical therapy, a walking aid, or other steps to help prevent future falls.

What to Do If You Fall

- Whether you are at home or somewhere else, a sudden fall can be startling and upsetting. If you do fall, stay as calm as possible.
- Take several deep breaths to try to relax. Remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments. This will help you get over the shock of falling.
- Decide if you are hurt before getting up. Getting up too quickly or in the wrong way could make an injury worse.
- If you think you can get up safely without help, roll over onto your side. Rest again while your body and blood pressure adjust. Slowly get up on your hands and knees, and crawl to a sturdy chair.
- Put your hands on the chair seat and slide one foot forward so that it is flat on the floor. Keep the other leg bent so the knee is on the floor. From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.
- If you are hurt or cannot get up on your own, ask someone for help or call 911. If you are alone, try to get into a comfortable position and wait for help to arrive.

- Carrying a mobile or portable phone with you as you move about your house could make it easier to call someone if you need assistance. An emergency response system, which lets you push a button on a special necklace or bracelet to call for help, is another option.

Keep Your Bones Strong to Prevent Falls

Falls are a common reason for trips to the emergency room and for hospital stays among older adults. Many of these hospital visits are for fall-related fractures. You can help prevent fractures by keeping your bones strong. Having healthy bones won't prevent a fall, but if you fall, it might prevent breaking a hip or other bone, which may lead to a hospital or nursing home stay, disability, or even death. Getting enough calcium and vitamin D can help keep your bones strong. So can physical activity. Try to get at least 150 minutes per week of physical activity.

Other ways to maintain bone health include quitting smoking and limiting alcohol use, which can decrease bone mass and increase the chance of fractures. Also, try to maintain a healthy weight. Being underweight increases the risk of bone loss and broken bones. Osteoporosis is a disease that makes bones weak and more likely to break. For people with osteoporosis, even a minor fall may be dangerous. Talk to your doctor about osteoporosis. Go to <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/fall-proofing-your-home> and learn how to fall-proof your home. [Source: National Institute on Aging | September 2021++]

Covid-19 Precautions

Update 05: CDC New Health Alert on Pregnancy



If you are pregnant, recently pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant in the future, you should get the COVID-19 vaccination, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised in a recent health advisory. Pregnant and recently pregnant women with COVID-19 are at increased risk of severe illness, death, and pregnancy complications, studies show. The recommendation that pregnant or recently pregnant women get vaccinated against COVID-19 is not new, but because of the gravity of the concern, CDC issued the recent health alert, which calls for "urgent action," saying the CDC "strongly recommends COVID-19 vaccination either before or during pregnancy because the benefits of vaccination outweigh known or potential risks."

The numbers of Americans who are pregnant and vaccinated fully or previously fully vaccinated against the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 is only 31%, according to CDC data. "All women are encouraged to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before pregnancy," said Dr. Margaret Ryan, medical director of the Defense Health Agency's Immunization Healthcare Division in San Diego, California. "If not vaccinated before pregnancy, they should become vaccine-protected during pregnancy and enroll in CDC's v-safe tracking system." About 97% of pregnant women hospitalized (either for illness or for labor and delivery) with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection were unvaccinated.

The DOD and CDC recommendations align with other recommendations from professional medical organizations serving people who are pregnant, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. "A new study shows that patients vaccinated in late pregnancy had no increased risk of delivery problems. Another new study shows that patients vaccinated in early pregnancy appeared to have no increased risk of pregnancy loss," Ryan said. Symptomatic pregnant women with COVID-19 who are hospitalized have a 70% increased risk of death. That is the case even though the absolute risk of death is low compared with non-pregnant symptomatic people, according to the CDC.

Pregnancy is independently associated with a three-fold increased risk for ICU admission, a 2.4-fold increased risk for needing extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), and a 1.7-fold increased risk of death due to COVID-19 compared to symptomatic non-pregnant patients, according to new data cited by Navy Cmdr. (Dr.) Monica Lutgendorf, chair, Department of Gynecologic Surgery and Obstetrics at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. Pregnant patients with other health risk factors - like obesity, diabetes, heart disorders, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, immunocompromised from organ transplantation, sickle cell disease and smoking, and those older than age 35 - also appear to have "an increased risk of adverse maternal outcomes," Lutgendorf said.

As of 27 SEP, more than 125,000 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases have been reported in pregnant women, including more than 22,000 hospitalized cases and 161 deaths. Pregnant women with the COVID-19 disease are also at increased risk for preterm birth. Some preliminary data suggests that COVID-19 increases risk for other adverse pregnancy complications and outcomes, such as preeclampsia (severe high blood pressure), coagulopathy (blood coagulation to clots), and stillbirth, compared with pregnant people without COVID-19. Furthermore, CDC's alert explained that babies "born to people with COVID-19 are also at increased risk for admission to the neonatal ICU." "In addition, although rare, pregnant people with COVID-19 can transmit infection to their neonates; among neonates born to women with COVID-19 during pregnancy, 1%-4% of neonates tested were positive" based on polymerase chain technology testing, CDC said.

A majority of military doctors agree that women who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 should not have any concerns about breastfeeding. Getting the vaccine while breastfeeding protects the mother and is safe for both the mother and the baby, Ryan said, adding: "Breastfeeding is healthy for babies, and mom's antibodies may be present in breastmilk. Breastfeeding is not an established way for an infant to attain immunity against COVID-19, but breastfeeding is still clearly healthy for babies."

There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men, CDC data show. Eligible pregnant women should also consider a booster dose. Vaccination coverage for pregnant women differs by race and ethnicity, with vaccination uptake being lowest for non-Hispanic Black pregnant women (15.6%), data collected by the agency show. [Source: Health.mil | Janet A. Aker | October 20, 2021 ++]

Covid-19 Variants

Update 01: B.1.630 detected in Louisiana

Researchers at LSU Health in Shreveport, La., detected B.1.630 — a rare COVID-19 variant — in two samples from Baton Rouge last week, the academic medical center announced 13 OCT. It's the first time the B.1.630 variant has been detected in Louisiana. It was first detected in the U.S. in March and contains the E484Q mutation, which may help the virus escape the immune response and resist antibodies.

So far, the variant has only been sequenced 79 times in the U.S., according to a news release. It has not been assigned a variant classification or Greek alphabet letter, such as the delta or alpha strains, because it accounts for a very small portion of samples sequenced. "Even though the predominance of this variant is low, we will continue to keep an eye on it and watch for any changes or if it starts to increase," said Krista Queen, PhD, director of viral genomics and surveillance at LSU Health's Center of Excellence for Emerging Viral Threats.

Of the 660 samples LSU has tested over the last 35 days, the majority were delta, none were B.1.630 and the remaining 0.3 percent were the alpha variant, Nola.com reports. The samples containing B.1.630 were collected in August. "[Delta] just outpaces everyone else," Jeremy Kamil, PhD, an associate professor of microbiology and immunology at LSU Health Shreveport, told the news outlet. "It's like showing up at the Olympics and having to compete against a marathon runner that beats the other racers not just by a minute or two, but by an hour."

Health officials have previously said they don't anticipate another variant to overpower delta as the predominant strain. "There are other variants that are around — certainly not in any manner or form more than a fraction of a percent in this country," Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said during an 13 OCT White House news conference. "So, we don't expect there to be any emergence of a variant that's going to outstrip the capability of delta." [Source: Beckers Hospital Review | Erica Carbajal | OCT 14, 2021 ++]

Covid-19 Variants

Update 02: Those of Concern & Interest as of OCT 2021



Multiple coronavirus variants are now spreading rapidly around the world, supplanting the original virus in some parts of the United States. New variants of SARS-CoV-2 are rapidly spreading through the U.S. These coronavirus variants are being studied because they may be more transmissible, cause more severe disease, or reduce the efficacy of current vaccines. The reason there are variants is that viruses constantly mutate. These mutations are mostly without public health impact unless the changes converge on a trait that is advantageous to the virus. For the most part, those changes haven't made a big impact on SARS-CoV-2 (i.e. Covid-19).

None of the currently circulating variants have been labeled by the CDC as being of "high consequence," which would require serious medical countermeasures. However, CDC is watching five "variants of concern" that can alter public health measures by having characteristics such as increased transmissibility, more severe disease or a higher death rate, and the ability to interfere with treatments or vaccine effectiveness. Those five variants, and the places they were originally detected, are: B.1.1.7 (U.K.), P.1 (Japan/Brazil), B.1.351 (South Africa), B.1.427 (California), and B.1.429 (California).

A virus variant has a particular set of mutations that accumulate as the virus replicates and evolves. There are hundreds of SARS-CoV-2 variants, but only some contain mutations that allow them to spread rapidly or that concern public health authorities. These are categorized as:

- Variants of concern -- Those associated with an increase in transmissibility compared to the original strain that emerged in March 2020, more severe disease or a higher death rate, or a decrease in the effectiveness of public health measures to contain the virus, vaccines or treatments.
- Variants of interest – Those that have mutations associated with variants of concern and have caused community spread or clusters of disease and been detected in multiple countries, per WHO.

Variants of Concern

Alpha variant, B.1.1.7

- Up to 70% more transmissible

- Up to 60% more deadly, but more research needed
- Vaccines are still effective
- Unlikely to reinfect people who already had COVID
- First discovered in the U.K

Delta variant, B.1.617.2

- Up to 115% more transmissible
- Unknown if it causes more severe disease
- Vaccines are still effective
- Can reinfect people who already had COVID
- First discovered in India

Beta variant, B.1.351

- 50% more transmissible
- Unknown if it causes more severe disease
- Some vaccines are less effective
- Can reinfect people who already had COVID
- First discovered in South Africa

Gamma variant, P.1

- Believed to be more transmissible, but more research needed
- Unknown if it causes more severe disease
- Some vaccines are slightly less effective
- Believed to reinfect people who already had COVID
- First discovered in Brazil

Variants of Interest

Iota/Eta variants, B.1.526/B.1.525

- Unknown if it is more or less transmissible
- Unknown if it causes more severe disease
- Vaccines are likely still effective
- May be able to reinfect people who already had COVID, but more research needed
- First discovered in New York

Kappa variant, B.1.617.1

- Believed to be more transmissible
- Unknown if it causes more severe disease
- Vaccines are still effective
- May reinfect people who already had COVID
- First discovered in India

Epsilon variants, B.1.427/B.1.429

- 20% more transmissible
- May cause more severe disease, but more research needed
- Vaccines are likely still effective
- May be able to reinfect people who already had COVID
- First discovered in California

[Source: Axios | Will Chase| October 20, 2021 ++]

Cancer Risk

Update 02: Higher for USAF Fighter Pilots, Crews



U.S. Air Force fighter pilots and crew members are far more likely to be diagnosed with certain types of cancers than their fellow airmen, according to the most comprehensive military study to date. It is the first confirmation of a connection long suspected by fighter aviators who saw their peers contracting some cancers at concerning rates. Earlier, less comprehensive studies had proven inconclusive. The study also identified at least one airframe—the F-100 Super Sabre—whose crews faced higher rates of almost all types of cancer compared to both their non-flying fellow airmen and the general population.

The 2021 study, “Cancer Incidence and Mortality Among Fighter Aviators” available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/534504371/Air-Force-Cancer-Incidence-Study> conducted by the Air Force Research Laboratory’s 711th Human Performance Wing, tracked every airman who had recorded more than 100 flight hours in an Air Force fighter aircraft from 1970 to 2004. The study found a total of 34,679 “fighter aviators”: fighter pilots and weapons systems officers. Their cancer rates were compared to 411,998 Air Force officers who did not fly fighter aircraft and were on active duty for at least one day from 1970 to 2004.

Compared to their non-fighter peers, the study found, fighter pilots and their crew were 29 percent more likely to be diagnosed with testicular cancer; 24 percent more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma; and 23 percent more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. When

compared to the general U.S. population, fighter aviators were 13 percent more likely to be diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, 25 percent more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma, and 19 percent more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. The study also found that the fighter aviators had similar rates of other types of cancer, such as brain cancer, compared to non-flying Air Force officers. And compared to the general U.S. population, they had lower rates in several categories, including renal, thyroid, and urinary cancer.

“Current and former fighter aviators are encouraged to discuss this report with their flight surgeon or primary care provider, including such topics as ultraviolet radiation protection and its impact on vitamin D, lifestyle approaches to cancer prevention, and screening for melanoma skin and prostate cancers,” said Maj. Brian Huggins, a preventive medicine consultant with the 711th Wing.

The study represents the deepest dive to date on a question that continues to surface among the military aviation community: Did their military flying careers cause the many cancers they now see among the men and women they flew with? “We’re about to graduate out of the era of ‘We think this deserves a study, and we think that cancer incidence rates and mortality are higher among military aviators, but no one’s paying attention.’ That was 2017, 2018, and 2019. Here in 2021, we have this study. And the Air Force is talking about it out loud,” said Vince “Aztec” Alcazar, a former F-15E Strike Eagle pilot who now leads the aviator medical issues committee for the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, a private veterans support organization.

The Air Force study also looked at a few specific fighter airframes to compare rates of incidence between those crews and non-flying personnel. However there were limitations. The study only singled out four Vietnam-era warplanes, the F-100, F-4, F-105 and RF-4, to look specifically at those crews’ cancer rates, even though the study covers all fighter jets flying through 2004, such as the F-16 and F-15. Earlier Air Force reports have found cancer clusters among F-15E Strike Eagle and C-130 aircrews but the new study did not single out those aircraft.

Still, among those Vietnam-era planes, there were striking findings, particularly for the F-100 Super Sabre, the nation’s first supersonic warplane. “Male fighter aviators who flew the F-100 had greater odds of being diagnosed and dying from colon and rectum cancer, pancreas cancer, melanoma skin cancer, prostate cancer, and brain cancer. They also had greater odds of being diagnosed and dying from thyroid cancer and non-Hodgkin lymphoma, despite similar odds of diagnosis,” the study found. Crews who flew the F-105 and F-4 also showed higher rates of testicular, melanoma, and prostate cancer.

A larger, Congressionally-directed cancer review is also underway. Run by the Defense Health Agency, or DHA, the study is looking at aviation community rates of cancer across all military branches, not just the Air Force. Initial results are expected by year’s end, said a spokesman for Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). The DHA study kicked off after Feinstein got language included in last year's defense bill that required the Pentagon to determine whether service members

involved in any part of military aviation, whether a pilot, navigator, weapons officer, carrier deck crew or flight line crew have higher rates of cancer than the general U.S. population.

If the DHA study does find higher rates of cancer for the aviation community, the legislation requires Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to launch a deeper, and much-more-difficult-to-execute study. That study would look for causes, such as whether cockpit emissions may be linked, or contact with fuels, solvents, radars or other environmental factors. It would also calculate rates of cancer by type of aircraft flown and locations served. Finally, it would set recommendations for the age at which cancer screenings should begin for those service members.

Feinstein and other lawmakers filed legislation to address aviator cancers after a number of former fighter pilots spoke out last year about the high rates of cancers and cancer deaths they were seeing among their ranks. One of the initial leaders of that outreach was Thomas “Boot” Hill, a former F-4 and F-14 Navy pilot who served as the commanding officer of Strike Fighter Squadron 143 and air boss aboard the aircraft carrier Washington. After several fellow aviators got sick with cancer, Hill started compiling an Excel database of every Tomcat pilot or commanding officer he could verify who had either been diagnosed with or died of cancer. He then expanded it to all Naval aviation airframes. Hill started with the year 1985 and got as far as 2001. He found that those naval aviators were three to five times more likely to be diagnosed with cancer than the general population.

The Air Force study and the larger service-wide study expected later this year “means a lot,” said Hill’s daughter Lauren Farrelly, her voice breaking. “It means it wasn’t all in vain, it wasn’t just him sitting, you know, doing a spreadsheet. It gives us some comfort knowing this is something that will continue to be fought for.” Hill, 69, died nine days ago, after a decade-long battle with esophageal cancer. In his 23-year Naval aviation career he flew more than 3,600 hours and made 960 carrier landings. “My two boys want to be just like him,” Farrelly said. [Source: Defense One | Tara Copp | October 25, 2021 ++]

Heart Failure

Update 06: Air and Noise Pollution Linked to Increased Risk

Exposure to air pollution and road traffic noise over several years may increase the risk of heart failure, according to new research from a large observational study. The study examined more than 22,000 female nurses based in Denmark, aged 44 and older, over a period of 15 to 20 years to evaluate the impact of exposure to small particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, as well as road traffic noise. The results showed that increased exposure to these pollutants after just 3 years was tied to a substantially increased risk of new heart failure

Former smokers and hypertensive patients were most susceptible to the negative effects of fine particulate matter, says Youn-Hee Lim, PhD, lead author of the study and an assistant professor

in the Section of Environmental Health in the Department of Public Health at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. In fact, former smokers exposed to fine particulate matter for extended periods had a 72% higher risk for heart failure. They were not able to examine longer exposure to fine particulate matter, Lim says, "therefore, we can't say which the pivotal number of years is where the heart failure risk starts to set in." Road traffic noise was estimated by measuring noise from roads within a 3-kilometer radius of participants' homes. Although the relationship for road noise was not as strong as with pollutants, it was still linked to a higher risk of heart failure.

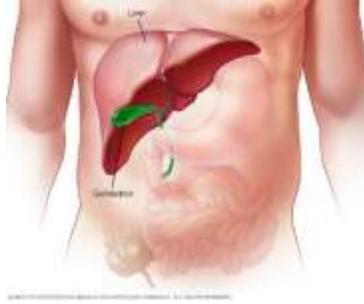
The findings were published online in the Journal of the American Heart Association. While previous studies have linked air pollution and cardiovascular disease, there has been little research before now on the association between extended air pollution exposure and heart failure, says Lim. "As air pollutants and road traffic noise share a major source — traffic — it is important to consider the independent or interactive effects of the 2 exposures on health," the researchers wrote. With emissions standards now in place to combat pollution, it is interesting that the researchers thought to explore air pollution as a heart failure risk, says Ileana L. Piña, MD, a heart failure transplant cardiologist and professor of medicine at Wayne State University. "You think of respiratory illness in cities where there is a high level of pollution, but you don't think of heart failure," says Piña, who was not a part of this study. "Next I think we need to link up what it was in that polluted air that actually caused the trauma."

Each woman enrolled in the study completed a comprehensive questionnaire on body mass index; lifestyle factors including smoking, alcohol consumption, physical activity, and dietary habits; current health conditions; reproductive health; and working conditions. The study did not account for things like exposure to indoor air pollution or occupational noise, which may have affected the results. Lim says broad public tactics like better emissions control measures can help lessen the impact of pollution exposure, as can things like stopping smoking and controlling blood pressure. [Source: Medscape | Rosalind Stefanec | October 22, 2021 ++]

Liver Disease

Update 04: Acute Liver Failure

Acute liver failure, also known as fulminant hepatic failure, is loss of liver function that occurs rapidly — in days or weeks — usually in a person who has no preexisting liver disease. It's most commonly caused by a hepatitis virus or drugs, such as acetaminophen. Acute liver failure is less common than chronic liver failure, which develops more slowly. It can cause serious complications, including excessive bleeding and increasing pressure in the brain. It's a medical emergency that requires hospitalization. Depending on the cause, acute liver failure can sometimes be reversed with treatment. In many situations, though, a liver transplant may be the only cure.



Signs and symptoms of acute liver failure may include:

- Yellowing of your skin and eyeballs (jaundice)
- Pain in your upper right abdomen
- Abdominal swelling (ascites)
- Nausea and Vomiting
- A general sense of feeling unwell (malaise)
- Disorientation or confusion
- Sleepiness
- Breath may have a musty or sweet odor
- Tremors

When to see a doctor

Acute liver failure can develop quickly in an otherwise healthy person, and it is life-threatening. If you or someone you know suddenly develops a yellowing of the eyes or skin; tenderness in the upper abdomen; or any unusual changes in mental state, personality or behavior, seek medical attention right away.

Causes & Complications

Acute liver failure occurs when liver cells are damaged significantly and are no longer able to function. Potential causes include:

- Acetaminophen overdose. Taking too much acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) is the most common cause of acute liver failure in the United States. Outside of the United States, acetaminophen is known as paracetamol. Acute liver failure can occur after one very large dose of acetaminophen, or after higher than recommended doses every day for several days. If you or someone you know has taken an overdose of acetaminophen, seek medical attention as quickly as possible. Treatment may prevent liver failure. Don't wait for the signs of liver failure.
- Prescription medications. Some prescription medications, including antibiotics, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and anticonvulsants, can cause acute liver failure.
- Herbal supplements. Herbal drugs and supplements, including kava, ephedra, skullcap and pennyroyal, have been linked to acute liver failure.

- Hepatitis and other viruses. Hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis E can cause acute liver failure. Other viruses that can cause acute liver failure include Epstein-Barr virus, cytomegalovirus and herpes simplex virus.
- Toxins. Toxins that can cause acute liver failure include the poisonous wild mushroom Amanita phalloides, which is sometimes mistaken for one that is safe to eat. Carbon tetrachloride is another toxin that can cause acute liver failure. It is an industrial chemical found in refrigerants and solvents for waxes, varnishes and other materials.
- Autoimmune disease. Liver failure can be caused by autoimmune hepatitis — a disease in which your immune system attacks liver cells, causing inflammation and injury.
- Diseases of the veins in the liver. Vascular diseases, such as Budd-Chiari syndrome, can cause blockages in the veins of the liver and lead to acute liver failure.
- Metabolic disease. Rare metabolic diseases, such as Wilson's disease and acute fatty liver of pregnancy, infrequently cause acute liver failure.
- Cancer. Cancer that either begins in or spreads to your liver can cause your liver to fail.
- Shock. Overwhelming infection (sepsis) and shock can severely impair blood flow to the liver, causing liver failure.
- Heat stroke. Extreme physical activity in a hot environment can trigger acute liver failure.
- Some cases of acute liver failure have no apparent cause.

Acute liver failure often causes complications, including:

- Excessive fluid in the brain (cerebral edema). Too much fluid causes pressure to build up in your brain, which can lead to disorientation, severe mental confusion and seizures.
- Bleeding and bleeding disorders. A failing liver cannot make enough clotting factors, which help blood to clot. Bleeding in the gastrointestinal tract is common with this condition. It may be difficult to control.
- Infections. People with acute liver failure are more likely to develop infections, particularly in the blood and in the respiratory and urinary tracts.
- Kidney failure. Kidney failure often occurs after liver failure, especially if you had an acetaminophen overdose, which damages both your liver and your kidneys.

Prevention -- Reduce your risk of acute liver failure by taking care of your liver.

- Follow instructions on medications. If you take acetaminophen or other medications, check the package insert for the recommended dosage, and don't take more than that. If you already have liver disease, ask your doctor if it is safe to take any amount of acetaminophen.
- Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Even over-the-counter and herbal medicines can interfere with prescription drugs you're taking.
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. For healthy adults, that means up to one drink a day for women and up to two drinks a day for men.

- Avoid risky behavior. Get help if you use illicit intravenous drugs. Don't share needles. Use condoms during sex. If you get tattoos or body piercings, make sure the shop you choose is clean and safe. Don't smoke.
- Get vaccinated. If you have chronic liver disease, a history of any type of hepatitis infection or an increased risk of hepatitis, talk to your doctor about getting the hepatitis B vaccine. A vaccine also is available for hepatitis A.
- Avoid contact with other people's blood and body fluids. Accidental needle sticks or improper cleanup of blood or body fluids can spread hepatitis viruses. Sharing razor blades or toothbrushes also can spread infection.
- Don't eat wild mushrooms. It can be difficult to tell the difference between a poisonous mushroom and one that is safe to eat.
- Take care with aerosol sprays. When you use an aerosol cleaner, make sure the room is ventilated, or wear a mask. Take similar protective measures when spraying insecticides, fungicides, paint and other toxic chemicals. Follow product instructions carefully.
- Watch what gets on your skin. When using insecticides and other toxic chemicals, cover your skin with gloves, long sleeves, a hat and a mask.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity can cause a condition called nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, which may include fatty liver, hepatitis and cirrhosis.

[Source: Mayo Clinic | <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-condition> | October 2021 ++]

Sleep

Update 14: Myths That Could Explain Why you're So Tired



This year, with everything from the pandemic to the roller-coaster economy and murder hornets, a lot of people have been losing sleep — but the good news is that there's been plenty of research on the topic. The negative effects of alcohol and caffeine on a good night's rest are fairly well-known, but myths abound. Correctives to these common misconceptions, along with free tools and tips, might help you catch a full night of sound sleep. They won't cure the pandemic or murder hornets, but at least you'll be rested enough to deal with them.

Myth: Stay in Bed Until You Have to Get Up

Penn Medicine research has found that you may be able to prevent acute insomnia from becoming chronic insomnia by getting out of bed if you wake before the alarm goes off. People who developed long-lasting insomnia stayed in bed in the morning trying to force more sleep.

Myth: Mattresses Last for Decades

Mattresses are expensive, and some consumers like to believe that the high cost guarantees decades of use. Like all cushioned furniture, however, mattresses gradually decline in comfort and support. The lifetime of a mattress varies from person to person, but the Better Sleep Council recommends replacing a mattress every seven years.

Myth: Pajamas Have Nothing to Do With Sleep Quality

Research has shown that sleeping naked may improve sleep. Forgoing PJs is better for body temperature regulation, which helps relieve stress — and that, in turn, makes it easier to sleep. For some people, the absence of garments also leads to more intimacy in bed — another soporific.

Myth: Sleep Debt Can Be Repaid

There's no such thing as catching up on a sleep deficit. Research indicates that a lack of sleep has negative effects on the next day's energy, motor skills, cognitive thinking, and productivity. Studies have shown the effects of sleep deprivation on business leaders and adolescents alike, so strive to get the daily recommended amount of rest.

Myth: Everyone Needs 8 Hours of Sleep

The exhortation to get eight hours of sleep a night may be the biggest myth of all. In 2015, the National Sleep Foundation released revised its recommended sleep durations, including a separate category for young adults (18 to 25 years old). Depending on your age, you may be sleeping too much or too little.

Myth: Getting the Recommended Number of Hours Is Enough

Waking up in the middle of a sleep cycle can cause tiredness even in people who sleep the recommended number of hours. Try to time your morning wake-up so it falls between natural sleep cycles. Free services such as SleepyTi.me can help determine the best times to begin preparing for bed based on when you need to wake up.

Myth: A Quick Nap Doesn't Affect Nighttime Sleep

Naps come with great benefits, such as improved alertness, performance, memory, and even reaction time. People with no trouble sleeping at night probably won't be thrown off by a short nap during the day, but it's a different story for people with sleeping problems. For better nighttime sleep, power through drowsiness and resist napping. A quick walk outside or 10-minute stretch to activate the brain and body could stave off that tired feeling.

Myth: Exercise Is Unrelated to Sleep

According to the National Sleep Foundation, exercise can make falling asleep (and staying asleep) easier. Even 10 minutes of physical activity during the day can improve sleep quality and reduce

the likelihood of sleep disorders. People who have trouble sleeping and aren't particularly active can take a lunchtime stroll or go for a short pre-dinner speed walk. Challenge your partner to a joint workout so you both get better sleep.

[Source: Cheapism | Olivia Lin | October 12, 2021 ++]

* Finances *



COLA Summary

2022 Retirement, VA Disability, SBP and SS Recipients

Military retirees and veterans receiving disability payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will see their paychecks go up by 5.9% for 2022, triggered by inflation and an annual adjustment to the federal Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). That annual adjustment has averaged around 1.5% for the last 10 years. The adjustment rate was announced Wednesday by the Social Security Administration. The VA is required by law to alter disability payment rates by that amount. While military retirement is not legally required to follow suit, the change is traditionally the same.

For 2022, retired military members will see a \$59 increase for each \$1,000 of military retirement pension they receive each month. Retirees who entered military service on or after Aug. 1, 1986, and opted for the Career Status Bonus (CSB/Redux retirement plan) have any COLA increases reduced by 1%, so they will see a smaller increase in 2022. They should see a monthly increase of only \$49 per \$1,000. Survivors receiving Survivor Benefit Plan payments will see the same increase of \$59 per \$1,000 in their monthly payments.

Disabled veterans will also get a bump. The average VA disability check will go up about \$8.50 per month for those with a 10% rating, and \$185.65 for those rated at 100%. Military retirees and VA beneficiaries aren't the only ones who benefit from the COLA increase. Civil Service retirees and Social Security recipients also will see the 5.9% jump in their monthly checks. For Social Security recipients, the monthly increase will mean an extra \$91 per month for the average beneficiary.

How the COLA Is Determined

Each year, military retirement pay, Survivor Benefit Plan Annuities, VA Compensation and Pensions, and Social Security benefits are adjusted for the rate of inflation

. The Department of Labor determines the annual COLA by measuring the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is a measurement of a broad sampling of the cost of consumer goods and expenses. The CPI is compared to the previous year; if there is an increase, there is a COLA. If there is no increase, there is no COLA.

The COLA affects about one in every five Americans, including Social Security recipients, disabled veterans, federal retirees and retired military members. Retirees saw a 1.3% increase in 2021. The COLA increase was 1.6% in 2020. [Source: Military Officers Association of America | Jim Abshe | October 13, 2021 ++]

SSA COLA 2021

Update 01: 5.9% for 2022 Insufficient to Restore Senior's Buying Power

Soaring inflation has deeply weakened the purchasing power of Social Security benefits in 2021, according to TSCL's latest update on rising senior costs. The study, which compares the growth in the Social Security cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) with increases in the costs of goods and services typically used by retirees, found that Social Security benefits have lost 32 percent (nearly one third of buying power) since 2000. During that period, data indicate that, while COLAs have increased Social Security benefits by 55%, typical senior expenses over the same period grew by 104.9%.

The Senior Citizens League has been conducting this study for 12 years. The study typically looks at data from the 12-month period of January of the previous year to January of the current year. But with record - setting inflation in 2021, COLA researcher Mary Johnson has updated the survey this year in order to help the public and Members of Congress understand the impact that high inflation could have on Social Security buying power.

Would a 5.9% COLA restore buying power of benefits in 2022? Not completely. This is especially the case for older retirees, anyone retired prior to 2000. The average Social Security benefit in 2000 was \$816 per month. That benefit grew to \$1,262.40 by 2021 due to COLA increases. However, because retiree costs are rising at a far more rapid pace than the COLA, this study found that a Social Security benefit of \$1,671.70 per month — an extra \$409.30 per month more — would be required, just to maintain the same level of buying power as in 2000. A 5.9% COLA would increase \$1,262.40 by about \$74.50 per month before deductions for Medicare premiums. That is substantially higher than any COLA in recent years, but still not enough (by a long shot) to completely restore buying power for people have been retired for the past 20 years. [Source: The Senior Citizens League | The Advisor | October 20, 2021 ++]

SSA COLA 2021

Update 02: How a High COLA Really Impacts Social Security Income

Now that the Social Security Administration has confirmed that Social Security benefits will increase by 5.9% in January of 2022, what’s next? Several factors play an important role in determining the final financial impact that 2021’s high inflation will have on your Social Security income. But beneficiaries won’t get the full picture until well into 2023 and beyond. Although the increase in benefits is substantial, so are the offsetting impacts, because other associated factors could act to reduce your net Social Security benefit income in different ways. Here’s what to watch for:

- 1. Higher Medicare Part B premiums could absorb a significant portion of the COLA:** In 2020, with cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) forecast to be just 1.3% in 2021, and with strong support of TSCL and its grass roots, Congress moved to restrict the amount that the Part B premium could increase for 2021. That resulted in a low increase of \$3.90 per month, from \$144.60 in 2020 to \$148.50 in 2021. However, as Medicare beneficiaries make-up care that was postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic, Medicare costs are expected to climb in 2022. The Medicare Trustees recently forecast that the Part B premium for 2022 would jump by 6.7% rising to \$158.50 per month. That would still outpace the growth of the COLA.
- 2. Higher income can mean Medicare Part B and Part D premium surcharges that could absorb most, if not all of your COLA:** The level of Medicare premium that individuals pay is related to income. The COLA will increase Social Security income and, for some higher-income beneficiaries, that could potentially push their incomes into the range subject to the income-related premiums, or a higher premium surcharge, if an individual already pays higher premiums. Beneficiaries won’t know for sure until they do their income taxes for 2022 which can affect the cost of Medicare premiums for 2024. Here’s what beneficiaries pay in 2021:

If your yearly income in 2019 (for what you pay in 2021) was as indicated below

<u>File individual tax return</u>	<u>File joint tax return</u>	<u>File married & separate tax return</u>	<u>You pay each month (in 2021)</u>
\$88,000 or less	\$176,000 or less	\$88,000 or less	\$148.50
Above \$88,000 up to \$111,000	Above \$176,000 up to \$222,000	Not applicable	\$207.90
Above \$111,000 up to \$138,000	Above \$222,000 up to \$276,000	Not applicable	\$297.00
Above \$138,000 up to \$165,000	Above \$276,000 up to \$330,000	Not applicable	\$386.10

Above \$165,000 and less than \$500,000	Above \$330,000 and less than \$750,000	Above \$88,000 and less than \$412,000	\$475.20
\$500,000 or above	\$750,000 and above	\$412,000 and above	\$504.90

1. **A high COLA could subject a larger portion of your Social Security benefits to taxation:** Depending on your income, Social Security benefits can be taxable, and a higher COLA could increase both your Social Security and taxable income. Under current law, individuals with incomes of more than \$25,000 and married couples filing jointly with more than \$32,000 pay taxes on a portion of their benefits. Because these thresholds are not adjusted for inflation over time, a growing number of beneficiaries pay the tax, and on a growing portion of their benefits. How much more you pay in taxes probably won't become apparent until 2023 tax season.
2. **Extra Social Security income could result in benefit trims for SNAP, rental subsidies and other low-income programs:** Virtually all low-income programs such as food stamps, rental assistance, and Medicare Extra Help come with complex eligibility rules and income restrictions that are tied to a percentage of the federal poverty level, such as 100%, 135% or 150%. If income is right on the borderline, and a high COLA is received, that potentially could cause trims to benefits from programs. Some individuals might lose access to certain low-income benefits altogether because the COLA boosts their income over the limit. The effect tends to be tempered by the fact that the federal poverty level is adjusted for inflation every year as well, using the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U). In many years the CPI-U grows slightly faster than the index used to adjust Social Security benefits, the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Thus, the poverty level tends to keep pace with the COLA in many years. But in 2021, the CPI-U has grown more slowly than the COLA, which could lead to widespread reductions of low-income program benefits for 2022.

[Source: The Senior Citizens League | Mary Johnson | October 20, 2021 ++]

Tax Credits

Update 02: Advance Child Tax Credit Eligibility 2021

If your income was tax-exempt because of a combat deployment, you're eligible for the tax credit as long as you provide more than half the support for a qualified dependent. Homeless, unemployed, newly employed or newly-enlisted individuals making less than the reportable income threshold can also collect the tax credit. Military families and individuals may be eligible for up to \$1,800 in federal child tax credits, even if they didn't file taxes in 2019 or 2020, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

If you already applied for the Child Tax Credit on your income taxes in the past, you may already be receiving half the Child Tax Credit's total — up to \$1,800 for children ages five and younger and up to \$1,500 for children ages six through 17. The advance payments are part of the federal coronavirus response approved in March with the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. If you didn't file a 2020 or 2019 tax return, there's still time to get Advance Child Tax Credits payments. Sign up on the IRS website <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/advance-child-tax-credit-payments-in-2021> by 15 NOV. If you're eligible for the tax credit and miss the deadline to sign up, you can still claim the full credit of up to \$3,600 per child when you file your 2021 taxes next year.

Monthly Advance Child Tax Credit (CTC) payments of \$250 and \$300 started in July and ended in December. About \$15 billion in Advance CTC payments in September went to 35 million families, according to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Treasury Department. Future Advance CTC payments are scheduled for Nov. 15 and Dec. 15. For the 2021 tax year, the Child Tax Credit increased from \$2,000 per qualifying child to:

- \$3,600 for children ages 5 and younger at the end of 2021
- \$3,000 for children ages 6 through 17 at the end of 2021

If you didn't file a 2019 or 2020 federal tax return, you can still receive advance child tax credit payments. If your income was tax-exempt because of a combat deployment, you're eligible for the tax credit as long as you provide more than half the support for a qualified dependent. Homeless, unemployed, newly employed or newly-enlisted individuals making less than the reportable income threshold can also collect the tax credit.

- Eligible parents or guardians must provide half the support for a child, stepchild, sibling (including step-siblings and half-siblings), grandchild, niece or nephew or foster child who is under age 18 until Jan. 1, 2022.
- The filer (a U.S. citizen, national or resident alien) – or their spouse, if married and filing a joint return – must maintain residence in the United States for more than half the year.
- Determine your eligibility and file a simplified tax return to get payments on the IRS' Advance CTC 2021 page.

By signing up, you may also be considered for third round Economic Impact Payments of up to \$1,400 per person, the IRS said. Or, you may claim the Recovery Rebate Credit from the first two rounds of Economic Impact Payments you may have missed. To get future Advance CTC payments by direct deposit, you can make changes using the IRS' Child Tax Credit Update Portal at <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-update-portal>. If you no longer qualify for the payments, you can stop them by unenrolling. Married couples must both unenroll or one spouse might still receive payments. You may unenroll for several reasons, including expecting your taxes to be more than your refund next year. To avoid owing the IRS, claim the credit when

filing your 2021 tax return instead. [Source: The Military Wallet | Rick Martinez | October 20, 2021 ++]

Widowhood & SSA

Financial Impact

When a spouse dies, not only is there the profound emotional loss but also there's frequently a financial one as well. While a widow receives Social Security survivors' benefits, she can't receive the same amount of Social Security income that she and her deceased spouse enjoyed before. And, while Social Security income drops, the effective tax rate tends to increase due to the change in filing status. To top it all off, there are a host of bureaucratic hoops to jump through when a spouse passes away. Here's a few of the most important:

- You must return the Social Security benefit that your deceased spouse received for the month of death, and any received thereafter. You are not allowed to keep Social Security checks received for the month a person dies, even when the death was on the last day of the month. If your spouse passed away in September, the September benefit is the check received in October. That money must be returned to the Social Security Administration, even if you were dealing with piles of medical bills in your spouse's last month of life.
- You will not receive a survivor benefit in addition to your own retirement benefit. You receive the higher of the two and, for the overwhelming majority of women, that means giving up your own retirement benefit to receive the higher survivors benefit.
- If you receive your own retirement benefit, rather than a spouse benefit, your benefit will not automatically convert to a survivors benefit — you must apply. You cannot apply online however, and you must get an appointment from the Social Security Administration. Survivors must contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to request an appointment. News reports suggest this has been huge problem for many eligible beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to staffing shortages and closed local offices. TSCL is still sorting through Social Security survivor data, which appears to be lower than the 5,886,000 forecast by the Social Security Trustees in 2020. We are not certain whether some of this is because of deaths due to COVID-19, or problems that eligible beneficiaries may have had in scheduling appointments to file claims for survivor benefits, or both.
- Your tax filing status and exemptions change. Tax rates and exemptions tend to be more favorable for married couples filing jointly. When a spouse passes away, you will file as a "single" taxpayer in the following tax year. Single taxpayers often must pay a higher

effective rate than married couples, and you don't qualify for the more generous standard exemption for joint filers.

Several approaches to modify Social Security benefits in order to aid widows are available to Congress. One widely discussed option would boost the widow's benefit to a percentage of the couple's combined Social Security benefit (such as 75% of the combined benefit) when the deceased spouse was alive, allowing the widow to choose the higher of the new boosted benefit or what she would otherwise receive as a widow's benefit. [Source: [Source: The Senior Citizens League | October 19, 2021 ++]

Health Insurance

Competition Dwindling

The American Medical Association on 28 SEP published its 20th annual report on the state of health insurance competition. It is intended to help researchers, policymakers, and federal and state regulators identify markets where consolidation involving health insurers may cause competitive harm to consumers and providers of care. This study addresses the following questions:

- Are health insurance markets competitive or do health insurers possess market power?
- Are proposed mergers involving insurers likely to maintain, enhance or create such power?

These are important questions of public policy because the use of market power harms society in both output and input markets. When an insurer exercises market power in its output market (the sale of insurance coverage), premiums are higher and quantity of coverage is lower than in a competitive market. When an insurer exercises market power in its input market (e.g., physician services), payments to providers and the quantity of health care are below competitive levels. In short, the exercise of market power adversely affects health insurance coverage and health care.

The study analyzed 384 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) throughout all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Here are seven things revealed it:

1. Seventy-three percent of MSAs were highly concentrated markets, as dubbed by federal guidelines. This is up from 71 percent in 2014.
2. Over half (54 percent) of these highly concentrated MSAs grew more concentrated between 2014 and 2020.
3. Nearly half (46 percent) of MSAs had an insurer that held more than half of the market.
4. Fourteen states had insurers that controlled over half of the insurance market.
5. Alabama, Michigan, Louisiana, South Carolina and Hawaii were the states with the least competitive commercial markets.

6. Anthem held the most top spots in MSA market shares (80), followed by Health Care Service Corp. (44), UnitedHealth Group (22), Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida (22), Highmark (20) and Kaiser (20).

7. At the national level, UnitedHealth Group has the most market share (15 percent), followed by Anthem (12 percent), Aetna (11 percent), Cigna (10 percent), Kaiser (7 percent), and Health Care Service Corp. (6 percent). Since 2014, the only change in market share standings has been Kaiser overtaking Health Care Service Corp.

In sum the study strongly suggests that health insurers are exercising market power in many parts of the country and, in turn, causing competitive harm to consumers and providers of care. Go to <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/competition-health-insurance-us-markets.pdf> to read the entire report. [Source: Becker's Hospital Review | Nick Moran | September 29, 2021 ++]

Covid-19 Treatment

Update 13: Hospitalized Patients Could Owe Thousands

Americans who are hospitalized with COVID-19 in 2021 may have to pay thousands of dollars in medical bills as insurers lift waivers, according to a University of Michigan analysis published in JAMA Network Open on 18 OCT. The study analyzed more than 4,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations of people with private insurance and Medicare Advantage insurance between March and September 2020. While most health insurers in 2020 voluntarily waived co-pays, deductibles and other cost-sharing, many stopped the waivers in early 2021.

Without the waivers, people could owe \$3,800 if they have job-related or self-purchased private insurance, or \$1,500 if they have Medicare Advantage plans. In total, each hospitalization of a person with private insurance costs about \$42,200 on average, and each hospitalization with Medicare Advantage costs about \$21,400 on average. The study also found that cost-sharing waivers don't always cover all hospitalization care. Seventy-one percent of those with private insurance were charged an average of \$788, and 49 percent of those with Medicare Advantage were charged an average of \$277.

"Many insurers claim that it is justified to charge patients for COVID-19 hospitalizations now that COVID-19 vaccines are widely available," said lead author Kao-Ping Chua, MD, PhD, in an 18 OCT statement. "However, some people hospitalized for COVID-19 aren't eligible for vaccines, such as young children, while others are vaccinated patients who experienced a severe breakthrough infection. Our study suggests these patients could [owe] substantial bills." [Source: Beckers Hospital CFO Report | Marissa Plescia | October 19, 2021 ++]

Dental Costs

Update 05: What You Can Expect to Pay in 2021

If you do not have dental insurance, paying for dental care can be a challenge. The price of dental procedures in the U.S. can vary greatly when you're paying out-of-pocket. Having up-to-date information on how much dental procedures cost can be a great help in planning your treatment. If you've been wondering how much is a root canal or how much does a dental implant cost, refer to <https://expressdentist.com/dental-prices> for a comprehensive list of prices for many types of dental procedures. It covers:

- Cost of Routine Dental Care
- Cost of Single-Visit Dental Procedures
- Cost of Surgical Dental Procedures
- Cost of Orthodontic Treatment

Note that the dental costs provided are estimates and reflect typical prices for dental procedures with no dental insurance. The cost of dental care can vary depending on your geographical location and other factors. You may also get discounts on dental procedures from some dentists, which will bring your out-of-pocket expenses down. The only way to get an exact and accurate estimate is to ask a specific dental office for a quote. However, this list of estimated dental procedure costs for 2021 should help you in budgeting for your dental care. [Source: Express Dentist | Peter Dubois | October 2021 ++]

Inflation

Update 01: CPI Jump from September 2020 to 2021

Inflation is driving prices through the roof everywhere, from the grocery store to the gas pump. According to the Labor Department, the Consumer Price Index jumped 5.4% from September 2020 to September 2021, the largest year-over-year increase since 1991. The latest numbers break down these price increases in painful detail. Following are some of the biggest and most sobering.

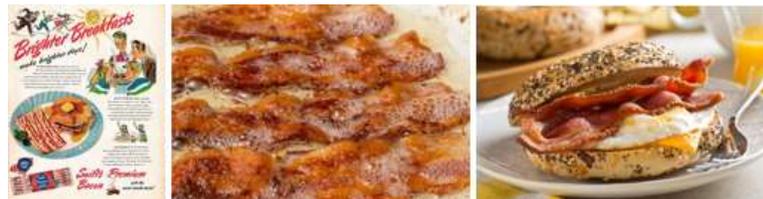
- Bacon: 19.3%
- Beef and Veal: 17.6%
- Bicycles: 8.9%
- Car Rentals: 42.9%
- Computers and Smart Home Technology: 8.5%
- Eggs: 12.6%
- Fresh Fish and Seafood: 10.7%

- Fuel Oil: 42.6%
- Furniture: 11.2%
- Gasoline: 42.1%
- Jewelry: 8.1%
- Kids' Shoes: 11.9%
- Lodging: 19.8%
- Moving: 9.4%
- Natural Gas: 20.6%
- Propane, Kerosene, and Firewood: 27.6%
- TVs: 12.7%
- Used Cars: 24.4%
- Washers and Dryers: 19.1%

In retrospect looks like the 5.9% across the board COLA increase for everyone starting in JAN 2022 is not going to be enough to cover our expenditures next year at the same level we did this year. A little belt tightening will most likely be in order for all except the affluent. [Source: Cheapism| Sandra Latham | October 14, 2021 ++]

Bacon

How Much More Does it really Cost Now?



It's safe to say America is obsessed with bacon. We've long enjoyed delicious strips of bacon with our eggs and on our burgers, but now we're finding increasingly creative ways to eat more bacon — from desserts to cocktails. And while it seems like the price of bacon seems to increase with our demand, you may be surprised to learn that the cost of a pound of sliced bacon hasn't changed dramatically since 1940 when you adjust for inflation. To find out why, and how much bacon cost was in the pass, read on.

1940 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.23 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: \$4.43

Having made it through the Great Depression when goods such as bacon were a luxury for many, Americans enjoyed a period of relatively low prices for the good stuff. But in the midst of World War II, the country's resources — including meat — were redirected toward the war effort, and those prices began to rise.

1941 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.29 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.36**

Having made it through the Great Depression when goods such as bacon were a luxury for many, Americans enjoyed a period of relatively low prices for the good stuff. But in the midst of World War II, the country's resources — including meat — were redirected toward the war effort, and those prices began to rise.

1942 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.34 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.67**

The U.S. entry into World War II may have helped employ millions of Americans following the Depression, but that also meant that more people were able to afford bacon — and more of it — than before. Combined with the demands for food reserves for servicemen heading to the front lines, the price of bacon spiked.

1943 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.35 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.43**

To help counteract the rising prices of bacon and other goods during the war, the U.S. government instituted a complex rationing program. While it likely helped reduce bacon prices in the years to come, it meant shoppers often had to use stamps or points to buy things such as bacon and monitor changing prices constantly. It also meant that bacon was sometimes unavailable at the local market, and led to a black market of point trading and selling for some.

1944 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.33 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.09**

While the price of bacon declined steadily during the war, those at home were encouraged to save their bacon grease for the war effort. The fat was converted into glycerin, which was used to make certain bombs. Only about half of Americans donated to the effort, however, as cooking fats and oils were in short supply, and Americans had long used bacon grease in the kitchen and were reluctant to give it up.

1945 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.34 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.10**

1947 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.64 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$7.90**

The costs of goods and services often rise following a war, and bacon prices were no exception. When adjusted for inflation, bacon reached one of the highest prices in recent history, likely leading some bacon lovers to do without for a while.

1950 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.52 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.94**

1955 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.54 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.49**

1960 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.54 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$4.96**

By the end of the 1950s, the economy was booming, and Americans enjoyed low prices on one of their favorite breakfast items. As more people started moving to the suburbs and fast-food companies began to spread across the country, Americans were eating more bacon on the go and at home.

1965 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.69 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.93**

1970 -- Cost of Bacon: \$0.82 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.74**

1975 -- Cost of Bacon: \$1.55 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$7.86**

Bacon prices hit a record high in 1975 with numbers not seen since 1947. Inflation during the mid-1970s is likely to blame for the price spike, which also happened for oil and other goods. The price was high even by today's standards. These were tough times for bacon lovers.

1980 -- Cost of Bacon: \$1.43 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$4.70**

As we entered the 1980s, slimming down with health-conscious diet fads, Tab, and Thighmasters was all the rage, which meant that indulgent treats such as bacon were often shunned or substituted with lower fat options (remember Sizzlean?). As demand declined, so did the price of bacon. Good news for those who skipped the diets and stuck with bacon, though.

1985 -- Cost of Bacon: \$1.98 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.00**

1990 -- Cost of Bacon: \$2.21 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$4.62**

1995 -- Cost of Bacon: \$2.34 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$4.17**

Great strides in precooked-bacon technology during the early '90s made it much easier for fast food companies to add bacon to their sandwiches. As a result, McDonald's launched the Bacon Double Cheeseburger and Quarter Pounder BLT, followed by Burger King's Whopper with bacon and Wendy's Baconator. The trend set in motion bacon's rise in popularity and prices increased with demand.

2000 -- Cost of Bacon: \$3.46 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.45**

After a few years of lower prices, bacon returned to its status as America's favorite topping. At the same time, kale and healthy smoothies became increasingly popular, which prompted a counter-trend of bacon-lovers looking to indulge with even more bacon.

2005 -- Cost of Bacon: \$4.09 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$5.71**

While bacon was occasionally used by high-end restaurants — maybe to wrap scallops — it was relegated mostly to breakfast and fast food. That began to change in the mid-aughts when notable chefs such as David Chang began singing the praises of pork belly and bacon. No longer satisfied with just supermarket bacon, consumers began demanding, and buying, artisanal, thick-cut bacon from venerable producers including Niman Ranch and Nueske's.

2010 -- Cost of Bacon: \$5.25 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$6.54**

The price of a pound of bacon jumps past the \$5 mark, even without adjusting for inflation. And America's bacon obsession shows no sign of slowing.

2015 -- Cost of Bacon: \$5.48 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$6.24**

2020 -- Cost of Bacon: \$5.21 Inflation-Adjusted Cost: **\$4.99**

Following a steady rise over the past two decades, bacon prices finally dropped to levels not seen in years, much to the joy of bacon lovers everywhere. The drop is largely attributed to the hog industry's fervent expansion over the past few years in an effort to keep up with consumer demand. Bacon prices also often drop slightly around spring as many people shop for ham for Easter instead. Hopefully, bacon prices will stay stable — 2020 prices hovered just below the \$5 mark — awaiting us to devise even crazier ways of eating more bacon.

[Source: Cheapism | Danny Jensen | August 26, 2021 ++]

Text Message Scams

Update 01: Wrong Number? Don't Even Text Back

A new text message scam seems so innocent that it's tempting to reply. But con artists are using phony "wrong number" texts to lure victims into conversation and falling for a scam.

How the scam works

- You receive a text that reads something like this: "Hey is this John? It's Amanda. We chatted on Tinder before when I came to visit my cousin but we never met irl. I'm back in town if you want to meet up this time, are you free?"
- If you reply to a text like this, even with a polite, "Sorry, wrong number," the stranger responds anyway, seemingly ignoring your answer. Usually, you'll receive a few compliments and some photos of "Amanda," who appears to be a scantily clad blonde woman. However, as the word gets out about this scam, scammers will change up the names, backstory, and photos.
- If you continue to engage with the stranger, who is really a chat bot, it tries to trick you into registering for dating or adult websites. Your new "friend" will encourage you to sign up for a specific website to see more explicit photos, which may involve offering up your credit card number. Considering the dubious nature of this scam, if you hand over your credit card information at any point, you could be putting yourself at risk for fraudulent charges and identity theft.

How to avoid chat bot cons:

- **Ignore texts from strangers.** If you receive a text from someone you don't know, simply don't reply. It's the safest route. If you engage with a scammer, even briefly, they will mark your number as active and you could receive even more shady texts in the future.
- **Block numbers that appear to come from scammers.** Unsolicited texts that look like they come from a chat bot or that ask you to click on suspicious links are probably not safe. Block these numbers to prevent scammers from contacting you through them again.
- **Never give your personal information to strangers.** Never share your credit card or banking information, your full name, home address, or social security number with someone you never met in person.

For More Information

Learn more about how to identify scams at BBB's new Spot a Scam page and this tip about fake text messages. Read more about a similar scam, text messages with surprise offers at <https://www.bbb.org/all/spot-a->

[scam?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=BBB&utm_campaign=scam-alert](https://www.bbb.org/scam?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=BBB&utm_campaign=scam-alert).

If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker at <https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker>. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at BBB's website <https://www.bbb.org/article/scams/8767-bbb-tips-10-steps-to-avoid-scams>. [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | October 27, 2021 ++]

Holiday Scams

Update 06: Shoppers Burned by Ads for Holiday Decor

If you're planning to get festive with your Halloween, Christmas, or other holiday decorations, keep your eyes open for this scam. BBB Scam Tracker has received complaints about false advertisements and phony promises for holiday decor.

How the scam works

- You are searching for some holiday decorations for your home or lawn. You come across the perfect item through a social media ad or a search result. The photos on the website look great! The decorations are larger-than-life with incredible lights and features and, best of all, low prices.
- You make your payment and wait for the decorations to arrive. However, when your package is delivered, the product is nothing like what you saw online. In many cases, it's a poorly manufactured miniature version of what you thought you bought. You now don't have a way to return the items or receive a refund. In fact, you probably won't even be able to contact the company.
- One consumer reported the following experience: "I ordered a giant 7-foot pumpkin head and giant 7-foot skeleton with LED eyes and sounds. What I finally got in the mail after almost a month was two rubber 7-inch dolls that sort of looked like what they were advertising. This company will not reply to their emails, which is the only means of communicating. The items looked amazing online, but the store is a total scam."

How to avoid holiday decor scams:

- Do your research before you buy. Before you make a purchase on an unfamiliar website, check out the company. Make sure they have working contact information. This should include a telephone number, email address, and, preferably, a physical address. Look on other websites for reviews of the company and reports of scams. You can always look for business ratings and customer reviews on BBB.org.

- Be wary of deals that seem too good to be true. Keep in mind that large decorations that involve special lights and technology are expensive. If you find something amazing for cheap, it could be a scam.
- Don't make quick purchases on social media. Scam advertisers can track your buying habits from social media ads and then target you with specific products they think you'll fall for. Don't buy anything on impulse while scrolling through your feed. Do research first to avoid getting scammed.
- Always use your credit card for online purchases. Credit card companies allow you to dispute fraudulent charges, a resource you may not have at your disposal if you purchase an item with a debit or gift card.

For more information

Review the [BBB Tip: Shop Safe and Shop Smart this Holiday Season](#) for more ways to protect yourself from scams while holiday shopping. If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker at <https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker>. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at BBB.org/AvoidScams. [Source: BBB Scam Alerts | October 29, 2021 ++]

Tax Burden on Oregon Vets

As of OCT 2021

Many people planning to retire use the presence or absence of a state income tax as a litmus test for a retirement destination. This is a serious miscalculation since higher sales and property taxes can more than offset the lack of a state income tax. The lack of a state income tax doesn't necessarily ensure a low total tax burden. States raise revenue in many ways including sales taxes, excise taxes, license taxes, income taxes, intangible taxes, property taxes, estate taxes and inheritance taxes. Depending on where you live, you may end up paying all of them or just a few. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you move to Oregon in 2021

Sales Taxes

Oregon is one of five states with no statewide sales tax, but Oregon law still allows municipalities or cities to enact their own local sales taxes at their discretion. Ashland, for example, has a 5% local sales tax on the sale of prepared food.

Excise Taxes

An excise tax is a tax directly levied on certain goods by a state or federal government. The most prominent excise taxes collected by the state government are the fuel tax on gasoline and the so-called "sin tax" collected on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. An excise tax is not the same thing as the state Sales Tax which is collected as a percentage of the final purchase price of all qualifying sales, and is collected directly from the end consumer of the product. The state's excise

taxes, on the other hand, are flat per-unit taxes that must be paid directly to the state government by the merchant before the goods can be sold. Merchants may be required to attach tax stamps to taxable merchandise to show that the excise tax was paid. Other general taxes, similar to excise taxes, may be collected on other items including tanning salons, vehicle sales, firearms, gas guzzlers, transportation tickets, and more.

Even though excise taxes are collected from businesses, virtually all merchants pass on the excise tax to the customer through higher prices for the taxed goods. The state collects an average of \$321 in yearly excise taxes per capita, one of the lowest average per capita excise taxes in the country.

- **Alcohol:** Beer: \$0.08 per gal | Wine: \$0.67 per gal | Liquor \$22.72 per gal. The excise tax on beer is one of the lowest beer taxes in the country. Oregon's beer excise tax is ranked #45 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on wine is lower than 60% of the other 50 states. Oregon's excise tax on wine is ranked #30 out of the 50 states. The excise tax on liquor is one of the highest liquor taxes in the country. Oregon's excise tax on Spirits is ranked #2 out of the 50 states. Note that the IRS also collects a federal excise taxes on alcoholic beverages, which are included separately from your alcohol taxes in the final purchase price.
- **Cannabis:** Retail -- 17% excise tax (retail price) as well as an additional 3% local municipal tax. Medical -- none
- **Cellphone:** The average tax collected on cell phone plans is \$1.81 per phone service plan, one of the lowest cellphone taxes in the country. Oregon's average cellphone tax is ranked #50 out of the 50 states. The cellphone tax is already included in the service plan price you pay to your service provider, and may be listed as "Misc. taxes and Fees" or "Other" on your
- **Cigarettes:** The excise tax on cigarettes is \$1.31 per 20 cigarettes, lower than 54% of the other 50 states and is ranked #27 out of the 50 states. The tax is applied to every 20 cigarettes sold (the size of an average pack of cigarettes). If a pack contains more than 20 cigarettes, a higher excise tax will be collected.
- **Fuel:** The excise tax on gasoline is 30 ¢ per gallon and diesel fuel is 16¢ per gallon, higher than 72% of the other 50 states and is ranked #14 out of the 50 states. The gas tax is included in the pump price at all gas stations in the state and is in addition to the federal excise tax of 18.4¢ per gallon on gasoline and 24.4¢ per gallon, on diesel. The federal tax was last raised in OCT 1993 and is not indexed to inflation, which has increased a total of 77% from 1993 to 2020. Refer to <https://www.salestaxhandbook.com/oregon/gasoline-fuel> for all state and federal excise taxes for all types of fuel.
- **Vehicle:** The state collects a **registration fee** and a **title fee** on the sale or transfer of cars and motorcycles, which are essentially renamed excise taxes. Go to

<https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/DMV/pages/fees/vehicle.aspx> to determine the amount of fees to be paid. Unlike standard excise taxes, however, the end consumer must pay the tax directly to the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and receive documentation (registration and title papers) proving the fees were paid.

Personal Income Taxes

The average family pays \$3,651 in state income taxes which is ranked 1st of 51 states. Oregon's high income taxes are partially due to the fact that Oregon has no state sales tax. Tax brackets for earnings under \$125,000 are indexed for inflation and adjusted yearly, while tax brackets over \$125,000 are only changed explicitly by statute.

Tax Rate Range: Low – 5%; High – 9.9%.

Income Brackets: Lowest – up to \$3,550; Highest – \$125,500+

Number of Brackets: 4

Personal Exemptions: \$210 each. The personal exemption credit is not allowed if federal AGI exceeds \$100,000 for single filers or \$200,000 for joint filers.

Standard Deduction: Single – \$2,315; Married filing jointly or Qualifying widow(er) – \$4,630; Head of Household \$3,725

Additional Deductions: 65 or older or blind if single or HoH – \$1,200; or \$1,000 all other filers.

Itemized Deductions Allowed: Some

Medical/Dental Deduction: Health care expenses are deductible in Oregon up to the amount that exceeds 7.5% of federal adjusted gross income. Taxpayers may include medical expenses from a spouse or dependents listed on the Oregon tax return if they earned under \$4,200. Oregon allows a tax credit on long-term care insurance premiums. The credit is the 15% of premiums paid or \$500, whichever is less.

Federal Income Tax Deduction: Up to \$6,950 of Federal income tax paid

Retirement Income Taxes: Most retirement income is subject to Oregon tax when received by an Oregon resident. This is true even if you were a nonresident when you earned the income. However, you may subtract some or all of your federal pension income from Oregon income. The state does not tax Social Security or railroad retirement benefits. Depending on your age and income, you may be entitled to a retirement income credit on your Oregon return. If you receive a U.S. government pension, you may be entitled to subtract part or all of that pension on your Oregon Individual income tax return. Refer to <http://www.oregon.gov/Pages/index.aspx> for more information,

Retired Military Pay: Military retirees may be able to subtract some or all federal pension income. This includes benefits paid to the surviving spouse. Retirees can subtract their entire federal pension if all federal service months occurred before October 1, 1991. Those who did not serve before October 1, 1991, cannot subtract federal pension. If service included months before and after October 1, 1991, a pension income percentage is eligible for subtraction.

Military Pay: Active Duty, Reserve and National Guard non-retirement income is taxed for state residents.

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.

Social Security Benefit: None

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: see Retired Military Pay

Website: Oregon Department of Revenue <https://www.oregon.gov/DOR/Pages/index.aspx>

Questions: <https://www.oregon.gov/DOR/FAQ/Pages/default.aspx>; Tel 503-378-4988 or 800-356-4222; questions.dor@oregon.gov

Tax Forms:

- https://www.oregon.gov/dor/forms/FormsPubs/form-or-40-inst_101-040-1_2020.pdf
Oregon Instructions
- https://www.oregon.gov/dor/forms/FormsPubs/form-or-40_101-040_2020.pdf Form OR-40 Individual Income Tax Return
- https://www.oregon.gov/dor/forms/FormsPubs/schedule-or-a_101-007_2020.pdf Oregon Itemized Deductions
- https://www.oregon.gov/dor/forms/FormsPubs/schedule-or-a-inst_101-007-1_2020.pdf
Itemized Deductions Instructions
- <https://www.oregon.gov/dor/forms/Pages/default.aspx> All Tax forms

Penalties. Delinquent payments have an immediate penalty of 5% and recurring 9% annual interest until paid. You'll be charged a 20 percent penalty for failing to file your return if you file it more than three months after the due date, including extensions. If both penalties apply, the total penalty will be 25 percent of the unpaid tax.

Property Taxes

The median property tax in Oregon is \$2,241.00 per year for a home worth the median value of \$257,400.00. For more localized property tax rates, find your county at <http://www.tax-rates.org/oregon/property-tax#Counties>. Counties in Oregon collect an average of 0.87% of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax per year. Oregon is ranked number fifteen out of the fifty states, in order of the average amount of property taxes collected. Oregon's median income is \$62,418 per year, so the median yearly property tax paid by Oregon residents amounts to approximately 3.59% of their yearly income. Oregon is ranked 16th of the 50 states for property taxes as a percentage of median income.

- The Oregon Constitution limits the rate of growth of property value subject to taxation. The limit is based on a property's maximum assessed value (MAV). MAV can't increase by more than 3-percent each year, unless there are changes to the property, such as the

addition of a new structure, improvement of an existing structure, or subdivision or partition of the property.

- If you're a disabled veteran or the surviving spouse or registered domestic partner (partner)* of a veteran, you may be entitled to exempt \$23,370 or \$28,045 of your home-
stead property's assessed value from property taxes.
- There is no discount for seniors or veterans. However, Homeowners 62 or older may delay paying property taxes based on certain income criteria. The state offers a Property Tax Deferral for Disabled and Senior Citizens Program, which allows qualified taxpayers to defer payment of their property taxes on their homes. The state pays the taxes to the county, maintains the account, and charges 6% simple interest, which also is deferred. Taxes are owed when the taxpayer receiving the deferral dies, sells the property, ceases to live permanently on the property, or the property changes ownership.

To qualify for the program, the taxpayer must live on the property and have a total household income of less than \$46,500 for the year before application. Participants may remain on either program as long as their federal adjusted gross income does not exceed that amount. If a participant's income exceeds the \$46,500 limit, part of the taxes still may be deferred. Participants can come in and out of the programs if their income changes. In addition to meeting the income limitation and property ownership requirement, disabled persons must be receiving or be eligible to receive federal Social Security Disability benefits to qualify. Residents must be 62 years old or older to qualify for the Property Tax Deferral for Disabled and Senior Citizens Program. For additional info refer to https://www.oregon.gov/DOR/forms/FormsPubs/deferral-disabled-senior_490-015.pdf or call 800-356-4222.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

Oregon has an estate transfer tax on estates valued at \$1 million or more. The rate spans from 10% to 16%. The tax is paid by the estate using Form OR-706, not by the individuals receiving the inheritance. For more information, see the instructions for Form OR-706 at https://www.oregon.gov/dor/forms/FormsPubs/form-or-706-inst_104-001-1_2020.pdf.

Other State Tax Rates

To compare the above sales, excise, income, and property tax rates to those accessed in other states go to:

- Sales Tax: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/sales-tax-by-state>.
- Excise Taxes (i.e. gasoline, cigarettes, cellphones, automobiles, beer, wine, and liquor: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/excise-tax-by-state>.
- Personal Income Tax: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/income-tax-by-state>.
- Property Tax: <http://www.tax-rates.org/taxtables/property-tax-by-state>.
- Income Tax: <https://taxfoundation.org/state-individual-income-tax-rates-brackets-2019>
- State Tax Comparisons <https://www.moaa.org/content/state-report-card/statereportcard>

-o-o-O-o-o-

For further information visit Oregon Department of Revenue <https://www.oregon.gov/dor> or call (503) 378-4988 or (800) 356-4222. [Source: <https://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-new-york-wyoming#Oregon> | October 2021 ++]

* General Interest *



Notes of Interest

OCT 16 thru 31, 2021

- **Military Discounts.** If you know of a business that would like to promote the fact they offer discounts for Veterans, refer them to 4VetsProject and they will pay 50% of all revenue they receive from them back to you as an individual or your organization as a non-profit! For further details call Joseph C. Walterbach at 503-636-0586 or email jwalterbach@4vetsproject.org.
- **AE.** The aviation electrician navy website <https://aviationelectrician.navy> is a personnel experience and helpful information for those wishing to join the US Navy and are interested in the aviation field.
- **\$10K Suppository.** In 2008, a box of 30 anti-inflammatory rectal suppositories that treat arthritis, called Indocin, had a price tag of \$198. As of Oct. 1, the price of that same box was 52 times higher, totaling \$10,350. An example of how nothing prevents some drug companies from hiking prices at will and selling them within a broken supply chain.
- **Burial.** Sens. John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer are calling on the Department of Veterans Affairs to open eligibility of state veteran cemeteries to members of Reserves and the National Guard.
- **Covid-19 Vaccine.** Johnson & Johnson, which is selling the vaccine at a not-for-profit price of \$7.50 per dose, registered \$502 million of global revenue from its COVID-19 vaccine in the third quarter of 2021, bringing year-to-date vaccine sales to \$766 million. Pfizer expects their revenue, will reach \$33.5 billion this year.
- **Covid-19 Vaccine.** More than 95% of the 1.4 million active duty service members have received at least one dose of vaccines against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, according to the latest figures from the Defense Department.
- **Covid-19 Hospitalization Cost.** California's: Complex: \$461,780 Noncomplex: \$111,213. Go to <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/finance/average-charge-for-covid-19-hospitalization-by-state.html> to see your state's average cost.

- **Bonhomme Richard fire.** The command investigation report’s “accountability” section recommends disciplinary action against 36 Navy officials, from the amphib’s enlisted ranks up to the former three-star head of Naval Surface Force Pacific.
- **GTMO.** A federal judge has found that a former Afghan militant has been held unlawfully at the Guantánamo Bay detention camp. His lawyers said it was the first time in 10 years that a detainee has won such a case against the U.S. government.
- **Afghanistan.** Russian President Vladimir Putin on 21 OCT said his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden had been right to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, a move that allowed the Taliban to seize power in a lightning offensive in August.
- **Credit Card Debt.** Earlier in the pandemic, revolving debt had been on the decline, but this summer, the Federal Reserve reported a 6.7% increase of this type of debt over the same time last year. And at \$956 billion, revolving debt appears to be on the way back to the \$1 trillion mark hit in 2017.
- **Vet Legislation.** At <https://youtu.be/sPswBY5OYkc> can be viewed the 13 OCT House Veteran’s Affairs Subcommittee on Health 125 min hearing on 13 bills affecting veterans.
- **VA Disability Rule.** If you have a VA rated disability you should be aware of the 10 year Termination rule. Check it out at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vUSbOUO00Q.

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

GTMO Detainees

Update 06: Majid Khan Gives First Public Account of CIA Torture



A Guantánamo Bay prisoner who was brutally interrogated at U.S. government “black sites” described in court for the first time the intense CIA abuse tactics he endured. Majid Khan, 41, a former Baltimore suburb resident turned al Qaeda courier, told a military jury on 28 OCT about forced feedings and enemas, waterboarding and other physical and sexual abuse he was subjected to from 2003 to 2006 in the CIA’s overseas prison network, multiple outlets reported.

Khan is now the first-ever former prisoner of the CIA’s secretive prisons to describe openly the inhumane “enhanced interrogation techniques” that agents used to press information and confessions from terrorism suspects and that were officially ended in 2009. He said interrogators began to torture him shortly after his capture in March 2003 in Pakistan, though he cooperated and told them everything he knew. “Instead, the more I cooperated, the more I was tortured,” he said. Some of Khan's accounts were included in a 2014 Senate Intelligence Committee report that accused the CIA of torturing al Qaeda prisoners far past legal boundaries with little proof the interrogation techniques produced useful information.

Reading from a 39-page account on 28 OCT, Khan described being beaten, starved, suspended naked from the ceiling with a hood over his head for long periods, chained in a way that kept him awake for days and held under water until he nearly drowned. “I thought I was going to die,” he said. His account did not identify CIA agents or other countries or foreign intelligence agencies that had a hand in his secret detention, as that information is protected at the national security court. “I would beg them to stop and swear to them that I didn't know anything,” he said, as reported by NPR. “If I had intelligence to give I would have given it already but I didn't have anything to give.”

Kahn spoke on the first of what is expected to be a two-day sentencing hearing at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, where a panel of military officers can sentence him to between 25 and 40 years in prison. He is expected to serve a far shorter sentence due to cooperation with U.S. officials and a secret plea deal. That deal will reduce Kahn’s sentence to no more than 11 years with credit for time already spent in custody since his February 2012 guilty plea. Khan, a Pakistani citizen who was born in Saudi Arabia, came to Maryland at the age of 16 when his family moved and were granted asylum in the 1990s. He graduated from a suburban Baltimore high school and worked for a telecommunications contractor in the Washington, D.C., area at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

Khan said he became radicalized after his mother died earlier in 2001 and during a family trip to Pakistan in 2002 his relatives showed him “propaganda videos” about Guantánamo’s detention center. He apologized for his actions, claiming full responsibility, and said he has forgiven his captors and torturers and just wants to be reunited with his wife and a daughter who was born while he was detained. [Source: The Hill | Ellen Mitchell | October 29, 2021 ++]

Afghan ISIS-K

Update 01: Intelligence Assessment on Their International Strike Capability

Terrorist groups within Afghanistan could strike international targets within six months if left unchecked, defense officials warned lawmakers on 26 OCT. “We’re actually fairly certain that

they have the intention to do so,” said Colin Kahl, the Defense Department’s undersecretary for policy, during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the security situation in Afghanistan following the U.S. military’s withdrawal from the country. “We could see ISIS-K generate that capability in somewhere between six or 12 months, according to current assessments by the intelligence committee. And for al Qaida, it would take a year or two to reconstitute that capability. We have to remain vigilant against that possibility.”



Kahl’s public comments confirmed intelligence assessments delivered to lawmakers in classified sessions over recent weeks, and raise new concerns about the long-term threat posed to the American homeland by a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Kahl was the latest in a series of defense officials to testify in the eight weeks since the U.S. departure, and offered a similar defense of the decision to end the ongoing deployment this summer. “The war as we know it isn’t continuing, but the terrorist threat continues,” he said. “What we saw unfold in the last few months would have happened whenever we left Afghanistan.”

He also said that intelligence officials say the risk to the American homeland “is at its lowest point since Sept. 11, 2001” despite the intentions of terrorist organizations working to regroup in Afghanistan. Conservative lawmakers bristled at the comment. “It doesn’t sound like a low risk when you have just told us that the possibility of an attack from ISIS-K on our homeland could come six to 12 months from now,” said Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA). But Kahl said that is not a foregone conclusion, but instead a warning that U.S. officials must use their long-range anti-terrorism capabilities to make sure the groups don’t gain strength.

“Those estimates from the intel community are based on no U.S. or coalition intervention,” said Lt. Gen. James Mingus, director for operations for the Joint Staff. “The goal would be to keep those time horizons where they’re at now or push them even further [with military strikes].” Kahl said he also expects the Taliban to help, though not because of any goodwill to America or humanitarian concerns. “The Taliban and ISIS-K are mortal enemies, so the Taliban is heavily motivated to go after them.”

Defense officials did not give specifics on what counter-terrorism strikes will entail, but were scheduled to brief senators on specifics later. Committee officials have also discussed the possibility of setting up an independent commission to look into the lingering threats and the

missteps made by American leaders over the last 20 years in regards to security in the region
[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | October 26, 2021 ++]

Taiwan-China Dispute

Update 13: Biden's Comment on U.S. Support Commitment

China on 22 OCT said there is “no room” for compromise or concessions over the issue of Taiwan, following a comment by U.S. President Joe Biden that the U.S. is committed to defending the island if it is attacked. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin reasserted China’s longstanding claim that the island is its territory at a daily briefing after Biden made his comment a day before at a forum hosted by CNN. China has recently upped its threat to bring Taiwan under its control by force if necessary by flying warplanes near the island and rehearsing beach landings.

“When it comes to issues related to China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and other core interests, there is no room for China to compromise or make concessions, and no one should underestimate the strong determination, firm will and strong ability of the Chinese people to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” Wang said. “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory. The Taiwan issue is purely an internal affair of China that allows no foreign intervention,” Wang said.

Biden’s comments on Thursday were viewed as stretching the “strategic ambiguity” Washington has maintained over how it would respond to an assault on the self-governing island republic. The U.S. should “be cautious with its words and actions on the Taiwan issue, and not send any wrong signals to the separatist forces of Taiwan independence, so as not to seriously damage China-U.S. relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait,” Wang said. In his comments, Biden said the U.S. did not want a new Cold War but expressed concern about whether China was “going to engage in activities that will put them in a position where they may make a serious mistake.”

“I just want to make China understand that we are not going to step back, we are not going to change any of our views.” Biden said. Asked whether the U.S. would come to Taiwan’s defense if it were attacked, he replied: “Yes, we have a commitment to do that.” However, after the president’s remarks at a CNN event, the White House quickly declared that the American policy of “strategic ambiguity” over the island’s defense had not changed. Asked Friday whether the U.S. would defend Taiwan if the island were attacked by China, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told a reporter he would not discuss hypothetical situations, but also said, “Nobody wants to see cross-Strait issues come to blows — certainly not President Biden, and there’s no reason that it should.” Speaking in Brussels after a NATO defense ministers’ meeting, Austin added that Washington remains committed to its longstanding “one China” policy.

In Taipei, a spokesperson for independence-minded President Tsai Ing-wen said the U.S. has shown its support for Taiwan through concrete actions and the island's 23 million citizens would not surrender to pressure or act rashly. "Taiwan will demonstrate our firm determination to defend ourselves and continue to work with countries with similar values to make a positive contribution toward the Taiwan Strait and Indo-Pacific region's peace and stability," spokesperson Chang Tun-han said. China and Taiwan split during a civil war in 1949. The U.S. cut formal diplomatic relations with Taipei in 1979 in order to recognize Beijing. The U.S. does not openly contest China's claim to Taiwan, but is committed by law to ensure the island can defend itself and to treat all threats toward it as matters of "grave concern."

Under President Xi Jinping, who is also Communist Party leader and head of the armed forces, China has been stepping up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan. Over its National Day weekend at the beginning of the month, China sent a record 149 military aircraft southwest of Taiwan in strike group formations, prompting Taiwan to scramble aircraft and activate its air defense missile systems. China has also recently held beach landing exercises on its side of the roughly 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait that, like the aircraft incursions, it described as a warning to Tsai's administration.

The U.S. has reinforced its support for Taiwan with military sales. State Department spokesman Ned Price said this month that American support for Taiwan is "rock solid." The U.S. has "also been very clear that we are committed to deepening our ties with Taiwan," Price said. On 20 OCT, Biden's pick for ambassador to Beijing, Nicholas Burns, told lawmakers considering his nomination that Americans should "have confidence in our strength" when dealing with the rise of China, a nation he said the U.S. and its allies could manage. Burns echoed the Biden administration's stand on cooperating with China where possible but condemning many of its actions, including its policies toward Taiwan and the semi-autonomous territory of Hong Kong, where it has virtually eliminated dissident voices through stiff legislation and arrests. [Source: The Associated Press | October 22, 2021 ++]

U.S. Taiwan Relations

Update 01: Pentagon & White House Revise Austin & Biden Responses

The Pentagon has edited an incorrect reference by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to the number of understandings the United States has reached with China and Taiwan just hours after the White House scrambled to clarify comments made by President Joe Biden, who appeared to commit to the defense of Taipei if Beijing were to attack. The first apparent gaffe came as Biden on 23 OCT answered questions that evening during a town hall hosted by CNN. Discussing China, one university student asked the president, "What will you do to keep up with them militarily, and can you vow to protect Taiwan?", to which Biden replied, "Yes and yes."

An open pledge to defend Taiwan would mark a reversal of decades of strategic ambiguity through which the U.S. has neither confirmed nor denied its willingness to come to the aid of Taiwan in the event of an attack by China. After Biden went on to discuss the might of U.S. military power and his own history with Chinese President Xi Jinping, host Anderson Cooper intervened for clarification on the president's answer, asking, "So you're saying that the United States would come to Taiwan's defense if China attacked?" "Yes, we have a commitment to do that," Biden said.

A White House spokesperson then quickly issued a revised version of U.S. policy, which matched the more traditional line of thought. "The U.S. defense relationship with Taiwan is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act. We will uphold our commitment under the act, we will continue to support Taiwan's self-defense, and we will continue to oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo," the spokesperson said. Biden's comments and the abrupt turnaround stirred controversy and confusion across social media.

But just hours later, Austin made an apparent error of his own as he attempted to explain the U.S. position on the critical issue during a summit of the U.S. led NATO Western military alliance in Brussels. "Nobody wants to see cross-strait issues come to blows, certainly not President Biden, and there's no reason that it should," Austin said. "You've heard us say this a number of times, and I'll say it again. We remain committed to our One China Policy, in keeping with the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Assurances and the six communiques."

But, as a note in the Pentagon's own transcript of the comments notes, Austin was actually referring to "the three U.S.-PRC Joint Communiqués" that set the stage for the relationship between Washington and Beijing after 1979 and "the Six Assurances" that promise lasting support for Taipei, albeit through informal channels.

The dispute between Beijing and Taipei is rooted in the Chinese civil war that ended with a Communist triumph and the declaration of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Defeated nationalists fled to the island of Taiwan and regrouped to maintain the remnants of the Republic of China. The U.S. initially recognized Taiwan, but would shift relations to mainland China three decades later as the People's Republic fell out with the Soviet Union and opened its economy. Today, only 14 countries and the Vatican maintain formal ties with Taipei, a relationship that precludes any diplomacy with Beijing, which has vowed to retake the island through diplomacy, or by force if necessary.

But the U.S. continues to foster unofficial relations with Taiwan and has expanded these interactions in recent years. This dynamic includes military assistance, something Austin said Friday would continue in spite of Chinese protests. "As we've done over multiple administrations, we'll continue to help Taiwan with the sorts of capabilities that it needs to defend itself," Austin said, "and so we'll stay focused on those things." [Source: Newsweek |Tom O'Connor | October 22, 2021 ++]

China's Offensive Capability

Update 09: Nuclear-Capable Hypersonic Glide Vehicle Test



Quoting five people familiar with the matter, the Financial Times reported on 16 OCT that China had tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile that flew through space, circling the globe before cruising down toward its target, which it missed by about 40 kilometers in August. On 18 OCT "It was not a missile, it was a space vehicle," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a regular press briefing in Beijing when asked about the report, adding it had been a "routine test" for the purpose of testing technology to reuse the vehicle and it was in July vice August. The significance of a reusability test is that it can "provide a cheap and convenient method for humans to peacefully travel to and from space," Zhao said, adding that many companies had carried out similar tests.

Whatever it was the test came amid an intensifying race for the next generation of long-range weapons that are harder to detect and intercept. The United States and Russia have conducted tests of hypersonic weapons in recent months, and North Korea said last month it had tested a newly developed hypersonic missile. The United States is closely watching China's military modernization program to assess the possible risks posed to it by its increasingly assertive strategic competitor.

HOW THE MISSILE WORKS

Hypersonic missiles travel at more than five times the speed of sound in the upper atmosphere - or about 6,200 km per hour (3,850 mph). This is slower than an intercontinental ballistic missile, but the shape of a hypersonic glide vehicle allows it to maneuver toward a target or away from defenses. Combining a glide vehicle with a missile that can launch it partially into orbit - a so-called fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) - could strip adversaries of reaction time and traditional defense mechanisms.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), by contrast, carry nuclear warheads on ballistic trajectories that travel into space but never reach orbit. Both the U.S. and USSR studied FOBS during the Cold War, and the USSR deployed such a system starting in the 1970s. It was removed from service by the mid-80s. Submarine-launched ballistic missiles had many of the advantages

of FOBS - reducing detection times and making it impossible to know where a strike would come from - and were seen as less destabilizing than FOBS.

WHO LEADS THE RACE

- In July, Russia successfully tested a Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missile, which President Vladimir Putin touted as part of a new generation of missile systems. Moscow also tested the weapon from a submarine for the first time.
- The United States said in late September that it had tested an air-breathing hypersonic weapon - meaning it sustain flight on its own through the atmosphere like a cruise missile - marking the first successful test of that class of weapon since 2013.
- Days after the U.S. announcement, North Korea fired a newly developed hypersonic missile, calling it a "strategic weapon" that boosted its defence capabilities, though some South Korean analysts described the test as a failure.

WHY IT MATTERS

The recent tests are the moves in a dangerous arms race in which smaller Asian nations are striving to develop advanced long-range missiles, alongside major military powers. Hypersonic weapons, and FOBS, could be a concern as they can potentially evade missile shields and early warning systems. Some experts cautioned against hype surrounding missiles such as the one China tested in July or August.

"China already has ~100 nuclear-armed ICBMs that can strike the U.S.," said Jeffrey Lewis, a missile specialist at the U.S.-based James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, responding to the FT report on Twitter. "Although the glider is a nice touch ... this is an old concept that is newly relevant as a way to defeat missile defenses."

U.S. experts say the test of a Chinese space-based hypersonic missile is unlikely to trigger an arms race, but could influence the White House and Defense Department's effort to shape new missile defense and nuclear posture strategies. Patty-Jane Geller, a policy analyst for nuclear deterrence and missile defense at the Heritage Foundation, told Defense News the implications could be significant. Even though China isn't necessarily explicitly developing a doctrine on preemptive strike, the test suggests it's thinking about the possibility given that it's experimenting with a capability that can evade early warning radars.

Ankit Panda, a senior fellow in the nuclear policy program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said this doesn't fundamentally upend strategic stability or deterrence. He told Defense News. "Americans don't like it, but the way that the deterrence is most stable is if each side is vulnerable to the other." It's natural to want to avoid vulnerability to attack, Panda said, and so the U.S., Russia and China all invest in offensive and defensive missile capability.

"Our existing missile defenses are, I think, poor enough that China should really have no concern about their ability to penetrate using ballistic missiles," he said. "They don't need this

capability.... But, if the U.S. successfully delivers a more robust homeland missile defense and early warning detection capability through programs like the Next-Generation Interceptor and other layered homeland defense technologies, “deterrence is a lot shakier if you are sitting in Moscow or Beijing,” [Source: Reuters / DefenseNews | Hyonhee Shin / Jen Judson | October 16, 18 & 20, 2021 ++]

Cleaning Myths **These Will Ruin Your Things**



Few things are more satisfying than a clean home, from sparkling windows to freshly scrubbed counters. On the flip side, few things are more frustrating than finding out that the cleaning methods you’ve relied on for years may actually be causing more harm than good. Here are several cleaning myths experts told us are better off busted, and the alternatives that should become your new go-tos.

Dryer Sheets Are a Harmless Way to Fight Static Cling

For many of us, it’s hard to fathom loading the dryer without tossing in a dryer sheet. But you might want to rethink that. “Dryer sheets make your clothes smell nice and reduce static, but they leave a waxy buildup on the lint screen that reduces or blocks airflow,” cautions Scott Thomas, director of systems at [Dryer Vent Wizard](#). “This leads to increased drying times, mold and mildew, excess wear and tear on both clothing and the dryer, increased energy costs, and an increased risk of fire.” If you just can’t quit dryer sheets, Thomas recommends washing your lint screen with hot, soapy water and a toothbrush every three to six months, and testing it to make sure water runs through instead of pooling on the surface. Better yet, he says: Switch to an alternative like dryer balls.

Magic Erasers Can Be Used on Every Surface

Fans of Magic Erasers and other melamine foam sponges sing their praises for cleaning just about anything, but beware: The magic has its limits. “They are amazing on many surfaces, removing stains on bathtubs, doors and door frames,” says Justin Carpenter, owner of [Modern Maids Austin](#). “However, they are constructed to act like sandpaper. This is how they remove

stains so easily.” That means that they’re not suited for more delicate surfaces, Carpenter warns. “You could accidentally dull the finish on your wood floors or remove paint from your walls.”

You Can Use Any Cleaner on Pet Stains ...

Sooner or later, every pet parent makes an unwelcome discovery: A smelly puddle, slowly soaking into the carpet or rug. And while it’s true you should clean up as soon as possible to keep the stench from settling in, be careful of just any old cleaner, says Matt Clayton of [PetHairPatrol](#). “Many cleaning products contain ammonia, which is also an ingredient of dog and cat urine. Using a cleaning solution with ammonia will only make your pet think another animal is marking their territory and encourage them to leave their own mark.” Clayton says your best bet is an enzyme-based cleaner that will break down organic matter instead of simply trying to cover up the smell. “Using an enzyme cleaner will get to the root of the problem and eliminate it completely,” he says.

... Or Stainless Steel

That bottle of multi-surface cleaner that you use in the kitchen, bathroom, and other spots might not be ideal for your appliances. Nelly Martinez, senior brand manager at [Whirlpool](#), warns against using anything that contains bleach or ammonia on stainless steel because it can dull the shine. Instead, she says homemade solutions can be a good choice. “Create a paste of baking soda and water and rub gently on the surface, always in the direction of the grain. If there is any white residue left over, simply wipe away with a dry clean cloth.” No baking soda? Vinegar can also do the trick, she says. “Adding one part mineral oil to one part white vinegar and some essential oil drops of your preference can bring a non-harsh cleaner into your home.”

Chemical Drain Cleaners Are the Best Way to Attack Clogs

Step away from that bottle of Drano or Liquid-Plumr, experts say — they can definitely do more harm than good. “When homeowners encounter clogs or slow drains, they’re often quick to turn to harsh chemical drain cleaners,” says Jake Romano of [John The Plumber](#) in Ottawa, Canada. “While they often work really effectively, the same chemical reaction that eats away at clogs can also eat away at your plumbing system.” A much safer solution, Romano says: Dish soap and hot water. He also recommends avoiding clogs in the first place by regularly cleaning pipes with half a cup of baking soda and half a cup of white vinegar. “Let this sit for half an hour, then flush it down with a kettle of boiled water. This is strong enough to clean most of the gunk in your drains, and gentle enough to cause no harm to your plumbing.”

Toilet Cleaner Is Your Secret Weapon Against Dirty Grout

Keeping grout clean may be one of the most thankless tasks of homeownership, but using toilet bowl cleaner, despite what you might see on the internet, isn’t the answer, says Dean Davies of London-based [Fantastic Cleaners](#). “Toilet bowl cleaners are sticky and hard to rinse off, not to mention that almost all of them contain unsafe chemicals,” he warns. “Thus, using such cleaners in your kitchen is quite risky. They cannot only damage the surface by discoloring it, but can harm you as well.” For a safe alternative, Davies says a simple solution of water and vinegar is an effective grout whitener.

Wood Should Be Polished Frequently

There's nothing quite like the sight and smell of freshly polished wood, but whether you're sprucing up the trim, floors, or the furniture, consider scaling back. "A myth that we encounter often on jobs is that wood must be polished often," says Kevin Geick, a manager at [Bio Recovery](#). "Polishing wood from time to time can help protect the finish of the wood, but it does not actually protect the wood itself. Too much maintenance can both wear down and discolor the wood." Geick says wood needs to be polished no more than once every six weeks, and dusting will usually suffice in between.

You Can Clean Anything With Vinegar ...

Sure, vinegar is a wonder, and it's often a go-to solution for anyone looking for a cheap, natural way to clean up around the house. But it's not a cure-all, cautions Jen Stark, founder of [Happy DIY Home](#). "Vinegar is a good limescale remover and a grease cutter. It also works on hard water stains, for cleaning coffee makers, and windows," she says. "However, you want to avoid using it on certain surfaces. Vinegar will damage granite countertops due to the acidity levels. It can dull these spaces and leave them more open to damage."

... Including Your Hardwood Floors

Step away from the vinegar when it comes to those gleaming hardwoods, too. "When you clean your hardwood floors, you aren't actually cleaning the wood — you are cleaning the chemical finish on the wood," explains Heather Lindemann, senior manager of corporate communications at [Bona](#). "Since vinegar is an acid, it will actually break down the finish on the surface of your floor, and over time, it will reduce the shine and leave a dull appearance. Using vinegar and water to clean floors can also lead to an excessive amount of water on the floor, which can cause swelling and discoloration." A safer bet: Using a specially formulated hardwood floor care cleaner.

[Source: Cheapism | Sandra Latham | July 07, 2021 ++]

News of the Weird

OCT 16 thru 31, 2021

Oops! – During an Oct. 17 weather segment on KREM-TV in Spokane, Washington, viewers were stunned to see a 13-second clip of a woman's bare behind on a display behind the meteorologist, Yahoo! News reported. Viewers began calling the Spokane police department, which is now working with the station to find out how the video made it to the broadcast. KREM-TV could face fines from the Federal Communications Commission for airing the shocking scene. [Yahoo! News, 10/20/2021]

o-o-O-o-o-

Picky, Picky – Vojin Kusic, 72, of Srbac, Bosnia-Herzegovina, built a home for himself and his family many years ago. His wife, Ljubica, wanted the bedrooms to face the sun at the time, so the

living room faced away from the road. In time, Ljubica became distressed that she couldn't see visitors approaching the house, so Vojin remodeled it. Now, with their children grown, Vojin has constructed the home of Ljubica's dreams: It rotates a full 360 degrees so she can turn it as she sees fit, the Associated Press reported. "Now, our front door also rotates, so if she spots unwanted guests heading our way, she can spin the house and make them turn away," Vojin said. [Associated Press, 10/10/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Great Art – Roughly 300 men and women volunteers gathered on 17 OCT in the desert near the Israeli city of Arad, where they took off all their clothes and painted their bodies white for a project by photographer Spencer Tunick, the Associated Press reported. For about three hours, they posed and repositioned themselves for Tunick as he shot photos to draw attention to the shrinking Dead Sea. "I am always happy to return here and photograph in the only country in the Middle East that allows art such as this," Tunick said. Organizers hope the project will bring attention to preserving the Dead Sea, and Israeli tourist officials hope it will bring visitors to the country. [Associated Press, 10/19/2021] [Guardian, 10/1/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

New World Order – David and Paula Knight of Surrey, England, were confused when they opened a letter informing them of a traffic violation and fine that took place in June in Bath. The letter, which detailed a bus lane violation and included a photo of the offender, was generated by a traffic camera that captured a woman walking in a bus lane, wearing a shirt that said KNITTER. The Knights' vehicle tag reads KNI9 TER, a reference to David's nickname, Knighter. "We thought one of our friends was stitching us up," Paula told the BBC, but they finally contacted authorities to straighten out the incident. She said the staff member who looked at the photo "burst out laughing." The fine was canceled, everyone involved got a giggle out of it, and the next time the Knights go to Bath, they may take the train. [BBC, 10/19/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Compelling Explanation – Folks in Plouneventer, France, were perplexed on 11 OCT when they woke up to find a van perched atop a bus stop shelter, Oddity Central reported. Police were summoned, the van was removed and the owner identified -- but the mystery remained, with theories involving alcohol and performance art. Finally, three days later, the truth came out: The prank was part of a "commercial dispute" between the van's owner and the perpetrator, who used a pallet truck to hoist the car onto the bus shelter. The latter may face charges of endangerment. [Oddity Central, 10/15/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Anger Management, Halloween Edition -- A Pittsburgh grandmother was assaulted with a pumpkin on Oct. 20 after she parked in front of James Gazis' home, WPXI-TV reported. The victim was picking up her grandson from a nearby home and parked in front of the Gazis property, where Gazis' wife and children started yelling at her before James hurled the gourd at the car. When she lowered her window to say

"You've got to be kidding me,' ... he took the second pumpkin, threw it (and) hit her in the face," the victim's son, James Moore, said. Moore and Gazis, 40, tussled; Gazis was charged with aggravated assault, and Moore is facing a simple assault charge. [WPXI, 10/22/2021]

-o-o-O-o-o-

Space Invasion -- Forget a "rude" awakening -- this one verges closer to "terrifying." Ruth Hamilton of Golden, British Columbia, told CBC News that she woke up on O4 OCT to her dog barking. "The next thing was just a huge explosion and debris all over my face," she said. After realizing something had punched a hole in her ceiling, she called 911. While answering the operator's questions, she moved a bed pillow and discovered a "melon-sized space rock" that must have landed inches from her head while she slept. Peter Brown, a physics and astronomy professor at Western University in London, Ontario, confirmed the rock was "certainly a meteorite," but will require further study to determine its exact origins. [CBC News, 10/12/2021]

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

Vocabulary

Some Words to Enhance Yours | 211031

Which word best matches these example sentences?

- (a) A trained interrogator will often use special tactics to _____ the suspect until they admit to something.
(b) *Bumfuzzle – Plenteous – Blithe - Noetic*
- (a) The singer's voice was _____ and smooth.
(b) *Aficionado – Mellifluous – Gallivant - Churlish*
- (a) The frames on the wall were _____.
(b) *Rudimentary – Charlatan – Farouche - Catawampus*
- (a) Hard-working is a quality commonly _____d to top bosses.
(b) *Homonym – Ascribe – Elide - Aberration*
- (a) Jon chose to _____ the situation of missing his connecting flight by leaving the airport and taking a tour of the city he was in.
(b) *Teutonic – Ameliorate – Pretentious - Concatenate*
- (a) The only pants Tammy will wear now are her comfortable _____.
(b) *Jeggings – Orotund – Persiflage - Stentorian*
- (a) The _____ man had to be escorted out of the concert.
(b) *Connoisseur – Scunner – Pugnacious - Winebibber*
- (a) The neighbors threw a _____ last night and you could hear it across town!
(b) *Scion – Zeitgeist – Hootenanny – Penurious*

9. (a) He could tell the officer was a _____ man so he decided he would try to use money to get out of his punishment.
 (b) *Cajole – Venal – Boondoggle - Ennui*
10. (a) The sun was past its _____ as it dipped below the treeline.
 (b) *Zenith –Inchoate – Parboil - Bamboozle*

Answers

1. Bumfuzzle [*buhm-fuhz-uhl*] - to confuse or fluster.
2. Mellifluous [*muh-lif-loo-uhs*] - sweetly or smoothly flowing; sweet-sounding.
3. Catawampus [*kat-uh-wom-puhs*] - is not lined up or not arranged correctly, or diagonally; in disarray or disorder; askew.
4. Ascribe [*uh-skrahyb*] - to attribute or think of as belonging, as a quality or characteristic.
5. Ameliorate [*uh-meel-yuh-rey*] - make (something bad or unsatisfactory) better.
6. Jeggings [*jeg-ingz*] - tight-fitting stretch pants for women, styled to resemble a pair of denim jeans.
7. Pugnacious [*puhg-ney-shuhs*] - inclined to quarrel or fight readily; quarrelsome; belligerent; combative.
8. Hootenanny [*hoot-n-an-ee, hoot-nan-ee*] - a social gathering or informal concert featuring folk singing and, sometimes, dancing.
9. Venal [*veen-l*] - willing to sell one's influence, especially in return for a bribe; open to bribery; mercenary
10. Zenith [*zee-nith*] - the point in the sky or celestial sphere directly above an observer.

[Source: <https://www.wordthirst.com> | October 2021 ++]

Have You Heard or Seen?

A Soldier Died Today | Corny Jokes 3 | Think Toons

A Soldier Died Today

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast. He sat around the Legion, telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he once fought in and the deeds that he had done. In his exploits with his buddies; they were heroes, every one.

And 'tho sometimes to his neighbors his tales became a joke. All his buddies listened quietly for they knew whereof he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer, for old Bob has passed away. And the worlds a little poorer for a Soldier died today.

He won't be mourned by many, just his children and his wife. For he lived an ordinary very quiet sort of life.

He held a job and raised a family, going quietly on his way. And the world won't note his passing, 'tho a Soldier died today.

When politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state. While thousands note their passing, and proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell of their life stories, from the time that they were young. But the passing of a Soldier goes unnoticed, and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution, to the welfare of our land. Someone who breaks his promise, and cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow, who in times of war and strife. Goes off to serve his country, and offers up his life?

The politician's stipend, and the style in which he lives. Are often disproportionate, to the service that he gives.

While the ordinary Soldier, who offered up his all. Is paid off with a medal, and perhaps a pension, very small.

It is not the politicians, with their compromise and ploys. Who won for us the freedom, that our country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger, with your enemies at hand. Would you really want some cop-out, with his ever waffling stand?

Or would you want a Soldier-- His home, his country, his kin. Just a common Soldier, who would fight until the end?

He was just a common Soldier, and his ranks are growing thin. But his presence should remind us. we may need his like again.

For when countries are in conflict, we find the Soldier's part. Is to clean up all the troubles, that the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor, while he's here to hear the praise. Then at least let's give him homage, at the ending of his days.

Perhaps just a simple headline, in the paper that might say:

"OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURNING, A SOLDIER DIED TODAY."

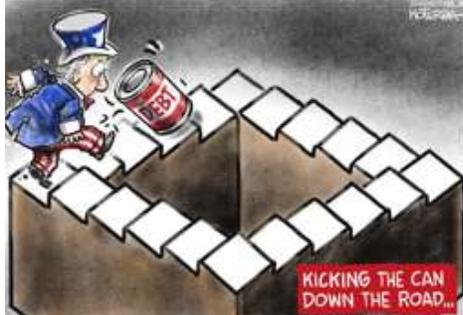
Corny Jokes (3)

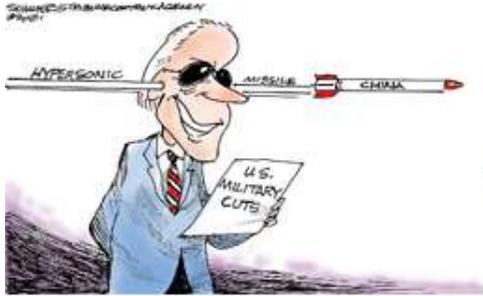
- What do you call a sleeping dinosaur? A dino-snore.
- Why does Snoop Dogg use an umbrella? For drizzle!
- Why did the restaurant hire a pig? He was good at bacon.

- What has four wheels and flies? A garbage truck.
- What do you call a bear with no teeth? A gummy bear.
- Why are the Irish so wealthy? Because their capital is Dublin.
- What do lawyers wear to work? Lawsuits.
- What has more lives than a cat? A frog, because it croaks every day.
- What's that restaurant on the moon like? It doesn't have atmosphere.
- What's the best way to burn 1,000 calories? Leave the pizza in the oven.
- What do you call a priest that becomes a lawyer? A father-in-law.
- Why don't eggs tell jokes? They crack up too easily.
- When is a door not a door? When it's ajar.
- Why don't you buy things with Velcro? It's a rip-off.
- Why did the robber jump in the shower? He wanted to make a clean getaway.
- What do you call a snobby criminal going down the stairs? A con descending.
- What's the difference between a poorly dressed man on a tricycle and a well-dressed man on a bicycle? Attire.
- What do you call a row of rabbits hopping away? A receding hare line.
- How did the hipster burn his tongue? He drank his coffee before it was cool.
- Why did the kid stock up on yeast? He wanted to make some dough.

Think Toons







Advertisements

Once Acceptable Vintage Ads | 01

What Girl Doesn't? No, this is not a joke. Go ahead, look it up; they have a whole website. There's not really a whole lot that has to be said about this hot dog advertisement, other than it was a genius way to sell their food.



Starting in 1849 at a Sierra Nevada foothills trading post, Boner Billy's quickly became famous for...well, obviously their name. Thus, when it became common to call an erection as such, this company was quick to make all manner of ads and innuendoes. Besides, who doesn't like a Big Boner?

Thought of the Day

If you don't do anything stupid when you're young, you won't remember something funny when you're old...

— Unknown

-o-o-O-o-o-

FAIR USE NOTICE: This newsletter may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. The Editor/Publisher of the Bulletin at times includes such material in an effort to advance reader's understanding of veterans' issues. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U. S. C. Section 107, the material in this newsletter is distributed without profit to those who have expressed an interest in receiving the included information for educating themselves on veteran issues so they can better communicate with their legislators on issues affecting them. To obtain more information on Fair Use refer to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this newsletter for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

-o-o-O-o-o-

TO READ and/or DOWNLOAD THE ABOVE ARTICLES, ATTACHMENTS, OR PAST BULLETINS GO Online To:

- <http://www.nhc-ul.org/rao.html> (PDF Edition w/ATTACHMENTS)
- <http://frabr245.org> (PDF Edition with no attachments)
- <http://veteraninformationlinksasa.com/emos-rao.html> (PDF w/ATTACHMENTS)
- <https://www.cgretirenw.org> (Listed under VET & RETIREE LEGISLATIVE & GENERAL NEWS)

Note: The above websites are blocked by some, if not all, USAF & USCG military commands for security purposes. To gain access you may need to open them using a non “. . . @us.af.mil” / “. . . @uscg.mil” source. Also, **due to the Bulletin's size/content recommend you whitelist my email addrees raoemo@sbcglobal.net & raoemo77@gmail.com in your computer as indicated at <https://connectthedot.com/email/mean-whitelist-email-whitelist-email> to avoid them being blocked as spam.**

== To subscribe send to raoemo@sbcglobal.net or raoemo77@gmail.com your full name plus either the post/branch/chapter number of the fraternal military/government organization you are currently affiliated with (if any) “AND/OR” the city and state/country you reside in so your addee can be properly positioned in the Bulletin mailing directory for future recovery. Subscription is open at no cost to all veterans, dependents, military/veteran support organizations, and media.

== Anyone who wants to remove or change their email addee from the Bulletin mailing list can use the automatic “UNSUBSCRIBE“ or “Change of Address“ tabs at the bottom of this message or send a message to me with the word “DELETE“ or “COA” in the subject line.

Notes:

1. **Subscription:** New subscribers and those who submit a change of address should receive a message that verifies their addition or address change being entered in the mailing list. If you do not receive a message within 3 days it indicates that either I never received your request, I made an error in processing your request, or your server will not allow me to send to the email addee you provided. Anyone who cannot reach me by email can call (858) 842-1111 to ask questions or confirm info needed to add them to the directory. This Bulletin Availability notice was sent to the 18,426 subscribers.

2. **Backup Email Addees:** If you have another email addee at work or home and would like to receive Bulletin notices there also, just provide the appropriate addee to raoemo@sbcglobal.net or raoemo77@gmail.com.

3. **Philippine Subscribers:** Bulletin recipients with interest in the Philippines, whether or not they live there, can request to be added to the Bulletin's Philippine email directory for additional receipt of notices on U.S. Embassy Manila, TRICARE in the RP, and Clark Field Space 'A' if it is ever reinstated.
4. **Article Retrieval:** Past Bulletin articles are available on request. Bear in mind that the articles were valid at the time they were written and may have since been updated or have become outdated. To request provide original article title. If unknown provide a brief description of what the article was addressing.
5. **Publishing Frequency:** The Bulletin is normally published on the 1st and 15th of each month. It is provided as a website accessed document vice email direct access. If you do not receive an email Bulletin Availability notice check to see if it is posted on the website www.nhc-ul.org/rao.html before sending me an email asking if one was published. If you can access the Bulletin at the aforementioned site it indicates that something is preventing you from receiving my Availability notices. Send me an email so I can verify your entry on the mailing list and modify its transmission path if necessary.
6. **Unable to Receive Notices:** Note that some email providers (especially SBCGLOBAL & lately COX and Roadrunner) allow many, but not all, of their users to receive the Bulletin if sent to them in its normal fashion via my mailing list provider (MLP). For those subscribers adversely impacted by this I maintain a separate direct mailing list (DML) to send in an alternate manner for those not allowed by their servers to receive their Bulletin Availability notices. If you are impacted by this let me know so I can add you to that mailing list which currently contains about 500 subscriber's email addrees.
7. **Article Sources:** Articles within the Bulletin are editorialized information obtained from over 100 sources. At the end of each article is provided the primary source from which it was obtained. The ++ indicates that 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 why that I can attest to their validity other than they have all been taken from previously reliable sources. Also, just because an article appears in the Bulletin it does not necessarily mean I support its content. If an article is based on the author's opinion vice a government entity I try to note that after the author's name. Readers who question the validity of any article's content are encouraged to go to the source provided to have their questions answered or express their opinions. I am always open to comments but, as a policy, shy away from anything political. Too controversial and time consuming.
8. **Forwarding Content:** Recipients of the Bulletin are authorized and encouraged to forward the Bulletin as a whole or its individual articles or attachments to other vets or veteran organizations. However adding advertising or using it for commercial purposes is not authorized.

-0-0-0-0-

RAO Bulletin Editor/Publisher:

Lt. James "EMO" Tichacek, USN (Ret) Tel: (858) 842-1111 Email: raoemo@sbcglobal.net or raoemo77@gmail.com

RAO Baguio Director:

SSgt Terrance (Terry) Parker, USAF (Ret), PSC 517 Box 4107, FPO AP 96517-1000, Tel: Smart 0921824728 or Globe 09454073380, Email: rao.dir.baguio@gmail.com

RAO Baguio Office: Mountain Lodge, 27 Leonard Wood Road, Baguio City, 2600 Philippines

FPO Mail Pickup: THUR 09-1100 --- Outgoing Mail Closeout: THUR 1100

Warning:

DELETE the end-paragraph (i. e. UNSUBSCRIBE Option) of the Bulletin before you forward it to others. The option following this warning is required by law and offers the recipient an opportunity to “UNSUBSCRIBE“, if they choose to. This “unsubscribe” link contains **YOUR** email address vice theirs and whoever receives your re-distribution has the opportunity, whether purposely or inadvertently, to terminate your future receipt of Bulletin messages if they should click on it.

