

RAO

BULLETIN

1 August 2018

PDF Edition



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*** DoD ***



MAVNI Program Update 08 ► Pentagon | Some Enlistees Falsified Records

The Pentagon pushed back against criticism that it was weeding out foreign-born troops 17 JUL and released court filings to show some international recruits in the program that granted citizenship through military service had falsified their background records and were connected to state-sponsored intelligence agencies, which led DoD to believe the program was vulnerable to insider threat. The filings, from *Tiwari v. Mattis*, “provide context for you regarding the true national security issues at stake,” said Pentagon spokeswoman Air Force Maj. Carla Gleason. The U.S. District Court Western District of Washington is considering the lawsuit, which was filed on behalf of 17

foreign-born military recruits who enlisted through the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program but have not been able to clear additional security requirements the military put in place in 2016 and 2017.

The program has been suspended since 2016 and about 1,000 recruits remain in limbo, unable to enter basic training and at risk of timing out of the program or having their visas expire. Immigration attorneys representing the clients have said the military never put adequate resources in place to process all the applicants and that the delays in screening are a way to shut the program down. Approximately 10,000 foreign-born troops have earned citizenship through MAVNI, which was put in place to help the military attract critical language and medical skills. In 2017 Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said he would like to see the program continued if security issues could be addressed.

In a statement filed by Roger Smith, branch chief for personnel security policy at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, DoD argued that regular reviews of the program found security holes, including that some applicants could not be vetted because the U.S. lacked “access and the ability to conduct standard security screening and interviews with associates, friends, and family members, as many MAVNI soldiers are from nations who remain hostile to the United States or do not have data-sharing agreements with the United States.”

In addition, in his statement Smith said that through a 2016 review, DoD found that “(1) a number of individuals accessed into the military based on receiving fraudulent visas to attend universities that did not exist; (2) some MAVNI recruits attended, and later falsified transcripts from, universities owned by a Foreign National Security Agency and a State Sponsored Intelligence Organization (notably, most of the university classmates of one MAVNI recruit later worked for the same State Sponsored Intelligence Organization); and (3) one MAVNI recruit who entered the United States on a student visa professed support for 9/11 terrorists and said he would voluntarily help China in a crisis situation.”

Further, Smith said, “the review uncovered a case where a MAVNI applicant failed to list foreign contacts from Eastern Europe and Russia, even though the recruit’s father manages the military department of a foreign factory and his brother-in-law worked for a foreign political party. In DoD’s judgment, these examples indicated that sufficient vetting of MAVNI personnel was not occurring at the accessions stage, contrary to the goal of avoiding altogether the accessions of individuals who present potential counter-intelligence, security, or insider threats.” [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Copp | July 17, 2018 ++]

USSF ► New Military Branch Proposal

The U.S. Air Force's former top civilian said more resources should be dedicated to the space mission, but argued that creating a new military branch known as "Space Force" is not the answer. "My very short response is no. I do not believe that we should have a separate Space Force," Deborah Lee James, the 23rd Air Force secretary, said during a panel 30 JUL at the Brookings Institution, a think tank in Washington, D.C. "And I come down to the fundamental issue of why I think this is so." She said the Air Force has faced criticism over its management of the space mission, due to inadequate funding, a slow acquisition process and gaps in the personnel promotion and management systems. But, "Space Force is not your answer," James said.

During her tenure, in the final three years of the Obama administration, the service pumped roughly \$5.5 billion into the overall space mission. That figure has ballooned over the last two budget cycles, with the Air Force expected to spend roughly \$40 billion over the next five years, officials have recently said. James, who serves on various boards of directors, including those of Textron and the Atlantic Council, said she understands President Donald Trump's push to make the space mission a priority. But she said she also fears the up to 30,000 airmen and civilians who work on Air Force space missions "will get totally lost in the bureaucracy" of a new military branch. Instead, another combatant command solely focused on space would better serve the mission, she said. "

A military service trains, organizes and equips -- it doesn't war fight," she explained. "Combatant commands do the war fight. "I would support a full-up, unified command, so it would be the equivalent of a [Strategic Command]," she continued. "I would certainly support that going forward to focus solely on space ... that would really be the ticket for solving that everyone is mostly focused on." James' comments come ahead of a highly anticipated report from Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan's office, which is expected to give more detail on the Pentagon's approach to setting up a new military branch. The report, originally mandated under the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, is anticipated to be delivered to lawmakers as early as this week.

Following Trump's surprise call for a separate "Space Force" in front of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joseph Dunford last month, officials have been weighing how best to proceed with forming the proposed sixth military branch. It is unclear whether the existing military services are involved in the process. "The president's statement to the National Space Council adds emphasis to the Air Force position -- space is a warfighting domain and the entire national security space enterprise must continue to enhance lethality, resilience and agility to meet the challenge posed by potential adversaries," Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson and Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein stated in a letter to airmen days after Trump's comments. "We look forward to working with Department of Defense leaders, Congress, and our national security partners to move forward on this planning effort." James said she has faith in both Goldfein and Wilson's effort to prioritize the space mission in the service. [Source: Military.com | Oriana Pawlyk | July 30, 2018 ++]

Deep Fake Technology ► Could Be Used To Blackmail US Troops

On 7 JUN, during a training exercise in the Baltics, four U.S. Army Stryker vehicles driving along a road between Kaunas and Prienai, Lithuania, collided when the lead vehicle braked too hard for an obstacle on the roadway. Not long after the incident, a blog post made to look like a popular Lithuanian news outlet claimed the Americans had killed a local child in the collision. A doctored image was posted showing unconcerned soldiers near a crushed bicycle and child's corpse. "This is a very typical example of the hostile information, and proves we are already being watched," Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis said of the fabricated event during a 8 JUN meeting with NATO officials. "We have no doubt that this was a deliberate and coordinated attempt aiming to raise general society's condemnation to our allies, as well as discredit the exercises and our joint efforts on defense strengthening."



A fabricated news story meant to look like a popular Lithuanian news outlet depicts a civilian killed by U.S. Army Strykers on a major roadway. Lithuanian officials denounced the photo as an attempt to divide the NATO alliance.

In this case, the phony image and news article were quickly refuted, but what happens when it's not so easy to tell truth from fiction? The ability to distort reality is expected to reach new heights with the development of so-called "deep fake" technology: manufactured audio recordings and video footage that could fool even digital forensic

experts. “I would say 99 percent of the American population doesn’t know what it is, even though for years they’ve been watching deep fakes in science fiction movies and the like, in which special effects are as realistic as they’ve ever been,” Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) said 19 JUN before a technology panel at the Heritage Foundation. “But never before have we seen that capability become so available right off the shelf.”

The emerging technology could be used to generate Kompromat — short for compromising material in Russian — that portrays an individual in deeply embarrassing situations, making them ripe for blackmail by a foreign intelligence service. Or, just as likely, deep fake technology could be used to generate falsified recordings from meetings that actually did take place, but where the content discussed is manipulated. Perhaps the only audio from a closed-door meeting could be doctored to make a senior U.S. official appear as though they told their hypothetical Russian counterpart “don’t worry about the Baltics, we won’t lift a finger to defend them,” said Bobby Chesney, an associate dean at the University of Texas School of Law who studies the impact of this emerging capability. The geopolitical fallout from such a declaration would be hard to overcome.

National-level intelligence agencies and even insurgencies already fabricate crimes by other countries' military forces, Chesney said. Deep fakes could add to these existing disinformation campaigns. “Often it’s a claim about killing civilians or harm to civilian populations,” he said. “And yeah, you can have actors play the role and impersonate, but how much the better if you can use the technology of deep fakes to make more credible instances of supposed atrocities?” Russian intelligence has long been known for its willingness to blackmail and discredit foreign officials. In 2009, a U.S. diplomat working on human rights issues in Russia was depicted in a grainy video purchasing a prostitute. Only it wasn’t him. The video spliced actual footage of the American making phone calls with fake footage of him in the compromising situation, according to the U.S. State Department.

This sort of propaganda also existed during the Cold War, but the speed at which information travels and the accessibility of the software involved is growing. “One of the ironies of the 21st century is that technology has made it cheaper than ever to be bad,” Rubio said. “In the old days, if you wanted to threaten the United States, you needed 10 aircraft carriers, nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. ... Increasingly, all you need is the ability to produce a very realistic fake video.” Fake videos used to be difficult to produce. They required an army of visual effects artists and complicated computers, but that changed recently.

Several universities and other entities began to draw attention to deep fakes after they published “puppeteering systems,” said Chris Bregler, a senior staff scientist at Google’s artificial intelligence division. “That means you take lots of video of somebody and then use machine-learning to change the lips or some other parts of the face, and it looks like someone said something entirely different,” he explained.

The word “deep” in deep fakes basically means a deeper, more layered neural network, which assists in developing more realistic images. The democratization of information has made this technology all the more accessible. Last year, someone posted computer code on Reddit — an aggregation and message board website — that allows a user to create deep fake programs. “If you have some software engineering skills, you can download that code, turn it into an application, collect a bunch of examples of faces of a person who is there in a video and faces of the person you want to replace, and then you buy a graphics card that costs less than \$1,000,” Bregler said. “You let your system run on your home computer or laptop for sometimes several days, or one day, and then it creates a deep fake.”

The best counter to deep fakes appears to be awareness. Technology to spot phony recordings is in lockstep with the development of deep fake software itself, Bregler said. But in an age of mass communication and instant information, there is a concern that the truth will come too late. “It’s true we can eventually debunk, but the truth doesn’t ever quite catch up with the initial lie, if the initial lie is emotional and juicy enough,” Chesney said. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Kyle Rempfer | July 19, 2018 ++]

DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 31 JUL 2018

Finbar Charles -- A former business partner of a U.S. military contractor has pleaded guilty to bribing multiple Army officials for contracts during the Iraq war, according to the Alabama Local News. Finbar Charles, who worked with former contractor Terry Hall, will be sentenced in November, the paper reported. The Justice Department announced Charles' plea earlier this week. According to DoJ, Charles provided millions of dollars to multiple U.S. Army officials from 2005 to 2007, and personally received more than \$228,000 in illicit gains. Alabama Local News reported that the bribes were given in return for unfair preference towards Hall's companies when it came to military contracts, including providing bottled water and constructing security fencing in Iraq and Kuwait. Charles, 62, is a citizen of Saint Lucia in the Carribean, but was charged in the northern district of Alabama, according to the Alabama Local News. The Army officials Charles worked with, including Maj. Eddie Pressley, John Cockerham, James Momon and Chris Murray, have pleaded guilty or have been convicted of related offenses, officials said. Charles managed bank accounts in Kuwait and the Phillipines that he used to facilitate the bribes. [Source: ArmyTimes | Noah Nash | July 18, 2018 ++]

Transgender Lawsuits Update 08 ► Appeals Court Upholds Previous Ban Ruling

An appeals court on 18 JUL ruled against the Trump administration and upheld a court order stalling a ban on transgender individuals serving in the military. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upheld a block on the implementation of the ban, which was first announced by President Trump last year. The court's move enables transgender people to continue enlisting in the military until the opposing parties go to trial, expected in April 2019. The administration had filed a motion to stay the preliminary injunction granted by a lower court in December 2017. The 9th Circuit ruling holds that the stay requested by the administration "would upend, rather than preserve, the status quo," which currently allows transgender people to serve. Trump abruptly announced on Twitter in June 2017 that he would ban transgender individuals from serving "in any capacity" in the U.S. military.

The move sought to reverse the Obama administration's decision to begin allowing transgender troops to serve openly in the U.S. armed forces, but that decision was still under final review at the time Trump announced the ban. Multiple groups filed lawsuits against the ban, including the group involved in the 18 JUL case. The lawsuit was brought by Lambda Legal and OutServe-SLDN in Seattle, and joined by the state of Washington on behalf of six troops that are currently serving, three people seeking to enlist and three LGBT rights groups – the Human Rights Campaign, the Gender Justice League and the American Military Partner Association. The ruling stems from Judge Marsha Pechman of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, who first granted a preliminary injunction in December 2017 to block the ban and "preserve the status quo."

The administration pushed back and moved to dissolve the injunction in April, pointing to a March memorandum laying out its revised plans to move forward with the policy, which bans most transgender people from serving in the military "except under certain limited circumstances." The memo gave Defense Secretary James Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, who oversees the Coast Guard, "authority to implement any appropriate policies concerning military service by transgender individuals." But Pechman ruled the lawsuit would go to trial and the injunction would stay in place as the memo did not represent a new policy, but rather an implementation of the ban Trump first announced on Twitter. The Trump administration then appealed the April ruling, arguing that allowing the ban to move forward was necessary to "prevent irreparable harm to military interests." Pechman in June once again blocked the ban, and wrote that the Trump administration made no arguments she had not already rejected and noted that there would be no demonstrable harm in keeping the injunction in place.

The top officers of the Navy and Marine Corps said in April that they have no evidence that unit morale and cohesion has been negatively affected by the open service of transgender individuals. "The only issues I've heard of

is in some cases, because of the medical requirements of some of these individuals, that there is a burden on the commands to handle all the medical stuff,” Marines Commandant Gen. Robert Neller told the Senate Armed Services Committee. “But discipline, cohesion of the force, no.”

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley testified before the same Senate panel that there have been “precisely zero” reports of problems with unit cohesion, discipline and morale, in regards to allowing transgender troops in the ranks. The ban has also received pushback from retired military officers and national security officials, 33 of whom wrote a letter earlier this month urging the 9th Circuit to uphold the court order stalling the ban. “Excluding transgender individuals from patriotic service that they are trained and qualified to give based on group characteristics, rather than individual fitness to serve, undermines rather than promotes the national security interests of the United States,” they wrote. [Source: The Hill | Ellen Mitchell | July18, 2018 ++]

USMC Wilson Sexual Abuse Lawsuit ► \$25 Million Tort Claim Filed

A decorated, high-tenured Marine colonel ended up behind bars last fall after being convicted of sexually abusing a six-year-old girl. The child's family is now pursuing a lawsuit against the Marine Corps, saying senior leaders failed to hold the officer accountable after he was booted from a previous posting in Australia just 10 days in for crass and drunken behavior. Adrian Perry, mother of the child abused by Col. Daniel Wilson, has filed tort claims totaling \$25 million against the Corps, saying the pain and suffering of her child and two other daughters she says were abused by Wilson were preventable, had he been investigated previously. The Marine Corps has six months to respond to the claims with an assessment of its own liability before lawsuit proceedings move forward. A Marine spokesman, Maj. Brian Block, said the service could not comment on ongoing litigation.



Marine Col. Daniel Hunter Wilson is escorted into a court-martial proceeding on Aug. 30, 2017, aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The existence of the legal action was first reported by The Australian earlier this month. Don Christensen, a retired Air Force prosecutor and president of the organization Protect Our Defenders, assisted Perry in filing the tort claims. He said the action was a way of getting the attention of the Marine Corps and potentially preventing future abuse. Military.com broke the news last December that Lt. Gen. Larry Nicholson, commander of III Marine Expeditionary Force in the Pacific, was faulted by the Inspector General of the Marine Corps for failing to initiate an investigation against Wilson and report his misconduct to top leadership after Wilson's tenure in Australia came to an abrupt end. An official told Military.com that it was likely the IG report spelled the end of Nicholson's distinguished military career. But some believe that's not consequence enough for the senior officer's failure to act. "[Nicholson has] paid absolutely no consequences, admitted no guilt for what he's done," Christensen said. "For me, that's particularly telling how callous [the Marine Corps has] been treating this."

Court testimony in Wilson's court-martial for child sexual abuse at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, revealed that Wilson, previously sent to Darwin, Australia, in February 2016 as a liaison officer, had almost immediately been flagged as a problem. An investigation into his behavior in Australia was launched only after he had been accused of sexual assault months later. Wilson told the wife of the colonel he was replacing in Darwin that "her thighs were sore from having sex with her husband," and asked another Marine officer to send him racy pictures of his wife. Wilson would later show the photo he obtained to his Australian counterpart, Cmdr. Greg Mapson, who ultimately complained to Wilson's higher-ups about him. During the few days Wilson spent in Australia, he also sent an email from a female civilian employee's account, asking her supervisor on a date, and made another female officer uncomfortable by sending her coarse and personal text messages.

An individual who was present in Australia when Wilson was there and was directly involved with the later investigation into his actions told Military.com that Wilson had been described as a "predator" by an Australian officer, just days after his arrival. It took the Marine Corps just three days to put Wilson on a plane out of Australia, cutting short what was to be a six-month tour. But follow-on actions ended there. Nicholson would tell investigators that Wilson had just been "stupid" and that he found credible Wilson's explanation that the complaints were the result of personality conflicts. "If your actions are egregious enough to get pulled out of a foreign country, you would think we would do something about it," said the individual close to the investigation, who asked not to be identified because of his position. "I'd want to know, what else did we not know?"

Wilson would next move to a post within II Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Lejeune. He'd become close to the Perrys over a two-week period in July 2016 that culminated in allegations he molested their daughters. Wilson would be sentenced in September 2017 to five-and-a-half years of confinement for molesting one of the girls, though he was acquitted on charges of abusing the other children and sexually assaulting an adult woman in a separate alleged incident in 2016.

Adrian Perry told Military.com her decision to pursue tort action against the Marine Corps was arrived at over much prayer and consideration. "It disgusts me to think that my children would ever have to pay for mental health care because of what Wilson did to them. That's unacceptable," she said. "To me, this is just one more step in the fight toward making sure my children are taken care of. This is not out of vengeance. This is out of protection for my children, because this is something extremely unacceptable and wrong that occurred." Perry said she has never been contacted by Marine leaders about Wilson following his conviction. She wants to make sure, she said, that what happened in Darwin can't unfold again within the service. "I lose sleep over the Australia stuff," she said. "Because I feel like this is a predator that could have been caught, that could have been stopped." [Source: Military.com | Hope Hodge Seck | July 27, 2018 ++]

GI Bill Update 257 ► More Clarification on New Transfer Cap

The Pentagon's new rules on transferring GI Bill benefits to dependents, announced last week, have created a lot of concern and confusion among service members, veterans and military families. Will you still be able to transfer your benefits? What if your toddler won't be old enough for college by the time you hit the new time-in-service limit? What effect will this have if you've already transferred your benefits? If you've been struggling with questions on the new rules, the following should help:

1. What changes have already taken effect?

The Defense Department requires service members to commit to serve an additional four years in the military in order to transfer GI Bill benefits to a dependent. Prior to last week's policy change, that requirement could be waived in some cases if it wasn't possible for a service member to serve another four years. The new policy ends such exceptions, meaning that regardless of what branch of the military you serve in, if you can't commit to another four years for any

reason, you can't put in for a GI Bill transfer. Though there's been some confusion about whether this aspect of the policy change applies immediately to members of all service branches, this change is, indeed, currently in effect across DoD. "If there are reasons that preclude a service member from committing to four years of service, that service member cannot sign up to transfer their benefits," a DoD fact sheet on the policy said, listing this as one of the changes that "go into effect immediately."

2. How long must I serve to be able to transfer my GI Bill?

Previously, DoD required troops to have served at least 6 years in order to request a GI Bill transfer. That requirement remains, and the Pentagon's new policy will also require that service members not have served more than 16 years. So you'll need between six and 16 years in uniform. It's important to note that because the 16-year cap doesn't go into effect until July 12, 2019, service members who have been in longer than that have a year to transfer their GI Bill benefits — as long as they can still commit to serving four more years. So, if you've been in for 20 years and can commit to 24, make sure you take advantage of this before time's up.

3. I've already transferred my GI Bill benefits. Does this rule change affect me?

No, you're safe. The policy change will not affect service members who have already transferred their GI Bill benefits, according to Jessica Maxwell, a DoD spokeswoman.

4. If I transfer my benefits now, can I make changes later on?

Yes, you can. If you want to add another child to your list of beneficiaries or divvy things up between your dependents a little differently, you can do that even if you've been in the service for more than 16 years.

5. Does my kid have to be old enough to use the GI Bill by the time I hit 16 years?

A dependent child must be 18 or younger when the GI Bill benefits are transferred to them -- or under 23 in special cases for approved programs, Maxwell said. To use the GI Bill, the dependent must be 18 or a high school graduate. So in other words, you can go ahead and transfer the GI Bill to your 2 year old without a worry. They just won't be able to use it until they're of age.

6. I'm in the Coast Guard. Do these changes apply to me?

Even though the Coast Guard is under the Department of Homeland Security and not DoD, the same changes apply.

7. I want to transfer my GI Bill benefits. How do I get started?

Log onto [DMDC milConnect](#). At the top of the page, you'll see a section labeled, "I want to." Click on the "Transfer my education benefits" option and go from there.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Natalie Gross | July 12, 2018 ++]

GI Bill Update 258 ► Forever Bill Benefits Launch 1 AUG

The benefits under the new "Forever GI Bill" will be ready to go into effect 1 AUG, with the exception of a few IT glitches on housing allowances, Department of Veterans Affairs officials said 18 JUL. "We hit the ground running and we haven't slowed down" on implementing the bill, but the technology was not quite ready to handle two provisions in the complicated formula for housing allowances, said retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert Worley, director of education services at the VA. "This is a complex, heavy-lift effort," he said at a hearing of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. "It is, of course, absolutely critical that we get these changes right."

Worley and Lloyd Thrower, deputy chief information officer at the VA's Office of Information & Technology, said they expect the housing allowance problems to be cleared up by mid-August. Housing allowance underpayments for veterans will eventually be made whole, they said. Rep. Beto O'Rourke (D-TX) asked whether veterans would be able to keep any overpayments on housing allowances. "That's correct," Worley said. "The VA would consider that an

administrative error on the VA's part." The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, dubbed the "Forever GI Bill" and named for the American Legion national commander who drafted the original GI Bill after World War II, was passed last year with bipartisan support. President Donald Trump signed the bill last August at his estate in Bedminster, New Jersey.

The bill's main provision removes the 15-year time limit for the use of education benefits under the existing GI Bill and makes it a lifetime benefit. The bill also includes increases in GI Bill funding for reservists and guardsmen, dependents, surviving spouses and surviving dependents; provides 100 percent GI Bill eligibility to post-9/11 Purple Heart recipients; restores eligibility for service members whose schools closed in the middle of a semester; and increases aid for veterans pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degrees.

"We made very good progress to date" on implementing the bill, although the VA missed the initial 16 JUL launch date, Worley said. "We have a handful of defects left" to correct. However, "We have the data in place that we need for [1 AUG], and we're ready to go. "We expect a wave of enrollments to come in between now and the early part of the fall, so that will be an increased workload, and that's why we have more people and overtime scheduled and those kinds of things," he said. "We will need to do some reworks for enrollments that come in between now and mid-August." [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | July 19, 2018 ++]

GI Bill Update 259 ► Lawmakers Opposed to New DoD Transfer Cap

A bipartisan group of 83 House lawmakers are blasting a Defense Department plan to change rules on troops transferring their GI Bill benefits to dependents, calling it unfair and devastating for military morale. "Once a service member meets the requirements for transferring Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to an eligible family member, we must uphold our end of the commitment," the group stated in a letter to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis last week. "This change in policy is unacceptable, and we call upon you to swiftly reverse this decision." At issue are plans in place for next year that would block servicemembers who have been in the ranks for more than 16 years from transferring their GI Bill benefits to dependents. Pentagon officials said the move is being made "to more closely align the transferability benefit with its purpose as a recruiting and retention incentive."

Currently, troops with at least six years of service may transfer their education benefits to a spouse or child, provided they agree to serve in the military for four more years. The value of the benefits can total tens of thousands of dollars in tuition, housing stipends and related education costs. Defense Department officials also announced that effective immediately, troops who cannot fulfill the additional four-year requirement because of issues such as mandatory retirement rules or medical issues will also not be allowed to transfer their benefits. Veterans groups have expressed dismay over the changes, which could severely limit the benefits value to military families.

- Last week, IAVA CEO Paul Rieckhoff warned that the new limitations on the benefits "hurt our readiness, hurt our recruitment, hurt morale, and are bad for military families." "Again, bean counters in Washington are trying to save pennies by chipping away at the most successful earned benefit in American history."
- The American Legion in a statement said they were upset the change was made without significant consultation with outside military advocates. "This is a bad policy and our veterans deserve better."

The bipartisan group of representatives — which includes multiple members of the House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs committees — echoed that frustration. "Revoking transferability benefits breaks (our) commitment with our most dedicated and seasoned service members," they wrote. "Eliminating the ability to transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to family members after honorably completing 16 years of service sends a exactly the wrong message to those who have chosen the military as their long-term career, and sets a dangerous precedent for the removal of other critical benefits as members approach military retirement."

The lawmakers demanded department leaders return to the original rules. The group has not yet publicly discussed legislation to force Pentagon officials to make the change. The effort was spearheaded by Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT) who in a statement said that “it should be (troops’) right to pass that hard-earned benefit over to a close family member such a child or a spouse.” According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than \$20 billion in education benefits has been distributed to more than 773,000 veterans, troops and family members since the Post-9/11 GI Bill was implemented in 2009. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 30, 2018 ++]

NDAA 2019 Update 09 ► Whale Issue Could Threaten Bill Passage

Defense legislation backed by Republicans would inadvertently kill 250 marine mammals and permanently injure 3,000 others, according to House Democrats fighting to keep out “anti-environmental” measures. It’s the latest flashpoint in a years-long fight—over government protections for the sage grouse and other wildlife—that has centered around the must-pass annual defense policy bill. Though lawmakers hope to wrap up talks to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act this month, such debates have caused delays in years past.

On 17 JUL, 119 House Democrats sent a letter to leaders of the House, Senate and armed services committees to ask that two provisions be stripped. They did not, however, explicitly threaten to vote against the bill en masse if the language stays in. “Provisions included in the House bill would undermine the science-based decision-making process used to protect all wildlife, plants, and fish in danger of extinction under the Endangered Species Act,” the letter reads. It was led by House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD) The lawmakers took issue with House bill provisions that would block the government from listing the sage grouse and the lesser prairie chicken as endangered species for 10 years — and kick the American burying beetle off the endangered species list altogether.

The law requires the military to get government approval from the National Marine Fisheries Service every five years for plans to mitigate activities that may harm whales and other warm-blooded sea creatures. The House-passed bill would extend that to 10, Democrats lamented, adding that “impacts from Navy activities can be significant.” The estimates of whale and marine mammal deaths and injuries, and foraging disruptions, were based on Navy projections, according to the lawmakers. The Navy has routinely acknowledged the detrimental impact of training and testing — with sonar and explosive ordnance — on marine life, though critics have claimed it is not doing enough to mitigate those activities.

In past years, Senate Armed Services Committee Chair John McCain (R-AZ), SASC Ranking Member Jack Reed, (D-RI), and HASC Ranking Member Adam Smith (D=WA) have successfully fought to keep the sage grouse issue out of the final bill. While House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) has in the past been beholden to House GOP leaders’ preference for the sage grouse provisions to stay in, he has in recent months said he would oppose anything non-germane to the bill if it threatens passage. [Source: DefenseNews | Joe Gould | July 17, 2018 ++]

NDAA 2019 Update 10 ► Pentagon Reverses Position on Bird Impact

In an abrupt reversal, the Pentagon said 7/19 it supports a Republican proposal in a defense policy bill that would bar the Fish and Wildlife Service from using the Endangered Species Act to protect two chicken-like birds in the western half of the U.S. In an email to Congress, a top Pentagon official said the proposal could help avoid any “negative readiness impacts on military facilities” that might result from listing the sage grouse and lesser-prairie chicken as

endangered. The statement by Pete Giambastiani, a legislative affairs aide, directly repudiates comments 18 JUL by Pentagon officials calling the GOP proposal unnecessary. The House-approved language would block endangered-species listing for the two birds for 10 years.

The birds have become flashpoints in an ongoing battle over whether they warrant federal protection that hinders mining and other development from Kansas to California. In a one-paragraph position paper made public 18 JUL, the Pentagon said the GOP provision was "not necessary to protect military testing and training" and said the department "urges its exclusion" from the defense bill being negotiated by House and Senate leaders. Lucian Niemeyer, assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment, said 18 JUL that military installations are "not experiencing significant mission impacts related to the management" of the sage grouse, lesser-prairie chicken or the American burying beetle, another threatened species targeted by the GOP bill.



Sage Grouse



Prairie Chicken

Giambastiani, in his email 19 JUL, challenged the accuracy of Niemeyer's statement. "The administration, the Defense Department and the Interior Department support the provision in question and believe that it could help the department avoid any negative readiness impacts on military facilities should the species be listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act," he wrote. "Importantly, several vital military installations are impacted by sage grouse populations in, around or underneath the airspace used by the Department of Defense on a daily basis." Alex Thompson, a spokeswoman for the Wilderness Society, said the GOP bill would "undermine collaborative, bipartisan efforts of Western states and federal agencies by binding the hands of federal agencies to exercise authority under the Endangered Species Act" to protect the sage grouse and lesser-prairie chicken. "This attempted end-run around congressional authorizing committee jurisdictions has drawn furious opposition" from veterans and sportsmen groups across the country, Thompson said, vowing to fight against the GOP plan.

Utah Rep. Rob Bishop inserted the endangered-species language into the defense policy bill, arguing that federal conservation efforts for the imperiled birds and the beetle undermine military training and readiness. A 2015 report by the Army says land-use restrictions designed to protect the sage grouse could affect operations at a number of Western sites, including the Yakima Training Center in Washington state and Hawthorne Army Depot in Nevada. [Source: The Associated Press | Matthew Daly | July 19, 2018 ++]

NDA 2019 Update 11 ► Cyber Warfare Provisions

The final version of an annual defense policy bill would set new authorities for the Department of Defense to deter and respond to attacks in cyberspace, including establishing the first U.S. policy on cyber warfare. Following House and Senate negotiations, a conference report on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) released 23 JUL says the United States should be able to use every option on the table, including offensive cyber capabilities. "[The NDAA] establishes a policy that the United States should employ all instruments of national power, including the

use of offensive cyber capabilities, to deter if possible, and respond when necessary, to cyber attacks that target U.S. interests," the conference report reads.

It notes that the policy could be applied if the attack was to intentionally "cause casualties, significantly disrupt the normal functioning of our democratic society or government, threaten the Armed Forces or the critical infrastructure they rely upon, achieve an effect comparable to an armed attack, or imperil a U.S. vital interest." Congress said if it is faced with a cyberattack or malicious cyber activity, it will first encourage the White House to take action before acting unilaterally.

"It is the policy of the United States that, when a cyber attack or malicious cyber activity transits or otherwise relies upon the networks or infrastructure of a third country— the United States shall, to the greatest extent practicable, notify and encourage the government of that country to take action to eliminate the threat; and if the government is unable or unwilling to take action, the United States reserves the right to act unilaterally (with the consent of that government if possible, but without such consent if necessary)," the blueprint of the bill reads.

If passed into law, this legislative text from the Senate would establish the nation's first cyber warfare policy — but it has to pass the president's desk first. President Trump has previously objected to the language in the Senate-passed bill, charging that this would infringe on his presidential authorities. "The Administration strongly objects, however, to section 1621(f), which would damage the national security interests of the United States by endorsing certain foreign policy and military determinations that are traditionally within the President's discretion, informed by the facts and circumstances prevailing at the time," the Trump administration said in a statement last month about the provision.

Trump, on the other hand, applauded a provision that would affirm the ability of the secretary of Defense to carry out military activities and operations in cyberspace, designating these cyber military activities to be traditional military activities. "The Administration strongly supports the Committee's recognition in section 1622 that military operations in cyberspace constitute traditional military activities. This affirmation is critical to ensuring that all elements of national power may be brought to bear in support of national security objectives," the White House statement continues.

The NDAA also gives the National Command Authority — a term that collectively describes the U.S. president and the secretary of Defense — the authority to direct the Defense Department's U.S. Cyber Command to respond and deter to "ongoing" cyberattacks carried out by Russia, China, North Korea and Iran by taking "take appropriate and proportional action." This particular provision comes at a time of heightened concern about Russian aggression. Recently, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats warned that the "warning lights are blinking red again" on Russians carrying out cyberattacks. Special counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election, indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers earlier this month for their involvement in hacking into the Democratic National Committee and releasing that information.

The defense bill, which is meant to advance the goals of the administration's National Defense Strategy, also would approve funding of more than \$100 million for "test infrastructure and workforce," which includes cybersecurity. Sens. John McCain (AZ) and Jack Reed (RI), the top Republican and Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, respectively, as well as Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK), and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) announced the details of the NDAA after months of negotiations. "The [fiscal 2019] NDAA will help provide our men and women in uniform the resources and tools they need to face today's increasingly complex and dangerous world," they said in a statement. "This legislation will strengthen our military's readiness, provide our troops a pay raise, support effective implementation of the National Defense Strategy, drive further innovation in emerging technologies to secure our military advantage, and continue to reform the Department of Defense," they continued. [Source: The Hill | Olivia Beavers | July 23, 2018 ++]

NDAA 2019 Update 12 ► TRICARE Fee Increases & Arlington National Cemetery

The final version of the fiscal 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, released 23 JUL, no longer includes a plan that would have resulted in unfair fee increases for many retirees and their families enrolled in TRICARE. This decision, made by leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, follows a campaign from the Military Officers Association of America and thousands of their members to get the measure removed, which would have eliminated the grandfathering for beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE prior to January 1, 2018 with the intent to establish a single co-payment structure for all beneficiaries. Congress's inboxes were flooded with over 17,000 MOAA-suggested messages explaining that yet another round of fee increases was unacceptable for TRICARE beneficiaries.

This mass swell of grassroots support, combined with many thousands more messages from partners in The Military Coalition, played an important role in shaping the conversation as the defense bill went to conference committee. Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins (USAF Ret.), MOAA's President and CEO, wrote Congressional leaders earlier this month, asking for the removal of the provision, Section 701 of the Senate version of the NDAA.

"This provision not only disregards the intent of the FY17 NDAA, which fully appreciated the difference between the many years of service as compared with new entrants, it patently results in yet another round of significant increases on that select population-affecting those who served a full military career and endured increases last year when the Defense Health Agency unilaterally implemented changes to the fee tables resulting in those net increases," Atkins wrote. "These new out of pocket cost increases, if approved, would be achieved through higher enrollment fees, new non-network deductibles, higher catastrophic caps and pharmacy fee increases-all of which significantly erode the military health care."

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The NDAA also formally directs the Secretary of the Army to take action on gradual filling up of burial plots at Arlington. Specifically, the provision in the final bill requires the secretary to make a decision on the criteria for burial so as to preserve Arlington as an active burial ground well into the future by Sept. 30, 2019. "Well into the future" is taken to mean over 100 years, a long enough time span to cast doubt on any prediction of demand or usage. While the Secretary of the Army holds governing authority over the cemetery, Congress felt the need to step in to spur action with the idea that the grounds ought to be kept open for new burials many decades into the future. The catch, of course, is that the space is finite, and the only realistic way to keep it as an active cemetery for more than a century is to severely limit eligibility.

Veteran and military service organizations have been part of ongoing discussions surrounding the space and time conflict at Arlington for years. The general consensus remains that disenfranchising the currently eligible population is not the way to go about extending the life of the cemetery. Expansion or reimagining the burial space are more acceptable alternatives. If eligibility is severely restricted in just over a year, some questions need answering sooner rather than later. Will any currently eligible be grandfathered? Will a certain number of plots be reserved for currently eligible? What sort of assistance will be provided to those who are no longer eligible, other than sending them to VA cemeteries? How will the word be spread to the interested parties? MOAA will be calling on the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery (ACANC) and cemetery leadership to get that information.

This directive was informed by a survey conducted by the ACANC, which has been studying this issue for a couple of years. Though the final results of the survey are not yet released, an interim update on the response trends suggested restricting eligibility to preserve the active cemetery was preferred by the public. The initial results also suggested a desire to further differentiate eligibility for above-ground and in-ground burials, perhaps as a means to retain retiree eligibility. An astounding 28,000 responses were collected at the time of that update, and the survey remained open for another month. Unfortunately, a 26 JUL Advisory Committee meeting was canceled. The final survey results were presumed to have been released at that meeting.

In more positive news, the legislation also grants the cemetery some small parcels of adjacent land along with funding for developing the land. Though not the long term solution, it is a more palatable way forward. It also directs a coordinated effort between the Secretary of Defense and the FAA to prevent unmanned aircraft, or drones, from disrupting funerals at Arlington.

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U.S. Senate lawmakers are expected to finalize Congress' annual defense authorization bill in the first week of AUG following the House's passage of the measure 26 JUL. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Forrest Allan | July 24, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Update 109 ► Military Talks With North Korean Representatives Resume

U.S. officials held high-level military talks with North Korean representatives on 15 JUL for the first time in nine years, a move that veterans advocates hope will be a breakthrough in efforts to recover the remains of thousands of fallen American troops. In a statement Sunday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the meeting between general officers from the two countries was "productive and cooperative" and also "resulted in firm commitments" from the North Korean contingent. As a result, additional meetings were scheduled to take place on 16 JUL, with the goal of coordinating the next steps in transferring the remains of the fallen U.S. troops. Pompeo said both sides also agreed to restart field operations to search for additional U.S. troop remains, a move which could eventually bring American military forensics teams into the country.

The resumption of recovery and return efforts was a key talking point of last month's summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Numerous veterans groups had lobbied the White House to emphasize the importance of the work in advance of the meeting, and praised plans to eventually bring home the fallen troops. More than 35,000 Americans died on the Korean Peninsula during the war, which lasted from 1950 to 1953. Of those, 7,700 are still listed as missing in action, with 5,300 believed to be on North Korean soil. From 1990 to 2005, 229 fallen service members were identified and returned back to America with the help of North Korean military staff. But that work was suspended 13 years ago amid deteriorating political relations between the countries.

Pentagon officials have said they believe North Korean officials currently have about 200 sets of U.S. remains that can be quickly transferred back to America once political and logistical issues are settled. But settling those issues has been problematic. In recent weeks, Trump has promised that work will begin soon, and indicated several times that fallen troops were already headed back home. Pentagon officials have said no remains have yet been transferred. Last week, North Korean representatives skipped a scheduled meeting with U.S. officials to discuss the work, requesting instead a military-to-military meeting to start the process. Sunday's meeting appears to have gotten the process back on track. U.S. military officials have been preparing for bringing the fallen troops' remains back to America for the last month, prepositioning about 100 wooden transport cases in South Korea. Pompeo's statement did not offer a timeline for when the first returns may take place. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 16, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Update 110 ► 55 MIA's En Route from North Korea

The remains of multiple of U.S. troops killed in the Korean War more than six decades ago are headed back to America now after North Korean officials turned them over to military officials, White House officials announced 26 JUL. The move comes on the 65th anniversary of the armistice that ended hostilities in the conflict and about six weeks after President Donald Trump met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. In a statement, White House officials praised their North Korean counterparts for honoring a promise from that meeting to return the remains. "We are encouraged by North Korea's actions and the momentum for positive change."



Military officials said the remains were loaded onto an Air Force C-17 at an air base in Wonsan, North Korea, and taken to Osan Air Base in South Korea. Service members from United Nations Command Korea and technical experts from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency were on hand for the event. United Nations Command officials confirmed that 55 cases of remains were turned over by the North Koreans. A formal repatriation ceremony will be held on 1 AUG, with plans to return the remains to Hawaii after that for further analysis. “The United States owes a profound debt of gratitude to those American service members who gave their lives in service to their country and we are working diligently to bring them home,” the White House statement said. “It is a solemn obligation of the United States Government to ensure that the remains are handled with dignity and properly accounted for so their families receive them in an honorable manner.”

More than 35,000 Americans died on the Korean Peninsula during that war. Of those, 7,700 are still listed as missing in action, with 5,300 believed to be on North Korean soil. U.S. and North Korean officials had previously worked together on the recovery of those casualties in the past, forging a repatriation agreement that lasted from 1990 to 2005. During that span, 229 fallen troops were identified and returned home. But 13 years ago, in the face of deteriorating political relations, the effort was suspended. Earlier this week, officials from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency credited lobbying work by the Veterans of Foreign Wars for helping to highlight the issue and push its inclusion into the North Korean summit conversation.

Identifying the remains is a process that typically takes months or years. Defense officials have said they believe North Korea the remains of 200 missing service members in their possession, and in recent weeks have begun preparing for the identification work ahead. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis met with Pentagon reporters 27 JUL and took many questions on the return of possible war remains from North Korea. He spoke on what it means for military families who have never had closure, and how the U.S. will verify the remains are real.

Q: We’ve been working [for] years and years to get the remains back, what does it mean for you personally?

Mattis: “What it means for us. We have families, that when they got the telegram, have never had closure. They’ve never, you know, gone out and had the body returned. So what we’re seeing here is an opportunity to give those families closure. To make certain that we continue to look for those remaining.” “By the way, you noticed it was a U.N. blue flag on each of the boxes. Many of the U.N. nations with us also have missing. We don’t know who is in those boxes. As we discover it, they will be returned. They could go to Australia, they have missing. France has missing. The Americans – there’s a whole lot of us. So this is an international effort to bring closure for those families.”

Q: Two years ago, North Korean officials offered to repatriate 200 remains. So, why only 55 caskets?

Mattis: “We can’t go back in and verify what the number they had was. We know what they said. But for us, we’ll simply say this is obviously a gesture of carrying forward what they agreed to in Singapore, and we take it as such. We also look at it as a first step in a restarted process. So we do want to explore additional efforts to bring others home, perhaps have our own teams go in.”

Q: Have the North Koreans provided any evidence that the remains they provided to the U.S. service members, and not, say, North Korean remains?

Mattis: “The reason those remains aren’t on their way back to the United States right now, is, that they are first going to be reviewed initially there in Korea. and we’ll look for any anomalies where they’re not what we think they might be. And then the forensics will begin when we land them in Hawaii, where the laboratory is. But we have no indications that there is anything amiss. But we don’t know, we can’t confirm it one way or another. That is why we go through all of the forensics.” US military teams may go to North Korea to look for more war remains

Q: You said earlier today there’s a possibility U.S. teams may eventually go into North Korea to look for additional remains?

Mattis: “That would be worked out. It certainly is something we’re interested in exploring with the North Koreans.”

Q: Does that mean that for the foreseeable future there will be no joint wargames with South Korea?

Mattis: “No, it’s unrelated to that.”

Q: What’s the next step?

Mattis: “We’ll have to sort it out. Obviously we want to continue this sort of humanitarian effort.”

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III & Tara Coop | July 27, 2018 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries ► Reported 16 thru 31 JUL 2018 | Seventeen

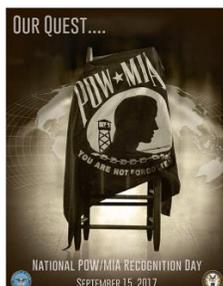
“Keeping the Promise“, “Fulfill their Trust” and “No one left behind” are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II 73,025, Korean War 7730, Vietnam War 1604, Cold War (126), 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 <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Year/2018> for a listing and details of those accounted for in 2018. 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. Ottaway B. Cornwell** was a member of the 4th Fighter Squadron, 52nd Fighter Group, Twelfth Air Force, piloting a Supermarine Spitfire aircraft, which was shot down over Pierrefeu-du-Var, France, on Jan. 27, 1944. Cornwell could not be reached through radio contact following the attack. Because southern France was occupied by enemy forces, an immediate search could not be conducted. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cornwell.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Vincent L. Politte**, 19, of Leavenworth, Kan., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 30 at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Politte served as a gunner with the 345th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 9th Air Force. During a raid north of Bucharest, Romania, Politte's B-24 Liberator aircraft was hit by machine gun fire and crashed. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. [Read about Politte.](#)
- **Army Cpl. Albert E. Mills** was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, blocking the Korean People's Army from advancing along a corridor linking the cities of Taejon and Taegu, South Korea. On July 23, 1950, enemy forces attacked his unit and Mills was reported missing in action on July 25, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mills.](#)
- **Army Cpl. Francisco Ramos-Rivera** was a member of Company H, 2nd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces near Taegon, South Korea. As U.S. forces regrouped after their evacuation, Ramos-Rivera could not be accounted-for and was declared missing in action on July 20, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ramos-Rivera.](#)
- **Army Master Sgt. Leonard K. Chinn** was a member of Company D, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, when his unit was fighting off persistent Chinese attacks in North Korea. Chinn was reportedly captured by enemy forces on Dec. 1, 1950, and was held at several temporary prisoner of war camps before being marched northwest to POW Camp 5 Complex, North Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Chinn.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Walter W. Green**, 18, of Zanesville, Ohio, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 20 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Green was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. In November 1950, his unit was involved in combat actions against the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces in the vicinity of Unsan, North Korea. Green was reported missing in action as of Nov. 2, 1950 when he could not be accounted for by his unit. [Read about Green.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Willard Jenkins** was a member of Company C, 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division near Nijmegen, Netherlands. On Sept. 20, 1944, while participating in Operation Market Garden, his unit was ordered to cross the Waal River to make an amphibious attack. Jenkins was wounded in the chest by enemy fire. Because of the enemy activity in the area, a search could not be conducted and he was declared missing in action on Sept. 20, 1944. Interment services are pending. [Read about Jenkins.](#)
- **Army Pvt. Delbert J. Holliday** was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 7th Cavalry Division, participating in combat actions against the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces in the

vicinity of North Pyongan Province, North Korea. Holliday was killed in action on Nov. 30, 1950 and was reportedly buried in the United Nations Military Cemetery in Pyongyang. As the United Nations' situation with North Korea worsened, circumstances forced the cemetery in Pyongyang to close on Dec. 3, 1950, and buried remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. Read about Holliday.

- **Army Pvt. John B. Cummings** was a member of Company A, 276th Infantry Regiment, 70th Infantry Division, along the France and Germany border. On Dec. 31, 1944, German troops crossed the Rhine River into France. As darkness fell, two members of Cummings' company passed him in a foxhole near the riverbank. U.S. troops heard German machine gun fire and maneuvered their way back to the foxhole, but were unable to locate Cummings. Despite extensive recovery efforts, Cummings' remains were unable to be located. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cummings.](#)
- **Army Staff Sgt. David Rosenkrantz**, 28, of Los Angeles, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried in June 20 in Riverside, Calif. Rosenkrantz was assigned to Company H, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. In September 1944, his unit participated in Operation Market Garden, a ploy by Allied planners to break German defensive lines on the western front by capturing a highway route through the Netherlands. On Sep. 28, 1944, Rosenkrantz' platoon occupied Heuvelhof, a farm located south of the town of Grosbeek, when German tanks and infantry attacked. The paratroopers hid among sparse trees and buildings. Rosenkrantz was killed by enemy gunfire when he rose from his position. Due to the proximity of the enemy, his remains could not be recovered at the time. Read about Rosenkrantz.
- **Marine Corps Pfc. Robert K. Holmes** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Holmes.](#)
- **Navy Aviation Radioman 3rd Class Walter E. Mintus** was aboard a torpedo bomber from U.S. Navy Torpedo Squadron Fifty One on a mission targeting the Japanese base at Malakal Harbor. Witnesses observed an object, believed to be an aircraft, on fire in Malakal Harbor. All three servicemen on board, including Mintus, were reported missing in action and subsequently presumed dead on Feb. 4, 1946. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mintus.](#)
- **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class George H. Gibson**, 20, of Winchester, Kan., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 21 in Inglewood, Calif. Gibson was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Read about Gibson.
- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Millard C. Pace** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Pace.](#)
- **Navy Fireman 2nd Class Lowell E. Valley**, 19, of Ontonagon, Mich., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 14 in his hometown. Valley was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Valley.](#)
- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Eugene W. Wicker**, 20, of Coweta, Okla., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried August 4 in Fort Gibson, Okla. Wicker was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Wicker.](#)

- **Navy Seaman 1st Class James C. Solomon**, 23, of Forestburg, Texas, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 14, in his hometown. Solomon was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsized. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Solomon.](#)

[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | July 31, 2018 ++]

* VA *



VA Secretary Update 82 ► Senate Approves Robert Wilkie 86 to 9

Senators overwhelmingly approved Robert Wilkie as the next Veterans Affairs secretary on Monday, but the move came with political dissent for the first time in the department’s 30-year history. The final vote of 86-9 wasn’t enough to seriously jeopardize his chances of taking over as the 10th VA secretary. But it did mark the first time since the agency became a Cabinet-level department that any senator has voted against a nominee for the top VA job — a post that usually rises above partisan congressional fights. All of the opposition came from Democrats and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Earlier this month, Sanders said he would not support Wilkie’s nomination because of his distrust of President Donald Trump’s policies towards veterans medical care. “Trump has been very clear about his desire to move to the privatization of the VA,” Sander said, “and I suspect any of his appointees will try and move the agency in that direction.”

The threat of outsourcing VA medical responsibilities — and funding — has dominated much of the discussion over department policy since Trump took office. One of Wilkie’s biggest responsibilities in the next year will be crafting new community care rules allowing veterans more access to private-sector doctors, a process that is expected to spur even more heated debate. His past work for former Sens. Jesse Helms and Trent Lott also drew questions at his confirmation hearing, particularly his involvement with controversial issues surrounding the Confederate flag, equality issues, and Trump’s military transgender policies. Wilkie defended much of the work as routine business, but that answer failed to reassure a number of Democratic opponents.

Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee ranking member Jon Tester (D-MT) has also expressed concerns about Trump’s intentions with VA, but took to the Senate floor before the vote to back Wilkie as a responsible nominee to guide the department into the future. “Right now the VA does not have a confirmed secretary who is focused on the larger mission of serving veterans, implementing the reforms, and improving VA care and benefits,” he said. “Instead, we’ve had temporary political appointees in charge. They’re more interested in picking political fights with people who are not their enemy. “I believe we’ve lost sight of the VA mission. It will be up to Mr. Wilkie to right that ship.” Republicans in the Senate were even freer with their praise. Committee chairman Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA) called the nominee “the real deal” and an exemplary pick by the president. “Robert Wilkie understands the needs of our veteran rural areas,” he said before the vote. “He understands the needs in large urban cities. He understands the threat of suicide and our need to get mental health accessible and available to our veterans at all times. He also knows that we’ve given him a quiver of arrows that he can use to root out the bad players and lift the good players.”

Wilkie's confirmation ends four months of leadership turmoil at VA, a department that boasts a budget of nearly \$200 billion and more than 350,000 employees. In March, President Donald Trump fired then-Secretary David Shulkin amid infighting at the department, and allegations by Shulkin that political operatives were working to undermine VA health care programs. Trump's first pick to replace Shulkin, former White House physician Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson, withdrew his name from consideration in April after allegations emerged about unprofessional behavior and medication mismanagement in his role as the administration's top doctor.

Wilkie, 55, has been serving since last fall as the Defense Department's under secretary for personnel and readiness. He also served as acting VA secretary for two months following the firing of Shulkin from the lead department job in March. He has received generally positive reviews from veterans groups in recent months as a stabilizing force for a department that has seen significant turmoil since the start of 2018. In a statement, American Legion National Commander Denise Rohan praised the move and said her staff is focused on working with the new secretary "to ensure America's veterans receive the healthcare, education, and other benefits they have earned."

Wilkie is an Air Force Reserve colonel who previously spent time in the Navy Reserve. He is the son of an Army artillery commander wounded in the Vietnam War, and has spoken frequently about growing up in a military family dealing with those serious injuries. He served in the Pentagon under Defense Secretaries Robert Gates and Donald Rumsfeld as an assistant secretary, and previously was special assistant to President George W. Bush for national security affairs. Wilkie is also well known on Capitol Hill, most recently serving as a senior adviser to Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., prior to his recent Pentagon appointment. The new secretary also outlined his top department priorities in that Senate event, promising to offer "world-class customer service" at VA, expanding veterans access to medical care outside the VA system, reducing disability claims backlogs and reforming human resources systems. Wilkie is expected to be officially sworn into his new role later this week. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 23, 2018 ++]

White House VA Hotline Update 02 ► No. 6 in Trump's 10-Point Plan

A Department of Veterans Affairs facility sits unassuming, behind a hotel in a small, riverside town on the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. The single-story brick building is nondescript except for a sign indicating the doors for VA deliveries. Inside, visitors are passed a badge through a slot in a window before entering through a second set of doors. One main room, separated from smaller offices by a large glass wall, houses a few dozen cubicles, each with just enough space for a phone and desktop computer. When veterans pick up the phone to dial the new White House veterans hotline, this is where their calls go.

As Promised

President Donald Trump vowed two years ago to create a White House hotline for veterans, promising them attention and action from the highest levels of government. He portrayed the hotline as a direct connection to the Oval Office and even indicated he might field a few calls. A hotline was established, but its connection to the White House is in name only. The operation is located in Shepherdstown, W.Va., about 70 miles northwest of Washington, and phones are answered by VA employees - not White House staff. Some veterans have misperceived the hotline as a powerful link to the president's official residence. And the government hasn't done much to correct them. Since it became fully operational in November, the VA has released few details about the hotline, its budget or how it differentiates from numerous other VA call lines.

Requests for interviews about it have been ignored or shunted since April. "This isn't going straight to the White House, and I don't think veterans know that, or have a good understanding what this hotline is supposed to be," said Licia Lynn, a Marine veteran who's called the hotline multiple times. "It's rough, because some people don't know how to advocate for themselves and were hoping the White House would advocate for them." On the campaign trail July 26, 2016, Trump spoke at the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Charlotte, N.C., and declared he would

create a private, 24-hour White House hotline that veterans could use to relay their complaints about the VA. In the run-up to the 2016 election, Trump described the VA as the most corrupt federal agency and vowed that his administration would fix it. The hotline was No. 6 in his 10-point plan. "I will create a private White House hotline - that is answered by a real person 24 hours a day - to make sure that no valid complaint about the VA ever falls through the cracks," Trump said. "I will instruct my staff that if a valid complaint is not acted upon, then the issue be brought directly to me, and I will pick up the phone and fix it myself, if need be."

He joked that the hotline could keep him up at night and "take the place of Twitter." "I want to have somebody, a real person and a really competent person, in the White House with that hotline going," Trump said. This week marks the two-year anniversary of that pledge, and Trump addressed the VFW convention again - this time touting the hotline as a promise kept. "As promised, we established the White House VA Hotline," he told a crowd of about 4,000 veterans. Trump's administration, under former VA Secretary David Shulkin, did establish a hotline. After months of delays and a soft launch in June 2017, the VA declared it fully operational in November. It can be reached at 855-948-2311. But there are many unknowns. While the VA has released some basic statistics, such as how many calls the hotline has received and how long it takes to answer the phones, the agency has refused to disclose the total cost of the operation, or say how successful it is in resolving veterans' problems.

Some veterans who have used it complained it's doing the opposite of what was promised and sending their calls back to local VA offices, rather than elevating their concerns to the highest reaches of government. Veterans aren't the only ones with questions and misperceptions about the hotline. Lawmakers who are tasked with VA oversight, as well as the VA inspector general, aren't receiving answers. When contacted by phone, VA Inspector General Michael Missal - who investigates VA programs and operations - said he was unaware about who ran the hotline and was uncertain whether he had oversight authority.

- Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN), the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said in a statement his office has sought answers to questions about the hotline for months and received nothing in response. "In fact, veterans on my own staff have resorted to calling the hotline themselves just to learn more about the hotline and how it functions," Walz said.
- Rep. Phil Roe, the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said in a statement that he looked forward to hearing more about the hotline and the concerns raised by callers. "Part of truly reforming VA is to ensure veterans have an outlet to share their experiences with the department - both good and bad," Roe said.

Why Shepherdstown?

A man at the local visitor's center, taking a break from playing a bagpipe, said Shepherdstown has become a draw for weekend tourists from Washington and Baltimore. It's a 90-minute drive from each city when the traffic is good. The town is home to about 1,700 people year-round and boasts an active three-block thoroughfare with a smattering of funky shops, fusion restaurants and a well-trafficked diner. The biggest employer is Shepherdstown University, a private liberal arts college that also takes up a large chunk of the town's acreage. There are a pair of minor attractions, both boasting views of the nearby Potomac River - a monument honoring the inventor of the steamboat, James Rumsey, and the Bavarian Inn, a hotel that promises fine European dining. Every summer about this time, residents look forward to a renowned theater festival that brings in visitors from across the mid-Atlantic.

On the south side of town, on the campus of the local Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, is the White House VA Hotline. When contacted about the hotline, multiple officials who represent Shepherdstown in the state legislature didn't know it was there. "I didn't know about it," said Patricia Rucker, a Republican senator from Jefferson County, where Shepherdstown is located. "Obviously, I'm very glad and honored that they have chosen to open the center in Shepherdstown." The VA has stated in news releases that the hotline is based in West Virginia, but it won't discuss why that was the chosen site. Rucker cited the proximity to the Washington metro area as a possible reason the place was selected. She also guessed property is more affordable here than anywhere closer to D.C.

When a reporter showed up at the building in late June, about 70 cars were parked in the government-only lots surrounding the building. The program manager for the hotline, Randy Kunkleman, allowed entry but was eventually prohibited by VA headquarters from speaking on the record. Tim Hudak, a communications official with the Veterans Experience Office in Washington, told Stars and Stripes that hotline staff couldn't accommodate a tour at that time. He referred questions to VA Press Secretary Curt Cashour, who said he would arrange an interview and possible visit, but - after multiple inquiries - hasn't. On Friday, Cashour offered a tour, but only after the Washington Post published its version of the story based on a tour.

'It does no good'

When announced, the White House hotline was thought to give veterans a direct line to the executive branch. A half-dozen veterans who have used the hotline and relayed their experiences to Stars and Stripes said they didn't believe that was the case in their situations. They called the hotline for a variety of reasons, from policy questions to complaints about VA programs and help setting up medical appointments. Coast Guard veteran Thomas Fant, 46, called the hotline with a criticism about the length of time it took to secure a medical appointment through the VA Choice program, which allows veterans to go into the private sector for care. A hotline agent sent Fant back to the private-sector provider whom he had already spoken to about the issue. "You call there because you've exhausted all other options with your local VA, but what happens is, it just circles right back to the origin of the issue. It does no good," Fant said.

The VA maintains one call line for benefits questions, 800-827-1000, one for health care questions, 877-222-8387, another for online account problems, 800-983-0937, and one for burial eligibility information, 800-535-1117. The VA Inspector General's Office has its own hotline to receive VA complaints, at 800-488-8244. The U.S. Office of Special Counsel has a hotline, 800-872-9855, to document employee retaliation issues at the VA. The White House hotline receives some calls that are transferred directly to the Veterans Crisis Line or the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans. Last month, 200 calls were sent to the crisis line, Cashour said. The new hotline, rather than eliminating bureaucracy as Trump promised, merely added another layer of it, Fant argued. "It really hasn't served any real benefit or purpose that I know of," he said.

Brian Lewis, a 38-year-old veteran and attorney in Woodbury, Minn., had a similar experience. He recently called the White House hotline with a complaint about the Minneapolis VA. The hotline agent rerouted him back to a VA employee in Minneapolis, and his issue was never resolved, Lewis said. "I am dismayed the president touted this system as an effective remedy, when it is merely a continuation of the failed VA patient advocacy system," Lewis said in an email. Licia Lynn, 32, is a social worker who has tried to use the hotline on behalf of veterans she assists. One veteran asked her to get him a new VA doctor. Others were attempting to check on backlogged claims. Half of the time, the person who answered the phone routed Lynn to her elected officials' offices. Other times, the calls went unanswered, she said. "It just doesn't seem like it's really working, and that's terrible to say," Lynn said. "I want it to work. I want it to work for my fellow veterans. I just haven't had a good experience with it."

The hotline is receiving some positive feedback, Cashour said. Since October, it's received 560 calls from veterans who were helped by the hotline and wanted to compliment the staff. Army veteran Allison Bockstanz, 39, described a good experience. Bockstanz called multiple times with complaints about the Ann Arbor and Washington medical centers. She recently called to check on the status of her disability rating. Each time she's called, someone immediately answered and followed up with an email, Bockstanz said. "I think it's working," she said. "I feel like the line is making the VA accountable for their actions. Everybody thinks that everything is bad, but I can tell you it was a lot worse, at least for me, a year ago."

How much does it cost?

When the hotline quietly launched last summer, Shulkin said it would cost about \$200,000 to kick off. The VA hasn't released updated cost estimates, but <https://www.usaspending.gov/#/>, an official government source for data on federal awards, lists three contracts totaling \$2.2 million awarded to AT&T Corp. for a "veterans hotline" in September. The contracts list the VA hospital in Martinsburg, West Va., as the location. Martinsburg is the parent duty station for the

Shepherdstown facility. Jim Greer, director of corporate communications for AT&T, said only that AT&T is involved with the hotline and "proud of the services we've provided." He referred questions about their involvement to the VA. Cashour did not respond to a question about the contracts with AT&T.

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | July 28, 2018 ++]

VA Suicide Prevention Update 48 ► Employee Shortages & Opioid Surpluses Impact

Employee shortages and opioid surpluses are severely hindering the Department of Veterans Affairs from effectively fighting the scourge of veteran suicide, according to a new report from the American Legion. The American Legion White Paper on Veteran Suicide can be accessed at https://www.scribd.com/document/383970975/American-Legion-White-Paper-on-Veteran-Suicide#from_embed

Just after the departure of ex-VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin in mid-February, the VA had more than 33,000 vacancies, according to a spokesman; in June, the American Legion told Congress that this shortage could reach 100,000 personnel from nurses and assistants to doctors and psychologists, according to [one study](#). This shortage doesn't just limit access to critical physician expertise, but "can lead to overworked staff, poor patient experiences and lower quality of care," according to the American Legion report. "Exemplary patient experience is vital to keeping veterans in the VA care network, which studies have shown significantly decreases risk of suicide."

That exhausting work environment can extend to sloppy handling of potentially addictive substances, namely benzodiazepines like Xanax and Valium. According to the Legion report, a full quarter of veterans newly diagnosed with PTSD "are still being prescribed harmful and potentially deadly amounts of medications;" a whopping 16% of veterans are prescribed "a morphine-equivalent dose of opioids" concurrently with their Benzo. This is horribly risky and irresponsible behavior. There exists "growing evidence of negative side effects, including an increase of PTSD symptoms, risk of suicidal thoughts and of accidental overdose," the Legion report cautions. "According to a 2013 study, 43 percent of servicemembers who attempted suicide between 2008 and 2010 had taken psychotropic medications."

The instinct to dope agitated veterans to the gills is only doing harm. Research indicates that benzos "have no health benefit in treating PTSD and that there is extreme concern for overdose among veterans who misuse alcohol while on them" — a major risk for a full 50% of the veterans who are prescribed these dangerous substances but booze on them anyway.

If there's some silver lining to the dangerous over prescription trend detailed in the American Legion's veteran suicide report, it's that, [according to USA Today](#), almost every VA facility has experienced a steady drop in its prescription rates since 2012, with an overall decline of 41%. Sure, part of this decline indicated that this is more of a return to relatively "normal" prescription levels than a [concentrated drop](#), after a mid-2010s spike in prescriptions. But as Task & Purpose editor's colleague James Clark noted back in January, it's certainly a step in the right direction — especially when it comes to making a dent in the veteran suicide rate. [Source: Task & Purpose | Jared Keller | July 16, 2018 ++]

VA Unions Update 02 ► New Work Hours Guidelines | EO 13837

VA announced that it has begun implementing a recent presidential executive order (EO), which offered new guidelines for how union officials use work hours when representing federal employees. Signed by President Trump on May 25, "Executive Order 13837 Ensuring Transparency, Accountability, And Efficiency in Taxpayer Funded

Union Time Use” is intended to “ensure that taxpayer-funded union time is used efficiently and authorized in amounts that are reasonable, necessary, and in the public interest.”

Peter O’Rourke, VA’s acting secretary, said the executive order will increase monitoring and reporting guidelines among VA, the Office of Personnel Management and union leaders, while making that information available to the public. “This executive order ensures the proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars,” O’Rourke said. “The order offers reasonable standards for union representatives and makes clear that they should spend the majority of their duty hours on federal government work.” The executive order affects about 1,700 VA employees using taxpayer-funded union time. Approximately 300,000 VA employees are represented by one of five national unions. The order’s restrictions regarding time spent on government work includes member solicitation, lobbying activities, elections of union officials and collection of dues. The executive order also outlines rules about the following:

- Negotiations about appropriate implementation of the executive order
- Standards for use of union time
- Employee conduct regarding agency time and resources, to include use of office or meeting spaces, phones and computer systems
- Preventing unlawful or unauthorized expenditures
- Agency reporting requirements, and
- Public disclosure and transparency.

Nathan Maenle, principal deputy assistant secretary for VA’s Office of Human Resources and Administration, offered an example of how the order is being implemented at VA. “VA employees who previously spent 100 percent of their official work hours on union issues can devote no more than 25 percent of that time to the union under the new executive order,” Maenle said. “Union leaders must also request and receive approval of their use of taxpayer-funded union time to allow the VA to monitor the use of this time to ensure that it’s only used for authorized purposes.” [Source: VA News Release | July 20, 2018 ++]

VA Crisis Hotline Update 36 ► New Smartphone Voice Command Access

A new smartphone feature enables distressed veterans to reach help faster by calling the Veterans Crisis Line with a voice command. Veterans and servicemembers now can connect to the Veterans Crisis Line through the Siri or Google Assistant functions on their smartphones, saving them the time and hassle of searching for the phone number. Military and medical leaders have estimated 20 veterans commit suicide each day. The new smartphone command is a simple feature that could make a difference when seconds matter. “I think anything that makes it more accessible for anybody that needs help without having to search for it is a great thing,” said Sara Dawdy, CEO of Mission 22, a nonprofit organization founded by Special Forces operators to raise awareness of veteran suicide. “I think that its great companies are stepping up to support people in crisis because that's what we're all supposed to do.”

Data released by the VA show the average number of veterans who die by suicide each day remained at 20 from 1979 to 2015. They also indicate suicide cannot be attributed to any single cause, but instead is the result of a range of factors, including relationships, substance use, physical health, job, financial, and legal problems, in addition to mental health conditions. The smartphone feature is the latest effort by the crisis line to connect with distressed veterans. Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 3.5 million calls, initiating the dispatch of emergency vehicles to imminent crises about 93,000 times. Chat and text services, introduced after launch, have generated more than 397,000 chat requests and 92,000 text services.

“The ability for veterans to connect to the Veterans Crisis Line using just four simple words, and through a technology that so many people are familiar with already, is truly remarkable,” said Matt Miller, director of the Veterans Crisis Line. “While some suicidal crises last a long time, most last minutes to hours. The quicker we can get

veterans connected to care, the more likely they are to survive.” If you or someone you know is in crisis, support is available 24/7. Veterans, servicemembers, military family members, and anyone who is concerned can call the Veterans and Military Crisis Line at (800) 273-8255, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/chat, or send a text to 838255. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Amanda Dolasinski | July 19, 2018 ++]

VA Cancer Treatment Update 58 ► Precision Oncology Program

On 19 JUL the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and IBM Watson Health announced the extension of a public-private partnership to apply artificial intelligence (AI) to help interpret cancer data in the treatment of Veteran patients. First announced two years ago as part of the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative, VA oncologists have now used IBM Watson for Genomics technology to support precision oncology care for more than 2,700 Veterans with cancer. Precision oncology is the practice of biologically directed cancer care. For example, the mutations in a cancer's genome (the cancer's DNA) can significantly impact the treatment options available to treat that cancer and the likely outcomes after treatment. By knowing the cancer genome, oncologists and patients are able to choose therapies that specifically target the patient's cancer.

VA's precision oncology program primarily supports stage 4 cancer patients who have exhausted other treatment options. The partnership extension with IBM will enable VA oncologists to continue using Watson for Genomics through at least June 2019. “Our mission with VA's precision oncology program is to bring the most advanced treatment opportunities to Veterans, in hopes of giving our nation's heroes better treatments through these breakthroughs,” said Acting VA Secretary Peter O'Rourke. “We look forward to continuing this strategic partnership to assist VA in providing the best care for our Veterans.”

VA treats 3.5 percent of the nation's cancer patients — the largest group of cancer patients within any one health-care group. In order to bring precision oncology advances to this large group of patients, with equal access available anywhere in the country, VA established a central “hub” in Durham, North Carolina. In this facility, a small group of oncologists and pathologists receive tumor samples from patients nationwide and sequence the tumor DNA. They then use AI — the ability of a computer program or a machine to think and learn — to help interpret the genomic data, identifying relevant mutations and potential therapeutic options that target those mutations.

More than one-third of the patients who have benefited from VA's precision oncology program are Veterans from rural areas where it has traditionally been difficult to deliver cutting-edge medical breakthroughs. “VA is leading the nation to scale and spread the delivery of high-quality precision oncology care, one Veteran at a time,” said Dr. Kyu Rhee, chief health officer for IBM Watson Health. “It is incredibly challenging to read, understand and stay up-to-date with the breadth and depth of the medical literature, and link them to relevant mutations for personalized cancer treatments. This is where AI can play an important role in helping to scale precision oncology, as demonstrated in our work with VA, the largest integrated health system in the U.S.” For more information about the VA's precision oncology program, visit <https://www.research.va.gov/pubs/varqu/spring2016/4.cfm>. [Source: VA News Release | July 19, 2018 ++]

VA Medical Examinations ► IG | Re-examination Unnecessary in 37% of Benefit Cases

Veterans Affairs officials are on track to waste more than \$100 million over the next five years on tens of thousands of unnecessary medical exams for disabled veterans, according a report out this week from the department's watchdog. The VA Inspector General's findings are based off a sampling of re-examination cases last year that indicated department officials may have requested unneeded medical check-ups in 37 percent of benefits cases. The exams are

designed to see whether veterans' health has improved enough to warrant changes in their disability payouts. VA covers the cost of the exams, but the process can still be time-consuming and inconvenient for the veterans involved. Investigators found that a sizable portion of cases that should be clearly exempt from those periodic checks — including ones where veterans have a permanent disability or where benefits changes are unlikely — were frequently ordered despite existing rules.

They blamed the problem on ratings officials skipping over pre-exam reviews of veterans cases which would have alerted them to reasons to change the standard medical report schedules. “The review team estimated that (the Veterans Benefits Administration) spent \$10.1 million on unwarranted reexaminations during the six-month review period,” the report stated. “VBA would waste \$100.6 million on unwarranted reexaminations over the next five years without instituting procedures to ensure employees only request necessary reexaminations.” The inspector general noted that the numerous excessive exams also put additional pressure on claims processors and VA physicians, by increasing their workload without proper justification.

VBA officials agreed with the bulk of the report and said they hope to implement new internal controls by this November to help address the problem. They are also planning more internal scrutiny of claims officials requesting the exams, to make sure they understand existing rules and processes. The agency has also begun collecting data for recurring reports on how many unneeded exams are ordered, to get a better sense of the scope of the problem. The full report is available at the inspector general's [web site](#). [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 18, 2018 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 31 JUL 2018

Pollack, LA -- A Louisiana woman has pleaded guilty to stealing more than \$114,000 in disability benefits meant for her deceased mother. U.S. Attorney David C. Joseph, in a news release 26 JUL, said 44-year-old **Elizabeth Poole**, of Pollock, pleaded guilty to one count of theft of money belonging to the Department of Veteran's Affairs. Authorities testified that Poole's mother died in September 2007, while receiving VA benefits as the surviving widow of a U.S. Navy veteran. Poole did not tell the agency of her mother's death and the VA continued to send monthly payments into an account she held jointly with her mother. U.S. District Judge Dee D. Drell set sentencing for 18 NOV. Poole faces up to 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and restitution. [Source: The Associated Press | July 27, 2018 ++]

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Jonesborough, TN -- On July 25, 2018, following a six-day trial in U.S. District Court, Kenneth Richard Devore, 44, was convicted of wire fraud, mail fraud, financial conflict of interest, theft of public money, and making false statements in matters within the jurisdiction of the United States.

According to evidence presented at trial, in 2015, while acting as a field examiner for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Devore schemed to defraud a disabled and incompetent veteran of over \$680,000. Under the VA's Fiduciary Program, field examiners are employed to help protect the financial assets of veterans who are unable to take care of themselves. As such, field examiners conduct on-site fact-finding examinations to ascertain the veteran's income and assets and to observe his mental condition, living arrangement, and social adjustment. While assigned to a disabled veteran in Knoxville, Tennessee, Devore used his position to convince that veteran that he needed a Last Will and Testament (will). Devore then drafted the will and deceptively inserted his own name as the sole beneficiary of the veteran's financial bank accounts and investments, which totaled over \$680,000. Devore falsified the victim's initials on the will and mailed it to his legal guardian, Regions Bank.

As a result of his conduct, Devore was forced to resign from the VA. Shortly thereafter, in early 2016, he applied for a position as an investigator for the National Background Investigations Bureau, an agency within the U.S. Office

of Personnel Management (OPM) that conducts investigations for positions of public trust and security clearances. In his application for the job and security clearance, he lied about his own educational and employment history, intentionally withholding that he had been forced to resign from the VA for misconduct and falsely claiming that he had received a college degree from the so-called “Canterbury University.” By his misrepresentations and omissions, Devore was hired for the job and worked through 2017.

Additionally, in 2009 and 2010, Devore lied about his own purported disabilities in order to obtain a 100% “total and permanent” disability rating by the VA. While he claimed to be unemployed and unable to work because of service-connected ailments, he worked gainfully and almost continuously in various federal and private sector jobs from 2009 through 2017. During that period, he received monthly disability compensation from the VA to which he was not entitled.

Sentencing was set for 10:00 a.m., November 5, 2018, before the Honorable Judge Pamela L. Reeves in U.S. District Court in Greenville. Devore was detained pending sentencing. Wire fraud and mail fraud both carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Theft of public money carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Financial conflict of interest and false statements both carry a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. [Source: DoJ Eastern District of Tennessee | U.S. Attorney’s Office | July 26, 2018 ++]

VAMC Omaha NE Update 04 ► Robots Now Assisting Staff

Here’s a Tug...there’s a Tug...everywhere a Tug Tug...unmanned robots have begun to roam the elevators and hallways of the Omaha VA Medical Center! Well, to put this into perspective, there are men behind the scenes, but the Tug’s are actively in the forefront and involved in helping the staff of the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, As these medical, robotic, automatons make their way onto elevators, up and down the walking areas, they are really and truly making a difference within the confines of the medical center. Jason Junge, a biomedical equipment support specialist at Omaha VAMC, explains how they function. “They support the facility by delivering logistical items and lab samples, to name a few. Plus, they can work 24 hours a day, which saves on man-hours, in the long run,” Junge said. “They are battery powered and will return to their respective docking station when their deliveries are complete.”



One of 10 Tugs at Omaha VAMC

Testing around the facility with the Tugs has been going on since early July, getting out the glitches and potential problems that may arise, but the laboratory Tugs are live and working, noted Tom Billotte, a contractor with Aethon from Pennsylvania. “The outpatient lab Tugs have been doing their job which has included making deliveries to and

from hematology and histology areas.” As humans walk the hallways and use elevators, the Tugs are quite aware of their presence. “The robots are patient. They will stop and pause if they sense that a person is in their space, no matter how long it takes,” said Billotte.

Okay, so they don’t climb stairs, but they do the next best thing. Tugs will call the elevator by way of their wireless network, and presto! They get on and self-adjust themselves so they are facing the exit when their floor arrives for them to disembark. The robot Tug has a map of the facility in its network so it will remain in the building. They will not go outside, no matter what kind of enticement a person may use on them. Though the Tugs are new to the Omaha VAMC, they are not to the VA network. As a matter of fact, according to Billotte, they can be found at other VA’s in Pittsburgh, Dallas, Houston, and New York. Tugs can also be some of the best workers for at least three good reasons: they don’t need a salary; they don’t take smoke breaks; and they don’t get tired. Tugs with the cage attachments can carry around at least 900 pounds at one time, compared to what a human can roll around in a cart.

It’s a misconception that Tugs are replacing employees. “For instance, when it comes to carrying heavy items around, they save on many push-pull injuries that employees may get,” Junge said. Junge also mentioned plans for making them more personal. “Once we get all of them operating, we will be giving each of the Tugs their own special name. And as the holidays approach, we could even adorn them with seasonal decorations.” Marine Corps Veteran Bernard Fritz, was in the facility as a Tug was making one of its deliveries. “I think that is pretty neat. We’re heading for the ‘George Jetson’ age, getting all modern and stuff,” Fritz said. [Source: DVIDS | Jennifer Scales | July 17, 2018 ++]

VAMC Phoenix AZ Update 02 ► Improving User’s Experiences

The Phoenix VA Medical Center is implementing programs, efforts and initiatives to improve the overall Veteran and guest experience. One of the ways it is working to make this positive change is by bringing on the Veteran Experience Office’s Patient Experience team whose sole focus is to improve the experience for patients at VA medical facilities across the country. Medical center leaders have provided tools and training that enable staff to go above and beyond to meet Veteran and caregiver needs. These include:

- Red Coat Ambassador program, which places red coat or vest-wearing participants, who in many cases are volunteers, at the entrances of medical centers to kindly greet and direct visitors. This initiative reduces any possible visitor anxiety by providing a personal connection at the very beginning of their visit and by assisting in facility navigation.
- Enhancements to facility signs and directions, also called Way Finding. This initiative reassess and improves what can sometimes be unclear facility signage to ensure guests get to where they need to be quickly and without confusion.
- Stepped up its leadership engagement efforts. Veteran feedback, supported by research, shows that leaders who are engaged and visible, earn more trust. Phoenix has responded to this feedback with what’s known as Walking the Post or WECARE Leadership Rounding, where hospital administrators and leaders make regular rounds to interact with and listen to Veterans, guests and VAMC staff.
- Initiation of a customer experience workshop called Own the Moment. This effort encourages VA staff to connect with, understand and help guide Veterans through the moments that truly matter on their journey with VA. This initiative provides basic guidelines and helpful tips on Veteran interaction, connection and guidance so that staff can ensure that VA provides the best quality of care for Veterans.
- A “one stop shop” Customer Care Center where Veterans can go to have all their needs met – anything from billing to patient advocacy – in the comfort of a lounge-style atmosphere with complimentary beverages. Phoenix is an urban facility which means their physical growth is limited by their real estate restrictions. A

facility with space issues has to be innovative in how to meet the needs of a growing number of patients and visitors and the Customer Care Center has done just that.

Elijah Ditter, a Veterans Experience advocate at Phoenix VA, spoke of the efforts added to improve the patient experience as “a great way to start a larger cultural change effort.” While these initiatives and events have had a positive impact, sustainment is an important part of any lasting change effort. To address this, Phoenix established working groups that focus on the implementation and ongoing success of individual patient and Veteran experience initiatives. Each of these work groups report to a Veteran-centered care committee that oversees these efforts. This structure has enabled Phoenix to maintain its positive trajectory and keep staff and Veterans engaged and coming back. The Phoenix VA Medical Center has the same challenges as many other VA medical centers including staffing shortages, limited funding and real estate limitations. Despite their current and past issues, the positive results at the Phoenix VA Medical center illustrate how a concerted and coordinated effort can make a difference in the experience of Veterans and caregivers. [Source: Vantage Point | Beth Lamb | July 23, 2018 ++]

VAMC Cincinnati OH Update 09 ► Another Investigation

Another month, another investigation is creating turmoil at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center. The VA’s Office of Inspector General is reviewing drug-related allegations involving a nurse who was placed on unpaid administrative leave in late June. The incident was followed by a critical nursing shortage that forced the closure of a 24-bed inpatient unit at the Vine Street hospital on 3 JUL. “This is a temporary measure that has absolutely no negative impact on patient care,” the Cincinnati VA said in a prepared statement. “The unit will reopen on a partial basis 23 JUL and reopen fully once full staffing is achieved.”

The VA declined to confirm what several sources told WCPO: The drug investigation involves the son of a high-ranking nurse executive at the hospital. Because of the OIG review, “there is a limited amount of information we can provide,” said the Cincinnati VA statement. “However, this conduct is not in line with the norms and values of the VA. As a result, the employee has been removed from patient care and does not have access to VA medications while the VA pursues the appropriate criminal and administrative action.” The VA said the Inspector General’s review is not related to the closure of a medical/surgical ward on the south wing of the hospital’s sixth floor. The VA denies claims by hospital sources that patients were diverted to other hospitals because of the closure, which eliminated about a third of the hospital’s 72-bed capacity for acutely ill patients and those recovering from surgery.

The VA also denies hospital sources’ claims that it responded to the drug investigation by demanding drug tests from other nurses, causing several to be angry enough to quit, thus triggering the closure of 6 South. “Nurse recruiting challenges are a contributing factor,” said the Cincinnati VA’s statement. “We are dealing with these challenges by expediting the hiring/orientation process for short positions, increasing overtime, maneuvering nurse managers into direct care roles, signing a new contract with a nursing agency, and consolidating resources such as temporarily closing the nursing station at 6 south. These are all temporary measures until nursing staff returns to the expected level.”

The closure is a sign of continuing disruptions in the Cincinnati health care system that cares for roughly 43,000 Tri-State veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs shook up its Cincinnati leadership in 2016 after a WCPO TV investigation documented cost cutting, mismanagement and patient care problems at the Vine Street facility. The hospital’s former chief of staff, Dr. Barbara Temeck, was convicted in January on a felony count of illegally prescribing pain pills for the wife of her former boss. Dr. Temeck has asked U.S. District Judge Michael Barrett to set aside the jury verdict or grant a retrial, but he’s yet to rule on the matter. Last month, the VA temporarily removed Dr. Elizabeth Brill from her job as chief of staff as it investigates “certain operations of the surgery department.” The VA has yet to release a formal conclusion of its internal review on the surgery matter and has not provided public records sought by WCPO T. [Source: WCPO TV 9 | Dan Monk & Mark Greenblatt | July 16, 2018 ++]

VAMC Aurora CO Update 23 ► Finished Five Years Behind Schedule

It's more than \$1 billion over budget and five years behind schedule, but an elaborate new veterans hospital is finally ready to open in suburban Denver with the promise of state-of-the-art medical care. The \$1.7 billion Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center made it through nearly a decade of management blunders, legal battles, federal investigations and congressional hearings. Lawmakers were so angry they stripped the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs of the authority to manage big projects in the future and gave it to the Army's construction experts, the Corps of Engineers.

Veterans say they are frustrated by the slow and tortuous path but relieved the hospital is finally done. "The cost overrun has been unfortunate. The schedule slip has been unfortunate. Yeah, it's all been unfortunate," said Leanne Wheeler, an Air Force veteran who gets VA health care in Denver. But "we're glad to have it," she said. The VA planned a ribbon-cutting ceremony 21 JUL. Outpatient services will begin moving from the old hospital in Denver to the new facility on 27 JUL, and hospitalized veterans will be transferred starting 4 AUG. The bright, airy complex in the east Denver suburb of Aurora is a collection of a dozen large buildings connected by a long, soaring, glass-walled corridor. From above, it looks like square leaves growing from a vine.

Most patients will have private rooms, with space for family to stay overnight. Operating rooms have easy access to the intensive care unit as well as pre- and post-operation rooms. When it's in full operation, the new hospital will offer services that the old one does not, including clinics for spinal cord injuries, mammography, PET scans for cancer, prosthetics and aquatic therapy. But a post-traumatic stress disorder program will remain at the old campus for now. It was axed from the new facility when the VA tried to rein in soaring costs. The old hospital is "kind of dingy, depressing," with a dreary, military feel, said John Keene, a Marine Corps veteran and executive director of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1 in Denver. "I've heard anecdotally that some veterans don't use the VA because just walking into the facility can bring back memories," he said. The new hospital should be more inviting, Keene said.

It has been in the works since 2002, when the VA proposed making it part of a University of Colorado hospital then in the planning stages. But the agency dropped that idea when veterans said they wanted a separate facility. In 2006, the VA hired a design team, and in 2009, the agency estimated it could build the new hospital for \$537 million and finish by 2013, according to a government investigation. Six years later, the price tag had soared to more than \$1.7 billion. What went wrong, according to multiple investigations, was that VA officials opted for a lavish design and tried to use a complicated contract they didn't fully understand. They failed to get the designers and builders to agree on plans and costs, and they didn't oversee the work closely enough, investigators said.

Congress was furious, holding multiple hearings and demanding that the VA fire anyone responsible. But in the end, no one was let go or criminally charged. The VA said it was ready to fire one executive and was investigating another, but both retired before the agency could act. Other officials were demoted or transferred. Congress eventually agreed to finish the hospital. The Army Corps of Engineers took over construction management and trimmed the final cost by about \$400,000, to just under \$1.7 billion, according to VA numbers.

Republican Rep. Mike Coffman, whose district includes the hospital, was a dogged critic of the project's planners and managers but declined to dwell on the problems this week. "While we can debate the long road it took for us to get here, Saturday will be about the veterans and their families," he said in an email to The Associated Press. Keene, the VFW post commander, worries that the public will blame hospital staff for the problems. "They kind of have a weight around their neck coming out of the gate because of all the cost overruns," he said, but they're not the ones responsible. "Those are good people and they're trying to do their best," he said. [Source: Associated Press | Dan Elliott | July 20, 2018 ++]

VAMC Tampa FL Update 09 ► Radiology Exam Cover-up Alleged

Congress is demanding answers from the Department of Veterans Affairs about allegations that at least hundreds of radiology exams were improperly canceled at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and that officials there tried to cover it up. The demand comes in the wake of a Tampa Bay Times article about a VA Office of Inspector General's investigation of the allegations. They were made by four radiology technicians suing the hospital over sexual harassment and intimidation. The radiology technicians claim that hospital officials — without following established protocol — routinely canceled exams ordered to determine patient health if they went unfilled for more than 60 days. They then tried to cover it up, the technicians claim, by turning off printers that acknowledge such cancellations. The types of exams include CT scans, MRIs, ultrasounds and mammographies.

"The allegations made in the Times' article were clearly disturbing," U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, vice chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said in an email statement. "I have joined a fellow HVAC Committee member and staff in demanding timely information from the VA about their radiology and cancellation practices." Tampa attorney Joseph Magri, who is representing Kara Mitchell-Davis, Erin Tonkyro, Michelle Strauser and Yenny Hernandez in their suit against Haley, confirms his clients have been contacted by the congressional committee. "They are happy Congress wants to look into it and will of course cooperate fully," Magri said. "This is about the veterans. They believe that many others in the VA are concerned about the veterans and will come forward to make sure that appropriate procedures are in place." Karen Collins, a Haley spokeswoman, said "we appreciate the lawmakers' concerns and will respond to them directly."

Hospital officials deny wrongdoing. In court documents, they say the printers were turned off to avoid confusion between old and new exams. They say concerns about radiology exams have been reviewed previously and found to have no basis. VA officials say there are several reasons why exams are not fulfilled within 60 days, including elimination of clinical need, redundant orders and patients not showing up. The hospital has also denied the sexual harassment and retaliation claims made in the lawsuit and have moved to have it thrown out. In court documents and in complaints to investigative agencies, the four plaintiffs liken the cancellations to a 2014 scandal at the Phoenix veterans hospital, where patients died awaiting medical procedures. The delays in Phoenix were covered up through appointment documents.

The plaintiffs say the moves affected patient care at Haley, but it's unclear whether any patients were harmed by having their exams canceled. The plaintiffs make no such link, in part "because they are denied access to that information," Magri said earlier this month. Still, one of the plaintiffs said in a deposition that she reached out to a patient whose ultrasound test was overdue and learned that the patient had died. She did not know the cause of death. According to internal VA documents obtained through the lawsuit, physicians and radiologists must determine whether a patient still needs an exam before canceling it. Collins, the Haley spokeswoman, said a notification about cancellation that shows up on the computer screen of such medical personnel is sufficient.

The review of the allegations against Haley is part of a nationwide audit of radiology practices at Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals. The goal is to determine whether the VA "processes radiology requests in a timely manner and appropriately manages canceled requests," said Michael Nacincik, a spokesman with the agency's Office of Inspector General. At a meeting in April with an official from the Office of Inspector General, Kara Mitchell-Davis, one of the four radiology technicians, turned over paperwork supporting the allegations against Haley, including appointments that were never completed, improperly scheduled or "tampered with," according to court documents.

A list of 1,234 patients that Mitchell-Davis provided shows veterans were not receiving diagnostic exams due to "short staffing and inept leadership in radiology," according to court documents. The Inspector General's office launched the investigation on its own in February and expects to finish it by January. Haley is one of eight VA hospitals

nationwide that investigators have contacted "to assess their local procedures and processes," Nacincik said. [Source: Tampa Bay Times | Howard Altman | July 22, 2018 ++]

* Vets *



Vet Jobs Update 236 ► American Corporate Partners Program

American Corporate Partners' (ACP) free Mentoring Program connects post-9/11 veterans (*Protégés*) with corporate professionals (*Mentors*) for customized mentorships. ACP assists veterans on their path towards fulfilling, long-term careers, whether the veteran is job searching or newly employed. Typical mentorship goals include:

- Résumé review and interview preparation
- Career exploration and understanding job opportunities
- Career advancement once a position is obtained
- Work-life balance
- Networking
- Small business development
- Leadership and professional communication

An ACP mentorship is a yearlong commitment. ACP encourages Mentors and Protégés to connect for monthly discussions to advance the veteran's goals. Each mentorship is supported by an ACP staff member who offers customized resources, training and suggestions and to help the pair build a successful mentorship. ACP's staff personally pairs every applicant, hand-picking a Mentor for each Protégé based on career compatibility, experience level, location and personal interests. Every Mentor and Protégé has a phone call with an ACP staff member to communicate preferences, which are then taken into account during the pairing process. Most mentoring pairs are long-distance and communicate primarily through phone, videoconference and email exchanges.

ACP's volunteer Mentors represent a wide variety of industries, education levels, geographies and professional expertise. They come from diverse fields such as education, finance, healthcare, IT, logistics, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, marketing, insurance and project management. Mentors come from both ACP's Partner Companies, as well as select individuals from non-affiliated companies who join ACP's Citizens Mentoring Program. ACP's Veteran Protégés are post-9/11 service members and veterans at various stages of their military transition process:

- Service members who are still serving on active duty and planning for an upcoming transition or military retirement.
- Recently separated veterans in the midst of a transition.
- Veterans who separated several years ago who are currently employed, but looking to advance in a current civilian career.
- Student veterans who are seeking advice from successful business leaders in the private sector

To submit an application to participate in this program go to <https://mentoring.acp-usa.org/apply/protége/auth>. Applications take about 15 minutes to complete. Once you apply, an ACP staff member will reach out to you to schedule a quick phone call to learn more about your career goals, preferences and background. For

questions contact ACP at info@acp-usa.org or (212) 752-0700. If you served prior to 9/11, you can go to acp-advisornet.org to get free career guidance from thousands of volunteer career Advisors. [Source: NCOAdvocate | June 2018 ++]

Vet Educational Assistance Update 02 ► Defrauded Student Loan Forgiveness Rules

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos moved 25 JUL to make it harder for students who say they were defrauded by colleges to erase their debts, rolling back Obama-era regulations that for-profit colleges saw as threatening their survival. The proposed rules published Wednesday require students to prove schools knowingly deceived them if they want their federal loans canceled. And it scuttled an Obama administration provision that allowed similar claims to be processed as a group. Instead, students will have to prove their claims individually.

The rules are DeVos's rewrite of an Obama-era regulation published in 2016 and part of that administration's crackdown on for-profit colleges that critics say prey on vulnerable students. In ways big and small, the new version makes it harder for students to win debt forgiveness. "Postsecondary students are adults who can be reasonably expected to make informed decisions and who must take personal accountability for the decisions they make," said the proposed regulation, which was posted online Wednesday. Still, DeVos said in a statement, "Our commitment and our focus has been and remains on protecting students from fraud."

The Education Department punted for now on one key question: whether students must be in default in order to apply for loan forgiveness. Allowing "affirmative claims" from students who are current on their loan payments could invite a flood of applications, the agency warned, because there is little downside to asking for loan forgiveness. At the same time, the Education Department said, it does not want to create incentives for borrowers to fall into default in hopes of winning debt relief.

The department said it wants feedback on the matter. But it said that if claims are permitted from people not in default, they may be required to meet a higher burden of proof. In general, the agency is suggesting that applicants prove their case with a "preponderance of evidence," the same standard used by the Obama version. But the department said it was considering the tougher standard of "clear and convincing" evidence in the case of claims from people not in default, if those are allowed. The department aims to publish a final rule by 1 NOV so that it can take effect for loans originating after July 1, 2019. The agency will allow 30 days for public comments on the proposal. Students with existing student loans can also ask for loan forgiveness under standards established in 1995. That process was rarely used before two huge for-profit chains, Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institutes, collapsed following complaints of deceptive marketing and predatory recruitment.

The department said that about 139,000 applications for what is known as borrower defense have been received since 2015. As of 1 MAY, more than 99,000 were pending, according to agency data released by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL). A plurality of the claims were from Corinthian students, but there were thousands from other schools, which Durbin said makes clear the problem is pervasive. The package is a victory for conservatives worried about the hit on federal taxpayers if a large number of student borrowers are allowed to escape responsibility for paying off their student loans. It's also a win for colleges, particularly for-profit ventures, who opposed the Obama rules as threatening their survival and harmful to students seeking loans to attend their programs.

It's a defeat for consumer advocates who favor a more aggressive posture against colleges that they say routinely take advantage of veterans and older students. They said it would be outrageous for the department to bar applications from people who are not in default, and also unacceptable to require that group to meet the higher "clear and convincing" standard of proof. "Today's proposal is a giveaway to predatory for-profit colleges and a stunning show of indifference toward students working to better their lives," said Aaron Ament, a former Obama Education Department official who is president of the National Student Legal Defense Network. He said the standard for winning

debt relief is too high. Consumer advocates also said it is unrealistic to expect borrowers to prove that their college intended to mislead them. "How are borrowers supposed to prove intent? They don't have any discovery rights. They don't have the ability to get testimony from the person who lied to them about what they knew or didn't know," said Abby Shafroth, an attorney at the National Consumer Law Center.

A senior Education Department official said that proving a school intentionally deceived students should be straightforward if the students can show false marketing and other materials. She said the agency's goal was to prevent holding schools responsible for a stray or unofficial comment that may be false but does not reflect the school's intent or official position. The rules were welcomed by the industry group representing for-profit colleges, who said it balanced protection for those involved with due process. Under the rules, the government will seek to recoup from schools money that is forgiven, but schools will have a chance to present evidence to defend themselves. "This rule will help students who are victims of fraud find relief, and ensure colleges and universities are part of a fair and objective adjudication process," said Steve Gunderson, president of the trade group Career Education Colleges and Universities.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), chairman of the Senate education committee, said the DeVos rewrite offered "important safeguards and clear standards" for claims. The Obama version was overly broad, he said, and "put taxpayers on the hook for too many loans." DeVos adopted a number of other changes to the Obama regulation that set tougher limits on students seeking redress. For one, borrowers may have less time to apply for relief. The Education Department also will no longer group together similar claims to speed up the application process, with the rationale that everyone in the group may not have suffered the same harm.

The new rules also kill an Obama provision that barred colleges from requiring students to sign agreements that force them into arbitration in the event of a dispute. And the agency will no longer offer automatic loan forgiveness for anyone whose school closes. Students whose colleges offer a route to complete their courses - what's known as a "teach-out" plan - will now be ineligible for this type of loan forgiveness. Most states require schools to have teach-out plans. In some cases that could mean no more than an online course, which could be impractical for programs requiring hands-on training. The department is also expected to soon release its rewrite of another Obama-era regulation aimed at the for-profit college sector. That rule cut off federally backed loans to schools if their graduates' earnings are not sufficient to pay off their student debt. [Source: The Washington Post | Laura Meckler & Danielle Douglas-Gabriel | July 25, 2018 ++]

Trump VFW National Convention Comments ► Pledge to Vets

President Trump on 24 JUL pledged he would "stand up for America" as he faces criticism for appearing too deferential to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "We don't apologize for America anymore. We stand up for America. We stand up for the patriots who defend America," Trump said at the Veterans of Foreign Wars national convention. "And we stand up for our national anthem," the president added, garnering a thundering ovation from a crowd of military veterans inside a roughly half-full Municipal Auditorium in downtown Kansas City. Trump spoke for nearly an hour in remarks that began with a focus on the military and veterans, but occasionally hewed closer to his more heated rhetoric at campaign rallies. As the event progressed, the president touted his protectionist trade policies, hit Democrats for their criticism of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and took a jab at the press in attendance.

After running through a list of military equipment upgrades covered in the latest spending bills, Trump ratcheted up his rhetoric against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, labeling the terrorist organization a group of "blood-thirsty killers." "We're calling the threat by its real name, the name that wasn't mentioned for a long time," Trump said. "It's called radical Islamic terrorism." He briefly acknowledged his decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal, but did not address his all-caps tweet on 22 JUL in which he warned that the country could face extreme

consequences for threatening the U.S. Trump during his speech also made no mention of his efforts to make peace with Moscow. Upon landing in Kansas City, the president had sent a tweet saying he's "concerned" that Russia may interfere in this year's midterms in an effort to help Democrats.

President Trump told one of the nation's largest veterans group that the U.S. doesn't "seek conflict" overseas despite his robust military buildup. He said his two-year, \$1.4 trillion Defense budget "is committed to ensuring that our war fighters have the tools, the resources, and the firepower that they need to defeat our enemies with overwhelming force." "Hopefully we will never have to use the kind of power that I'm building and helping to build for you," the president said. "Hopefully people will look at us and they'll say 'let's pass, let's pass.'" Trump also touted his efforts to strike a nuclear agreement with North Korea, saying footage has emerged showing that Pyongyang has dismantled a key missile site. The president added that remains of U.S. service members, another key point of negotiations with the country, would be coming home "very soon." He has in the past suggested that process had already begun.

Trump has spent the past week enduring criticism for his meeting with Putin, in which the U.S. president cast doubt on the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. He has since attempted to clarify those remarks and express confidence in his intelligence officials, but undermined those efforts when he said others could have meddled as well, and labeled Russian interference "a big hoax." During his address he touted other initiatives including reforms of the scandal-plagued Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He praised newly minted VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, who was in attendance one day after being confirmed by the Senate, and said of his new VA secretary, "He's going to be fantastic." A scheduled speech by the acting VA secretary was apparently cancelled, and Trump didn't invite Wilkie to address the crowd. Trump said a new VA whistleblower law allows the government to more easily get rid of employees accused of misconduct. "We can look them in the eye and say you're fired. Get out!" the president said to a round of applause.

Though the event Tuesday was billed as an official, not a political, appearance, he also gave a boost to Missouri Republican Senate candidate Josh Hawley, who is running to unseat Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO) in November. Trump invited the Missouri attorney general on stage, where he gave a glowing review of the president's first 18 months in office. Trump later veered into more traditional campaign rally territory, telling the veterans in attendance that Democrats are unsupportive of law enforcement and renewing his feud with Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA), a vocal critic who has called for his impeachment. "Instead of supporting our ICE officers, many of these Democrat politicians — who are really disciples of a very low IQ person, Maxine Waters, and perhaps even worse, Nancy Pelosi — they've launched vicious smears on the brave men and women who defend our community," Trump said, referencing a small group of liberal Democrats who have called for ICE to be abolished.

The president also rejected criticisms of his decision to implement steep tariffs on Canada, Mexico, the European Union and China, even as those countries have slapped retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods that are detrimental to American workers. While his protectionist trade policies have earned overwhelming condemnation from Republicans and Democrats alike, the president assured his supporters that the decision would pay off in the end. "The farmers will be the biggest beneficiary. Watch. We're opening up markets. You watch what's going to happen," he said "Just stick with us. Don't believe the crap you see from these people, the fake news," he said, pointing at the press in attendance. Moments after Trump concluded his speech and departed for a fundraiser, the Department of Agriculture announced it would provide \$12 billion to farmers negatively affected by the trade war spurred by Trump's tariffs.

The president was interrupted repeatedly by applause and shouts of support - notably when he mentioned his hopes that the remains of Korean War veterans would soon be repatriated, as agreed in his 12 JUN summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "We're also working to bring back the remains of your brothers-in-arms who gave their lives to Korea," Trump said to cheers. "And I hope that very soon these fallen warriors will begin coming home to lay at rest in American soil."

Frank Morris of member station KCUR reported from the convention floor that the enthusiastic crowd was predominantly white, male and older. The reaction of 89-year-old Anthony Maroney was typical. "He gave a darn

good speech, I'll tell you that," said the Army Airborne veteran. "He was for everybody, not for himself, but everybody, all the vets who were here." But some expressed concern about how the federal government would pay for the veterans programs the president pledged to support. And last week's summit with Russian president Vladimir Putin worried others. "With Russia, I think he's making a huge mistake," said Timothy Juliatt, another Airborne veteran. "They have been an enemy of ours for eons." [Source: The Hill | Jordan Fabian | July 24, 2018 ++]

VA Medical Marijuana Update 47 ► A Disconnect In Care

Some of the local growers along the West coast see it as an act of medical compassion: Donating part of their crop of high-potency medical marijuana to ailing veterans, who line up by the dozens each month in the echoing auditorium of the city's old veterans' hall to get a ticket they can exchange for a free bag. One Vietnam veteran in the line said he was using marijuana-infused oil to treat pancreatic cancer. Another said that smoking cannabis eased the pain from a recent hip replacement better than prescription pills did. Several said that a few puffs temper the anxiety and nightmares of post-traumatic stress disorder. "I never touched the stuff in Vietnam," said William Horne, 76, a retired firefighter. "It was only a few years ago I realized how useful it could be."

The monthly giveaway bags often contain marijuana lotions, pills, candies and hemp oils, as well as potent strains of smokable flower with names like Combat Cookies and Kosher Kush. But the veterans do not get any medical guidance on which product might help with which ailment, how much to use, or how marijuana might interact with other medications. Ordinarily, their first stop for advice like that would be the Department of Veterans Affairs health system, with its thousands of doctors and hundreds of hospitals and clinics across the country dedicated to caring for veterans. But the department has largely said no to medical marijuana, citing federal law. It won't recommend cannabis products for patients, and for the most part it has declined even to study their potential benefits. That puts the department out of step with most of the country, where at least 30 states now have laws that allow the use of medical marijuana in some form.

A department survey suggests that nearly a million veterans may be using medical marijuana anyway. But doctors in the veterans' health system say the department's lack of research has left them without much good advice to give veterans. "We have a disconnect in care," said Marcel Bonn-Miller, a psychologist who worked for years at the veterans' hospital in Palo Alto, Calif., and now teaches at the University of Pennsylvania medical school. "The V.A. has funded lots of marijuana studies, but not of therapeutic potential. All the work has been related to problems of use." Mr. Bonn-Miller said that in 2016, he wanted to study the health outcomes of the veterans who were getting cannabis from the Santa Cruz Veterans Alliance, but he did not seek funding from Veterans Affairs because of the department's lack of interest in therapeutic use.

Congress is now considering changing that. A bipartisan bill introduced in the House of Representatives this spring would order the department to study the safety and efficacy of marijuana for treating chronic pain and PTSD. If the bill passes, the department could not only develop expertise about a drug that many veterans have turned to on their own — it may also start down the road toward eventually allowing its doctors and clinics to prescribe cannabis. "I talk to so many vets who claim they get benefits, but we need research," said Representative Tim Walz, Democrat of Minnesota, who introduced the bill along with Phil Roe, Republican of Tennessee, who is a physician. "You may be a big advocate of medical marijuana, you may feel it has no value," Mr. Walz said. "Either way, you should want the evidence to prove it, and there is no better system to do that research than the V.A."

A spokesman for the Department of Veterans Affairs said Congress would need to do more than pass the current House bill. The spokesman, Curt Cashour, said that because cannabis is classified as a Schedule 1 drug under federal law, researchers would need to secure approval from five separate agencies to conduct studies. "The opportunities for VA to conduct marijuana research are limited because of the restrictions imposed by federal law," Mr. Cashour said. "If Congress wants to facilitate more federal research into Schedule 1 controlled substances such as marijuana, it can

always choose to eliminate these restrictions.” The department does have two small studies in their early stages. One, in San Diego, looks at whether cannabidiol, a nonintoxicating component of cannabis, can help patients during PTSD therapy; it is scheduled to continue through 2023. The other, planned for South Carolina, would examine the palliative effects of cannabis in hospice patients. “In a system as big as ours, that’s not much, certainly not enough,” said Dr. David J. Shulkin, who was President Trump’s first secretary of veterans affairs before being fired in March.

During his tenure as secretary, Dr. Shulkin eased some rules, allowing the department’s doctors to start talking to veterans about medical marijuana. But many veterans faulted him for not going further. Dr. Shulkin said that the tangle of red tape surrounding Schedule 1 drug studies should no longer be an excuse not to conduct them. “We have an opioid crisis, a mental health crisis, and we have limited options with how to address them, so we should be looking at everything possible,” he said. The push for more research and for access to medical marijuana in the veterans’ health system is not coming just from liberal areas of California. The generally conservative American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars both favor expanded research. And some of the most vocal advocates are products of the nation’s strict military academies. “Cannabis is the safe, responsible choice,” said Nick Etten, an Annapolis graduate and former Navy SEAL who runs an advocacy group called the Veterans Cannabis Project. “It helps with the Big Three we struggle with after combat — pain, sleep and anxiety — and it is safer than many medications.”

Veterans are not waiting for a green light from Washington. A department survey in 2017 found that nearly 9 percent of veterans reported using cannabis in the last year, and almost half of those were using it for medical purposes. The growing use of medical marijuana among veterans is not without risks, though. Cannabis can interact with some prescription medications. Frequent use can lead to dependency and abuse. New forms of concentrated cannabis that are inhaled as vapor can compound both of those problems. And cannabis’s therapeutic value in treating chronic pain, PTSD and other ailments is far from clear. Veterans who look for information about medical marijuana online find a proliferation of marketing claims and testimonials, many of them dubious. Several companies sell non-psychoactive hemp oil for as much as \$150 an ounce that they say is rich in cannabidiol, also known as CBD; the Food and Drug Administration has gone after marketers whose claims for cannabidiol as a treatment for PTSD violate its rules.

A 2017 report by the National Institutes of Health found evidence of a number of therapeutic benefits of cannabis and its various components but said there had been little research relating specifically to post-traumatic stress. “CBD may be of huge benefit, THC may be of huge benefit, but there are also risks of abuse and bad outcomes,” said Mr. Bonn-Miller, who is conducting several cannabis studies now without financial backing from the department. “We’d like to know more, so we can figure out what works and what doesn’t.” The Santa Cruz Veterans Alliance, the growers who conduct the monthly giveaway, said they felt compelled to step in where Veterans Affairs had not. They are veterans themselves who found that marijuana helped them after combat.

Aaron Newsom, who deployed to Afghanistan as a Marine, said he was part of some “bloody scenarios” in his time there. “When I came home, I couldn’t turn things off,” he said. “I was losing friends, losing jobs. Nothing really mattered after being confronted with life and death.” He and Jason Sweatt, an Army veteran, now grow thousands of marijuana plants in a 17,000-square-foot warehouse south of Santa Cruz and sell most of their crop in the state’s dispensaries. One of the alliance’s workers, Jake Scallan, was sent to Iraq with Air Force security forces and came back with a traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. He said Veterans Affairs doctors put him on five different drugs for anxiety, depression, pain and sleeplessness. “Honestly, there was no healing,” said Mr. Scallan, 30. “I was in such a fog I couldn’t deal with anything.”

After a suicide attempt and hospital stay in 2013, Mr. Scallan was persuaded by a friend to try marijuana for his anxiety and depression. “It was like I could suddenly breathe again,” he said. He now uses a highly potent concentrate that he said has helped him put his life back together, hold down a job and get married, which he did in July. “I was really lost, and now I can function,” he said. [Source: New York Times | Dave Philipps | July 25, 2018 ++]

USCG Forced Retirement Lawsuit ► 400 Denied Due Process

Former service members of the U.S. Coast Guard have filed a lawsuit claiming they were wrongfully forced to retire. The lawsuit filed in federal court last month claims about 400 service members were made to retire from 2012-14 in violation of federal law, the Kodiak Daily Mirror reported 24 JUL. The suit claims the Coast Guard violated service members' rights to due process and it forced retirement through the Coast Guard Active Duty Enlisted Career Retention Screening Panel. The involuntary retirements were issued without adequate review and without any reduction in the force, the suit claims. Under a statute in effect at the time, service members of 20 years or more could be forced to retire if there was a reduction in force, or if an Enlisted Personnel Board determined the member had committed "professional dereliction" or his performance was substandard.

The Coast Guard declined to comment, citing the ongoing litigation. It has not yet filed a response to the suit. Derrick Magnuson, one of three plaintiffs named in the suit, joined the Coast Guard in 1992, at age 19. He was selected for involuntary retirement in 2013 after 21 years of service. He has been stationed in Kodiak since 2000. He was notified of his unexpected retirement through a letter. Magnuson said he had heard of the Career Retention Screening Panel program, but he did not think it would apply to him. He wasn't given an explanation on why he was chosen, he said. "Based on what we were told, if you had any kind of disciplinary action, or something in your record — like alcohol incidents or a DUI — you would be CRSP'ed," Magnuson said. "I had none of that in my record." [Source" Associated Press | July 25, 2018 ++]

Vet Mental Health Update 01 ► Most Common Medical Diagnosis Upon Separation

They got colds in boot camp. In midcareer they were beset by muscle strains, tears and back problems. But at the end, just before separating from the armed forces, servicemembers' most common medical diagnosis was mental health disorders, a new Pentagon study has found. Mental disorders — almost never diagnosed at the beginning of military service — became the top diagnostic category at the end, according to the study by the Defense Health Agency, which surveyed 45,000 troops who served 4-15 years beginning in 2000 and separated in 2014 and 2015.

The study, published in the June edition of the Monthly Surveillance Military Report, speculated that the increase in mental health diagnoses over time could be attributable partly to the military's "many unique stressors," including combat deployments, frequent moves, long hours and time away from family. The fact that the diagnoses of mental disorders surged around the time of separation might also be due to the negative impact such diagnosis is likely to have on a servicemember's career. So is serving in the military detrimental to mental health? "That's one possible conclusion but probably not the best one," said Dr. Harold Kudler, a psychiatrist and Duke University professor who recently retired as chief consultant for the Department of Veteran Affairs' mental health services. "I think the best conclusion is that we're selecting healthy young people and then we're exposing them to significant stressors over time, to the normal wear and tear of being human beings facing the real challenges of military service."

Kudler told Stars and Stripes that the data reflected a number of phenomena, including a growing acceptance in recent years that mental health ailments are common and that reporting and seeking care for them is no disgrace. "If you go back not that long ago there was a strong sense that (post-traumatic stress disorder) was something that happened to weak people. That really has changed over the years, from being viewed with strong social stigma to something closer to an occupational hazard, which may affect a sizable proportion of service members," said Kudler, who was not involved in the study.

Another likely factor is timing and motivation. Troops in early or midcareer face "disincentives for reporting medical conditions or seeking care," said study authors Capt. Colby Uptegraft, an Air Force physician, and Shauna Stahlman, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Those included the possibility of

adverse personnel actions such as medical evaluation boards and subsequent medical separation, duty location or deployment limitations, and career field denial or termination, particularly in occupations such as aviation and special forces. But when servicemembers are about to separate, getting medical diagnoses on their records, including for mental health problems, makes them eligible for VA and disability benefits. “I think one thing we’re looking at is an abrupt change in a motivation for talking about these things as one nears separation from the military,” Kudler said.

The study aimed to track illnesses over time in separating troops — the 83 percent of troops who leave the service before retirement at 20 years or more. It looked for trends in what went up, down or stayed about the same by examining electronic health records at three career intervals: the first six months of service, the middle six and the final six months before separation. The majority of the troops in the study — 72 percent — had served four to eight years; 22 percent had served eight to 12 years and 6 percent had served up to 15 years. Most were male, white troops 25-34 years old. A third were Marines, and more than half were junior enlisted and had never deployed.

At the beginning, the majority of diagnoses were for respiratory infections, which declined afterward. Mental health disorders accounted for 1.3 percent of diagnoses. In the middle six months of service, musculoskeletal problems accounted for nearly a quarter of all medical diagnoses, and mental health diagnoses had surged to 17 percent. In the last six months of service, mental health diagnoses were the most frequent of any, accounting for almost 36 percent in men. The study appears to be one of the first to analyze medical diagnoses over time of people who separated from the services before retirement. Studies of retirees published in 2010 found a significant increase in the incidence rates of illness and injury-related diagnoses within six months of retirement; 72 percent of retirees were diagnosed with a new medical condition within six months of retirement. But few of them were for mental health conditions, according to the current study.

The potential reasons for this “striking difference” between the two groups could be because troops reaching retirement “are likely among the healthiest overall service members across time,” the study authors wrote. In addition, their study did not distinguish between voluntarily separating service members and those being medically separated. “Many mental health conditions, especially those lasting longer than a year, requiring treatment, and/or impacting duty, do not meet retention standards, and mental health disorders have been found to be the leading category of discharge diagnoses in men and the second leading category in women.” The current study found that musculoskeletal disorders peaked at 24.3 percent of diagnoses in the middle surveillance period for men but peaked at 23.4 percent in the first six months of service for women.

Kudler said the study reflected “an evolving understanding that mental health problems are very widespread across the general population,” particularly among people under stress. “Depression and anxiety — these are part of normal human life,” he said. “They’re not always illnesses. If you’re in a room with a tiger and you’re anxious — there’s nothing wrong with that.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nancy Montgomery | July 23, 2018 ++]

Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial ► Vandalizer Caught

In an early 20 JUL morning arrest, authorities nabbed a New York teen they believe destroyed the Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial. Fourth Squad detectives from the Suffolk County Police took the unnamed 14-year-old boy into custody at his Ronkonkoma home at 3 a.m. on Friday, according to a statement released to Navy Times by Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart. He was charged with Criminal Mischief in the 2nd Degree and will be arraigned at Suffolk County Family Court in Central Islip at a later date, she added. Because he’s a juvenile, officials declined to identify the suspect. He’s accused of smashing the memorial into a dozen shards on 19 JUL at Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Park in the Long Island community of Lake Ronkonkoma. Although a \$2,500 reward was offered through Crime Stoppers for information leading to his arrest, detectives didn’t identify the suspect through a tip, officials said.



Murphy, a member of SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team 1, posthumously received the Medal of Honor — America’s highest award for battlefield bravery — for his gallantry near Asadabad in Afghanistan’s Konar Province during Operation Red Wings in 2005. While hunting for a Taliban commander, Murphy’s four-member SEAL team was surrounded by nearly 10 times as many guerrillas, according to this award citation. Although wounded in a ferocious firefight, Murphy continued to lead and encourage his men. Facing almost certain death, he fought to reach an open spot to transmit a satellite telephone call to his headquarters. Continuing to blaze away at the Taliban fighters, that final act of heroism cost the 29-year-old Murphy his life.

Murphy’s father says he doesn't believe the vandal understands the significance of his actions. "Unfortunately the stonework isn't here anymore, but if you look at one of the places where he struck Michael was right at the heart, which is like striking at the heart of America," Daniel Murphy said. "Michael was the type of person who would have wanted to take that man under his wing and talk to him." Murphy's mother said she hopes someone speaks to the boy about what Lt. Murphy and his team of SEALs did for the country. She would like the child to read the book "Lone Survivor" which is about her son's mission. The book was made into a movie starring Mark Wahlberg. "I lost Mike and then when I saw that I felt like I lost him again because, you know, I was proud to come down and see this," Maureen Murphy said. Gov. Andrew Cuomo released the following statement:

"Lieutenant Michael Murphy served our nation with extraordinary courage, valor and dignity, and we are all indebted to him and his family for his sacrifice. He was a Smithtown native who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the military's highest decoration, for his actions in Afghanistan during Operation Red Wings on June 28, 2005, the first member of the Navy to be awarded the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War. This most-esteemed award memorializes and honors his leadership and service, and to desecrate this honor is beyond the pale.

"I am appalled and disgusted by this apparent act of vandalism. The State of New York will fully fund the replacement of the plaque, and I hope this brings comfort to his family and community. The people of this state and this nation owe Lieutenant Murphy a debt of gratitude, and I personally thank him for his service."

The Murphy family said they would be willing to meet with the boy. "The boy who did this, he's a child. He did something foolish. And everybody has done something foolish when they're younger," Maureen Murphy said. A new plaque is already being made. New York State as well as Suffolk County and the Town of Brookhaven have all offered to pay for the replacement. The town said it has received so many donations from private citizens that it needs to figure out who will make the final payment. A local company has also offered to put in free surveillance cameras to monitor the site moving forward. The town hopes to have the cameras installed by the end of the month. Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Park in Lake Ronkonkoma was dedicated in his memory on July 7, 2006, on what would have been his 30th birthday.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Michael Murphy was named in honor of the slain SEAL hero. The Long Island native was buried in Suffolk County’s Calverton National Cemetery. Commissioned in 2012 and homeported in Pearl Harbor, the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer Michael Murphy bears his name. [Source: NavyTimes | Carl Prine | July 20, 2018 ++]

Vet Death Preps ► What To Do Before A Veteran Dies

One of the eventualities in life that spouses and families of veterans face is the death of their loved one who served America in uniform. To help ease the burden on loved ones, veterans can make preparations in advance. The first step is to make certain the family has easy access to important documents such as:

- The veteran's discharge certificate (DD form 214).
- VA documents, if any, indicating a VA claim number.
- A copy of all marriage certificates and divorce decrees (if any previous marriages).
- Insurance policies, including beneficiary designation.
- A copy of the family will (not required for VA benefits).
- Location of safety deposit boxes (not required by VA).
- Business address, email address, office and cell phone numbers for local American Legion service officer.

Veterans who die on active duty, or with discharges that are other than dishonorable, are entitled by law to:

- A gravesite in any national cemetery with available space, opening and closing of the grave.
- A government headstone, marker, urn, or medallion in a national and/or private cemetery.
- A government-issued U.S. flag to drape over the casket, and for presentation to the surviving spouse or next-of-kin.
- A Presidential Memorial Certificate signed by the president of the United States.

[Source: American Legion | A Guide for Pre-Planning | July 23, 2018 ++]

Vet Death Preps Update 01 ► What DoD Will Provide Upon Death

Burial in a VA national cemetery -- Every eligible veteran who is entitled to burial in a national cemetery as long as space is available and the following conditions are met:

- Veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.
- Veteran was not subsequently convicted for offenses involving prohibited weapons of mass destruction, genocide and international terrorism.
- With certain exceptions, service beginning after Sept. 7, 1980, as an enlisted person and service after Oct. 16, 1981, as an officer must have served for a mini-mum of 24 months or the full period for which the person was called to active duty. For a description of requirements refer to www.cem.va.gov

Burial benefits in a VA national cemetery include the following: gravesite, headstone, marker or medallion, opening and closing of the grave, and perpetual care of the grave site. Many national cemeteries have columbaria or gravesites for cremated remains. Gravesites in national cemeteries cannot be reserved. Many national cemeteries are closed to new casket interments. Funeral directors or others making burial arrangements must apply at the time of death.

Spouses and minor children of eligible veterans and of servicemembers may also be buried in a national cemetery. If a surviving spouse of an eligible veteran marries a nonveteran, and remarriage was terminated by death or divorce of the non-veteran, the spouse is subsequently eligible for burial in a national cemetery. Visit the National Cemetery Administration website at www.cem.va.gov for a listing of all national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries. Send questions on benefits eligibility to VA at public.inquiry@mail.va.gov.

Headstones and markers -- VA provides headstones and markers anywhere in the world for the unmarked graves of veterans who died before Sept. 11, 2001. For the marked graves of veterans who died on or after Sept. 11, 2001, double marking is authorized. Flat bronze, flat granite, flat marble, upright granite and upright marble type are available to mark the grave in a style consistent with the cemetery. Niche markers are also available for urns. When burial is in a national cemetery or state veterans cemetery, the headstone is ordered by the cemetery, which will place it on the grave. When burial occurs in a private cemetery, the headstone must be applied for from VA. The headstone is then shipped at government expense. VA does not pay the cost of placing the headstone on the grave. The cost is borne by the veteran's family or other party. These charges may be included in many prepaid funeral packages. VA Form 40-1330 (application for headstone) can be obtained from most funeral home directors, through veterans service officers, or through VA. This form may also be downloaded and printed out by visiting www.cem.va.gov/hmm.

VA rules allow for custom inscriptions on headstones. Belief symbols such as Christian Crosses, Stars of David, Islamic Crescents and others are available. However, VA has limited other graphics such as logos, military decorations and fraternal organization marks. The best way to assure that you get the desired stone or plaque is by obtaining and filling out VA Form 40-1330 (Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans Cemetery) and filing it with other documents. When a spouse or child is buried in the same grave as a veteran, VA will have a contractor inscribe the reverse side of the headstone. Twenty-year reservists are eligible for a headstone or marker. Specific steps must be taken for authorization from The American Legion to affix an American Legion emblem onto the headstone.

Burial flag --A U.S. flag is provided, at no cost, to drape over the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who served honorably in the U. S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a veteran's military service. Eligibility for former members of Selected Reserves were added by Section 517 of Public Law 105-261. The flag will be issued once only for burial purposes and will not be replaced if lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed. National cemeteries with avenues of flags, and many state veterans cemeteries, accept donations of burial flags for mass display on Memorial Day, Veterans Day and other occasions. The standard issue burial flag is made of cotton and will not withstand continuous outdoor display. Burial flags may be obtained at VA regional offices, national cemeteries and most local post offices. Overseas, U.S. flags can be obtained from U.S. embassies or consulates VA will furnish a burial flag for veterans who served during wartime, died on active duty after May 27, 1941, who served after Jan. 31, 1955, peacetime veterans who were discharged or released before June 27, 1950, certain people who served in the organized military forces of the commonwealth of the Philippines while in service of the U.S. Armed Forces, and who died on or after April 25, 1951, and certain former members of the Selected Reserves.

Burial and plot-interment allowance -- You may be eligible for a VA burial allowance if all of these conditions are met:

- You paid for a veteran's burial or funeral.
- You have not been reimbursed by another government agency or some other source, such as the deceased veteran's employer.
- The veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

In addition, at least one of the following conditions must be met. The veteran:

- Died because of a service-related disability.
- Was receiving VA pension or compensation at the time of death.
- Was entitled to receive VA pension or compensation, but decided not to reduce his/her military retirement or disability pay.
- Died while hospitalized by VA, or while receiving care under VA contract at a non-VA facility.
- Died while traveling under proper authorization and at VA expense to or from a specified place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care.
- Had an original or reopened claim pending at the time of death and has been found entitled to compensation or pension from a date prior to the date of death.

- Died on or after Oct. 9, 1996, while a patient at a VA approved state nursing home.

VA will pay the following amounts:

- For a veteran's service-related death: If the death was due to his or her service-connected disability, VA will pay up to \$2,000 toward burial expenses occurring on or after Sept. 11, 2001.
- For a veteran's non-service related death since Oct. 1, 2011: If the death occurred while hospitalized by VA, it will pay up to \$700 toward burial and funeral expenses.
- If a veteran's death was not due to a service-connected disability and the veteran was not hospitalized by VA, the veteran must meet at least one specific condition to receive up to \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses and a \$300 plot-interment allowance.

Applications for payments must be filed within two years after the burial. If the application is incomplete at the time it is originally submitted, VA is required to notify the applicant of the evidence necessary to complete the form. If such evidence is not received within a year from the date of notification, no allowance may be paid. Also, payment for some or all the cost of transporting veteran remains to a VA national cemetery may be reimburse:

- If the death is related to a veteran service-connected disability, and the veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery
- If the death was not related to a veteran's service-connected disability and the veteran was hospitalized at a VA facility, or at a non-VA facility at VA expense, or under VA contracted nursing home care.

The applicant can apply by filling out VA Form 21-530, Application for Burial Benefits and attach a copy of the veteran's military discharge document (DD 214 or equivalent), death certificate, funeral and burial bills. The applicant must prove the burial expenses have been paid. Downloaded the form at www.va.gov/vaforms. To obtain assistance in filing a claim, find an American Legion Department Service Officer at www.legion.org/serviceofficers or call 202-861-2700.

Presidential Memorial Certificates -- Presidential Memorial Certificates express the nation's recognition of a veteran's service. Certificates bearing the signature of the president are issued honoring deceased veterans with honorable discharges. Eligible recipients include next-of-kin and other loved ones. The award of a certificate to one eligible recipient does not preclude certificates to other eligible recipients. To establish honorable service, a copy of a document such as a discharge (form DD-214) must accompany requests for a certificate. A Presidential Memorial Certificate is issued when a headstone or grave marker is issued. If the certificate is lost, stolen or destroyed, a new one may be issued if requested in writing. VA regional offices can assist in applying for original or replacement certificates.

Arlington National Cemetery -- Arlington National Cemetery is under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army. Eligibility for burials is more limited than at other national cemeteries. For information on Arlington burials, write to Superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA 22211, or call (877) 907-8585. Visit the website at www.arlingtoncemetery.mil.

Military funeral honors -- As of Jan. 1, 2000, all eligible veterans, including military retirees, are entitled to military funeral honors. The funeral honors ceremony will include the folding and presentation of the U.S. flag and the playing of Taps. At least two uniformed military personnel, in addition to a bugler, if available, shall perform the ceremony. If a bugler is not available, a high-quality recording may be used. DoD has contracted for a ceremonial bugle that does not require a trained bugler. For information, visit www.ceremonialbugle.com. One of the uniformed military personnel will be from the deceased veteran's parent military service and will present the flag to the next of kin. The military services may provide additional elements of honors and may use additional uniformed military personnel or other authorized providers, such as members of a veterans organization, to augment the funeral honors detail. The appropriate individual must request the funeral honors. DoD policy calls for funeral directors, rather than next-of-kin, to contact the military. This toll-free number, (877) 645-4667, has been set up for funeral directors. See www.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh for details.

Vet Charity Watch Update 65 ► FTC Crackdown On Fraudulent Vet Charities

The Federal Trade Commission, along with law enforcement officials and charity regulators from 70 offices in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam and Puerto Rico, announced more than 100 actions and a consumer education initiative in “**Operation Donate with Honor**,” a crackdown on fraudulent charities that con consumers by falsely promising their donations will help veterans and servicemembers. “Americans are grateful for the sacrifices made by those who serve in the U.S. armed forces,” said FTC Chairman Joe Simons. “Sadly, some con artists prey on that gratitude, using lies and deception to line their own pockets. In the process, they harm not only well-meaning donors, but also the many legitimate charities that actually do great work on behalf of veterans and servicemembers.”

The FTC planned this ongoing effort with the National Association of State Charity Officials (NASCO). The initiative includes an education campaign, in English and Spanish, to help consumers recognize charitable solicitation fraud and identify legitimate charities. Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen said, “Time and again, state attorneys general have come together on matters of national importance to enforce, educate and advocate on behalf of our residents. Charities fraud of any kind is abhorrent, and veterans charities fraud is especially upsetting. This campaign will offer important resources to help donors identify charities that match their own values.”

- Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson said, “While the enforcement actions announced today represent some truly bad actors in the charitable sector, the vast majority of charitable organizations do good and important work. I urge donors to use the resources highlighted in today’s announcement and to donate with confidence in support of our military and veterans.”
- “Not only do fraudulent charities steal money from patriotic Americans, they also discourage contributors from donating to real Veterans’ charities,” said Peter O’Rourke, Acting Secretary for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. “The FTC’s Operation Donate with Honor campaign will help educate citizens on how to identify organizations that misrepresent themselves as legitimate veterans charities, and those who, by contrast, truly help our nation’s heroes. I commend the FTC and its state partners for taking strong action on this important issue.”

Fraudulent charity ‘Help the Vets’

Neil G. “Paul” Paulson, Sr. and Help the Vets, Inc., (HTV) will be banned from soliciting charitable contributions under settlements with the FTC and the states of Florida, California, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio and Oregon, for falsely promising donors their contributions would help wounded and disabled veterans. Operating under names such as American Disabled Veterans Foundation, Military Families of America, Veterans Emergency Blood Bank, Vets Fighting Breast Cancer, and Veterans Fighting Breast Cancer, HTV falsely claimed to fund medical care, a suicide prevention program, retreats for veterans recuperating from stress, and veterans fighting breast cancer. It also falsely claimed a “gold” rating by GuideStar, which provides information about nonprofits.

One letter signed by Paulson stated, “But for thousands of disabled veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, giving an arm and a leg isn’t simply a figure of speech – it’s a harsh reality. . . . Your \$10 gift will mean so much to a disabled veteran.” But according to the FTC’s complaint, HTV did not help disabled veterans, and 95 percent of every donation was spent on fundraising, administrative expenses, and Paulson’s salary and benefits. The defendants are charged with violating the FTC Act, the FTC’s Telemarketing Sales Rule, and laws of the six states. In addition to the ban on soliciting charitable contributions, the proposed settlement order bans Paulson from charity management and oversight of charitable assets. To ensure that donors to HTV are not victimized again, HTV and Paulson must destroy all donor lists and notify their fundraisers to do so.

The order imposes a judgment of \$20.4 million, which represents consumers' donations from 2014 through 2017, when HTV stopped operating. The judgment will be partially suspended when the defendants have paid a charitable contribution to one or more legitimate veterans charities recommended by the states and approved by the court. Paulson must pay \$1.75 million – more than double what he was paid by HTV – and HTV must pay all of its remaining funds, \$72,000.

Fraudulent charity ‘Veterans of America’

The FTC charged Travis Deloy Peterson with using fake veterans' charities and illegal robocalls to get people to donate cars, boats and other things of value, which he then sold for his own benefit. The scheme used various names, including Veterans of America, Vehicles for Veterans LLC, Saving Our Soldiers, Donate Your Car, Donate That Car LLC, Act of Valor, and Medal of Honor. Peterson allegedly made millions of robocalls asking people to donate automobiles, watercraft, real estate, and timeshares, falsely claiming that donations would go to veterans charities and were tax deductible. In fact, none of the names used in the robocalls is a real charity with tax exempt status. Peterson is charged with violating the FTC Act and the FTC's Telemarketing Sales Rule. At the FTC's request, a federal court issued a temporary restraining order prohibiting Peterson from making unlawful robocalls or engaging in misrepresentations about charitable donations while the FTC's enforcement action is proceeding.

State Enforcement Actions

In 93 state actions announced 19 JUL at https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/attachments/press-releases/ftc-states-combat-fraudulent-charities-falsely-claim-help-veterans-servicemembers/dwh_list-enforcement-actions_1.pdf, charities and fundraisers sought donations online and via telemarketing, direct mail, door-to-door contacts, and at retail stores, falsely promising to help homeless and disabled veterans, to provide veterans with employment counseling, mental health counseling or other assistance, and to send care packages to deployed servicemembers. Some actions charged veterans charities with using deceptive prize promotion solicitations. Others targeted non-charities that falsely claimed that donations would be tax deductible. Some cases focused on veterans charities engaged in flagrant self-dealing to benefit individuals running the charity, and some alleged that fundraisers made misrepresentations on behalf of veterans charities or stole money solicited for a veterans charity. Maryland Secretary of State John Wobensmith said, “Scam artists are on the prowl, ready to take advantage of donors who want to help veterans. Make sure your donations go to reputable, well-established charities.”

How to donate wisely and avoid scams –

1. Look up a charity's report & ratings (give.org, guidestar.org, charitywatch.org, charitynavigator.org).
2. Never pay by gift card or wire transfer. Credit card and check are safer.
3. Watch out for names that only look like well-known charities.
4. Search the charity name online. Do people say it's a scam?
5. Ask how much of your donation goes to the program you want to support.
6. Donating online? Be sure where that money is going.

Which veterans group would you donate to? American Disabled Veterans Foundation, National Vietnam Veterans Foundation, Healing American Heroes, Inc., Veterans Fighting Breast Cancer, Military Families of America, VietNow National Headquarters, Inc., Foundation for American Veterans, Inc., Healing Heroes Network, Help the Vets, Inc. They have all been sued for lying to donors. Don't depend on the name. Do your research. Then donate. [Source: Federal Trade commission Release | July 19, 2018 ++]

Burn Pit Toxic Exposure Update 56 ► Time Is Running Out

Iraqi War veteran Christina Thundathil, 39, of Orlando, sometimes lays awake at night wondering. "The worst thing that ever happened to me was I had a broken leg from playing 'chicken' on a bicycle, and now I'm sitting here

wondering if I'm going to be able to watch my kids grow up," Thundathil lamented. Thundathil was 24-years-old when a U.S. led coalition launched into Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein. She was in the Army. "I had no problem going to war," she said. "My problem came in when my government lied to me, they said, 'oh this is harmless.'" Thundathil has since learned the smoke and fumes from burn pits in Iraq were not so harmless. Pits into which the military dumped any and all waste, doused it with jet fuel and burned it. "My lungs are damaged because of the carcinogens that I inhaled," she said.

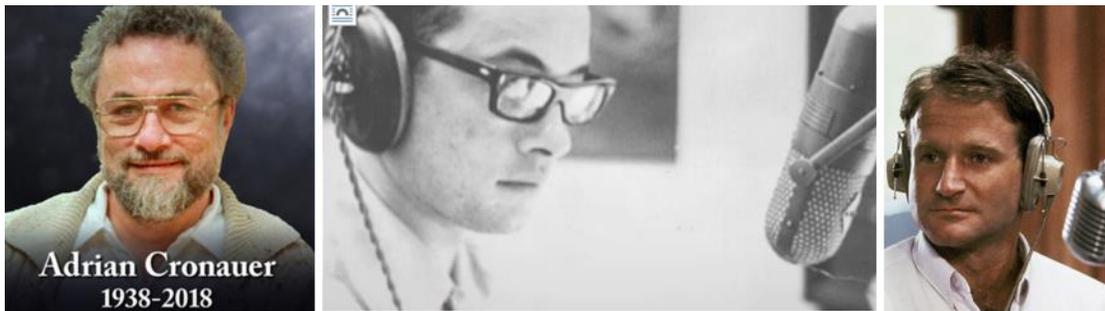
One of her jobs was to burn large barrels of human waste, everyday for 300 days. "No face masks were given," Thundathil remembered. "You put the jet fuel in and you stir it and you light it. You have to sit there, you have to watch it burn. When the fire goes down when it's even with the drum, then you have to go back and you have to stir it and you add more jet fuel. It's pretty nasty." By the time she left the Army in 2004, Thundathil had experienced coughing, fevers, nausea, dizziness. "In 2016, that's when I started throwing up blood," said Thundathil. She went to the VA in Orlando. "The doctor said well, 'you're fat, that's why your PFT's [pulmonary function tests] are wrong,'" Thundathil recalled. The Orlando VA said it is barred from commenting on a patient unless that patient signs a release.

The Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville later diagnosed Thundathil with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, a result of exposure to toxic substances including exposure to burn pits. COPD is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes obstructed airflow from the lungs. At a round table discussion in Washington D.C. last week, Iraqi War veteran Lauren Price, who developed a chronic bronchial disease after returning from Iraq, urged action. Congress and the VA said more research is necessary to determine if smoke and fumes from burn pits affects the health of service members. Price claims the research has been done repeatedly with the same findings. "Burning trash and all forms of trash is detrimental and can be fatal to humans," Price stated.

More than 141,000 veterans signed on to the VA's Burn Pit registry. The VA has only approved 2,000 burn pit exposure claims. Thundathil is waiting on her disability claim, which she says includes hearing loss, traumatic brain injury, Gulf War illness, autoimmune condition, migraine headaches secondary to PTSD and tinnitus. She also filed an 1151 claim which in her case, would be a claim for negligence. For people like Thundathil and Price, time is running out. [Source: News Channel 8 Orlando | Steve Andrews | July 25, 2018 ++]

Obit: Adrian Cronauer ► 18 JUL 2018 | Gooood Morning, Vietnam

Adrian Cronauer, the man whose military radio antics inspired a character played by Robin Williams in the film "Good Morning, Vietnam," has died. He was 79. Mary Muse, the wife of his stepson Michael Muse, said 19 JUL that Cronauer died from an age-related illness. He had lived in Troutville, Virginia, and died at a local nursing home, she said. During his service as a U.S. Air Force sergeant in Vietnam in 1965 and 1966, Cronauer opened his Armed Forces Radio show "Dawnbuster" with the phrase, "Gooooood morning, Vietnam!" Williams made the refrain famous in the 1987 film, loosely based on Cronauer's time in Saigon.



Adrian Cronauer, a disc jockey in Vietnam for the Armed Forces Network, was beloved by many of the American troops who served in Vietnam.

The film was a departure from other Vietnam war movies that focused on bloody realism, such as the Academy Award-winning "Platoon." Instead, it was about irreverent youth in the 1960s fighting the military establishment. "We were the only game in town, and you had to play by our rules," Cronauer told The Associated Press in 1987. "But I wanted to serve the listeners." The military wanted conservative programming. American youths, however, were "not into drab, sterile announcements" with middle-of-the-road music, Cronauer said, and the battle over the airwaves was joined. In the film, Williams quickly drops Perry Como and Lawrence Welk from his 6 a.m. playlist in favor of the Dave Clark Five.

Cronauer said he loved the movie but much of it was Hollywood make-believe. Robin Williams' portrayal as a fast-talking, nonconformist, yuk-it-up disc jockey sometimes gave people the wrong impression of the man who inspired the film. "Yes, I did try to make it sound more like a stateside station," he told The AP in 1989. "Yes, I did have problems with news censorship. Yes, I was in a restaurant shortly before the Viet Cong hit it. And yes, I did start each program by yelling, 'Good Morning, Vietnam!'" The rest is what he delicately called "good script crafting." Cronauer left the Air Force as a sergeant in 1966 and eventually served as an adviser to the deputy assistant secretary of defense from 2001 to 2009,

When the film was released, the presidential campaign of Democrat Jesse Jackson called asking if Cronauer would help out. The conversation died quickly after Cronauer asked the caller if she realized he was a Republican. In 1992, George H. W. Bush's re-election campaign taped a TV ad slamming Bill Clinton's draft record. In the ad, Cronauer accused Clinton of lying. "In many ways, I'm a very conservative guy," he said. "A lifelong, card-carrying Republican can't be that much of an anti-establishment type."

Cronauer was from Pittsburgh, the son of a steelworker and a schoolteacher. After the military, he worked in radio, television and advertising. In 1979, Cronauer saw the film "Apocalypse Now" with his friend Ben Moses, who also served in Vietnam and worked at the Saigon radio station. "We said that's not our story of Vietnam," Moses recalled. "And we made a deal over a beer that we were going to have a movie called 'Good Morning, Vietnam.'" It wasn't easy. Hollywood producers were incensed at the idea of a comedy about Vietnam, said Moses, who co-produced the film. "I said 'It's not a comedy - it's the sugar on top of the medicine,'" Moses said. Writer Mitch Markowitz made the film funny, and director Barry Levinson added the tragic-comedy aspect, Moses said. Williams' performance was nominated for an Oscar.

Moses said the film was a pivotal moment in changing the way Americans thought about the Vietnamese and the war. Muse, the wife of Cronauer's stepson, said the movie "helped open dialogue and discussion that had long been avoided." "He loved the servicemen and servicewomen all over the world and always made time to personally engage with them," she said. She added that he was "a loving and devoted husband to his late wife Jeane (as well as a) father, grandfather and great-grandfather." Cronauer attended the University of Pennsylvania's law school and went into the legal profession, working in communications law and later handling prisoner-of-war issues for the Pentagon. "I always was a bit of an iconoclast, as Robin (Williams) was in the film," Cronauer told the AP in 1999. "But I was not anti-military, or anti-establishment. I was anti-stupidity. And you certainly do run into a lot of stupidity in the military." [Source: Associated Press | Ben Finley, | July 19, 2018 ++]

Obit: Elbert Howard ► 23 JUL 2018 | Black Panther Party Co-Founder

Elbert "Big Man" Howard, a co-founder of the Black Panther Party who served as newspaper editor, information officer and logistics genius behind the group's popular social programs, has died at age 80. His wife, Carole Hyams, says Howard died Monday in Santa Rosa, California, after a long illness. Friends and family described Howard as a "gentle giant" who could paint in words what a jazz song was saying. Howard was an author, volunteer jazz disc jockey, author, lecturer and activist in Sonoma County, where he later made his home. Howard was one of six people

who founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland in October 1966, along with Bobby Seale and Huey Newton. The political organization started out patrolling police for possible abuse against blacks.



n this Nov. 27, 1970, file photo, Elbert "Big Man" Howard, deputy minister of information for the Black Panther Party, speaks at a sidewalk news conference in Washington.

Key members quit in 1974 after years of fatal fights with police and each other. Later it became clear that the FBI had engaged in surveillance and harassment to undermine the party and incriminate its leaders. Howard quit the party in 1974, but in its active years, he served as editor of its newspaper and deputy minister of information. He traveled to Europe and Asia to set up chapters and was responsible for the social programs that made the party famous. Billy X. Jennings, a longtime friend and party archivist, said Howard was the person who negotiated lower prices and organized refrigerated trucks for food giveaways. Later, as an administrator at a local college, he organized a program for jail inmates to take courses. "He was a beloved member," Jennings said. "People might have had different grudges against Bobby or Eldridge (Cleaver), but nobody got a grudge against Big Man."

Howard was born Jan. 5, 1938, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, as the only child of Emma and Anderson Howard. He joined the Air Force and was posted to Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California. Jennings said after he was discharged, Howard enrolled in Merritt College, where he met Seale and Newton. Seale remains active in politics. Newton was killed in 1989. Hyams was a nurse when she met Howard in 1969; they broke up when he started traveling on party business. "He was huge, he was impressive, he was quiet," she said. "He seemed shy almost, but carried himself with great distinguishment." After Howard left the party, he returned to Tennessee and worked as a sales manager, Jennings said. The friends got back in touch in the 1990s, and Howard became active in party reunions and events. In 2005, Hyams reached out to Howard by phone after a friend's son found his information online. They got back together and were married in her Sonoma County home in 2008. In addition to his wife, survivors include his daughter Tynisa Howard Wilson of Landover, Maryland, and grandsons Jaylen and Amin; stepson Robert Grimes of San Pablo, California, and three step-grandchildren. [Source: The Associated Press | Janie Har | July 24, 2018 ++]

Obit: Alene B. Duerk ► 22 JUL 2018 | Navy's First Female Admiral

The Navy's first female admiral, retired Rear Adm. Alene B. Duerk, passed away 22 JUL at the age of 98. Born in Defiance, Ohio, in 1920, Duerk joined the U.S. Naval Reserve as an ensign in 1941 after completing nursing training at the Toledo Hospital School of Nursing, a Navy release said. Her initial tours were spent as a ward nurse at Naval Hospital Portsmouth, Virginia, Naval Hospital Bethesda, Maryland, and at sea aboard the USS Benevolence, a Navy hospital ship. During that 1945 at-sea tour, Duerk would provide aide to wounded personnel returning from World War II and the fight against Japan.



Official portrait of Rear Adm. Alene B. Duerk

The crew of the Benevolence also assisted in repatriating recently-liberated allied prisoners of war, the release said. "The time I was aboard the hospital ship and we took the prisoners of war, that was something I will never forget," Duerk said years later. "That was the most exciting experience of my whole career." Duerk was released from active service in 1946 but returned in 1951 as a nursing instructor at the Naval Hospital School in Portsmouth. She would spend the next 20 years in hospitals in San Diego and Yokosuka, Japan, and in recruiting stations in Chicago and Washington. In 1970, she was appointed as the director of the Navy Nurse Corps, where she helped expand Navy medical capabilities in anesthesia, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology and ambulatory care.

President Richard Nixon approved Duerk's selection to rear admiral in 1972, making her the first woman to be selected for a flag rank. "It took 197 years and a forward-looking Chief of Naval Operations, Elmo Zumwalt, to break with tradition before Alene Duerk became the first woman admiral in the U.S. Navy," Naval History and Heritage Command director Sam Cox said in the Navy release. "But the credit goes to Duerk. From the crucible of caring for wounded Sailors, Marines and prisoners of war during World War II in the Pacific, she blazed a trail of stellar performance in tough jobs, serving as an inspiration for an ever increasing number of women officers who have followed her path."

Rear Adm. Duerk retired in 1975 and remained involved in Navy Medicine for the rest of her life. More information on Duerk's stellar career can be [found here](#). "Alene Duerk was a strong and dedicated trail blazer who embodied the very principles that continue to guide Navy Medicine today," Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, Navy surgeon general, said in the release. "She will forever be remembered as a servant leader who provided the best care to those who defended our nation, honoring the uniform we wear and the privilege of leadership." [Source: NavyTimes | J.D. Simkins | July 25, 2018 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► Scheduled As of 31 JUL 2018

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program employment workshops are available in conjunction with hundreds of their hiring fairs. These workshops are designed to help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date in the below list. To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering (if indicated) for the hiring fairs which are shown below for the next month. For more information about the USCC Hiring Our Heroes Program, Military Spouse Program, Transition Assistance, GE Employment Workshops, Resume Engine, etc. refer to the Hiring Our Heroes website <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/hiringourheroes/events>. Listings of upcoming Vet Job Fairs nationwide providing location, times, events, and registration info if required can be found at the following websites. You will need to review each site below to locate Job Fairs in your location:

- <https://events.recruitmilitary.com>

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



[Source: Recruit Military, USCC, and American Legion | July 31, 2018 ++]

Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule ► As of 31 JUL 2018

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\veteterans 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\veteterans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, Milton.Bell126@gmail.com. [Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | July 31, 2018 ++]

Vet State Benefits ► Alabama 2018

The state of Alabama provides a number of benefits to veterans. To obtain information on them refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits – AL**”. Benefits in the following categories are available to veterans who are residents of the state:

- Housing Benefits
- Financial Assistance Benefits
- Employment Benefits
- Education Benefits
- Recreation Benefits

- Other State Veteran Benefits

[Source: <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/alabama-state-veterans-benefits.html?comp=7000022835803&rank=2> | July 2018++]

*** Vet Legislation ***



Note: To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress> for any House or Senate bill introduced in the 115th 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.

VA Blue Water Claims Update 47 ▶ S.422 | Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017

For over a decade, Vietnam Veterans of America has sought, on behalf of veterans, legislation to restore presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to members of the Armed Forces, who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam. With passage of H.R. 299 in the House by a vote of 382-0 on June 25, 2018, we are approaching our goal. Last month, House lawmakers overwhelmingly approved legislation dealing with the plight of “blue water” Vietnam veterans. The House bill will add a new Veterans Affairs home loan fee to pay for the \$1.1 billion needed to cover benefits costs. But nearly half of all borrowers — including disabled veterans — will be exempt from the fee.

The bill will now go to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for further consideration. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) has introduced companion bill S.422. The bill has 50 cosponsors in the Senate. The Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee is planning a 1 AUG hearing on the issue, one that committee Chairman Johnny Isakson (R-GA) has called a “top priority” for the remainder of the year. If enacted into law, nearly 90,000 “Blue Water” veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam, veterans who served near the demilitarized zone in Korea, and certain veterans who served in Thailand will again be eligible for compensation for service-connected, disabilities related to their exposure to Agent Orange.

VVA believes Congress should recognize that these veterans were exposed to Agent Orange and should authorize presumptive status for VA disability claims associated with this exposure. Now is the time to contact your Senators to ask them to support this bill. VVA is asking those who support this bill to send VVA’s prepared letters to your Senators requesting they cosponsor S.422, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017, as amended and passed in the House. Go to <http://capwiz.com/vva/issues/alert/?alertid=77020631&queueid=11716906556> and all you need do is enter your Zip code and the code word provided on the Take Action site. These veterans are aging, and the time to help them is now! [Source: Vietnam Veterans of America - Legislative Alert | July 13, 2018 ++]

Gold Star Spouse ▶ H.R. 5882 | Spouses Leasing Relief Act

U.S. Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Bill Nelson (D-FL), and Doug Jones, (D-AL) introduced the bipartisan Gold Star Spouses Leasing Relief Act on 19 JUL. The legislation, which was originally introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) and Cheri Bustos (D-IL), would modify the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to allow a widow or widower of a servicemember who died

while in military service to terminate a jointly held residential lease, without penalty, within one year of the servicemember's death. "A grieving military spouse dealing with the death of their loved one on active duty should be able to end their lease without paying high termination fees," Portman said in a news release.

"This bill, with the support of numerous veterans groups and the Department of Defense, is a commonsense fix for Gold Star spouses. I encourage my colleagues in the Senate to join me in supporting this legislation to provide relief for our Gold Star spouses", said Portman. Currently, when a servicemember receives military orders, his or her spouse is often required to relocate and then sign a lease for a house, apartment, or other dwelling. But if the servicemember dies during military service, the surviving spouse could be forced to pay off the remainder of that residential lease even though the couple only entered into that contract to accommodate the servicemember's assignment.

The Gold Star Spouses Leasing Relief Act also is supported by The American Legion, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and the National Military Family Association (NMFA). "Gold Star families should not be forcibly bound to lease agreements made before the loss of their loved one. This bill affords every Gold Star family the decency of the financial protections that their service member earned," said Denise H. Rohan, National Commander of The American Legion. "Surviving spouses should not be made to pay extra rent or fees to end their lease after the active duty death of their loved one. We applaud Sen. Warren for providing a remedy for the undue burden during a time of grief," said Bonnie Carroll, president and founder of TAPS. The Gold Star Spouses Leasing Relief Act also is supported by the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, and the National Military Family Association. [Source: The Ironton (Ohio) Tribune | July 22, 2018 ++]

Transition Assistance Program Update 07 ► H.R.5649 Forwarded to Senate

The **Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer William "Bill" Mulder (Ret.) Transition Improvements Act of 2018** (H.R. 5649), introduced by Rep. Jodey Arrington (R-TX), makes improvements to the Transition Assistance Program and the overall transition process for servicemembers to include a focus on career opportunities and entrepreneurship. The Act, named after a friend of the congressman who committed suicide, would make several changes to TAP. Among them, the legislation would require service members to go through personalized pre-separation counseling one year before getting out of the military. Specifically, the bill:

- Authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DoL) to access the Federal Directory of New Hires. This is a federal database that can be used to better track employment outcomes of transitioning servicemembers;
- Reauthorizes the off-base TAP pilot that was originally authorized by P.L. 112-260. This pilot would authorize the DoL employment workshop portion of TAP to be taught at off-base locations (e.g. local high schools, community centers, etc.) to veterans and their spouses;
- Authorizes a five-year pilot program that would provide \$10 million in matching grant funds to help community providers fund innovative transition services (i.e. resume assistance, interview training, job recruitment training, and related services leading directly to careers as the grant recipient deems as important to transition);
- Authorizes VA, in consultation with State entities that provide services to retired, separated or discharged servicemembers, to enter into a contract with a non-Federal party to study and identify community providers that provide effective and efficient transition services to servicemembers;
- Requires VA, in consultation with DoL, Department of Defense (DoD), and the Small Business Administration (SBA), within 90 days of enactment, to enter into a contract with a third-party entity that has experience in teaching adult learners. It would also require a two-year independent assessment and

curriculum review of TAP and the entire transition process both prior to separation and post-separation; and

- Requires VA, in consultation with DoD, DoL, and SBA, to conduct a five-year longitudinal study on three separate cohorts of servicemembers including: a cohort that has taken the current TAP curriculum, a cohort that has taken the revised curriculum following the biannual TAP review, and a cohort that did not take either program.:

Additionally the bill would make the following changes to GI Bill and Voc rehab benefits:

- (1) Provide a maximum of 4 months of extra living allowance to students using the GI Bill who, as a result of a closure of their school, are forced to take courses online.
- (2) Eliminate the current 12 year delimiting date for use of the VR&E program and place a cap on tuition and fee payments for flight training public institutions of higher learning at the current cap in place for tuition and fees payments to private schools through the GI Bill. Currently enrolled students would be grandfathered in and not impacted by such a change for two years.
- (3) Eliminate the current prohibition on GI Bill funds being used to pay for training that leads to a private pilot's license.



- (4) Authorize students taking flight training under the GI Bill to accelerate payments which would allow them to condense 36 months of benefits at the new cap for flight training into 18 months at twice the cap. The proposed cap would bring the cost of public-school programs in line with what's covered at all private schools, or up to \$23,571.94 for the upcoming 2018-19 school year. Students could still take advantage of the [Yellow Ribbon program](#), which is a voluntary agreement schools can enter with the Veterans Affairs Department to split costs not covered by the GI Bill. Data from the Veterans Affairs Department show just over 3,200 veterans used the GI Bill to attend flight schools in fiscal 2017 at a total cost of \$51 million. This is down from around 3,500 users and \$65 million the year before.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) enacting the legislation would cost \$16 million over the 2019-223 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts. The bill introduced April 27, 2018 passed in the House on July 24, 2018 and goes to the Senate next for consideration. It has a 22% chance of being enacted according to Skopos Labs. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Natalie Gross | July 27, 2018 ++]

House Vet Bill Progress ► 16 thru 31 JUL 2018

The following bills have been passed by the House and forwarded to the Senate for consideration:

- **H.R. 2409** -- Would allow certain servicemembers to terminate their cable, satellite television and internet access service contracts while deployed. It extends existing federal protections to cable and satellite television services under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. Under this legislation, servicemembers

would only need to provide notice and a copy of their active duty orders to cable and satellite providers to terminate their contracts without penalty.

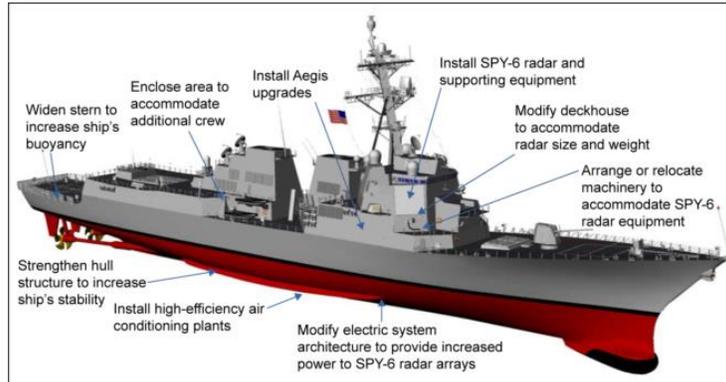
- **H.R. 2787**, the VET MD Act -- Would direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a three year pilot program beginning no later than August 15, 2020, in at least five regionally diverse VA medical centers to provide undergraduate students a clinical observation experience within VA.
- **H.R. 5538**, The Reserve Component Vocational Rehabilitation Parity Act -- Would add eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) for active service under certain reserve orders.
- **H.R. 5864**, The VA HELP Act -- Would (1) require VA, within 180 days of enactment, to establish qualification standards and performance metrics for VHA HR positions and provide a report to Congress containing such standards and metrics; (2) require GAO to submit a report to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs containing a description of the implementation and an assessment of the quality of such standards and metrics.
- **H.R. 5882**, The Gold Star Spouses Leasing Relief Act -- Would allow surviving spouses to terminate residential leases at the time of a servicemember's death without penalty.
- **H.R. 5938**, the Veterans Serving Veterans Act -- Would (1) require VA to identify the MOSs that correlate with open positions within VA, to coordinate with DoD to identify soon-to-be-separated servicemembers and to add those servicemembers' MOSs and contact information to VA's recruiting database with an opt-out option; (2) require VA to implement a program to recruit, train and certify former military medics as ICTs to work at VA medical facilities.
- **H.R. 5974**, the VA COST SAVINGS Act -- Would (1) require VA to identify VA facilities that would benefit from cost savings associated with the use of an on-site regulated medical waste treatment system over a five year period; (2) require VA to develop a uniform, regulated medical waste cost analysis model to be used to determine the cost savings associated with the use of an on-site regulated medical waste treatment system; (3) ensure that, at each VA facility identified as a facility that would benefit from an on-site regulated medical waste treatment system, these systems are purchased pursuant to the purchase agreement known as the "VHA Regulated Medical Waste On-Site Treatment Equipment Systems Blanket Purchase Agreement."
- **H.R. 5693**, Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act -- Would authorize VA, during a three-year period beginning on October 1, 2019, to transfer upon request up to 900 veterans for whom the VA is required to provide nursing home care to a medical foster home that meets VA standards.

[Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | July 27, 2018 ++]

*** Military ***



Navy Destroyers ► Maxed Out | Navy Looks to New Hulls & Power for Radars/Lasers



Source: GAO (analysis); Navy (image and data). | GAO-16-613

The Navy has crammed as much electronics as it can into its new DDG-51 Flight III destroyers now beginning construction, the Navy's Program Executive Officer for Ships Rear Adm. William Galinis said 11 JUL. That drives the service towards a new Large Surface Combatant that can comfortably accommodate the same high-powered radars, as well as future weapons such as lasers, on either a modified DDG-51 hull or an entirely new design. "It's going to be more of an evolutionary approach as we migrate from the DDG-51 Flight IIIs to the Large Surface Combatant (LSC)," he said. "(We) start with a DDG-51 flight III combat system and we build off of that, probably bringing in a new HME (Hull, Mechanical, & Engineering) infrastructure, a new power architecture, to support that system as it then evolves going forward." LSC evolved from the Future Surface Combatant concept and will serve along a new frigate and unmanned surface vessels.

"Before the end of the year, we'll start reaching out to industry to start sharing some of the thoughts we have and where we think we're going," Galinis told a Navy League breakfast audience. "We'll bring industry into this at the right point, but we're still kind of working a lot of the technology pieces and what the requirements are right now." This evolutionary approach is similar to how the current Aegis combat system entered service on the CG-47 Ticonderoga cruisers in 1983 but came into its own on the DDG-51 Arleigh Burke destroyers. (Despite the difference in names, the two classes are virtually the same size). The DDG-51 is now the single most common type in the fleet, a vital part of the hoped-for 355-ship Navy, with some ships expected to serve into the 2070s:

- There are now 64 Arleigh Burkes of various sub-types in service;
- Nine of the latest Flight IIA variant are in various stages of construction; and
- Work is beginning on the new Flight IIIs in Mississippi (Huntington Ingalls Industries) and Maine (General Dynamics-owned Bath Iron Works).

The Navy is doubling down on long-standing programs to keep its older warships up to date and on par with the newest versions. But the current destroyers just won't be able to keep up with the Flight III, which will have a slightly modified hull and higher-voltage electricity to accommodate Raytheon's massive new Air & Missile Defense Radar. A stripped down version of the AMDR, the Enterprise Air Search Radar (EASR, also by Raytheon) is already going on amphibious ships and might just fit on older Burkes as well, however. But it's tight. On the Flight III, even with the hull modifications, "you kind of get to the naval architectural limits of the DDG-51 hullform," Galinis told a Navy League breakfast this morning. "That's going to bring a lot of incredible capabilities to the fleet but there's also a fair amount of technical risk."

The Navy is laboring mightily to reduce that risk on Flight III with simulations and land-based testing, including a full prototype of the new power plant being built in Philadelphia. But it's clear the combat system is out of room to grow within the limits of the current hull. [Source: Breaking Defense | Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. | July 11, 2018 ++]

Military Sexual Assault Update 05 ► Pentagon Delays New Report Release

Leaders from American Veterans (AMVETS), the nation's oldest and most inclusive Congressionally chartered veteran service organization, joined Republican Senator Joni Ernst and Democratic Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in calling for the Pentagon to release a new report that rates the risk of sexual assault at military bases around the world. The report is based on data collected from service member in 2014 and reinforces the findings of a previous RAND study. The new report was set to be released earlier this year, but, according to USA Today, Pentagon officials delayed its release due to concerns over whether the study's methodology followed its original intent. "As we speak, there is a service member somewhere being ostracized, intimidated, and/or abused following a report of military sexual trauma," said Jan Brown, AMVETS National 2nd Vice Commander. "Worst yet, somewhere a case is going unreported for fear of this same ostracism, intimidation and abuse. We know it's happening, and the Pentagon needs to do all it can to prevent it, starting with the release of this new report."

In May 2018, the Defense Department released its Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, which showed a nearly 10 percent increase in service members reporting sexual assault in 2017. Earlier this month, AMVETS expressed strong support for pending Senate legislation, the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2017 (S-2141), to address military sexual assault cases and problems with how they are investigated by the military. Rand is a federally funded, nonpartisan research firm. The methodology it used for this latest report has been legitimized by peer review, and it has the potential to help both prevent and respond to instances of sexual assault, Brown said. "Our enemies win every time we let a sexual assault go unpunished in our military. It hurts unit morale and troop readiness, which ultimately threatens our national defense. There is no reason to delay the release of a report that could bring us a step closer to stamping out the long-standing problem of military sexual trauma," said National 2nd Vice Commander Jan Brown. [Source: AMVETS News Release | John Hoellwarth | July 27, 2018 ++]

Operation Yellow Ribbon ► USPS Change Impact on Troop Care Package Shipments

In January, Dave Silver logged onto the U.S. Postal Service's online portal for calculating postage for Priority Mail packages. As president of the all-volunteer Operation Yellow Ribbon (www.operationyellowribbonsouthjersey.org) in southern New Jersey. Silver had tallied postage for thousands of care packages he had sent to servicemembers in Afghanistan and Iraq over the years. But something was way off on this one. "I hit enter, and all of sudden I'm looking at \$60 postage instead of \$30 or so," said Silver, who assumed there was a glitch in the USPS's website. There wasn't. He subsequently learned it arose from a quiet change made by the USPS that doubled the shipping costs for many Priority Mail packages sent to overseas military addresses.

That roughly translates to an annual postage hike of \$50,000 for Operation Yellow Ribbon, Silver said. "It has totally thrown a curveball at us," he said of the nonprofit that sent out about 1,900 care packages in 2017. "We know nonprofits that have just shut down and stopped because of it." Silver and others have pinned their hopes on a bill introduced in Congress this month that could provide some relief. For about a half-century, the USPS had used hubs in New York City, San Francisco and Miami to route packages mailed to Army Post Office, Fleet Post Office or Diplomatic Post Office addresses. The cost of mailing to APO, FPO or DPO addresses was uniform, regardless of how many of the USPS's 10 regional zones a package crossed. In 2013, the USPS consolidated the processing of packages being sent to APO/FPO/DPO addresses in a single center in Chicago, but the one-zone postage rate was maintained.

In January, the rates for shipping such packages was changed to reflect how many of those zones were crossed. For an organization based in New Jersey, such as Operation Yellow Ribbon, it has meant paying extra to send through several zones to Chicago. "The post office went rogue," said John Couch, one of the co-founders of ShipitAPO

<https://www.shipitapo.com/home.php>), which helps overseas servicemembers receive packages from retailers that won't send to APO addresses. Couch had submitted a formal protest over the USPS's proposed rate change, which he said was "buried" in a notice published in the Federal Register in October 2017. "I'm representing the military people who are my customers," he said. "They're paying me more because I have to pay the post office more. They're the ones suffering. I make the same amount of money because they pay me a handling fee."

In a statement provided to Stars and Stripes, the USPS said it receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and must rely solely on postage, products and services for funding. "Changes to improve our operations are being made so we can reduce costs and remain competitive in the marketplace, to be able to continue to serve the public in the most efficient, cost-effective way possible." The USPS offered no financial analysis for the ratio of senders who would pay less or more. Couch points out that the nation's population hubs are on the East and West coasts, far from Chicago. The USPS statement also noted that its flat-rate boxes "are popular and affordable ways to send packages to the troops." The postage on them ranges from \$7.20 for a small box to \$17.40 for the large one, and they were not affected by the January rate change.

But using those boxes does not make economic sense for the kind of bulk shipping done by outfits like Operation Yellow Ribbon. "We send anywhere from \$100 to \$150 worth of treats and hygiene items," Silver said. "I can fit six or seven of those [Priority Mail flat-rate] boxes into one of ours. "We use egg boxes that our supermarket here donates to us. They're huge. They hold 30 dozen eggs, have handles and can hold up to 50 pounds," he added.

Earlier this month, Rep. Tom MacArthur, R-N.J., introduced the Care Packages for Our Heroes Act (H.R.6231), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/6231/all-actions?r=206&overview=closed>, which would require the same postage rate for all packages going to overseas military addresses regardless of how many zones they cross. "Care packages provide much needed basic comforts and a morale boost to our servicemembers," he said in a July 12 news release. "I see letters all the time from men and women in the Armed Services thanking us for the packages and the continued support." With little legislation moving forward in Congress these days, Operation Yellow Ribbon likely faces a hard decision. "We can either try to match what we did last year to keep our productivity up and burn through our cash, spending more each month than we bring in and bringing down our savings every month," Silver said. "Or we cut back, but then we're hurting the morale of the brave men and women overseas. We're trying to walk that fine balance."

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Wyatt Olson | July 25, 2018 ++]

SIAS ► **In AI, if You're Not First, You're Last.**

The Air Force is looking to transition its intelligence enterprise into the digital age to meet the pace of threats rapidly eroding the technological and military advantages long held by the Department of Defense. Nations such as Russia and China have publicly stated their intent to devote significant funds and resources to be global technology leaders in sectors such as artificial intelligence. "They are competing against the United States. We need to really make sure we understand that," Lt. Gen. VeraLinn "Dash" Jamieson, deputy chief of staff for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, said at an Air Force Association breakfast on Capitol Hill 26 JUL. "The forerunners [in AI] will be in control of tools that will analyze more information in more ways than we ever thought possible," she said, allowing them to "deliver better strategies, methods of solving problems and accomplishing goals than we've seen before."

With that in mind, Jamieson said, in this new digital age "second place might as well be last place." Jamieson did not mince words in describing the challenge before the Air Force, acknowledging that the ISR enterprise is not postured to fight these technologically sophisticated peer threats. Over the last 20 years, Jamieson said, the armed forces have been fighting in a permissive environment focused on technologically inferior extremist organizations,

and it has not been preparing or building for a high-end fight being faced today. Jamieson outlined a five-step path ahead, which includes;

- Leveraging computing as a service to include the platforms, infrastructure and software, not data-storage facilities;
- Secure creation and transport of quality training data to be able to train advanced algorithms;
- Identifying, understanding and measuring authoritative data and information across the enterprise;
- Developing and fielding algorithms at speed and scale to enable automated software upgrades; and
- Management of the talent of the workforce.

Jamieson also explained that the armed forces must rethink processes of the past as they transition from a manpower intensive force to more of a machine-learning intensive force. Along those lines, Jamieson described a new framework in the works that will replace the current intelligence process for making sense of data (known as processing, exploitation and dissemination, or PED). “PED is dead,” she said, explaining it is no longer sufficient for war-fighting decisions at the speed of relevance in the digital age. In its place is a new concept Jamieson called SIAS: sense, identify, attribute and share. This new approach is more in line with automation and machine learning, Jamieson said, adding PED can be done by machines while people or analysts need to harmonize the data to decision quality at speed.

Holistically, SIAS involves gathering and fusing information from a sensor grid that spans all the domains of warfare, putting that together into a pattern of life or trend analysis in order to answer who or what is responsible for certain actions and then sharing that across coalitions industry and academia to help evolve the framework. Jamieson’s vision is in line with the trend senior leaders across DoD have highlighted as an important capability: harnessing AI, automation and machine learning to empower analysts to come to decisions faster. The analysts that can more efficiently fuse sensor data into relevant information faster can provide a significant battlefield advantage, reinforcing the timely and potentially costly nature of artificial intelligence leadership.

[Source: C4ISRNET | Mark Pomerleau | July 26, 2018 ++]

USS Bremerton (SSN-698) Update 01 ► Longest-Serving Submarine In Navy History

When the Navy commissioned the fast-attack submarine Bremerton, Blondie’s “Rapture” topped the charts and “Dallas” ruled the TV ratings. It was March 28, 1981, and President Ronald Reagan would survive an assassination attempt a few days later. The old boat now sits at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, near her namesake Washington town, never to return to her Hawaiian home port. Decommissioning and dismantlement are the final tasks for the Bremerton, the longest-serving submarine in Navy history. It sailed more than a million miles underwater while the world above it changed, according to Cmdr. Travis Zettel, the boat’s commander.

The Bremerton sounded its first dive alert during the Cold War as the Soviet threat loomed. Later, its mission morphed to support counter-terrorism operations in the wake of 9/11. Recent years have seen it pivot alongside the rest of the military to prepare once again for conventional war. Over nearly four decades of service, the Bremerton conducted strike missions, chased foreign subs, interdicted narcotics shipments and performed countless other operations, Zettel said. As the Bremerton rests along a pier, never to traverse the depths again, Zettel said it’s a bittersweet time. “It’s sad to see a crew that’s ready to go out, ready to go to war, come back pier side,” he said. With the Bremerton eventually slated to be reduced to so much scrap, some crew members were wistful about their mighty boat’s ignominious end.

- “After going on deployment ... you become brothers,” said Chief Information Systems Technician-Submarine Xavier Martinez. “Seeing our home being taken apart slowly is kind of emotional.”

- Fire Control Technician (Submarine) 2nd Class Mason Davis said operating the Navy’s oldest sub gave Bremerton’s submariners a unique place in the community, especially compared to his buddies stationed on newer boats. “Knowing I’m on the oldest boat and we still keep this thing going after 37 years is a point of pride for me,” Davis said. “I get to brag a little bit about that.”

Zettel said an effort is underway to get the boat’s sail turned into some sort of local monument. “There’s a number of people pining after bits and pieces, to keep the Bremerton alive,” he said. A Navy Times tour of the boat found knobs and other innocuous pieces have gone missing as crew members smuggle away mementos from their historic vessel. Perhaps the oldest part on the Bremerton came from another boat. “Annie,” a klaxon that was carried on a World War II-era diesel sub, was used before modern diving alarms arrived. Sailors found it in the shipyard while the Bremerton was being built, and it was incorporated into the boat, Zettel said. At one time, crews only engaged Annie when no outsiders were around. But over the years, its distinctive “AWOOGA!” has been blasted long, loud and proud. “Today we embrace Annie,” Zettel said. “It’s part of the ship’s history.”

As the Bremerton’s end nears, Zettel has had to pass on the famed O’Kane cribbage board, which had been part of the Bremerton’s crew since 2011. O’Kane’s cribbage board is iconic among Submarine Force Pacific. It once belonged to Rear Adm. Richard O’Kane, who commanded the World War II submarine Tang in the South Pacific. That boat sank scores of Japanese ships and rescued downed American aviators. It fired its final torpedo on Oct. 24 1944, a round that circled. The round back and struck the boat, killing all but nine of the sub’s 87 men, according to O’Kane’s New York Times obituary. O’Kane and the other survivors were captured and spent the rest of the war in captivity. He later received the Medal of Honor. O’Kane’s cribbage board fell into the hands of SUBPAC, and it now rides with the oldest sub in the Pacific. So with the Bremerton ending its duty, the board was passed on to the submarine Olympia, which was commissioned in 1984 and now takes the eldest crown.

While operating the Bremerton requires some extra TLC, Zettel said upkeep was easier in some ways. For one, spare parts aren’t hard to find. Other Los Angeles-class subs have already been decommissioned, offering the Bremerton’s crew easy access to replacement parts. And after nearly 40 years in service, “best practices are there” for any fix-it job, Zettel said. The crew is well-versed in repairing broken cogs, capacitors or other components, unlike their peers on more modern boats, where sailors “just rip out an entire drawer,” he said.

It’s not easy to end the life of a nuclear-powered submarine, and Zettel suspects the Bremerton won’t be officially decommissioned for several years. Workers will need to shut down the reactor and defuel the boat, according to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard spokesman J.C. Mathews. Then they’ll have to remove all classified material, cryptographic gear and refrigerants. They’ll drain the hydraulic system and clean out other fluids. The electrical works will go dark. The reactor compartment will be pulled from the boat, then packaged for shipment and disposal, Mathews said. All the hazardous materials will go, too. In the end, everything that made the Bremerton so mighty will be stripped away. Scrap metal will be sold to recycling companies, and the submarine will be no more, left to live on in the memories of generations of sailors who served on her. “Everybody understands the gravity of how long this boat’s been commissioned,” Davis said. “I think everybody gets it.”

[Source: NavyTimes | Geoff Ziezulewicz | July 27, 2018 ++]

USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) Update 17 ► Lt. Natalie Demitri Combs Arraigned

More than a year after the fatal collision of the guided-missile destroyer Fitzgerald, the military arraigned Lt. Natalie Demitri Combs during a speedy but controversial 23 JUL morning hearing at the Navy Yard in Washington. Her prosecution sparks controversy because an Article 32 hearing officer, Cmdr. Anthony Johnson, recommended that the Navy skip court-martial proceedings against her and instead send her to a board of inquiry to determine if she should remain on duty. An Article 32 investigation acts much like a civilian grand jury, but Johnson’s

recommendations after weighing the evidence against Combs were overruled by Adm. James Caldwell, the director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. He charged Combs on 20 JUN with two violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice: dereliction of duty that negligently resulted in the death of fellow sailors and the negligent and improper hazarding of a vessel.

In the early morning of June 17, 2017, the MV ACX Crystal, a commercial container vessel flagged by the Philippines, speared into the Fitzgerald, causing severe damage above and below the starboard waterline of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer. The collision and flooding of the Fitzgerald's lower decks killed seven Navy sailors. Military prosecutors allege that Combs, the tactical action officer in the destroyer's combat information center, failed to follow both her commander's standing orders and rules spelled out by the Surface Ship Navigation Department Organization and Regulations Manual. They also contend that Combs failed to communicate with the bridge crucial information about radar contacts with nearby vessels and her recommendations about safe speeds and maneuvering through sea lanes often bustling with shipping traffic.

Her trial is slated to start next year on 25 FEB. She's pleaded not guilty and her civilian attorney, David Sheldon, called her prosecution "very disturbing" and a possible case of "selective prosecution" tinged with "unlawful command influence." Sheldon said that several of her shipmates escaped with lighter charges. He predicted that Combs would be "100 percent exonerated" and said she looked forward to "fighting this injustice" despite being "saddened by the loss of life" of her fellow sailors aboard the Fitz. "It's one thing for the Navy to conduct a dog and pony show at an Article 32 hearing. It's very difficult to do that in this courtroom," said Sheldon.

Monday's proceedings lasted 17 minutes and were overseen by Navy Capt. Colleen Glaser-Allen, chief judge of the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals, but Cmdr. Arthur Gaston is expected to preside over the court-martial of Combs next year. The Navy has assigned Lt. Cmdr. Kate Shovlin and Lt. Cmdr. Paul Hochmuth as prosecutors. Sheldon will lead a defense team that includes Lt. Cmdr. Robert McElhose and Lt. Brenna Falzetta, who wasn't present on Monday. The officer of the deck during the collision, Lt., j.g. Sarah B. Coppock, already has pleaded guilty to a sole charge of dereliction of duty. The Fitzgerald's commanding officer, Cmdr. Bryce Benson, has a trial scheduled to begin on 28 JAN 2019. Adm. Caldwell stripped out negligent homicide charges in his case. He also dismissed charges against the warship's surface warfare coordinator, Lt. Irian Woodley. She will appear before a Navy board of inquiry.

The Fitzgerald disaster was the third serious mishap involving Navy vessels in the Japan-based 7th Fleet's area of operations last year. On 31 JAN the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser Antietam ran into rocks along the Japanese coast. Less than five months later, her sister cruiser Lake Champlain collided with a South Korean fishing boat. But those accidents weren't fatal, unlike both the Fitzgerald collision and a similar predawn incident on Aug. 21 in the Singapore Strait involving the Navy destroyer John S. McCain and the Alnic MC, a Liberian-registered oil tanker. That mishap killed 10 Navy sailors. In the wake of the Fitzgerald and McCain calamities, Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Bill Moran named Caldwell the "Consolidated Disposition Authority" to mete out justice to the leadership teams aboard both warships.

Prosecutors have secured guilty pleas for dereliction of duty by both Cmdr. Alfredo J. Sanchez, the McCain's retired commander, and Chief Boatswain's Mate Jeffery D. Butler, one of his senior enlisted leaders. That's why the spotlight is falling on the Fitzgerald's Benson and Combs. Originally from Texas and a product of Prairie View A&M College's Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps program, Combs was commissioned in 2008 as a surface warfare officer and served aboard the destroyer McCampbell between 2011 and 2013. She reported to the Fitzgerald on Dec. 29, 2016, less than three months after graduating from Surface Warfare Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island, according to military records released to the Navy Times. Combs was removed from the Fitzgerald's crew on Oct. 19, 2017 and attached to Destroyer Squadron 15 in Japan. Her decorations include the Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal and a Navy "E" Ribbon.

[Source: NavyTimes | Carl Prine | July 24, 2018 ++]

Weapon Shortages ► Sonobuoys & Development of HCSW

The Navy says it is running short of critical submarine-detecting sonobuoys, thanks to stepped-up submarine activity by Russia in the Mediterranean and around Europe. As a result, the service has asked Congress to reprogram \$20 million to buy more of the detection devices in an Omnibus funding package the Pentagon sent to Congress earlier this month. The Omnibus says the air-dropped buoys — which can detect diesel submarines and transmit their location in real time back to monitoring units — are in critically short supply after experiencing “unexpected high anti-submarine warfare operational tempo in 2017 [which] resulted in unexpected high expenditure rate of all type/model/series.”

The ask comes as American and European allies are sounding the alarm over higher levels of Russian submarine traffic both in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Russian subs have fired missiles at targets in Syria on several occasions, part of Moscow’s scorched-earth campaign to back Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad’s bloody war on civilians and rebels who have broken from the regime. There have been multiple reports of U.S., British and Russian subs playing cat and mouse games in the Med over the past several years, and the request clearly underscores how seriously U.S. commanders in the region are taking the new Russian patrols, which skirt the shorelines both of northern and southern Europe. Earlier this month, ships, aircraft, and personnel from 10 NATO countries practiced hunting stealthy submarines off Norway’s coast during Exercise Dynamic Mongoose, which wrapped up just days before this week’s NATO summit, a sign of how seriously NATO is taking Russian advancements in undersea warfare.

The omnibus package also includes tens of millions of dollars to more quickly develop and field hypersonic technologies, which Pentagon leaders have announced as a major new priority after recent Chinese and Russian advancements in the field have alarmed military leaders and policymakers. The requested new funding covers \$20 million for acceleration of the Air Force’s Hypersonic Conventional Strike air-launched glide munition, which is slated for a flight test in 2020, and \$65 million to speed up the demonstration of a land-launched version. In April, the U.S. Air Force awarded Lockheed Martin a \$1 billion contract for a hypersonic cruise missile, taking a big step toward developing a critical capability that top Pentagon officials have said in recent weeks they need to keep pace with Russian and Chinese advancements.

The Hypersonic Conventional Strike Weapon (HCSW) program is one of two hypersonic weapon prototyping efforts being pursued by the Air Force, and comes in addition to the Tactical Boost Glide program, which the Air Force is working on with DARPA and Raytheon. The service plans to have a prototype ready by 2023. Developing hypersonic weapons is the No. 1 priority for Michael Griffin, undersecretary of defense for research and engineering. Speaking with reporters on 12 JUL, Griffin said that hypersonics are “not an advantage that we can concede to people who wish to be our adversaries,” promising, “you’re going to see our testing pace stepping up, and you’re going to see capability delivery in the early [2020s] right through the end of the decade.” [Source: Breaking Defense | Paul McLeary | July 23, 2018 ++]

Air Force Dress Standards ► Changes | Hair, Hair Accessories, Earrings & OCP

The Air Force on 13 JUL released new dress regulations that for the first time allow female airmen to wear their hair in the loc hairstyle popular with black women. The revised regs also will allow male airmen to wear earrings while in civilian attire and off-duty on military installations. Locs, a type of hairstyle usually worn by black women, were added to a list of other authorized female hairstyles such as braids, twists, micro-braids, and cornrows in the update to Air Force Instruction AFI-36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel. The AFI defines locs

as “portions of hair that have been intentionally or unintentionally fused together to form a loc or locs.” When worn as multiple locs, the AFI said they must be of “uniform dimension,” tightly-fused or interwoven to present a neat, professional appearance, and be about a quarter-inch in diameter. These are the same rules that already applied to braids and twists. The Army in January 2017 also authorized the loc hairstyle, although only allowing 1/8 inch-wide strands, less than what the Air Force now permits.



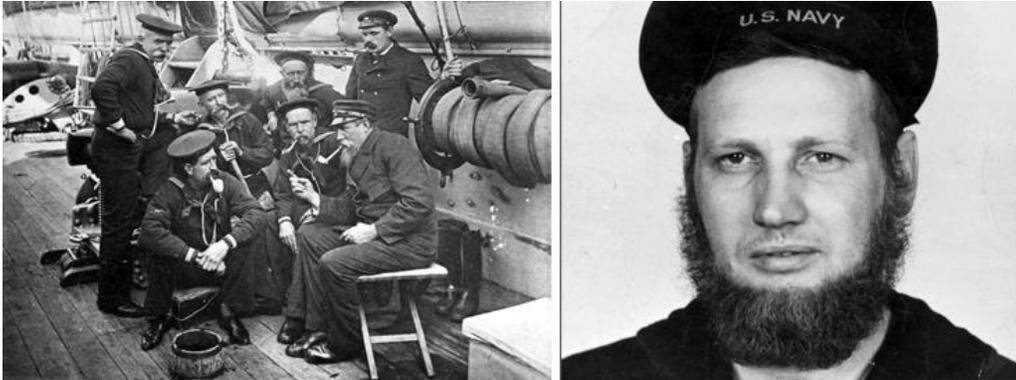
The new regulations also remove the minimum hair length requirement for female airmen, meaning they can shave their heads, where they previously were required to wear at least 1/4 inch of hair. And the regs were revised to allow female airmen to wear their hair in a bun that extends up to 3 1/2 inches from the scalp, and allows proper wear of headgear. They previously were allowed to wear a bun of at most three inches. Black hair accessories such as scrunchies, hairpins, combs, clips and headbands are now allowed to be worn, regardless of hair color. The previous regulation required those accessories to match the airmen’s hair color. The revised earring regulations also say that besides being off-duty, male airmen also must be in civilian clothes to wear earrings on-base. This means they can’t wear earrings when carrying out official duties while in civilian attire. And the earring regulations were tweaked to also allow female airmen to wear square earrings as well as round, which were previously the only shape allowed.

The revised AFI also spells out the details of how the new OCP, or Operational Camouflage Pattern, uniform will be worn. Part of those new uniform regs also say that airmen will be allowed to wear a long- or short-sleeve breastfeeding t-shirt — which will be colored sand when worn with the airman battle uniform, and tan when worn with the OCP — with their utility uniform. It will be tucked in, unless worn with the maternity uniform, the AFI said. And airmen wearing the breastfeeding t-shirt are not supposed to take off their ABU or OCP coat, unless in a designated lactation room. [Source: AirForceTimes | Stephen Losey | July 16, 2018 ++]

Navy Beards ► **If Women’s Hair Standards Can Change, Why Can’t Men’s**

Now that women in the Navy can wear ponytails, men want beards. The Navy recently said that servicewomen could sport ponytails, lock hairstyles, or ropelike strands, and wider hair buns, reversing a policy that long forbade females from letting their hair down. Servicemen immediately chimed in on social media, asking the Navy if they could grow beards. A sailor's Facebook post with a #WeWantBeards hashtag was shared thousands of times. Beards were banned in 1984. The Navy wanted professional-looking sailors who could wear firefighting masks and breathing apparatuses without interference. The Navy says that's still the case. Still, some hope the change in female grooming standards opens the door.

Travis Rader, a 29-year-old naval physical security officer, said allowing beards would boost morale for men, just like allowing ponytails and locks has for women. There are two things that would make many Navy men happy: beards and better boots, he added. Rader had a 6-inch-long beard when he joined the Navy after high school. "You take something away from somebody, and they want it more," said Rader, a master-at-arms assigned to Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City.



In the circa 1890 photo (left) seven members of U.S. Navy sit together aboard the USS Enterprise in New York. In the June 20, 1942, photo (right) a U.S. Navy second-class aerographer, wears a seven-month's beard at Dutch Harbor, Alaska.

The Navy announced it was adding grooming options for women during a Facebook Live event. Many black women had asked the Navy to be more inclusive of different hair textures. The Navy had the standards in place because of safety concerns and to ensure everyone maintained a uniform, professional look. Rader was one of several sailors who wrote in the comments section of the Facebook Live event to press for beards. Bill Williams, a 20-year-old naval information systems technician, commented too, asking why sailors can't have beards if bearded civilian firefighters wear masks. Williams said he thinks a nice, well-groomed beard looks very professional. "It'd be great because I know that when I shave for multiple days in a row, it starts to really hurt," said Williams, who works at the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station Hampton Roads in Virginia.

Sailors can get permission to grow a beard for religious reasons or if they have a skin condition that's irritated by shaving. Mustaches are allowed as long as they are trimmed and neat. "Handlebar mustaches, goatees, beards or eccentricities are not permitted," the policy states. The Navy isn't currently considering changing that. Safety continues to be the primary concern, said Lt. j.g. Stuart Phillips, a spokesman for the chief of naval personnel. He referenced a 2016 study by the Naval Safety Center, which concluded that facial hair affects the proper fit and performance of respirators. [Source: The Associated Press | Jennifer McDermott | July 20, 2018 ++]

Military Behavioral Trends ► Binge Drinking & Smoking

Binge drinking and increased use of e-cigarettes among service members are two of the behavioral trends Defense Department officials need to address, according to researchers who analyzed the most recent DoD Health Related Behaviors Survey. About one-third of the service personnel surveyed met the criteria indicating hazardous drinking and possible alcohol use disorder, with 30 percent reporting that they binge drank in the past month. Among Marines, that figure jumped to 42.6 percent.

Binge drinking is defined as more than five drinks for men or more than four for women in one sitting, according to the report, issued by Rand and based on a survey that was conducted from late 2015 to early 2016. That rate was down from 33.1 percent in the previously reported survey from 2011, but it's still high enough to cause concern, researchers said. Drinking problems could be addressed by shifting the culture and climate surrounding alcohol use, such as communicating disapproval of heavy drinking and changing on-base alcohol and sales policies, according to the report. This report is issued at the same time beer and wine will be more widely available on bases, with sales expanding to military commissaries. Until now, alcohol has been sold only at the exchanges. Defense officials have said that the sale of these products must comply with the department's efforts to "deglamorize" alcohol.

The survey used a random sampling method and was sent to 201,990 service members in the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard. Of those, 16,699 usable responses were received, for a response rate of 8.6

percent. The 2018 survey is expected to be fielded in the fall, and Rand has made recommendations for getting a higher response rate for a new, shorter survey, said Sarah O. Meadows, Rand co-principal investigator for this report. DoD has changed policy in the past based on results of the Health Related Behaviors Survey, which has been fielded periodically for more than 30 years. "One of the big success stories has been the emphasis on cigarette smoking," said Meadows. "The rates have gone down."

Defense officials have taken a number of steps, such as increasing the prices of tobacco in military stores, limiting areas where smoking is allowed and launching an extensive education campaign about the dangers of smoking. This year's survey asked where service members purchased their cigarettes; more than half of those who bought cigarettes in the previous year bought them mainly on base. While cigarette smoking has been declining in the military, there are some trends to watch, according to the report. Researchers recommended DoD officials pay attention to the increasing use of e-cigarettes, as 12.4 percent of those surveyed reported using them in the previous month. That percentage was 4.6 in 2011. "The health consequences of e-cigarette use are not yet established, but the dramatic increase in e-cigarette use, especially among younger service members, is worth attention now and continued tracking in the future," researchers stated.

For the first time, cigarette smoking in the military has declined to the point that it's now lower than rates in the general population, according to the report. Overall, 13.9 percent of those surveyed indicated they are current cigarette smokers, which is down from the 24 percent in the 2011 survey. The rate of smoking in the general population was 16.8 percent in 2014, the latest available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention when Rand researchers did their analysis. The most recent CDC numbers from 2015–2016, comparable with the DoD survey time period, estimate the general population's rate of smoking has decreased to 15.5 percent. Although the rate is probably still significantly different, it's more neck-and-neck. It will be interesting to see what impact Guam's new law will make in which troops must be 21 to buy tobacco, e-cigarettes. The law went into effect 16 JUL

Among other recommendations from researchers:

- Continue to monitor the use, and efforts to increase the use, of long-acting methods of contraception. The report showed inconsistent use of contraception, with 17.7 percent of servicewomen reporting they didn't use a form of birth control the most recent time they had vaginal sex.
- Mandate more frequent HIV testing for those at high risk of infection. Attention should focus on unmarried service members, of whom more than 40 percent were in the high-risk category for HIV infection.
- Address concerns related to lack of sleep. More than half of service members reported getting less sleep than they need, and 30 percent reported being bothered by sleep-related lack of energy. In addition, 8.6 percent took sleep medications daily or almost daily.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 16, 2018 ++]

Air Force One Update 06 ► Making It Great Again

Air Force One's baby blue color scheme is so last election. Instead, picture a star-spangled Boeing jet transporting the commander in chief through the sky for years to come. President Trump has confirmed reports that he wants to make big changes to the iconic fleet of Boeing jets. "Boeing gave us a good deal. And we were able to take that," Trump told CBS Evening News. "But I said, 'I wonder if we should use the same baby blue colors?' And we're not." The 45th president wants to do away with the blue color scheme that's donned Air Force One jets since 1962 with President John F. Kennedy. "Red, white and blue," Trump told CBS. "Air Force One is going to be incredible. It's gonna be the top of the line, the top in the world. And it's gonna be red, white and blue, which I think is appropriate."

The custom presidential jets were originally designed with a red and gold color scheme, but JFK worked with a French industrial designer to create the blue color scheme we see today, according to the New England Historical

Society. The Air Force on 17 JUL formally awarded Boeing a \$3.9 billion fixed-price contract to design, test and deliver two presidential aircraft by 2024, a deal that had been informally reached with the president in February. A statement from the White House Office of the Press Secretary said the deal would save taxpayers more than “\$1.4 billion from the initially proposed \$5.3 billion cost-plus contract,” although numerous media reports had pegged the cost at closer to \$4 billion, meaning a savings closer to a few hundred million dollars at most.



One artist's rendering of what a future Air Force One could possibly, maybe, potentially look like.

Although the new Air Force One jets won't be ready until 2024, the last year of Trump's presidency if he is re-elected, Trump wants future presidents to enjoy this new paint job for years to come. "I hate to say this, it's gonna be a long time," Trump said. "It's a very complex project. But by the time it gets built, you're gonna have many presidents, hopefully, use it and enjoy it." What do you think about the idea? [Source: AirForceTimes | Charlsy Panzino | July 17, 2018 ++]

America's Aging Nuclear Missile Subs ► **Inside USS Tennessee (SSBN-734)**

America's nuclear deterrent is aging, with a half-dozen replacement programs on the horizon. But the young men and women who serve, are better than ever says the four-star Air Force officer in charge of Strategic Command Gen. John Hyten: "They love this country. They want to defend this country. They go to work every day. They're amazing — they're smarter than we were, by far. They get motivated differently so you have to lead them differently, but their passion is just the same." To learn more about what it's like inside one of these nuclear missile submarines refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Inside America's Aging Nuclear Missile Subs**". [Source: Breaking Defense | Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. | July 16, 2018 ++]

Military Retirement System Update 30 ► **BRS Opt-Ins to Date**

Halfway through the year, about 13.5 percent of service members facing a choice between the new and legacy military retirement systems have opted in to the new Blended Retirement System, according to Defense Department officials. As of 30 JUN — with six months left to make a decision — 221,872 service members had opted into BRS. That's out of the 1.6 million service members who are eligible to choose between the new system or staying with the legacy system, DoD spokeswoman Air Force Maj. Carla Gleason said. The Marine Corps has the highest percentage of BRS opt-ins by far: 27.2 percent, nearly 10 percentage points ahead of runner-up Navy at (17.1 percent). The Army has the smallest percentage of opt-ins at 8.8 percent.

	# of opt-ins	# eligible to opt in	Opt-in pct.
Army	71,707	810,301	8.84 %
Air Force	54,660	374,003	14.61%
Navy	47,696	278,910	17.1%
Marine Corps	47,809	175,627	27.22%
DoD Total	221,872	1,638,841	13.54%

The BRS choice is available to active-duty service members who had fewer than 12 years of total service as of Dec. 31, 2017, and reserve-component members in a paid status with fewer than 4,320 retirement points as of Dec. 31, 2017. No one is automatically enrolled; they must make the move to opt in to BRS before the Dec. 31 deadline. Those with more time in service as of that date had no choice — they stay with the legacy retirement system. Those entering the military in 2018 and later also have no choice — they are automatically enrolled in the BRS. Defense officials have said they have no target, goal, preference or expectations for the choices service members make this year, because each service member’s decision is based on what’s best for his or her own personal circumstances.

Gleason said 80.4 percent of all active duty and 60.4 percent of all Reserve and Guard members who have opted into BRS this year are contributing at least 5 percent of their basic pay or drill pay to their Thrift Savings Plan. “This indicates that members who have opted in are taking full advantage of DoD’s TSP matching contributions,” she said. But a little more than 1 in 10 service members who have switched to BRS aren’t putting any money into their TSP accounts, so DoD, service officials, and the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, which administers the TSP, have mounted a campaign to emphasize this step. Under the BRS, DoD automatically contributes 1 percent of the service member’s basic pay to the service member’s TSP, and will match up to an additional 4 percent, for a total of 5 percent match. Under the legacy system, there are no matching DoD TSP contributions.

Only about 19 percent of active-duty service members and 14 percent of reservists stay in the military long enough to earn retirement pay, under the legacy system. Under BRS, nearly every service member would get some retirement benefit even if they leave before 20 years of service, because of the TSP. An additional benefit is a one-time payout of continuation pay after reaching 12 years of service. Those who choose BRS and reach 20 years of service still qualify for the retired pay, but it is 20 percent less than what they’d receive under the legacy system. There are other pros and cons. To opt in: Soldiers, sailors and airmen go to MyPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx> Marines must register their decision with Marine Online at <https://mol.tfs.usmc.mil/mol>. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 18, 2018 ++]

USCG Icebreakers Update 05 ► New Icebreaker Funding Excluded From HSAA Draft

The Homeland Security Appropriations Act draft that emerged from the House of Representatives this week lacked the \$750 million that the Homeland Security Department requested to design and build the Coast Guard's first new heavy polar icebreaker in over 40 years — and Democratic lawmakers are pushing back. In a letter addressed to Appropriations Committee chairman Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen and Rep. Kevin Yoder, chairman of the Homeland Security subcommittee, House Democrats criticized the bill's exclusion of the \$750 million icebreaker request and of funding requested for the Coast Guard's 12th national-security cutter, as well as a \$10 million cut to the service's research and development budget.

The bill excludes those funds "while wasting a staggering \$4.9 billion on a border wall and increasing the Immigration and Customs Enforcement budget by \$328 million," according to the letter, composed by Rep. John Garamendi and signed by seven other Democratic lawmakers. "We urge you in the strongest possible terms to

reconsider this misallocation of resources," which would undermine the Coast Guard's mission and "place our nation at a distinct economic, geopolitical, and national security disadvantage for decades to come," the letter adds. The Coast Guard's underwhelming icebreaker fleet has been a point of contention for some time. The service currently has one medium polar icebreaker, the Healy, and one heavy polar icebreaker, the Polar Star. Another heavy polar icebreaker, the Polar Sea, is out of service and is used for parts to keep the Polar Star running.

The 42-year-old Polar Star, which was refurbished in 2012, is well past its 30-year service life but remains the only ship the Coast Guard has to support year-round access to the Antarctic and Arctic regions — during a trip to McMurdo Station in Antarctica earlier this year, the Star's crew battled engine failures and flooding. Former Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft has said the Polar Star is "literally on life support." Efforts to add to the Guard's icebreaker fleet have been underway for some time. The National Defense Authorization Act called for up to six more polar-class icebreakers. In late 2017, the Coast Guard and the Navy released a joint draft request for proposal to deliver the next heavy polar icebreaker by 2023, with an option to construct two more of them.

A number of US officials, including the Democratic representatives who signed Garamendi's letter, have said a small Coast Guard fleet puts the US at a disadvantage in the Arctic, where receding ice is opening new areas for shipping and resource exploration, attracting the interest of rival powers like Russia and China . "We are woefully unprepared for the reality of rising global temperatures and melting sea ice," the letter says, noting that Russia has 41 icebreakers that are "far superior in capability and technology." The Congressional Research Service has reported that Russia has 46 total icebreakers — including four operational heavy polar icebreakers and 16 medium polar icebreakers, five of which are for use in the Baltic Sea. The US's five total icebreakers are also outstripped by Finland, which has 10 total icebreakers, and by Canada and Sweden, both of which have seven. China has fewer total icebreakers than the US, and the ones it has are not heavy icebreakers. But those ships have successfully traversed the existing Arctic passages, and Beijing recently started the bidding process to build a nuclear-powered icebreaker — the first nuclear-powered surface ship in its inventory.

Garamendi and his colleagues are not the only legislators who have emphasized the emerging significance of the Arctic. Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter said at a hearing in June that it seemed "really myopic and shortsighted" for the Defense Department to exclude the Arctic from its latest National Defense Strategy report. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis "talked about everywhere on Earth basically except for the Arctic," Hunter said. Some have argued that diminishing sea ice will reduce the need for icebreakers to open sea lanes, particularly as newer cargo ships with sturdier hulls take sail. Others have said the greater threat posed by Russia comes from its navy, particularly its Northern Fleet, which is growing in both size and sophistication.

Other experts have said that the US's focus on other threats, like North Korea and Iran, have drawn both attention and resources away from the space that has opened in the Arctic in recent years put the US at a disadvantage. "The emergence of a new ocean did not fit into the budget," Heather Conley, an Arctic expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told The Washington Examiner in June. "Now we're behind." "In our national-security strategy we call Russia and China our great-power competitors," Conley added. "Well, they are very invested in the Arctic and growing." [Source: Business Insider | Christopher Woody | July 26, 2018 ++]

Cold Weather Boots ► **New Rubber Compound Allows Troop Ice Climbing**



Standard boot outer soles have been developed for the desert, the jungle, and even pavement. But slick, icy conditions have always been trickier. Now, a new rubber compound being built by two companies aims to fill the gap between inadequate grip and full blown ice climbing. To showcase their new sole, Belleville Boot Company and Vibram put on a display of ice blocks, set at a 15-degree incline, at this year's Warrior Expo East by ADS, Inc. The new rubber mixture is used on select points in the tread of the boot to help grip to the slick, icy surface. It's also usable in slick, snowy conditions, said Belleville Chief Sales Officer Glen Becker. "What they've created is a wet ice technology, various lugs are emphasized with this new compound," Becker said. "It really allows the sole to grip wet ice." That's important when a slipped step could mean a tumble downhill with a 60-pound pack. Becker said the combined tech is still under development, but the company is shooting for interest from military units, specifically those that operate in cold, wet environments. The final product will be an insulated, cold-weather boot, using GORE-TEX materials and the Vibram gripping outer sole. [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | July 19, 2018 ++]

Drone Killer ▶ **New 7 Pound w/Battery Shoulder-Fired Weapon**

Current counter-drone tools often use large-scale blasts of power to take out the radio comms between the drone and the pilot. That requires a lot of battery and can jam or disrupt friendly frequencies. The Drone Killer, made by IXI Technology and displayed at this year's Warrior East Expo by ADS, Inc., hits both of those gaps and more. John Lopardo, adjunct director with IXI, explained that the shoulder-fired weapon weighs only 7 pounds, battery included, and has a range of 500 meters. "It's our line-of-sight solution," Lopardo said. Instead of shooting on a broad range of frequencies, the device has a "passive detector" that picks up what frequency the drone is using. Then it uses six distinct circuit boards to disrupt that specific frequency.



The method saves power, meaning less battery is needed. It also isolates the jamming to the right range, avoiding disruptions to friendly communication channels. The device also can disable frequency-hopping drone controllers, which wasn't a capability for past counter-drone devices. "It's not a broadband noise jammer," Lopardo said. "In the older systems you had to send out a large amount of noise and you could interfere with friendly links in your area." Once hit, the drone begins to waver and either slowly drift to the ground or return to their controller. Older drones just drop like stones, Lopardo said. The Drone Killer has been tested and confirmed at Camp Pendleton, California; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and at the Muscatatuck Training Center in Indiana, Lopardo said. To see it in operation refer to <http://ixitech.com/2017/08/11/drone-killer-fox-news-august-2017> & <https://youtu.be/QgcMp0TVpLw>. [Source: DefenseNews | Ken Chamberlain | July 2, 2018 ++]

Army Goggles ► New Enhanced Night Vision Goggles-Binocular

For most of modern military history, soldiers who needed to track battlefield movement or simply navigate to an objective while on foot would spend much of their time staring down at a paper map or GPS device screen, much like a distracted phone gazer bumping into people at the mall, but with deadlier consequences. A new combination of advanced night vision goggle (NVG) is merging day/night vision, thermal viewing, weapon sight and augmented reality into one view that allows a soldier to see the battlefield while maneuvering. Think Google Glass, with a gun. And the head of the Army's new cross-functional team focused on soldier lethality sees the device as a way to exponentially improve the dismounted warfighter's battlefield awareness.



New Enhanced Night Vision Goggles-Binocular uses wireless technology to merge the weapon sight with day/night vision, thermal and augmented reality to improve the soldier's battlefield awareness.

“This is a true, fundamental change to the capability we’re giving to our dismounted soldier,” said Brig. Gen. Christopher Donahue during a recent media roundtable phone interview. The Enhanced Night Vision Goggle (ENCG), has been paired with augmented reality software and the Family of Weapons Sights-Individual (FWS-I) by the Army’s Communication-Electronics, Research, Development and Engineering Center and Program Executive Office Soldier to put all of the capabilities into the view of the soldier. The weapons sight capability brings the weapon sight picture into the goggles through a camera on the sight. This allows a soldier to shoot around corners without being exposed. It also can switch views from the sight to a picture-in-picture where the normal view is presented along with the weapon’s sight picture.

“The beauty of the two systems is there’s wireless communication between the goggle and weapon sight,” said Dave Smialek, the business development manager for Survivability, Targeting, and Sensing Solutions at BAE Systems, which is producing the goggle. “What’s transmitted is the aim point from the weapons sight, displayed as an overlay on the ENVG-III image.” BAE Systems developed a Rapid Target Acquisition Module to reduce target engagement time as part of building the new goggle. The augmented reality portion creates an almost individualized tracker that lets the soldier mark targets, pick waypoints while on patrol and share those digital icons with other members of the squad. Smialek said past night vision goggles didn’t have the capability to display video. Advancements in wireless technology have enabled the change.

The system simultaneously permits the shooter to see a 40-degree view while also seeing an 18-degree view from the weapon sight. This enables shooters to fire from multiple positions, around and above obstacles, without exposing themselves. The “picture-in-picture” mode lets the shooter see two different directions at once. For example, if an infantryman were on foot patrol in a tight wedge formation, the soldier or Marine could patrol while observing their left flank, turn to give hand signals from their squad leader and still watch the flank from the camera on the rifle. All of that is an aim to cut down target acquisition time for shooters.

Military Times staff participated in a media demo and shoot of the system twice in the past year. The device allows a shooter to fire from the hip and shoot around corners, using the weapon-mounted camera. The night vision portion of the system also can overcome the high-illumination problems that disabled earlier night vision devices. Side-by-side comparisons at more than 75 yards with current night vision systems showed an immediate contrast

with thermal. Multiple man-sized targets were visible with both systems at various distances. A man-sized target behind camouflage netting was invisible with standard night vision goggles, but visually jumped out immediately with thermal sights. The first batch of a total of 64,000-night vision devices, the ENVG-III are arriving at infantry and special operations forces units this year. The 36,000 FWS-I devices are expected to hit units sometime in late 2018 or early 2019. [Source: ArmyTimes | Todd South | March 21 & July 18, 2018 ++]

Warships That Will Change The Future ► USNS Spearhead



USNS Spearhead (T-EPF-1)

This boat literally looks like someone took a ferry boat, painted it in a military coat, and threw a whole bunch of weapons and missiles onto it. And actually, you would be right. What you are looking at above is called the USNS Spearhead, the very first in the Spearhead class of US Navy quick supply ships. This boat can go at speeds of up to 50 miles per hour, and can either carry enormous amounts of cargo or troops. Construction began on 22 July 2010, when the ship's keel was laid at the Austal facility in Mobile, Alabama. At the time, Spearhead was intended for service with the US Army in the 7th Sustainment Brigade. She was launched on 8 September 2011, though she did not enter the water until several days later; her launch was the moving of the vessel from the shed where she was constructed onto a floating drydock. At the time, she was scheduled to be delivered to the Navy in early 2012, a delay from the original target of September 2011. She was christened on 17 September 2011 and formally delivered to the Navy on 5 December 2012, eight months late and \$31 million over budget.

During operations in 2015, Spearhead experienced bow-damage from rough seas requiring more than a half-million dollars to repair. It was determined that a design change that Austal recommended to the Navy late in the design phase to save weight has resulted in a weakened bow structure. The first five ships in the class will need to be returned to Austal to have upgrades done to improve the superstructure, at a cost of \$1.2M each. The remaining ships which are still in various stages of construction will be upgraded as well. Spearhead, as well as other ships of her class, are built to a modular design that allows them to be rapidly refitted with various equipment within a 20,000 square feet bay depending on the mission at hand. She is 338 ft long with a 94 ft beam and a draft of 12.6 ft. There is space for 41 crewmembers, though under normal conditions will sail with 22, as well as sleeping accommodations for up to 150 people and an additional 312 seats for troop transport. Her four engines and waterjets provide a maximum speed of 43 knots and a service speed of 35 knots. There are also facilities for one medium lift helicopter. Spearhead is planned for non-combat missions, such as transportation of troops or equipment. There will be 10 in her class. To view her underway refer to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLmDeE9pInQ>.

[Source: <http://www.kiwireport.com/amazing-29-warships-will-totally-change-future> | July 2018 ++]



WWI Memorial Update 11 ► Cleared Major Hurdle 19 JUL

A years-long effort to build a new World War I memorial in the nation's capital cleared a major hurdle 19 JUL, when the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approved an updated design-concept for the memorial. Members of the WWI Centennial Commission, along with the project landscape architect and others involved in the work, presented their case for the memorial before the CFA as part of a required regulatory review of the project. In 2014, Congress authorized the use of Pershing Park, about one block east of the White House, as the site of the new memorial. A design contest, started in 2015, yielded a winning concept in January of 2016. Since then, many agencies, including the CFA, the U.S. National Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission, have had to approve the plans.



Ceremonial shovels at the groundbreaking ceremony for the National World War I Memorial at Pershing Park in Washington, D.C., Nov. 9, 2017.

In November, 2017, a multitude of military and city dignitaries gathered at Pershing Park for an official groundbreaking. But still the review process continued. “I applaud the design effort that the memorial team brought forward. I feel prepared to go forward with the schemes that you have presented,” CFA Commissioner Edward D. Dunson, Jr. was quoted as saying in a Thursday press release from the WWI Centennial Commission. According to the release, WWICC Chair Terry Hamby said the commission would continue to push forward with the project. “Our veterans deserve our best effort, and we owe it to them.” The WWI commission originally planned to have the memorial built by November to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day, which initially marked the close of WWI but now is referred to as Veterans Day in the United States. Because of delays and a lengthy approval process, the memorial is now expected to be built in 2020. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Carlos Bongioanni | July 19, 2018 ++]

Battle of Gettysburg Update 01 ► Six Lessons Learned

July 1-3 is the 155th anniversary of the bloodiest battle ever fought in the Western Hemisphere: Gettysburg. In the first three days of July in 1863, some 52,000 Americans were killed, wounded, or missing. The Union Army of the Potomac (about 90,000 troops) led by General George Meade clashed in a titanic battle with the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia led by General Robert E. Lee. Gettysburg is the battle that almost every Civil War buff loves to study because of so many "what ifs" and twists and turns. It could have gone so many different ways. Many also love studying this battle because of the life lessons we can learn from the fascinating circumstances and the very fine men who fought on both sides. Here are a few life lessons we can learn today:

1. The small things count.

Gettysburg began by "accident" because some Confederate infantrymen were looking for shoes in that little town. No one planned on a battle there that day. Both armies had been looking for each other. Contact was made in the early morning hours of July 1 when some of Henry Heth's troops looking for shoes (thousands of Lee's troops were barefoot) "bumped into" John Buford's Union cavalrymen. Word went out to both armies and within hours troops came pouring in from every direction. That little search for something as insignificant as shoes turned into the bloodiest battle of the Civil War.

On the second day of the battle, Confederate infantry was to assault the far left wing of the Union army. The hill known as Little Round Top was unoccupied. If the Confederates could take that hill then they could flank the entire army of the United States and possibly win the battle. The men of the 15th Alabama and supporting units at first scrambled up Big Round Top. The temperature was in the low 80s but it probably felt hotter to all those troops clothed in wool uniforms and with a battle raging around them. They had been marching all day to get into position to fight, and they had given all their canteens to a few men to get water. Those men with the canteens were all captured by Union cavalrymen. Now, the Confederates climbing Big Round Top had no water to drink. When they reached the summit, they took a break for about 10 minutes.

While the Confederates were climbing the hill the Union general Warren realized they had left Little Round Top unoccupied! He quickly ordered the troops of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's 20th Maine to occupy that critical position. In the 10 minutes that the Confederate troops were resting, the Union was fortifying the hill the Confederates needed to take. The 15th Alabama, along with the 4th and 5th Texas launched their attacks against Chamberlain's men on Little Round Top, but it was too little too late. If only they had not stopped to rest for 10 minutes, if only they were not parched and sapped of strength for lack of water, if only they had been joined by one more Confederate regiment ... but the 20th Maine fought them off and the Union was able to hold that critical hill.

Colonel William Oates of the 15th Alabama, recalled many years later, "great events sometimes turn on comparatively small affairs." During the third day of battle, when Lee ordered "Pickett's Charge" of some 12,000 Confederate infantry, he preceded the assault with an artillery barrage. His cannons missed the Union lines, shooting over them, and consequently did not take out the Union infantry. Were the Confederate artillerymen just really bad shots? No. Besides the fact that it's difficult to see over a mile away when the field is filled with smoke from 150 cannons, we now know that the fuses they were using for their cannon shells were from factories in Charleston and Selma (fuses they did not normally use). These fuses burned for just one extra second, making the cannon balls explode later ... just long enough for them to blow up BEHIND the Union lines on July 3, 1863 and not on the Union infantrymen. Small things indeed matter.

2. Communicate properly.

One of General Lee's biggest problems throughout the Gettysburg campaign is that he simply did not communicate exactly and completely with his generals. His chief of cavalry, "J.E.B." Stuart, was off riding around the Union army and generally creating havoc against the enemy, but without his cavalry Lee was essentially blind. He did not know where the enemy was or how many troops he faced. His vague orders to Stuart gave the cavalry commander the liberty

to go off and "do his own thing." That lack of command on Lee's part cost him dearly. On the first day of battle the Union army was in full retreat. The Confederates were on a roll and all they had to do to seal the deal was continue the attack and drive the Union forces off Seminary Ridge. General Lee saw this moment of opportunity and told his Second Corps commander, Richard Ewell, to "take that hill if practicable." What do you mean "if practicable?" If it's not too hard? If it seems like it's a good idea that day? Again, Lee was too vague. He should have said, "take that hill at all costs!" But he did not, and the opportunity to win was frittered away by his non-aggressive field commander.

3. Be merciful.

One of the stories from Gettysburg is that of General Gordon giving aid to his enemy, General Barlow. This story has come under fire in the past 30 years and some historians have called it "myth." However, here is a scholarly rebuttal to that charge.

On the first day of the battle, Confederate General John Gordon of Georgia saw the Union General Francis Barlow of New York fall in battle. Gordon's forces drove the Union troops back, and Barlow lay wounded on the ground. Gordon saw a Union general on the ground, dismounted, and quickly gave him aid (water and brandy). He summoned his medical staff who rescued the critically wounded Union general. And that was the last Gordon saw of Barlow. It turns out however, that Barlow recovered and fought in several more battles during the war. Many years later, they met at a party. Gordon was now a U.S. Senator from Georgia and Barlow was a successful lawyer. They each thought that the other had been killed in the war! Imagine their surprise when they "found" each other alive and well at that party! Gordon asked, "Are you the Barlow who was wounded at Gettysburg?" Barlow asked, "Are you the Gordon who gave me aid?" That started a friendship that lasted until Barlow's death many years later. There was mercy to a fallen foe, even in the heat of battle.

4. Be humble.

Many leaders of the Civil War who were modest, humble men (Lee, Grant, "Stonewall" Jackson for starters). Abraham Lincoln, however, tops the list when you think of Gettysburg. He was not present at the battle, of course. But a little over four months after the battle he came to that town to help dedicate the cemetery and deliver the now famous "Gettysburg Address." He was not the main speaker that day! A famous orator, Edward Everett was the main speaker ... and man did he speak! Mr. Everett's speech was two hours long! Then Lincoln got up. He spoke for about two minutes. And in those two minutes he spoke some of the most poetic, stirring, sublime truths ever uttered.

Even if you are not a Lincoln "fan" you cannot help but tremble when you read the Gettysburg Address. The whole speech is about the sacrifice of the soldiers and the urgency of the cause of the United States. He even says that the world will little note what he says there. It is doubtful he thought that his short speech would become the greatest American speech ever. His words sink down deep into our souls ... because we know Lincoln had a humble spirit when he wrote it and delivered it.

5. Be courageous.

The Battle of Gettysburg is the story of one courageous man after another. Both armies were filled with men of valor. Many from their youthful years on thrill to hear the stories of men on both sides who fought with incredible bravery and honor. This article writer's favorite story is that of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and his men of the 20th Maine who fought on Little Round Top. He had less than 200 troops. He was facing an attack of well over 1,000 in his sector. Chamberlain was given orders that they could not retreat. They could not surrender. They had to fight to the death that day. It would be their last day on earth. When he tells this story to school kids dressed up in one of his Civil War uniforms), and gets to this point in the story where Chamberlain and his men run out of ammo and he asks the kids, "What would you do? It all comes down to just you now. Are you gonna run away and cry to mama? Or are you gonna fight?"

He never forget one little girl in the fifth grade, looking at him with all the determination in the world shouting in class: "I'm not running away! I'm gonna FIGHT!" He smiled at her and said, "I know you will. You'll fight just like Colonel Chamberlain!" Then he went on and tell the kids the rest of the story of how Chamberlain launched a bayonet

charge and saved the United States that day (at <https://youtu.be/ZL-5uyp44WA> can be viewed his famous charge from the movie Gettysburg). There will be times when we will be outnumbered. We will be "out of ammunition." The temptation will be great just to chuck it all and give up. But Chamberlain inspires everyone to dig deep, "fix bayonets," not give up ... and charge.

6. Take responsibility.

General Robert Lee, often maligned in these "politically correct" days, was truly a man of integrity. He ordered the largest infantry attack at that time, now known as "Pickett's charge" (named after General George Pickett). The attack was a colossal failure, resulting in over half the force being wiped out by the Union army. Many men would try to pawn off the failure onto others. Maybe the troops were not brave enough or quick enough. Maybe the generals did not obey Lee's orders fast enough ... or misunderstood him. No, Lee would never blame others for mistakes that he knew were entirely his. That is why he rode out to his troops and told them that it was all his fault. He took ALL the blame. He later wrote a letter of resignation to President Jefferson Davis (Davis refused the resignation).

Do we have men and women in leadership today who take such responsibility for failure? We hear politicians whine excuses after excuses, but rarely do we hear a real person of integrity say, "Yeah I screwed up. It was all my fault and no one else's." Lee's men loved him even more because they knew that in him, for better or for worse, they were following a real man who was full of integrity; not hot air. There are many other life lessons we could glean from this momentous battle, and from the whole war itself. God help us to learn good lessons, and not repeat the horror of a war that killed 700,000 of us, and left us scarred for generations.

[Source: PJ Media | Jeff Sanders | June 30, 2018++]

Battle of Bunker Hill ► 10 Things You May Not Know

'The morning of June 17, 1775: Colonial Patriots awaited a battle in the heights above Boston Harbor. Approaching were the English Redcoats, the most feared fighting force in the world. Low on water and ammunition, the ragged band of farmers-turned-militiamen faced a daunting task. Here 10 Things You May Not Know About the Battle of Bunker Hill and what ensued:

1. It was not actually fought on Bunker Hill.

Tasked on the night of June 16, 1775, with fortifying 110-foot-tall Bunker Hill on the Charlestown peninsula, which jutted into Boston Harbor, Colonel William Prescott instead directed the 1,000 patriots joining him to build an earthen fort atop neighboring Breed's Hill, a shorter peak with a closer perch to the British under siege in Boston. Whether Prescott ignored orders or was simply ignorant of Charlestown's geography is unknown, but the subsequent battle that unfolded was named for the original target—Bunker Hill—even though most of it occurred one-third of a mile south on Breed's Hill.

2. The patriots sought to delay a British attack but instead provoked one.

Seeking to break the siege of Boston, the British planned to launch a massive attack on June 18, 1775, to seize the two promontories overlooking the city—first Dorchester Heights to the south and then Bunker Hill to the north. When patriot leaders received intelligence that an assault was imminent, they directed Prescott to fortify Bunker Hill as a deterrent. Prescott's provocative action to instead occupy Breed's Hill, within cannon shot of the Redcoats, forced the British to change plans, respond to the overt challenge and launch an amphibious assault on Charlestown.

3. The British won the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Often obscured by the moral victory earned by the patriots is that they ultimately lost the military battle. After the colonial militiamen repelled the first two British assaults, they ran out of ammunition during the third attack and were forced to abandon their redoubt. The fierce defense, however, inflicted heavy casualties on the Redcoats, demonstrated the ability of the patriots to fight toe-to-toe with the British and boosted the colonists' confidence.

4. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the American Revolution.

Victory at Bunker Hill came at a terrible price for the British, with nearly half of the 2,200 Redcoats who entered the battle killed or wounded in just two hours of fighting (226 Redcoats killed and 828 wounded). The patriots sustained over 400 casualties (115 killed and 305 wounded). “The loss we have sustained is greater than we can bear,” wrote British General Thomas Gage. “I wish [we] could sell them another hill at the same price,” quipped patriot leader Nathanael Greene after the battle. The casualty count was the highest suffered by the British in any single encounter during the entire war. There have been some reported discrepancies in these statistics, but the outcome remains; the Redcoats lost more men.

5. A future U.S. president watched the Battle of Bunker Hill.

In Boston and neighboring communities, curious colonists climbed roofs, steeples and hills to watch the battle unfold. Ten miles south of Bunker Hill, 7-year-old John Quincy Adams stood next to his mother, Abigail, atop a hill near his childhood home and heard the thunder claps of the cannon fire and watched the smoke rise from the battlefield. The sixth president of the United States later wrote that he “witnessed the tears of my mother and mingled with them my own.” (A father of a future U.S. president had an even closer view of the action. Benjamin Pierce, father of 14th president Franklin Pierce, fought in the battle.)

6. British soldiers killed at Bunker Hill are buried inside Old North Church.

Several of the Redcoats killed during the battle, including Major John Pitcairn, were laid to rest in the crypt of Christ Church in Boston’s North End. That house of worship is now better known as the Old North Church, a patriotic symbol of the American Revolution for its role in signaling the movement of British troops under Pitcairn to Lexington and Concord in April 1775. Pitcairn’s widow requested his body be exhumed from the crypt and returned to London, but the wrong corpse was sent instead. Pitcairn remains among the 1,000 bodies buried in Old North Church.

7. The patriot heroes included a former slave.

One hundred fifty African Americans took their place among the Patriots who fought at The Battle of Bunker Hill. Upon his arrival in Boston in November of 1775, one of Washington's first orders was to expel all African American soldiers from the ranks, an action that represented the prejudices and fears that many white colonists held about their black counterparts. Six months after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Prescott and a dozen other colonial officers petitioned the General Court of Massachusetts to reward Salem Poor—a former slave who had purchased his freedom in 1769—for the bravery he displayed. The petitioners noted that Poor “behaved like an experienced officer, as well as an excellent soldier.” Unfortunately, the officers did not describe his exploits, instead writing that “particulars of his conduct would be tedious.” Some historians have surmised that Poor killed Pitcairn while the major led a charge of British marines up Bunker Hill. Others, however, have speculated that another African-American, Peter Salem, was the man responsible.

8. The identification of Joseph Warren’s body may have involved the first example of forensic dentistry in America.

The battle produced the American Revolution’s first martyr, the charismatic Sons of Liberty leader Dr. Joseph Warren. After the battle, the British buried him in a shallow grave along with a farmer also killed in battle. Nearly 10 months later, after the British evacuated Boston, the patriots exhumed Warren’s body. Amateur dentist Paul Revere was able to identify Warren because he recognized a false tooth that he had crafted for the doctor.

9. Reconciliation with the British was thought to be quite possible until the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Even after the firing of shots at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, many colonists continued to feel loyal to the king and thought it possible to resolve their differences with Parliament without an all-out war. The bloodshed at Bunker Hill, however, eliminated virtually any chance for reconciliation and pointed the colonies on the path to independence. When King George III received the news of the battle in London on August 23, 1775, he issued a proclamation declaring the colonies in a state of “open and avowed rebellion.” In the wake of Bunker Hill, Benjamin

Franklin penned an unsent letter to an English friend and member of Parliament that he closed, “You are now my enemy and I am yours.”

10. A bake sale raised money to build the Bunker Hill Monument.

On the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette laid the cornerstone for a memorial obelisk atop Breed’s Hill. The project languished, however, due to a lack of money and by 1840 was still only half-complete. To raise funds, magazine editor Sarah Josepha Hale—credited by some as the author of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”—organized an eight-day bake and crafts sale that generated \$30,000 used to complete the granite monument in 1843.

[Source: www.history.com | Christopher Klein | June 17, 2015 ++]

Military History ► A Beauty for Bravo Company | Vietnam

Go to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**A Beauty for Bravo Company**” for a true story of an unusual event which occurred in Vietnam in late 1965. It recounts how one of the ‘Frontlines of Freedom Newsletter’ editor’s West Point classmates got a Playboy Bunny to visit his unit in Vietnam. The classmate Jack Price recently reported for duty in heaven. This is a great way to remember him. [Source: Richmond Times-Dispatch | Rex Bowman | November 2, 2002 ++]

Vietnam Vets [32] ► Bennie Adkins | A Tiger Among Us Author

Veteran Bennie Adkins sat down with Military.com on 18 JUL to talk about his new book, "A Tiger Among Us: A Story of Valor in Vietnam's A Shau Valley," and his work with the Bennie G. Adkins Foundation a day after he and 28 other recipients of the nation's highest award for valor were honored at baseball's All-Star Game at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C. At the July 17 All-Star Game, the 29 combat veterans lined up on the infield as actor Bradley Cooper narrated a video on the medal: "You don't win a Medal of Honor. It is earned by the rarest of heroes, heroes who reveal the remarkable capacity of their character. They connect us through the ideals they proudly represent. Tonight, in our nation's capital, it is our honor to welcome these true American heroes."

Fox broadcaster Joe Buck asked the sellout crowd to remain silent as each MoH recipient was introduced on the field by name and rank. Adkins, leaning on his walker, was the first to be introduced. He gave the crowd a salute. The crowd then erupted in a long-standing ovation as both the National and American League teams swarmed around the recipients to take selfies and exchange autographs. "They all came by," Adkins said of the ballplayers. "They were a nice group of young men. You could tell they were quality people." Adkins was in town to promote his book, co-written with Katie Lamar Jackson and including a foreword by former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel. He was speaking that night at the International Spy Museum and had also made a presentation at the National Archives.

"The tiger kinda' helped" in scaring off the enemy in March 1966, Special Forces legend and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bennie Adkins said of the last hours of a four-day battle in Vietnam in which he earned the Medal of Honor. The tiger had an assist from the 12-gauge sawed-off shotgun Adkins carried as a sidearm. He had cut down the barrel and sawed off the stock. The 84-year-old Adkins said he still isn't quite sure how that weapon squared with the laws of war and the Geneva Conventions, but "I did use it, I did, and a lot of hand grenades." While on the run in triple-canopy jungle, Adkins figured out another use for the shotgun. He had an HT1 radio, but "the antenna was shot off this one." He rigged the shotgun as a makeshift antenna and managed to get a location to the rescue helicopters. "The next day, the weather broke enough so they could come get us," he said.

The Indochinese, or Indonesian, tiger is an endangered species. Only about 20 are believed to remain in Vietnam, but just about everybody who served in the Army and the Marines in South Vietnam's northern I Corps in the 1960s had a tiger tale to tell. Everybody seemed to know a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy who had come in contact with them, but few had ever seen one. Everybody also knew about the A Shau. It was Vietnam's heart of darkness in the telling, running west from Hue to link up with the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was the place where whole units could disappear. Lots of tigers in the A Shau, guys would say, but you really didn't want to go there to find out. Adkins said it was so: "It was not uncommon in the A Shau, the tigers."

He came to the A Shau by way of Waurika, Oklahoma. He was drafted into the Army in 1956, and saw it as a way out. There wasn't much work back in Waurika, Adkins said. "Maybe day work on the farm or fry cooking or something like that is what it amounted to," he added. The Army "made a clerk typist out of me" and sent him to Germany. In 20 months, he was a sergeant, but he was bored. He asked for the infantry, was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, for training and later was accepted into the Special Forces. His first tour in Vietnam was in 1963. "We went in country in civilian clothes" on what turned out to be a six-month tour. He didn't say much about what they did there, "but at the time we were supposed to have gone in there just as advisers." "We left the country in uniform," he said.

On his second tour, which began in 1965, he said the sergeant major made Adkins his intelligence sergeant. But he had been in Danang only a short time when the sergeant major came to him again. "We just had a man in the A Shau hit, and we have to send you out there," the sergeant major said. "So I didn't get to do any of that rear echelon stuff," Adkins said. Camp A Shau turned out to be "a horrible camp, horrible location. It was the wrong place, period," situated on low ground that flooded constantly between mountainous terrain on either side, he said. "The camp absolutely fell apart; we just couldn't keep the thing together." He was with two officers and 10 enlisted troops from the Fifth Special Forces Group. In addition, "they had the worst of the Vietnamese Special Forces in there and the CIDG" -- the Civilian Irregular Defense Group of paramilitaries, Adkins said.

The CIDG was "initially designed to go in and train these local villagers to take care of their own village, but there was no village much to be involved in [at] the A Shau camp," he said. "We found that, once the battle started, we had one company of these irregulars just change sides and fought with the North Vietnamese." The Americans at Camp A Shau knew an attack was coming. "We had a couple of prisoners, and the prisoners in the interrogations indicated that we were going to be attacked," he said. "Then we had two walk in and give themselves up and also indicated the attack was going to happen a couple of days later, as soon as major weather hit and we couldn't get air support in."

At about 2 a.m. on March 9, 1966, "they hit us," Adkins said. "They laid down some mortar, 82 and 120 mortars on us initially. Then mass assaults." Adkins fought back from his own 81mm mortar position, and "then it got down to individual weapons and hand grenade fighting," he said. After 38 hours, the order to evacuate was given. Several Marine helicopters were shot down in the rescue attempt, he said. Marine helos eventually landed outside the camp. Adkins said he and the executive officer went back to the camp to pick up one of the wounded. "When we came back out, we didn't have a ride, so we had to hit the jungle." "This was the night the North Vietnamese had us surrounded. We were in triple canopy," he said. "We started hearing a noise and then we could see the eyes -- about a 400-pound Indonesian tiger was stalking us that night," but the enemy was more concerned than they were. "The North Vietnamese soldiers -- they backed away from us and gave us room and we were able to get away," he said.

Adkins' medal citation states: "During the thirty-eight-hour battle and forty-eight hours of escape and evasion, fighting with mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, small arms, and hand grenades, it was estimated that Sergeant First Class Adkins killed between 135 and 175 of the enemy while sustaining eighteen different wounds to his body. "Sergeant First Class Adkins' extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, Detachment A-102, 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces and the United States Army," the citation concludes. Adkins was awarded the

Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the A Shau. During his three tours in Vietnam, he also earned two Bronze Stars with Combat "V" device and three Purple Hearts.

Forty-eight years later, President Barack Obama approved the upgrade of Adkins' DSC to the Medal of Honor. At the White House ceremony in 2014, Obama said, "I have to be honest. Bennie performed so many acts of bravery, we actually don't have time to list them all. Bennie ran into enemy fire again and again." Obama said Adkins told him that the enemy "was more scared of that tiger than they were of us." Adkins retired from the military in 1978. He earned a college degree and two masters degrees from Troy State University and ran his own accounting firm. Now he heads the Bennie G. Adkins Foundation, which raises funds for scholarships for enlisted Special Forces troops transitioning to civilian life. He stressed that the proceeds from the book and the fund-raising for the foundation "is not for me. The funding is for doing scholarships. Looks like this year we'll probably do 25 scholarships."

Adkins doesn't talk much about his third and last tour in Vietnam in 1971, which was with the clandestine "Studies and Observation Group (SOG)," a mix of Special Forces, SEALs, other commando units and CIA operatives that ran missions behind enemy lines and in Laos and Cambodia. When asked if he had ever returned to Vietnam, Adkins laughed and said he hadn't. "I don't know if there's anything to it or not, but I heard they [the North Vietnamese] had a poster -- so much for me dead or alive -- and that warrant may still be good. So, no, I haven't been back." [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | 22 Jul 2018 ++]

WWII Vets 169 ► John Basilone | Guadalcanal Legend

Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone was born to be a United States Marine. Ask any past or present Marine about the legendary New Jersey native and they'll be able to rattle off facts in the same story-recalling fashion of other Marine Corps demigods — the Dan Dalys, the Smedley Butlers, the Chesty Pullers and Carlos Hathcocks — who are hammered home into the brain housing group from the moment a recruit steps on the yellow footprints. Basilone served three years in the Army during the 1930s, but it wouldn't be until he enlisted in the Marine Corps — and the country's subsequent plunge into World War II — that he would reach mythical standing.



Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone became a Marine Corps legend for his actions on Guadalcanal.

On the night of October 24, 1942, in the jungles of Guadalcanal, one of the hundreds of islands that comprise the Solomons, then-Sgt. Basilone was commanding two heavy .30-caliber machine gun sections from First Battalion, Seventh Marines, that were tasked with holding a narrow pass at the Tenaru River. As the small crews of Marines dug in for the night, a Japanese regiment numbering 3,000 men attacked the line, hammering the Marines with grenades and mortar fire. Wave after wave were kept at bay by the small teams of Marines, until one of the gun crews was disabled by enemy fire. With total disregard for his own life, Basilone carried about 90 pounds of weaponry and

ammunition to the silenced gun pit, running a distance of 200 yards through enemy fire and encountering Japanese soldiers along the route, who he killed with his Colt .45 pistol.

Basilone continued running back and forth between gun pits, supplying ammunition to those desperately in need and clearing gun jams for his junior Marines. Amidst the carnage, Basilone lost his asbestos gloves, hand protection critical for holding or swapping out the scalding hot barrels of the heavily used machine guns. During the height of the battle, Basilone barehanded the searing barrel of his machine gun without hesitation and continued putting rounds downrange, killing an entire wave of Japanese soldiers and burning his hands and arms in the process. Enemy bodies were (literally) piling up so rapidly that he — or other Marines, depending on the story — had to vacate their defensive positions to knock over the growing wall of flesh so they could reestablish clear fields of fire.

An entire Japanese regiment was thwarted by the gun crews, and by the time reinforcements arrived, only Basilone and two other Marines were left standing. Basilone used his crews' machine guns, his pistol and a machete to kill at least 38 enemy soldiers by himself. Pfc. Nash W. Phillips was with Basilone on Guadalcanal and recounted the otherworldly efforts of his sergeant. "Basilone had a machine gun on the go for three days and nights without sleep, rest or food," said Phillips, who lost a hand in the fight. While receiving medical treatment, Phillips recalled Basilone's mythical appearance as he came to check on him.

"He was barefooted and his eyes were red as fire," he said. "His face was dirty black from gunfire and lack of sleep. His shirt sleeves were rolled up to his shoulders. He had a .45 tucked into the waistband of his trousers. He'd just dropped by to see how I was making out; me and the others in the section. I'll never forget him. He'll never be dead in my mind!"

Basilone would go on to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions on Guadalcanal. He returned to the U.S. to assist the war bond effort — and was offered a commission and the chance to spend the rest of the war in Washington. He turned the offer down, forgoing the public attention being a war hero yielded and opting instead to return to combat. On February 19, 1945, Basilone stormed Red Beach on Iwo Jima. Pinned down by enemy machine gun fire, he led his gunners up the steep black sand, kicking his inexperienced Marines to get off the beach as they hugged the ground for cover. Minutes after destroying a Japanese blockhouse, Basilone and four members of his platoon were killed when an enemy artillery shell exploded. He was 28 years old. Gunnery Sgt. Basilone would be posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and the Navy Cross for his actions on Iwo. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | June 29, 2018 ++]

WWII VETS 170 ► **Jerome Yellin | Last Fighter Pilot of WWII**



Jerome "Jerry" Yellin was a United States Army Air Forces World War II fighter pilot who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima and who flew 19 Very Long Range (VLR) combat missions over Japan. He has been credited with flying the final combat mission of World War II in a North American P-51 Mustang against a military airfield near Tokyo

on August 14, 1945 (August 15, 1945 local time in Tokyo). In his later years, he became well known for his reconciliation with the Japanese and for his work in helping veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He was the author of four books, including *Of War and Weddings*, an autobiography. On January 29, 2014, Texas Governor Rick Perry honored Captain Yellin's military service and commitment to help veterans by making him an honorary Texan.

Yellin was born February 15, 1924 in Newark, New Jersey, the son of a real estate developer. After graduating from high school in Hillside, New Jersey, he worked night shift at a steel mill, saving money before starting college. On December 7, 1941 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. On his 18th birthday in 1942 he enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces and graduated from Luke Field, Arizona as a fighter pilot in August 1943. Flying P-40 and P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes, his training continued based out of Hawaii. On March 10, 1944, 15 miles off the coast of Haleiwa, Oahu, Yellin parachuted out of his P-40 at 5,000 feet after the engine failed and he spent 9 hours in a life raft before being rescued. He was assigned to the 78th Fighter Squadron, 15th Fighter Group. President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with General MacArthur in Hawaii in July 1944 and Yellin was chosen by his commanding officer, Jim Tapp, to fly with him in an aerial show for the President.

On March 7, 1945 he landed his P-51 on Iwo Jima after the first of three airfields was secured. For the remainder of the battle for the island, he flew strafing and bombing combat missions in support of the Marines who were fighting the well-entrenched Japanese soldiers. Additionally, he led his squadron on combat missions against Japanese forces on the nearby island of Chichijima. On 7 APR he participated in the first land based fighter mission over Japan. In all, Yellin flew 19 dangerous VLR missions from Iwo Jima attacking the Japanese mainland and providing air cover to B-29s on bombing missions. He was co-credited with shooting down a Mitsubishi A6M Zero, along with his wingman, 2nd Lieutenant Daniel Mathis, with probably destroying another Zero, and with damaging an Aichi E13A (Jake). He was an exceptional pilot who flew over one thousand hours of missions in various aircraft. Captain Yellin was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with an Oak Leaf cluster and the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf clusters. Final World War II flight

Yellin's final combat mission was executed five days after the U.S. Army Air Forces Boeing B-29 Superfortress Bockscar had dropped a second American nuclear weapon on Nagasaki Japan. He flew along with another pilot, First Lieutenant Phillip Schlamborg, who was piloting a second P-51 as Captain Yellin's wingman. The two men were executing their mission against the airfield at or about the time that Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, wherein Japan would accept allied terms for unconditional surrender. Yellin and Schlamborg did not hear the military's attempted radio broadcast alerting them that the war had ended. Immediately after carrying out their mission against the airfield, Yellin and Schlamborg banked steeply into a cloud cover. Yellin emerged from the cloud cover, but Schlamborg had disappeared, apparently shot down, and became the final known combat death of World War II. Short on fuel, Yellin began his four-hour flight back to his home base on Iwo Jima, where he learned that the war had ended.

Captain Yellin was honorably discharged from the Army Air Forces on December 19, 1945. He returned home suffering from restlessness, depression, and suicidal thoughts due to Posttraumatic stress disorder, though the affliction would not be recognized as a medical entity until 1980. In 1975, at the urging of his wife, Helene, Yellin learned Transcendental Meditation (TM) which helped to alleviate his PTSD symptoms. He became an advocate for TM as treatment for PTSD and founded Operation Warrior Wellness as part of the David Lynch Foundation to teach TM to veterans suffering with the illness. He also co-founded Operation Warrior Shield with CMSgt(ret) Edward W Schloeman to teach TM to veterans and first responders. He traveled throughout the United States to talk about his experiences with PTSD and TM.

On a business trip to Tokyo in early 1980, he described seeing the Japanese as other than the enemy for the first time. In 1984, his younger son moved to Japan in what would be a life changing event for father and son. The younger Yellin settled in Japan, married a Japanese woman, and bore Jerry three Japanese-American grandchildren. The children's other grandfather had been assigned to a kamikaze squadron in the last days of the war and initially rejected

the wedding of his daughter to the younger Yellin. But after learning that Jerry was a P-51 fighter pilot and had flown combat missions on Iwo Jima and against Japan, he told his wife to arrange the marriage so that the blood of a brave man could flow in the veins of his grandchildren. The two older men became friends for the remainder of their lives, and through the bonds of family, Yellin went "from hatred to love" of the Japanese.

Yellen traveled extensively to talk about peace and reconciliation and his autobiography is entitled *Of War and Weddings*. In 2010, he returned to Iwo Jima for the first time as a civilian to participate in the joint Japanese-United States Reunion of Honor ceremony commemorating the soldiers from both countries who fought in the historic battle. He also traveled to Iwo Jima in 2015 and 2016 to participate in the commemorative ceremony. In 2018, he was posthumously awarded The Major General Fred Haynes USMC Legacy Award to honor his "many years of service educating thousands on the Battle of Iwo Jima...ensuring future generations of Americans will remember the legacy of what happened on that small volcanic island known as Iwo Jima."

Jerry Yellin married Helene Schulman in 1949 and the couple were together for 66 years. She died in 2015. They had four sons and six grandchildren. Three of the grandchildren live in Japan and three live in the United States. He was an amateur golf champion in New Jersey and was on the United States golf team in the 1965 Maccabiah Games in Israel, winning a silver medal. In the 1960s and 1970s, while living in Florida with his family he was a well-known tennis umpire. He was a chair umpire for World Championship Tennis matches played in Hollywood and Aventura, as well as at the WCT finals in Dallas. He also was an umpire at the 1969 US Open (tennis). A 2015 video interview with him can be viewed at <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/395572/jerry-yellin-world-war-ii-veteran-interview>. Another can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/FH6H11mo2s8>. He died of lung cancer in Orlando, Florida at age 93 on December 21, 2017. [Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerry_Yellin | July 24, 2018 ++]

WWII VETS 171 ► Anne Butler | Former WAC Turns 100

A pioneering Women's Army Auxiliary Corps volunteer turned 100 on July 20, clinging to her bed railing as she recounted her time as a typist behind the American World War II effort. Anne Butler, who grew up in America and Poland, has just her memory and several colorless portraits to remind her of the years she spent stationed in old New York City offices. She typed her way through World War II, donating her time to make some, any, helpful impact. She joined the Army at the war's beginning and left after its violent end. During WWII, over 150,000 American women joined the Women's Army Corps (WACs), initially formed as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, according to a U.S. Army Center of Military History publication. Those women were the first, after nurses, to serve formally within U.S. Army ranks, and many took on repetitive, detailed tasks that freed up more men for combat.



Anne Butler

Butler said she never desired to go to the front lines herself, because she didn't think that was her place. Still, when war broke out and Butler inquired about volunteering to help in some capacity, she was told there was no position for her. "They said no, no, you don't even belong in this," Butler told the Florida Times-Union. In her early 20s, wide-eyed and ready to work as hard as anyone else, she declared that, in fact, there would be a spot for her. "I'll make one," she responded. "I came here to volunteer and, by golly, I'm gonna do it," she said.

Butler said she was finally stationed with a small group a couple of blocks down from New York's Collingwood hotel, in what looked like an old post office. WAC volunteers filled that hotel, four to a room. Men guarded the women, some of whom, including Butler, did "secret" work, she said. Butler recalled few specifics about her "secret" work but said she took any assignment that crossed her path. Those mostly involved typing; she was high-school educated and studied business and secretarial work before the war began. Although Butler was supposed to keep her work confidential, she said she "kind of told everybody." The caveat, she said, was that she never really knew exactly she was doing.

When Butler first volunteered, she worried about that uncertainty. So, she moseyed across the street to Macy's and made a purchase. "I didn't know what I was supposed to do," Butler said. "I decided that I better get a nice-looking hat to wear." She soon learned the Army-green hat she picked out was reserved for officers' use. Butler said she never really knew what was expected of her. Before she joined the Army, she might have joined a convent, since she grew up around nuns and went through the Catholic school system. Her excitement about rallying around the flag and helping as much as she could overrode that. There was another reason Butler said she joined the Army, which was to travel. Butler wanted to see India; she had not seen much of the world and had a schoolmate stationed there. "That was so selfish, wasn't it?" Butler wondered. "I joined the service to go to India."

Butler didn't make it to India, bound to a woman's clerical assignments in the post-office-like building where she balanced higher-ups' instructions. She remembered one sergeant whose commands resembled lectures as he urged the "girls" to stay true to their Army roots and stay out of trouble, mainly with men. "Everything was secret those days," Butler said, "especially the men." Men were not allowed in the women's metropolitan hotel, but Butler said they snuck them in anyway, hiding them on the second floor. They all were a "tight military squad," she said, playing tricks on guards and marching to and from work, all in good spirits. "It was the funniest thing," she said, revealing a rosy smile. Butler said otherwise, there was little ruckus among her group, and that the only trouble came from traveling women who made military pay while she did not.

When the war ended and Butler left the Army, after rejecting a discharge deal to accompany war brides coming to America, she married Timothy Butler, an Army man coming back from Italy. They moved into a Jacksonville home in 1950. She might have worked in a factory after leaving the Army, said her son, Larry Butler. He added she volunteered with a children's hospital about 20 years ago and was always active, doing yardwork and tending to her orchids. Still holding onto her bed railing, Butler once more downplayed the feat of reaching her centennial after helping an American war effort, completing tasks higher-ups expected of her without relying on a surplus of remarkable skills. "Anybody could be 100 years old," she said. Butler said she's not sure what lies ahead for her as she marks her 100th year. "I guess whatever's expected of me," she said, in her humble fashion. [Source: The (Jacksonville) Florida Times-Union | Emily Sullivan | July 29, 2018 ++]

Military History Anniversaries ► 01 thru 15 August

Significant events in U.S. Military History over the next 15 days are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 15 AUG.**" [Source: This Day in History www.history.com/this-day-in-history | July 2018 ++]

WWII Bomber Nose Art ► (11) Nine-O-Nine



Medal of Honor Citations ► Kenneth E. Gruennert | WWII



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

KENNETH E. GRUENNERT

Rank and organization: Sergeant, U.S. Army, Company L, 127th Infantry, 32d Infantry Division

Place and date: Near Buna, New Guinea, 24 December 1942

Entered service at: Helenville, Wis.

Born: November 19, 1922 in Helenville, Wis.

Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. On 24 December 1942, near Buna, New Guinea, Sgt. Gruennert was second in command of a platoon with a mission to drive through the enemy lines to the beach 600 yards ahead. Within 150 yards of the objective, the platoon encountered 2 hostile pillboxes. Sgt. Gruennert advanced alone on the first and put it out of action with hand grenades and rifle fire, killing 3 of the enemy. Seriously wounded in the shoulder, he bandaged his wound under cover of the pillbox, refusing to withdraw to the aid station and leave his men. He then, with undiminished daring, and under extremely heavy fire, attacked the second pillbox. As he neared it he threw grenades which forced the enemy out where they were easy targets for his platoon. Before the leading elements of his platoon could reach him he was shot by enemy snipers. His inspiring

valor cleared the way for his platoon which was the first to attain the beach in this successful effort to split the enemy position.



Kenneth Gruennert's commission phot left and the back of his Medal of Honor engraved with his name (right).

Kenneth Gruennert joined the Wisconsin National Guard when he was a 16-year-old Jefferson High School student. During high school he played football and was captain of the school's championship-winning team. At age 16, he enlisted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard from Helenville and served as a member of Company L of the 127th Infantry Division in Wisconsin's 32nd Red Arrow Infantry Brigade. The 32nd Division was federalized in 1940, and after the attack on Pearl Harbor the unit began training for combat. Gruennert was sent to Louisiana for training and quickly moved up in rank, earning his sergeant's stripes two days before Pearl Harbor. His unit was sent to Australia and then to New Guinea, where the Wisconsin National Guard troops took part in the bloody Buna Campaign during the fall and winter of 1942-'43.

Fighting in impenetrable terrain, the allied soldiers battled thousands of heavily entrenched Japanese soldiers for weeks in withering heat and rain. U.S. forces recorded a much higher percentage of casualties during the Buna Campaign than in the more well-known battle for Guadalcanal. In his last letter home, written the day after Thanksgiving, Gruennert, who was known as Kenny, wrote about finally getting into the fight after two years of training. Kenneth Gruennert was an avid hunter, shooting pheasants and rabbits as a young boy in Helenville. So it was fitting that when he spoke about engaging the enemy he put it in terms understandable to a young guy from a small town in Wisconsin. "No bag limit, no size limit, no time limit and Uncle Sam furnishing us free ammunition. I think I am going to like this hunt," he wrote.

The Christmas package sent by Kenneth Gruennert's parents was returned unopened with these heartbreaking words scribbled across the front: Killed in Action, Dec. 24, '42. In September, the Gruennerts got a letter telling them their son would receive the nation's highest honor for valor. President Franklin Roosevelt would present the Medal of Honor to Arthur and Belva Gruennert in a ceremony at the White House on Oct. 6, 1943. However, the Gruennerts declined to accept a free trip to Washington, D.C.

In a letter to the Army's adjutant general, the Gruennerts noted that they were helping raise money through a war bond drive in Jefferson County and the gas ration sticker on their vehicle's windshield asked 'Is this trip really necessary?' "We believe every cent of the money subscribed should be used to supply our boys with the necessities of war and not spent for trips that do not directly help the war efforts. Only this last week thousands of other parents have lost their loved ones on the battlefields of Italy, all brave boys that were loved by their parents as much as we loved our own. These parents cannot all converge on Washington and because of the common bond we have with them we feel we shouldn't either."

Several months later another package arrived by mail at the family's Jefferson County home — Gruennert's Medal of Honor. The nation's highest honor, earned by Gruennert on a hot and humid Christmas Eve in the jungles of New Guinea, is still shiny, the light blue ribbon with tiny white stars has not faded. It was never worn. The medal was passed from Gruennert's parents to his only sibling and then to his nephew, Jim Gruennert

In NOV 2013 the Wisconsin Veterans Museum unveiled 62 Medals of Honor earned by Wisconsin troops since the Civil War. A portion of it featured a small display of four Medals of Honor received by Wisconsinites, two in Korea, two in World War II. "There's definitely a different feeling when we get a Medal of Honor because they all have such incredible stories," Museum Director Michael Telzrow said. Jim Gruennert, 55, of Muskego, recalled his uncle's Medal of Honor was kept in a bookcase in a bedroom at his grandparents' Helenville home. It was never displayed. "They were obviously very proud of their son, but I don't think they considered him above anyone. Everyone sacrificed for the war," Jim Gruennert said. He decided to donate his uncle's Medal of Honor along with other memorabilia, including his Purple Heart, uniform buttons, Red Arrow patch, sergeant stripes and a small metal strip printed with Kenneth Gruennert's name and serial number believed to be from his casket when his remains were moved to his hometown of Helenville.

[Source: <https://history.army.mil/moh/wwII-g-l.html> | July 2018 ++]

*** Health Care ***



Prescription Drug Valsartan ► FDA Warning | Voluntary Recall

Valsartan is used to treat high blood pressure and heart failure. It is also used to improve the chance of living longer after a heart attack. In people with heart failure, it may also lower the chance of having to go to the hospital for heart failure. Valsartan belongs to a class of drugs called angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs). It works by relaxing blood vessels so that blood can flow more easily. Lowering high blood pressure helps prevent strokes, heart attacks, and kidney problems.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is alerting health care professionals and patients of a voluntary recall of several drug products containing the active ingredient valsartan. This recall is due to an impurity, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), which was found in the recalled products. However, not all products containing valsartan are being recalled. NDMA is classified as a probable human carcinogen (a substance that could cause cancer) based on results from laboratory tests. The presence of NDMA was unexpected and is thought to be related to changes in the way the active substance was manufactured. The FDA's review is ongoing and has included investigating the levels of NDMA in the recalled products, assessing the possible effect on patients who have been taking them and what measures can be taken to reduce or eliminate the impurity from future batches produced by the company.

"The FDA is committed to maintaining our gold standard for safety and efficacy. That includes our efforts to ensure the quality of drugs and the safe manner in which they're manufactured," said FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D. "When we identify lapses in the quality of drugs and problems with their manufacturing that have the potential to create risks to patients, we're committed to taking swift action to alert the public and help facilitate the removal of the products from the market. As we seek the removal of certain drug products today, our drug shortages

team is also working hard to ensure patients’ therapeutic needs are met in the United States with an adequate supply of unaffected medications.”

Information for Patients and Health Care Professionals

- Because valsartan is used in medicines (ENTRESTO, Diovan, Carlanor. HCTZ, etc.) to treat serious medical conditions, patients taking the recalled valsartan-containing medicines should continue taking their medicine until they have a replacement product.
- To determine whether a specific product has been recalled, patients should look at the drug name and company name on the label of their prescription bottle. If the information is not on the bottle, patients should contact the pharmacy that dispensed the medicine.
- If a patient is taking one of the recalled medicines listed below, they should follow the recall instructions provided by the specific company. This information will be posted to the FDA’s [website](#).
- Patients should also contact their health care professional (the pharmacist who dispensed the medication or doctor who prescribed the medication) if their medicine is included in this recall to discuss their treatment, which may include another valsartan product not affected by this recall or an alternative treatment option.

The companies listed below are recalling all lots of non-expired products that contain the ingredient valsartan supplied by a third-party. Not all valsartan-containing medicines distributed in the United States have valsartan active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) supplied by this specific company. The supplier has stopped distributing its valsartan API and the FDA is working with the affected companies to reduce or eliminate the valsartan API impurity from future products. Recalled Products

<u>Medicine</u>	<u>Company</u>
Valsartan -----	Major Pharmaceuticals
Valsartan -----	Solco Healthcare
Valsartan -----	Teva Pharmaceuticals Industries Ltd.
Valsartan/Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) ----	Solco Healthcare
Valsartan/Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) -----	Teva Pharmaceuticals Industries Ltd.

“We have carefully assessed the valsartan-containing medications sold in the United States, and we’ve found that the valsartan sold by these specific companies does not meet our safety standards. This is why we’ve asked these companies to take immediate action to protect patients,” said Janet Woodcock, M.D., director of the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. The FDA will continue to investigate this issue and provide additional information when it becomes available. The agency encourages patients and health care professionals to report any adverse reaction to the FDA’s [MedWatch program](#).

[Source: FDA News Release | July 13, 2018 ++]

Physical Exams ► When Was Your Last Annual?

When was your last annual physical exam? Is that important? Asked Mr. Jones, a 64-year-old Veteran and former smoker of 30 years. Having a physical saved his life. After discussing his prior smoking habits, Mr. Jones received a CT exam that revealed a “highly suspicious” tumor in his lower right lung. The tumor turned out to be stage 1 lung cancer and was successfully removed surgically without the need for chemotherapy or radiation. “I just wanted that tumor out of my body,” Mr. Jones said. “The screening saved my life.” Discussing his personal and medical history saved Mr. Jones’ life. Veterans can use VA resources like [MyHealththeVet](#) to access their health records to prepare for an exam and message their care team securely with any questions they may have after an appointment.

Dr. Raya Kheirbek knows the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is especially true when it comes to health care. She is an internist, geriatrician and essayist at the Washington DC VA Medical Center and an associate professor of medicine at George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. As a primary care physician for VA, she assists Veterans in maintaining their health and screening for various health risks through proper preventative care. Preventative care focuses on maintaining proper health and preventing disease and an annual physical is vital to proper preventative care. An average physical can include things like:

- A comprehensive physical exam catered to a patient’s age, gender and specific risk factors
- A check for heart health
- Lung examination
- Skin screening
- Lab test, including blood count and cholesterol
- BMI (body mass index) testing
- Screenings for age and gender appropriate cancer risk factors.

One of the most important aspects of preventative care, according to Dr. Kheirbek, is the partnership between a physician and patient. Veterans can make the most out of their annual physicals by coming prepared with any questions they have about their health, being informed about their family medical history and researching their health conditions or risk factors. “Don’t be intimidated to ask questions or get involved with your care,” Dr. Kheirbek urges, “After all, it’s your health and your body.”

Many patients are unaware that in addition to discussing physical issues, an annual physical exam also offers the opportunity to talk about any new or ongoing struggles with depression, PTSD, homelessness, drug dependency or an entire range of health-related issues. “The VA system prompts clinicians to ask those important questions; on many occasions Veterans are screened positive and they are same day referred to mental health for further evaluation and management,” Dr. Kheirbek says. This is especially important as more and more research points to the association between emotional stress and physical illness. In her own patients Dr. Kheirbek has seen the importance of physicals and preventative care. Mr. Jones was her patient. [Source: Vantage Point | Taylor Haas | July 19, 2018 ++]

High Blood Pressure ► The Silent Killer

You can have high blood pressure, or hypertension, and still feel just fine. That's because high blood pressure often does not cause signs of illness that you can see or feel. But, high blood pressure, sometimes called "the silent killer," is very common in older people and a major health problem. If high blood pressure isn't controlled with lifestyle changes and medicine, it can lead to stroke, heart disease, eye problems, kidney failure, and other health problems. High blood pressure can also cause shortness of breath during light physical activity or exercise.

What Is Blood Pressure? Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of arteries. When the doctor measures your blood pressure, the results are given in two numbers. The first number, called systolic blood pressure, is the pressure caused by your heart contracting and pushing out blood. The second number, called diastolic blood pressure, is the pressure when your heart relaxes and fills with blood. Your blood pressure reading is usually given as the systolic blood pressure number over the diastolic blood pressure number, such as 138/72. Normal blood pressure for adults is defined as a systolic pressure of less than 120 and a diastolic pressure of less than 80. This is stated as 120/80.

Do I Have High Blood Pressure? One reason to visit your doctor regularly is to have your blood pressure checked. Routine checks of your blood pressure will help pick up an early rise in blood pressure, even though you might feel fine. If there's an indication that your blood pressure is high at two or more checkups, the doctor may ask you to check

your blood pressure at home at different times of the day. If the pressure stays high, even when you are relaxed, the doctor may suggest exercise, changes in your diet, and, most likely, medications.

What is considered high blood pressure for older adults? Recent updates to guidelines from the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology changed the definition of high blood pressure or hypertension for most people. High blood pressure is now generally defined as 130 or higher for the first number, or 80 or higher for the second number (previously it was 140/90). However, there are important considerations for older adults in deciding whether to start treatment for high blood pressure, including other health conditions and overall fitness. If your blood pressure is above 130/80, your doctor will evaluate your health to determine what treatment is needed to balance risks and benefits in your particular situation.

What if Just the First Blood Pressure Number Is High? For older people, often the first number (systolic) is 130 or higher, but the second number (diastolic) is less than 80. This problem is called isolated systolic hypertension, which is due to age-related stiffening of the major arteries. It is the most common form of high blood pressure in older people and can lead to serious health problems (stroke, heart disease, eye problems, and kidney failure) in addition to shortness of breath during light physical activity, lightheadedness upon standing too fast, and falls. Isolated systolic hypertension is treated in the same way as regular high blood pressure (130 or higher for the first number, or 80 or higher for the second number) but may require more than one type of blood pressure medication. If your doctor determines that your systolic pressure is above a normal level for your age, ask how you can lower it.

What if My Blood Pressure Is Low? If your blood pressure is lower than 90/60, you have low blood pressure, or hypotension. You may feel lightheaded, weak, dizzy, or even faint. Low blood pressure can be caused by [not drinking enough liquids](#) (dehydration), blood loss, some medical conditions, or too much medication.

Some High Blood Pressure Risks You Can't Change -- Anyone can get high blood pressure. But, some people have a greater chance of having it because of things they can't change. These are:

- Age. The chance of having high blood pressure increases as you get older.
- Gender. Before age 55, men have a greater chance of having high blood pressure. Women are more likely to have high blood pressure after menopause.
- Family history. High blood pressure tends to run in some families.
- Race. African Americans are at increased risk for high blood pressure.

How Can I Control My Blood Pressure? High blood pressure is very common in older people. As we age, our vascular system changes. Arteries get stiffer, so blood pressure goes up. This is true even for people who have heart-healthy habits. The good news is that blood pressure can be controlled in most people. There are many lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of high blood pressure:

- Keep a healthy weight. Being overweight adds to your risk of high blood pressure. Ask your doctor if you need to lose weight.
- Exercise every day. Moderate exercise can lower your risk of high blood pressure. Set some goals so you can [exercise safely](#) and work your way up to exercising at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week. Check with your doctor before starting an exercise plan if you have any health problems that are not being treated. You can find more information about exercise and physical activity at [Go4Life](#).
- Eat a healthy diet. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products may help to lower blood pressure.
- Cut down on salt. As you get older, the body and blood pressure become more sensitive to salt ([sodium](#)), so you may need to watch how much salt is in your diet. Most of the salt comes from processed foods (for example, soup and baked goods). A low-salt diet, such as the [DASH diet](#), might help lower your blood pressure. Talk with your doctor about eating less salt.
- Drink less alcohol. [Drinking alcohol](#) can affect your blood pressure. Men should not have more than two drinks a day and women no more than one a day to lower their risk of high blood pressure.

- Don't smoke. Smoking increases your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. If you smoke, quit. You are never too old to quit, and the health benefits of quitting can be seen at any age.
- Get a good night's sleep. Tell your doctor if you've been told you snore or sound like you stop breathing for moments when you sleep. This may be a sign of a problem called sleep apnea. Treating sleep apnea and getting [a good night's sleep](#) can help to lower blood pressure.
- Manage stress. Relaxing and coping with problems can help lower high blood pressure.

If these lifestyle changes don't lower your blood pressure to a safe level, your doctor will also prescribe medicine. You may try several kinds or combinations of medicines before finding a plan that works best for you. Medicine can control your blood pressure, but it can't cure it. You will likely need to take medicine for the rest of your life. Plan with your doctor how to manage your blood pressure.

High Blood Pressure Facts -- High blood pressure is serious because it can lead to major health problems. Make a point of learning what blood pressure should be. And, remember:

- High blood pressure may not make you feel sick, but it is serious. See a doctor to treat it.
- You can lower your blood pressure by changing your day-to-day habits and by taking medicine, if needed.
- If you take high blood pressure medicine, making some lifestyle changes may help lower the dose you need.
- If you take blood pressure medicine and your blood pressure goes down, it means medicine and lifestyle changes are working. If another doctor asks if you have high blood pressure, the answer is, "Yes, but it is being treated."
- Tell your doctor about all the drugs you take. Don't forget to mention over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and dietary supplements. They may affect your blood pressure. They also can change how well your blood pressure medicine works.
- Blood pressure pills should be taken at the same time each day. For example, take your medicine in the morning with breakfast or in the evening after brushing your teeth. If you miss a dose, do not double the dose the next day.
- Don't take more of your blood pressure medicine than your doctor prescribes. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop. Don't skip a day or take half a pill. Remember to refill your medicine before you run out of pills. If you cannot afford your medicines, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Before having surgery, ask your doctor if you should take your blood pressure medicine on that day.
- Get up slowly from a seated or lying position and stand for a bit before walking. This lets your blood pressure adjust before walking to prevent dizziness, fainting, or a fall.
- As you get older, high blood pressure, especially isolated systolic hypertension, is more common and can increase your risk of serious health problems. Treatment, especially if you have other medical conditions, requires ongoing evaluation and discussions with your doctor to strike the best balance of reducing risks and maintaining a good quality of life.

If your doctor asks you to take your blood pressure at home, keep in mind:

- There are many home blood pressure monitors for sale. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist which monitor you need and how to use it. Have your monitor checked at the doctor's office to make sure it works correctly.
- Avoid smoking, exercise, and caffeine 30 minutes before checking your blood pressure.
- Make sure you are sitting with your feet uncrossed and on the floor, and that your back is resting against something.
- Relax quietly for 5 minutes before checking your blood pressure.
- Keep a list of your blood pressure numbers, what time you measured your blood pressure, and when you took your blood pressure medication (if you take it). Share this information with your doctor, physician's assistant, or nurse.

For More Information about High Blood Pressure refer to:

- American Heart Association, 1-800-242-8721 (toll-free), inquiries@heart.org, www.heart.org.
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 1-301-592-8573, nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov, www.nhlbi.nih.gov.
- MedlinePlus, National Library of Medicine, www.medlineplus.gov.
- Smokefree60+, 1-877-448-7848, cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov, www.60plus.smokefree.gov.

[Source: National Institute on Aging | May 2, 2018 ++]

Agent Orange Diseases Update 05 ► Ischemic Heart Disease

Agent Orange-related ailments can manifest in a number of ways and decades down the road, and some veterans don't even make the service connection. One dangerous condition is ischemic heart disease, and a MOAA member is making it a personal mission to help raise awareness and secure disability compensation for veterans. Ischemic heart disease, also called coronary heart disease, is caused by narrowed heart arteries. The disease makes it difficult for blood and oxygen to reach the heart and potentially lead to a heart attack, according to the American Heart Association. The disease was officially connected to Agent Orange by Veterans Affairs in 2010 - 35 years after the war's end.

Retired Army Lt. Col. Steve Wallace, a member of the Military Officers Association of America, has made it his personal mission to help people secure the compensation. In his Army retirement, he said he has found purpose in helping other veterans. He has previously volunteered at a Cardiac Rehab Unit in an Atlanta hospital, but had to stop due to his own pulmonary medical conditions from his Army duty at Ground Zero in New York City after 9/11. Agent Orange, an herbicide chemical sprayed by aerial troops to destroy vegetation used for enemy cover in Vietnam, has caused illness to more than 3 million veterans, according to government data. The VA added ischemic heart disease to its regulations in October 2010 after a report by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine connected the disease to the chemical.

According to the report, there is “suggestive but limited evidence that exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the Vietnam War is associated with an increased chance of developing ischemic heart disease.” The VA ruled that veterans with ischemic heart disease who were exposed to herbicides during service may be eligible for disability compensation and healthcare. Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Korean demilitarized zone or other areas where Agent Orange was sprayed may be eligible for a free Agent Orange registry exam. The VA has reportedly tracked about 180,000 veterans with Ischemic heart disease. Surviving spouses, dependent children and dependent parents of exposed veterans may be eligible for survivor's benefits, according to the VA.

It wasn't until after former 1st Lt. Wayne Lessig's death that his wife became aware his heart issues were related to Agent Orange. Gelsie Lessig has since been accepted for compensation through the VA. “This was a war fought for 60 years,” she said. “It's a wonderful thing available now for people to get this help. For a long time, we weren't sure Agent Orange had anything to do with anything.” The couple was married for 42 years. Wayne served in Vietnam from 1964 to 1965. After the war, Lessig graduated from Georgia Tech and the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. He maintained a healthy lifestyle, but was diagnosed with ischemic heart disease at 41 years old. For the next three decades of his life, Lessig was required to see a cardiologist annually.

He was playing tennis with his son when he felt a sharp pain in his chest. He knew it was a heart event and went to the hospital with Gelsie by his side. He was cared for and released. But two days later, he was rushed by ambulance from his home back to the hospital where he died. The family never connected his service to his heart problems - until they met Wallace, who was volunteering at Emory St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta. Wallace helped the Lessig family apply for compensation. The compensation transcends monetary value, Gelsie Lessig said. For her, it's the country's way of recognizing her husband's valiant service. “He was a great patriot,” she said. “It was very difficult to be a patriot here in the United States during Vietnam. I think people need that compensation. They need to know about it. The message to them is that this is a way for the country to say we appreciate your service and we're here to help.”

Wallace was also able to assist Stuart Steinmark, who served as an Army captain during Vietnam from 1968 to 1969. Steinmark, 77, worked out of the U.S. Procurement Agency Vietnam, where he used his accountant skills to oversee laundry operations with civilian contractors. He said he was in a noncombat zone, so he never considered his exposure to Agent Orange. “I had no clue,” Steinmark said. “The Army dropped a bizzillion tons of Agent Orange to kill off the forest. What they didn't realize at the time was the chemical's harmful effects. The chemical was everywhere.” Steinmark said he maintained a healthy lifestyle, so he said he was surprised to learn he had the heart complications. He began cardiac rehabilitation in 2014. That's when he met Wallace, who assisted him to get on the VA's ischemic heart registry. “All I can say is shame on the federal government for not adequately publicizing this information,” Steinmark said. “I want (veterans) to know that it's there. They don't even know it exists.” [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Amanda Dolasinski | July 19, 2018 ++]

Diets ► Fad Ones to Avoid

Have you tried the Whole 30 program? Are you following the Ketogenic diet? Maybe you've gone gluten-free, or always choose soy milk over dairy? There are as many ways to pursue a healthy diet as there are people concerned about their fitness. And as long as humans have been watching their weight, there have always been new and sometimes bizarre diet and “health” fads, some of them ridiculous and others downright dangerous. From weird home exercise machines to diets that sound as if their ingredients were pulled randomly out of a hat, practically anything is worth a try for us to slim down and buff up. Here are 12 once trendy ideas that are really **NOT** recommended you try.

1. Vinegar and water diet

Health fads come and go, and come again. You may know people who've recently started to swear by drinking apple-cider vinegar for various health reasons. (The Mayo Clinic says it's mostly safe, but there are some risks.) But vinegar as a diet fad dates back to romantic poet Lord Byron, who was obsessed with thinness in the early 1800s. Some say he touted apple-cider vinegar mixed with water as a diet, while the BBC says he existed on “biscuits and soda water or potatoes drenched in vinegar,” and wore wool to sweat off still more pounds. Don't do this: Byron died at age 36.

2. Smoking

The evils of smoking are well-documented now, but back in more innocent days, doctors appeared in cigarette ads touting tobacco as an aid for weight-loss and other things. One Lucky Strike cigarette ad shows a plump man being replaced with a fit hurdler, with copy urging overeaters to “reach for a Lucky instead.” Actors and singers appeared in print ads claiming smoking was good for your voice and throat. Although smoking is still a tough-to-quit addiction for many, at least this kind of ad has gone up in smoke.

3. Cotton ball diet

Cotton balls have many uses — they're great for taking off nail polish or creating bunny tails on Easter cards. But don't eat them. The cotton ball diet, as reported by ABC News in 2013, involves soaking cotton balls in orange juice or other sweet liquids, then eating them to fill up one's stomach. Doctors told ABC this is no diet, it's an eating disorder, and it's terrible for you. For one thing, unless you're dining on an expensive organic brand, most cotton balls are actually bleached, polyester fibers containing a lot of chemicals. Also, since they resist digestion, the practice might lead to an obstruction of the intestinal tract. Don't cotton to this trend.

4. Vibrating belt machines

You may have seen these jiggling belt machines in old movies or magazines. You slip the belt around your waist, hips or other areas, turn on the machine, and it jiggles your fat, supposedly until it melts away. A BuzzFeed writer got her hands on one in 2016 for \$50 and actually gained 3 pounds using it. That seems like a lot of time and energy, uh, “waisted.”

5. Grapefruit diet

For decades, the easy cliché to show that a movie or TV character (almost always a woman) was on a diet was to show her sitting, usually sadly, in front of a plate with one sliced grapefruit half. Grapefruits are delicious and only contain about 100 calories — unless you're the type that dumps a pound of sugar on them to sweeten them up. But a diet of nothing but grapefruit is severely restrictive and unhealthy, and will bore you silly long before you lose much weight.

6. Cabbage soup diet

Speaking of a bland diet ... the cabbage-soup diet is famously dreadful. True to its name, cabbage soup makes up the bulk of the plan, with other foods added in as it progresses. WebMD warns that you're unlikely to want to add in healthy exercise on this low-calorie meal plan, since "your body just won't have enough gas in the tank for exercise." How about eating a more diverse menu and making time for workouts? It's better for you and not as boring.

7. Fletcherism

Victorian health-food enthusiast Horace Fletcher was obsessed with chewing, claiming that food needed to be chewed about 100 times a minute before being swallowed. He even told his followers to chew liquids, which is tougher than it sounds. Fletcher's 1912 obituary in the New York Times reported that he had once lived on potatoes for 58 days. No doubt those were well-chewed taters, which just doesn't sound that a-peeling.

8. Tapeworm diet

The tapeworm diet sounds like something out of a horror flick. The would-be dieter swallows a pill with a tapeworm inside it, giving the parasitic worm free rein in the gut. Once it sinks the hooks on its head into your intestine, tapeworms start growing — some up to 30 feet long — by eating the food that's supposed to nourish you. This can indeed cause weight loss and curb appetite, but the infection can be painful and might even kill you. Leave the eating of worms to creepy movies.

9. Heavy H₂O consumption

Water is vital, and we all need it. But some dieters over the years have believed if they just keep guzzling H₂O, they'll safely drop pounds. As WebMD reports, replacing sugary drinks with water is great, but those who just think adding glass after glass of water to their diet while changing nothing else won't see the scale go down. In fact, drinking too much water too fast can lead to water intoxication/poisoning — a potentially fatal disturbance in brain functions that results when the normal balance of electrolytes in the body is pushed outside safe limits.

10. Sleeping Beauty Diet

Well, this one's creepy. The Sleeping Beauty Diet is based on the idea that you can't eat while you sleep. True enough, but some desperate dieters over the years have apparently turned to sedation so they'd have less waking time to eat. A 2017 Vice article claims this vintage diet is enjoying a second life thanks to pro-anorexia blogs, and that adherents take sleeping pills and sedatives to knock themselves out. Rumors are that Elvis Presley tried this in the 1970s, but there's no definite proof of that, thank youverrahmuch. This idea seems tired to us — don't try it.

11. Corsets and waist trainers

Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone With the Wind" asked someone to pull her corset strings tighter so she'd have a visibly smaller waist. Most modern women give thanks that such painful clothing is as gone as the wind in the book's title, but over the last couple of years, a certain famous family seems to be trying to bring them back. The Kardashians of reality TV fame have been seen wearing various corset-like "waist trainers," which press in their flesh and squeeze the internal organs. As nutrition professor Stephan Ball told Life & Style, "you aren't going to lose body fat by cinching the waist."

12. Wrap yourself in plastic wrap

Plastic cling wrap works great to keep your potato salad fresh, or to cover a pan of brownies while you're driving to the school picnic. But don't think of it as a diet aid. Wrapping your belly area with plastic wrap and sweating up a

storm may help you drip off some weight temporarily, but that’s water weight that will return as soon as you hydrate. Keep the plastic wrap for kitchen needs, not fitness goals. And that’s a wrap!

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In case it hasn’t been clear, these are pretty bad ideas — not an easy path to fitness — and the Mayo Clinic agrees: “Fad diets aren’t a good long-term solution,” the Mayo Clinic warns. “For lasting results, your best bet is to eat a healthy diet based on fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean sources of protein.” [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Gael F. Cooper | July 18, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Dental Program Update 17 ► TRDP Ends Dec. 31, 2018

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) ends on Dec. 31, 2018. Beginning in 2019, dental and vision plans will be available through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). Now is a good time to become familiar with FEDVIP options. FEDVIP 2019 plans and rates will be online in the fall. But you can look at 2018 plans and rates now. FEDVIP offers a choice between 10 dental and 4 vision options. This fall will be your first chance to enroll in a FEDVIP dental or vision plan for 2019 coverage. If you're eligible, you can enroll in FEDVIP during the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season. This runs from Nov. 12 to Dec. 10.

Who is eligible?

- Retired service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP are eligible for FEDVIP dental coverage. Also, they're eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage if enrolled in a [TRICARE health plan](#).
- Family members of active duty service members who are enrolled in a TRICARE health plan are eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage.
- Children enrolled in or eligible for TRICARE Young Adult (a plan that qualified adult children can purchase after eligibility for "regular" TRICARE coverage ends at age 21 or 23 if enrolled in college) aren't eligible to enroll in FEDVIP.

When do you enroll?

- You can enroll in FEDVIP during the Federal Benefits Open Season. This year's open season runs from Nov. 12 through Dec. 10, 2018. Your coverage will begin on Jan. 1, 2019.
- If you currently have TRDP, you must enroll in a FEDVIP plan during the Federal Benefits Open Season to continue dental coverage for 2019.
- The Federal Benefits Open Season is your annual opportunity to enroll in, change, or cancel a FEDVIP dental or vision plan.

For more information, visit the [FEDVIP website](#). You can see if you're [eligible for FEDVIP in 2019](#). You can also [compare FEDVIP plans](#), [look up frequently asked questions](#), and [sign up for updates](#).

[Source: NVOAdvocate | July 18, 2018 ++]

Insect Bites ► Don't Get Bitten

With the summer season in full swing, Army Public Health Center entomologists recognize the undeniable presence of mosquitoes and ticks, and emphasize the importance of being aware that their bites can transmit illnesses. While not every mosquito or tick is infected, experts believe it is important to use protective measures to prevent bites and

the potential diseases they can carry. Dr. Robyn Nadolny, a biologist and program coordinator at the APHC Tick-Borne Disease Laboratory, emphasizes disease prevention saying, "ticks are everywhere and people need to make themselves aware." "Anyone can get a tick and get sick," she said.



Army Lt. Col. Jeffrey Clark, an entomologist and deputy chief of the Entomological Sciences Division at the APHC, stresses the importance of personal protection against bites from both ticks and mosquitoes. "The best way to ensure you don't get sick is to not get bitten," he said. Army entomologists say protecting yourself from tick and mosquito bites while outdoors is easy. Both Nadolny and Clark advise the use of an insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or IR3535 on exposed skin, and the use of the insecticide permethrin on clothing. The Army issues factory-treated permethrin uniforms to Soldiers as well as insect repellents containing the compounds mentioned above for use on skin to ensure they have maximum protection while conducting operations. These repellents, permethrin aerosols, and factory-treated permethrin clothing can also be purchased online or at any outdoor sports retailer.

Mosquitoes and ticks spread diseases to people, pets and other animals through pathogens in their saliva. As a result, prompt removal of a tick is one way to reduce risk of disease transmission, Nadolny said. This is because, for most tick-borne diseases, the tick needs to be attached for 24-48 hours to transmit pathogens. If a tick is found attached to the skin, experts recommend removing the tick by using pointy tweezers, grabbing the tick close to the skin and pulling it out slowly. Mosquitoes, on the other hand, can transmit diseases immediately upon biting you so bite prevention is absolutely critical, Clark said.

They also recommend doing a thorough tick check after spending time in tick habitat and putting clothes through a cycle on hot in the dryer immediately after getting home in order kill any ticks on the clothes. This is because, unlike mosquitoes, ticks can take their time finding a nice spot to bite you. Clark recalls times when ticks picked up on his clothing during the day were found crawling on him at night when he was working in Kenya. The ticks had crawled off his clothing and onto the bed in search of a meal. Other efforts can be taken to reduce the chances of getting a mosquito or tick-borne disease. These efforts focus on minimizing contact with these pests. By eliminating tall grass and brush around the home, one can reduce harborage areas for ticks and mosquitoes, as well as for other animals that might carry ticks into the yard. Minimizing areas that collect rain water like clogged gutters, trash, flower vases/pots and puddles denies breeding habitat for mosquitoes. Also, keeping doors closed and window screens in good repair will deny hungry mosquitoes access to your house. [Source: Health.mil News | Army Public Health Center | July 16, 2018 ++]

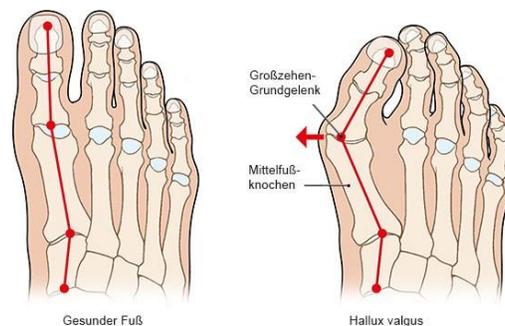
Bunions ► Cause, Prevention, & Treatment

Our feet often change as we get older. Sometimes the big toe starts leaning in towards the other toes, and a bump may start appearing on the joint at the base of the big toe. Known as a bunion (medical term: hallux valgus), this is more likely to happen in women. It is one of the most common foot deformities. Many people have a bunion with only mild

symptoms, or no symptoms at all. But bunions can also cause pain and pressure. Wearing suitable shoes can relieve the symptoms. Surgery is the only treatment that can get rid of bunions.

Symptoms

In people who have a bunion, the first metatarsal bone gradually moves sideways towards the other foot. As a result, the front of the foot becomes wider and the joint at the base of the big toe bulges out. The big toe leans in towards the other toes, sometimes deforming them too. Bunions can be painful, but not all of them are – even if they are very big. The pain is usually felt in the toes, on the bulging big toe joint or along the bottom of the foot. The big toe joint mainly hurts when you wear shoes that are too tight. If the bulge is very big, it might even hurt when wearing wide shoes. Bunions can sometimes damage nerves in the big toe, leading to numbness. The skin on the sole of the foot often becomes thick and hard. The big toe joint may be red and swollen, and sometimes inflamed too. It also becomes harder to move the big toe. Hammer toes or claw toes might develop as well. If that happens, the other toes are bent in the middle or push against each other. Corns often form on the affected toes. Bunions can increase the likelihood of osteoarthritis in the big toe joint and lead to chronic pain. Last, but not least, the resulting deformity can make you unsteady on your feet, increasing the risk of falls



Healthy foot and a bunion – as described in the article

Causes & Prevalence

Several factors influence the risk of developing a bunion. Some people are more likely to have bunions because of their genes. Contrary to popular belief, tight shoes aren't the main cause. But they can contribute to the development of bunions and make the problem worse – especially shoes with high heels and pointed toes. Some people regularly wear tight shoes and never get bunions. And some people nearly always wear comfortable shoes that are wide enough, but develop a bunion anyway. The risk of bunions is greater in people who have weak connective tissue, a short Achilles' tendon, short calf muscles, or a joint disease such as rheumatoid arthritis. But they can also develop as a result of having a splayfoot or flatfoot. Bunions are far more common in women than in men – probably because they tend to have weaker connective tissue in their feet and are more likely to wear tight, high-heeled shoes. It is estimated that about 1 out of 3 people over the age of 65 have a bunion to some degree.

Diagnosis

To determine whether foot problems are being caused by a bunion, the doctor will check whether the joint at the base of the big toe is bulging, look at the position of the toes in relation to each other, and see how well they can move. He or she will also look at the position of the legs. The examination is done while the patient is standing, walking and sitting. The doctor also looks at the state of the skin on the foot, checks for signs of osteoarthritis, and asks about the symptoms and how – if at all – they affect everyday life activities. To get a clearer diagnosis, the foot is x-rayed in a standing position. Bunions can vary a lot in severity. The severity is determined based on the angle between the big toe and the foot bone leading up to it (the first metatarsal bone). The difference between a “normal” big toe joint and a bunion isn't always clear. Many people have mild bunions that never cause any problems.

Prevention & Treatment

To prevent bunions, people are advised to wear comfortable, flat shoes. If there's enough room for the front of the foot, there's less pressure on the toes and the ball of the foot. Other advice includes walking barefoot in order to strengthen the foot muscles and allow the feet and toes to be in their natural position. Some doctors recommend using orthopedic shoe inserts (insoles). But there's not a lot of research on how well this can prevent bunions.

Bunions can get worse over time. Treatment is only needed if they cause problems. The most suitable treatment will depend on a number of factors, including the symptoms, the type of deformity, and whether the person has other medical conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes or vascular (blood vessel) disease. There are various conservative (non-surgical) treatments that aim to relieve the symptoms of bunions: Only a few good-quality studies have looked into how well they work, though.

- Splints: These toe-spacers or toe-supports are used to keep the big toe in a normal position. The aim is to relieve the symptoms and slow down the progression of the bunion – although it's not clear whether this is possible. They can't correct the misalignment. Splints are typically used at night.
- Well-fitting shoes: People are advised to wear flat shoes that give the toes enough room. If the toes or big toe joint hurt, bunion pads can be used. If the middle part of the foot hurts (metatarsalgia), the toes can be cushioned or supported using shoe inserts or wearing special "rocker bottom shoes." Walking barefoot as much as possible is also recommended.
- Physiotherapy: Special exercises can be done to try to strengthen and stretch the foot muscles.
- Painkillers: These may include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in the form of tablets or an ointment. Due to potential side effects, tablets should only be used over a short period of time.

The few studies on conservative treatments suggest that measures such as wearing well-fitting shoes and using splints can only provide very little relief. If the symptoms are severe and don't get better, surgery can relieve them. Surgery is the only way to treat the cause of the symptoms, by correcting the misalignment. But there's no guarantee that surgery will make the symptoms go away completely, and it can have side effects. For more on surgery go to <https://www.informedhealth.org/bunion-surgery.2626.en.html?part=behandlung-zy>.

[Source: InformedHealth.org | July 15, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 459 ► FEDVIP - Managing Insomnia

FEDVIP -- TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, or TRDP ends on December 31st, 2018. Beginning in 2019, dental and vision plans will be available through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Now is a good time to become familiar with FEDVIP options. FEDVIP offers a choice between ten dental and four vision options. Those eligible to enroll in FEDVIP include:

- Retired service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP are eligible for FEDVIP dental coverage. Also, they're eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage if enrolled in a TRICARE health plan.
- And family members of active duty service members who are enrolled in a TRICARE health plan are eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage.

Your first chance to enroll in FEDVIP is during the Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from November 12th through December 10th, 2018. Your coverage will begin on January 1st, 2019. The Federal Benefits Open Season will be your annual opportunity to enroll in, change, or cancel a FEDVIP dental or vision plan. Visit the FEDVIP website at www.tricare.benefeds.com to compare FEDVIP plans, look up frequently asked questions, and sign up for updates.

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Managing Insomnia -- Insomnia is a common sleep problem. According to the American Association of Sleep Medicine, it's considered a chronic problem if it happens three nights or more a week for at least three months. Here are some tips to help you beat insomnia:

- Stick to a schedule by making sure you go to bed and wake up at the same time daily.
- Try to limit your use of e-readers and devices before bed. Screens can actually prevent feelings of sleepiness.
- Create a peaceful place to sleep by making sure your room is quiet, dark, and at a comfortable temperature.
- Avoid stimulants such as alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine before bed.
- Make sure to get regular exercise.
- And avoid tossing and turning, and trying to force yourself to sleep. If you can't sleep get up and do a relaxing activity, like reading a book.

If you try these tips and still have problems falling or staying asleep, contact your doctor for an appointment. For more sleep tips, visit www.cdc.gov/sleep.

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The above is from the TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin, an update on the latest news to help you make the best use of your TRICARE benefit. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | July 18, 2018 ++]

TRICARE Podcast 460 ► Overseas Providers - TYA – Other TRICARE Resources

TRICARE Overseas Providers -- There are several types of providers when you need care overseas. Keep in mind, who you see and where you go for care will impact the amount of money you pay out of pocket. Make sure you understand your options to save yourself money and time. A TRICARE-authorized provider is any individual, institution or supplier that's licensed and certified to provide benefits under TRICARE. There are two types of overseas TRICARE-authorized providers, network and non-network: An overseas TRICARE network provider is a provider who has a formal agreement with International SOS to provide care for beneficiaries enrolled in the TRICARE Overseas Program, also known as TOP. Network providers provide cashless/claimless care to beneficiaries and will file claims on your behalf.

- An overseas participating non-network provider is a provider who doesn't have a formal agreement with International SOS, but most agree to provide cashless/claimless care to beneficiaries in TOP Prime and TOP Prime Remote areas. They may also file claims on your behalf. Non-network providers aren't obligated to submit claims on behalf of TOP Select beneficiaries.
- An overseas nonparticipating non-network provider is a provider that hasn't agreed to participate in the TRICARE Overseas Program. You may be required to pay upfront and file a claim to get money back. Be aware, outside of the U.S. and U.S. territories, there may be no limit how much these providers can bill.

The only preferred provider network is available in the Philippines. If you live or travel in the Philippines, you're required to see a certified provider for care. A certified provider can charge TRICARE for your claims and may not limit how much they bill. However, TRICARE will reimburse charges based on the TRICARE Philippine Foreign Fee Schedule. To learn more about your TRICARE overseas benefit, refer to our overseas newsletter at tricare.mil/publications.

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TRICARE Young Adult -- Have you recently graduated college, but haven't found your dream job yet? Or did you just turn 21, and you're not enrolled in college? If you're worried about your health care coverage as a military dependent, TRICARE Young Adult, also known as TYA, may give you the coverage you need. TYA eligibility begins when regular TRICARE coverage ends at age 21, or age 23 if enrolled in college. TYA is an option for

unmarried, young adult dependents who have aged out of regular TRICARE coverage and is only available as an individual plan. The TYA benefit includes either TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select coverage worldwide. The sponsor's status and your location determine eligibility to purchase TYA Prime or TYA Select. TYA coverage includes medical and pharmacy benefits, but excludes dental coverage. You qualify to purchase TYA if you're:

- An unmarried, adult child of an eligible uniformed service sponsor;
- At least age 21, or 23 if a college graduate, but not yet 26 years old;
- Not eligible to enroll in an employer-sponsored health plan based on your own employment;
- Not otherwise eligible for TRICARE program coverage.

You're required to pay monthly premiums with TYA. Your TRICARE plan and your sponsor's military status determine what you pay for covered services. If you qualify for TYA, you must actively enroll in and purchase the plan online, by phone, fax, or mail. To learn more and decide if TRICARE Young Adult is the right fit for you, visit the webpage at tricare.mil/plans/healthplans/TYA.

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Other TRICARE Resources -- Do you have questions about your TRICARE medical or dental benefit? Visit the TRICARE publications webpage at TRICARE.mil/publications for helpful resources. You can view and download TRICARE handbooks, fact sheets, newsletters, and other resources. Select categories from the sub-headings or use the search field to search all publications. You'll find resources ranging from broad topics like the TRICARE Plans Overview to detailed topics like the Dental Options Fact Sheet. Products are continuously updated and added.

Check out the TRICARE Stateside Guide, for beneficiaries living in the U.S. If you live overseas, check out the TRICARE Overseas Program Handbook. These resources provide information about health plans, covered services, enrollment guidance, and more. And, if you have suggestions for new products or feedback on existing products, we would love to hear from you! Take the publications survey. A link to the survey is at TRICARE.mil/publications.

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The above is from the TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin, an update on the latest news to help you make the best use of your TRICARE benefit. [Source: <http://www.tricare.mil/podcast> | July 27, 2018 ++]

*** Finances ***



Retirement Tax Credit ► **IRS | 75% of Those Eligible Fail To Claim It**

In less than six months, it will be income-tax season again. And as in years past, millions of taxpayers likely will miss the opportunity to slash their tax bill by up to \$2,000 simply because they overlook a little-known federal tax break. According to the Internal Revenue Service, the Saver's Credit is worth 10 percent, 20 percent or even 50 percent of your retirement plan contributions up to \$2,000 (or \$4,000 for married people filing joint tax returns). And yet, just 25 percent of workers in households that earn less than \$50,000 are even aware of this credit, according to a survey by the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies.

Your eligibility for the credit — and the size of the break you will receive — depends largely on your income and tax filing status, however. To be eligible for the Saver’s Credit, you must:

- Be an adult who is not a full-time student and not claimed as a dependent on someone else’s tax return.
- Have an adjusted gross income of no more than \$31,500 (or \$63,000 for married people filing jointly; or \$47,250 for people filing as heads of household).
- Contribute to a certain type of retirement plan (see below).

The percentage of your retirement contributions eligible for the Saver’s Credit also depends on your income. Click the IRS link <https://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-participant-employee/retirement-savings-contributions-savers-credit> for a breakdown. Contributions to various types of retirement plans are eligible for the Saver’s Credit:

- Traditional, Roth, or SIMPLE IRA
- 401(k) contribution pension account defined in subsection 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- SARSEP (Salary Reduction Simplified Employee Pension Plan)
- 403(b) Tax-Sheltered Annuity Plan
- 501(c)(18) Funded Pension Trust
- Governmental 457(b) plan

Failing to take advantage of such tax breaks is No. 1 among the “[5 Blunders You’re Making When Investing for Retirement](#).” Putting your retirement money in a nonretirement bank account, CD or brokerage account isn’t going to cut it. These options all share a glaring weakness: They offer no tax advantages to the saver. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsheer | July 17, 2018 ++]

VA Home Loan Update 65 ► What It Can Be Used For

A two-story home in the suburbs, a condo in the city, a modular home in the countryside. For many servicemembers and their families, buying a home and laying down roots is a powerful step to reentering civilian life. No matter what a Veteran’s ideal home, a VA home loan can help. For more than 70 years, returning servicemembers have been able to purchase homes without a down payment or perfect credit through loans issued by approved lenders like Veterans First Mortgage, whose loans are backed by the VA and the U.S. government. Some conventional loans may require at least 20% down, making homeownership a challenge for many Veterans. With their competitive rates, no private mortgage insurance, and option for no down payment, VA loans have made homeownership possible for millions of Veterans and their families. They may be able to do the same for you.

“During the turmoil of the mid-2000’s, when the housing bubble burst, the VA loan program offered a level of service and help that we couldn’t get through a conventional mortgage,” says Jamie Cox, who served as an officer in the Marine Corps for 20 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. Cox has used VA home loans several times throughout his career. Now in retirement, he’s used a VA loan to buy a home in Texas. “It’s a great benefit to have.” The VA loan is one reason that 79% of Veterans own their homes versus 63% of the non-veteran population, according to Forbes. While the VA home loan program is flexible, it also has its limits. It’s important to understand what a VA loan can be used for to see how it fits in with your goal of homeownership. Qualified borrowers can use the loan for many purposes, including buying a move-in ready, existing home. Most borrowers who qualify for a VA loan end up purchasing a single-family home. You can also refinance your home with a VA cash out refinance, and use the money to upgrade or repair your current home. Click here to learn more of the VA loan process.

Borrowers can also buy a townhouse or condo in a development that’s been approved by the VA. If a property you’re interested in isn’t approved by the VA, don’t worry. Your lender can help your Home Owner’s Association (HOA) ask the VA to approve the development. The process, however, could take several months to complete, so be prepared to wait. VA loans can be used for a multiunit property of up to four units per eligible borrower as well, as long as the borrowers live in one of the units full-time. Veterans can also refinance their existing home loans into the VA program, where they may get better rates. Veterans often ask, can I build my own home with a VA loan? Yes. However, it can be tricky to find a VA lender willing to make a zero down payment construction loan. Builders and

home plans must both be VA-approved, and multiple inspections are required. Builders also have to provide a one-year warranty on homes. Some service members work around these issues by financing their new construction with a local institution, and then later refinancing the loan on their newly built home into the VA program.

Veterans can also buy a mobile home, or a manufactured home, through the VA program, though not all lenders will finance mobile homes since they can be risky investments for lenders; their value decreases over time. Getting a VA loan for a mobile home is more feasible if you own the land where your mobile home will be parked. Also, mobile and manufactured homes must be affixed to their foundations - no ifs, ands, or buts. Prefabricated, or modular, homes are easier to finance through VA loans than mobile homes. These homes are built at a factory in sections and then put together on site by a contractor. Modular homes—which must be attached to a permanent foundation—are more likely to appreciate than mobile homes.

Say you want to buy a property as an investment, to lease out to tenants. Can a VA loan cover that? The VA is clear: that's a no go. VA loans also can't be used as a business loan, to buy farm land that doesn't house your permanent residence, or to buy a second home. Co-ops also aren't allowed. What about buying a home abroad? Also, not allowed, says the VA. The spirit of the VA loan program lies in primary residences that Veterans live in as their primary residences, not vacation homes. Loans, however, can be used in U.S. territories, including American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Borrowers often wonder about houseboats or RVs. The VA says no. Any property without a fixed, permanent foundation can't be considered for a VA loan. If you're looking for a single-family home, a condo, town home or even a mobile or modular home, however, a VA loan is a great option and should be explored. [Source: Military.com | July 26, 2018 ++]

Social Security Statement ► **New Access Policy**

With instant access to your Social Security Statement at any time, you will no longer receive one periodically in the mail, saving money and the environment. It is recommended that you review your statement at least annually. The new procedure to do that is to go to <https://www.socialsecurity.gov/reviewyourstatement>. Upon accessing the site you will be required to enter your user name and password. If you don't have an account you will be given the opportunity to create one (Note that you password must be updated at least every 6 months). Next you will be asked if the email on file is your current email. Upon responding you will sent a separate email providing a security code. Upon entering it you will be provided a 'Terms of Service' which you must agree to continue. After clicking 'Next' you Social Security Statement will open. It will include:

1. A message from Social Security which contains:
 - Estimated Benefits
 - Last Reported Earnings
 - Opportunity to view your earnings record
2. Benefits & Payments
 - What you are receiving
 - When your next payment will be received and its amount
 - Opportunity to get an official Benefits verification letter if you need proof that you receive Social Security.
3. Social Security Card Replacement option if you need to request a new card
4. Profile Access which allows you to view or update your:
 - Personal information
 - Contact information
 - Direct deposit information

[Source: www.ssa.gov | my Social Security | July 18, 2018 ++]

Car Insurance Update 18 ► If a Report on You Contains Errors, it Can Cost You

Surprise! Insurers can check your auto claim history before setting your premium. Thus, it is smart to first learn what they know about your past before you buy. Hopefully you get a free credit report every year. Your credit scores — which affect your finances in many ways — are based on the information in those reports. Don't stop there, though. You can also get free copies of the reports that impact your car insurance premium. Just as your credit report is a summary of your credit history, these reports offer summaries of your insurance claims and losses. Insurers may use these reports to evaluate you. So, if a report contains errors, it can cost you.

How to get a copy of your car insurance report

According to the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), three companies generate car insurance reports. They — and the CFPB's descriptions of them — are:

- “CLUE (Comprehensive Loss Underwriting Exchange): Collects and reports information on ... automobile insurance coverage and losses.
- Drivers History: Provides reports to its insurance clients containing information and data collected from open public sources and governmental agencies regarding driving violations issued to specific individuals.
- Insurance Information Exchange (iiX): Collects and reports motor vehicle records, including traffic violation data to insurance providers and prospective employers.”

Under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, all consumer reporting companies must give you a copy of the information in your car insurance report if you request it. Most consumer reporting companies — including CLUE and Insurance Information Exchange — must give you a free copy of your report once every 12 months. Others — including Drivers History — can charge you a “reasonable fee” for your report. That fee is currently capped at \$12. To request a copy of your car insurance report, contact one — or all — of the three companies above directly. The CFPB's “[list of consumer reporting companies](#)” contains each company's website address, phone number and mailing address. In the case of CLUE and Insurance Information Exchange, the list also contains a link to an [online form](#) you can use to request a report.

Why you must check your car insurance report

If you only pull your report from one company, perhaps make that CLUE. According to the nonprofit [Consumer Federation of America](#), more than 95 percent of auto insurers provide data to CLUE. That data can include:

- Policy information (such as name, date of birth and policy number)
- Claim information (such as dates of losses, types of losses and amounts paid)
- Vehicle information
- “Fault Indicator”

An error on this report can cost you money in the form of unnecessarily high insurance rates. The Consumer Federation of America urges you to periodically request a copy of your CLUE report. A company called LexisNexis Risk Solutions maintains CLUE reports. You can request your report from this company three ways:

- By mail: Print the [request form](#) and mail it to the address at the top of the form.
- By phone: Call 866-312-8076.
- Online: Visit LexisNexis Risk Solutions' “FACT Act Disclosure” [webpage](#) and click on the red “Order Now” button.

Once you get the report, review all of the data fields — particularly the “Fault Indicator” field. The federation explains: “This is where the insurer ... indicates who was at fault for a particular accident. The accuracy of the Fault

Indicator field is critical. When you apply for auto insurance, insurers will obtain a copy of your CLUE report and possibly do that as well when your [policy] comes up for renewal.” If the report is not accurate, the Consumer Federation of America urges you to request correction in writing to both LexisNexis Risk Solutions and the insurance carrier involved.

Federal law protects you when disputing consumer reports. According to the CFPB: “If you find information in your consumer report that you believe is inaccurate or incomplete, you have the legal right to dispute the report’s content with the consumer reporting company and the company that shared the information to the reporting company, such as your lender.” For more tips to help drive down your premium, check out “[The Complete Guide to Getting the Best Possible Deal on Car Insurance](#).”

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsher | July 17, 2018++]

Disability Insurance Update 01 ► Should You Get It

If you get hurt or sick, hopefully you’ve got health insurance that’s going to pay your medical bills. But what’s going to pay your other bills? Who’s going to pay your mortgage if you can’t work for months? Who’s going to pay for groceries? That’s what disability insurance does. It replaces a portion of your income so you can continue to meet your obligations if you can’t work after the sick leave runs out. There are two types of disability insurance: short-term disability and long-term disability. Short-term disability insurance typically pays out for three to six months. It’s called supplemental insurance, and it’s most often offered by employers. You can buy it outside of work, but generally speaking it’s an employee benefit. Long-term disability can cover you for two years, 10 years or even until you reach retirement age. Long-term disability can also be offered by your employer, but you can buy it yourself as well.

Long-term disability insurance

This is essentially insurance for your income. If you become sick or injured, you may be forced to miss work. Health insurance will only cover the cost of some of your medical procedures and recovery, but can’t help pay other bills. If you’re unable to work and can’t receive a paycheck, you run the risk of missing payments on your mortgage, utilities, or other bills. There are several things to consider when deciding on which is the best long-term disability insurance policy for you. Some important terms to know are:

- Coverage amount – The amount of money your insurer will pay to you. It is recognized as a percentage of your gross income. A typical benefit amount is 60% of your gross income. Also known as the participation rate.
- Waiting period – How long after you become disabled before you will begin receiving benefits. Typical waiting periods are 30, 60, 90, 180, or 365 days. We recommend waiting a period of 90 days for the most cost-effective policies. Also known as the elimination period.
- Benefit period – The amount of time you will receive benefits. Typically benefit periods are two years, five years, ten years, or until your retirement. Because the average disability lasts around three years, we recommend at least a policy with a five-year benefit period. A benefit period that extends to age 65 offers full protection and is the most common policy.
- Non-cancelable – A policy that is non-cancelable means that the insurer can never legally change the terms of the policy, including the premium.
- Own occupation – An own occupation policy will continue to pay out if you can’t work in your designated job, even if you are able to work elsewhere in another capacity.
- Exclusions – Exclusions limit what will be covered by a long-term disability policy. These are often pre-existing health conditions (for example, a policy may exclude certain pre-existing back ailments) but may also include potentially risky hobbies like skydiving.

Costs

Average long-term disability insurance rates cost between 1-3% of your annual salary, but the exact cost will depend on a number of factors about the applicant and the policy chosen. Applicant factors:

- Age – The older you are, the more expensive your policy.
- Gender – Women make more disability claims and therefore pay more for policies.
- Smoking history – Smokers or recent smokers will have more expensive policies.
- State of residence – Residents of states with a higher number of disability claims will pay more for policies.
- Occupation class – Depending on elements of your job (including manual duties, travel, and more) you may be classified as having a “riskier” occupation and pay more for your policy.
- Policy factors:
 - Coverage amount – Higher coverage amounts result in higher premiums.
 - Benefit period – Longer benefit periods result in higher premiums. The most cost-effective benefit period is five years, but full coverage extends to age 65.
 - Waiting period – Longer waiting periods result in lower premiums. The most cost-effective waiting period is 90 days.
 - Built-in policy features – Some features like own occupation coverage may come standard in policies from some carriers and may affect the cost of the policy.
 - Riders – Additional feature that don’t come standard may raise the cost of the policy.

Do you need it?

You may think, “I don’t need disability. I’m already covered by workers’ compensation and then there’s Social Security Disability Insurance as well.” True, but workers’ comp only applies to accidents at work. Qualifying for Social Security Disability Insurance isn’t easy. And neither one of these solutions pay much. When thinking about disability insurance, start by asking yourself some questions. For example, how risk-averse are you? If you’re afraid of losing your income due to an accident or illness, then the case for this insurance becomes more compelling. If losing your income could cripple your family, or if you can get insurance cheap through your employer, it might be worth considering. Bottom line: Do a lot of reading before you even start looking at this type of insurance. It’s not cheap, and there are lots of variables, such as:

- When does it kick in?
- How much of your income does it replace?
- How long does it last?
- How disabled do you have to be?

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Stacy Johnson | July 23, 2018 ++]

Air Conditioning ► Build a DIY For Less Than \$10

Summertime means heat, and that can make living not so easy. The National Weather Service reports that on average more than 130 people a year die due to the heat. The Mayo Clinic explains why hot weather puts extra stress on your body: “To help cool itself, your body sends more blood to circulate through your skin. This leaves less blood for your muscles, which in turn increases your heart rate. ... Under normal conditions, your skin, blood vessels and perspiration level adjust to the heat. But these natural cooling systems may fail if you’re exposed to high temperatures and humidity for too long ...

The good news is you may not need to run out and buy an air conditioner. There is a cheap, low-tech way to turn an ice chest into an air conditioner. You need only a few items to build a DIY air conditioner. None is expensive, and some you may already have around the house. They are:

- A cheap Styrofoam ice chest
- Two dryer vents or PVC joints
- A small fan
- Ice to fill the ice chest

Follow these steps to ready your materials for assembly or go to https://youtu.be/arB2T_FtxYk and/or watch the video on how to assemble it:

- Set the vents on top of the ice chest lid, facing down, with one vent on each side of the lid. Space them far enough apart that the fan will be able to fit between them.
- Trace around the perimeter of the vents, creating two circles on the ice chest lid.
- Use a serrated knife to cut out the two circles, creating holes for the vents. Make sure the holes are sized such that the vents will be able to fit snugly inside them.
- Cut out a hole for the fan, making sure this hole is a bit smaller than the fan itself. You want the fan to be able to rest on top of the chest but not fall into it.

To construct your air conditioner fit the vents snugly in their holes, place the fan on top of its hole, facing down so it will blow air into the ice chest, and fill the cooler with ice. Then, all that's left is to turn on your air conditioner by turning on the fan. The fan will force air into the chest, over the ice and out the vents — which you may wish to angle in a particular direction. As a result, you'll feel cold air blowing out of the chest. It should be around the same temperature as air from a traditional air conditioner — until the ice melts. If you keep a few water-filled milk jugs in your freezer, you'll always have a free supply of ice blocks that will last a long time in the cooler. If a heat wave knocks out your electricity? Don't sweat. Instead, get a battery-powered fan, and your air conditioner will work in a blackout as long as you've got ice. [Source: [MoneyTalksNews](#) | Jim Gold | July 24, 2018 ++]

Money Flipping Scam Update 02 ► Fulfilling Get-Rich-Quick Dream

Watch Out For "Money Flipping" Cons on Social Media. Want to turn \$500 into \$10,000 with very little effort? Of course you do! Scammers are taking advantage of people's get-rich-quick dreams by promoting "money flipping" scams on social media, and BBB is seeing dozens of reports each month about these cons.

How the Scam Works:

- You see a photo of a pile cash on Instagram or Twitter. In the caption, the user brags about having "flipped" a couple hundred dollars into thousands. Want to do it, too? It's easy. Just message the account holder.
- The con artist will ask you to wire money or share the PIN of a prepaid debit card. Normally, the scammer asks for the initial investment, typically \$250 to \$500, and a fee. In recent reports, con artists have added a new twist. The scammer claims that your initial investment has made so much money, you now need to pay taxes on it.
- Don't fall for it! Every dollar you pay for money flipping – from the initial "investment" to the alleged taxes – is going straight into the scammer's pocket. You won't see any of your money again.

Tips to Avoid Money Flipping Scams:

- Use common sense. Anyone who claims to be able to turn a small investment into piles of cash in a short time is a scam artist.
- Search online. Before contacting the potential scammer, do a web search of their username or phone number. If it's a scam, chances are that other victims have posted complaints and information online.
- Don't share your debit card, card number, or PIN. No legitimate service would ever ask you to share this information

- Be wary of prepaid debit cards. Treat prepaid debit cards and gift cards like cash. Once you give away the account information, you will not be able to get that money back.

For More Information

Many investment scams use similar techniques, see BBB.org/InvestmentScam. To learn more about scams, go to BBB Scam Tips (bbb.org/ScamTips). If you've been targeted by this scam, help others avoid the same problem by reporting your experience to BBB Scam Tracker.

[Source: BBB Scam Alert | July 27, 2018 ++]

Tax Burden for Idaho Retired Vets ► As of July 2018

Many people planning to retire use the presence or absence of a state income tax as a litmus test for a retirement destination. This is a serious miscalculation since higher sales and property taxes can more than offset the lack of a state income tax. The lack of a state income tax doesn't necessarily ensure a low total tax burden. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in Idaho:

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 6% (prescription drugs exempt); Some Idaho resort cities, counties and auditorium districts have a local option sales tax in addition to the state sales tax which could add an additional 3%.

Gasoline Tax: 51.4 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 57.4 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: 57 cents/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Low 1.125 up to \$1504 — High \$521.63 + 6.924% of amount over \$11,279. Note: Rate range for single filer. Double dollar amounts for married filers. Bracket levels and widths are adjusted for inflation each year. Details at <http://tax.idaho.gov/i-1110.cfm>

Income Brackets: Seven. Single - Lowest up to \$1471; Highest \$11,043 and over. Double if married

Personal Exemptions: Single – \$0; Married – \$0; Dependents – \$0.

Standard Deduction: Single – \$6,350; Married filing jointly – \$12,700. Standard deductions amounts adjusted for inflation each year.

Medical/Dental Deduction: Federal amount

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Tax: Generally, all income received by an Idaho resident, regardless of the source, is subject to Idaho income tax. Idaho does not tax social security benefits, benefits paid by the Railroad Retirement Board or Canadian social security benefits (OAS or CPP). Idaho does offer a retirement benefits deduction if you are age 65 or older, or if you are disabled and age 62 or older, and receive qualifying retirement benefits. Persons using the “married filing separate” filing status are not eligible for this benefit. The following are the types of benefits that qualify for this deduction (PERSI does not qualify for this benefit):

- Civil Service Employees: Retirement annuities paid by the United States to a retired civil service employee or the unremarried widow of the employee if the recipient is age 65 or older, or disabled and age 62 or older.
- Idaho Firemen: Retirement benefits paid from the firemen's retirement fund of the state of Idaho to a retired fireman or the unremarried widow of a retired fireman if the recipient is age 65 or older, or disabled and age 62 or older.

- Policemen of an Idaho city: Retirement benefits paid from the policemen's retirement fund of a city within Idaho to a retired policeman or the unremarried widow of a retired policeman if the recipient is age 65 or older, or disabled and age 62 or older
- **Servicemen:** Retirement benefits paid by the United States to a retired member of the U.S. military service or the unremarried widow of such member if the recipient is age 65 or older, or disabled and age 62 or older.

The amount deducted must be reduced by retirement benefits paid under the Federal Social Security Act and the Federal Railroad Retirement Act. The maximum amount that may currently be deducted is:

- Married filing jointly (age 65 or older): \$48,366
- Married filing jointly (age 62 or older and disabled): \$48,366
- Single (age 65 or older): \$32,244
- Single (age 62 or older and disabled): \$32,244

Retired Military Pay: Follows federal tax rules.

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

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

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

Military Spouses Residency Relief Act: The earned income of qualifying spouses of Idaho servicemembers is no longer subject to Idaho income tax due to the federal Military Spouses Residency Relief Act (SR 475, HR 1182) passed in November of 2009.

- You are married to a service member who is serving in Idaho and has registered in the military with another state as a home of record; and
- You have located to Idaho with the service member and you have the same domicile (permanent residence) as the service member's home of record.

Refer to <http://tax.idaho.gov/i-1011.cfm> for specific tax information that applies to military service members and their families.

Property Taxes

Taxable property is assessed at its full market value. A general property tax is imposed for local purposes and is limited to 1% of market value. The state property tax is suspended as long as the sales and use tax are in effect. There is no intangible personal property tax. A homeowner's primary residence is eligible for an exemption of 50% of the assessed value of the home, up to a maximum of \$100,000. If you are a qualified Idaho homeowner, you may be eligible for the circuit breaker program. To qualify you must own and occupy the home as your primary residence, you must meet income requirements and must be either age 65 or older, a widow(er), blind, former POW, fatherless or motherless minor, or a qualifying disabled person. This program may reduce property taxes on your home and up to one acre of land by as much as \$1,320. For more information on property and other taxes, go to <http://tax.idaho.gov/p-propertytax.cfm> or call 208-334-7733 or 800-972-7660.

Idaho has a property tax deferral program. For details go to <http://tax.idaho.gov/i-1128.cfm>

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

At the current time Idaho does not have an inheritance tax, gift tax or an estate tax.

Other State Tax Rates

To compare the above sales, 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>.
- 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>.

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For further information visit the Idaho State Tax Commission site <http://tax.idaho.gov/index.cfm>. [Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-by-state> | Jul 2018 ++]

* General Interest *



Notes of Interest ► 16 thru 31 JUL 2018

- **Ann Margaret.** **Correction.** Ann was mistakenly reported as deceased in a 1 JUL 2018 RAO Bulletin article. She remains very much alive at age 77 and hopefully will continue to be for many years to come.
- **West Point.** Lt. Gen. Darryl A. Williams, a 1983 U.S. Military Academy graduate who has held high-ranking Army posts in Europe and Asia, will become the first black officer to command West Point in its 216-year history, academy officials announced.
- **Carol Burnett Show.** For those of you who remember this show and Tim Conway, his first appearance as the Oldest Man character can be seen at https://youtu.be/S_9RWUV8MvA.
- **COLA.** The June 2018 CPI is 246.196, 2.7 percent above the FY 2018 COLA baseline. The CPI for July 2018 is scheduled to be released on August 10th.
- **Government Pay Freeze.** The House on 19 JUL approved a fiscal 2019 appropriations package 217-199 that effectively endorses President Trump's proposal to freeze federal civilian employees' pay next year, putting it at odds with the Senate on the issue.
- **Golden Knights Dispute.** The Las Vegas hockey team and the U.S. Army's long trademark battle has finally come to an end. Both sides entered into a trademark coexistence agreement regarding usage of the 'Golden Knights' mark and name. The Army will continue using the name Golden Knights and variations of it in connection with its parachute exhibition team.
- **Smoking.** One-quarter of American adults now say smoking should be completely outlawed in the U.S., according to a Gallup poll conducted in a July 1-11 poll. Gallup has been asking American's for nearly three decades whether they believe smoking in the country should be made "totally illegal." The 25 percent of respondents who said "yes," is the highest percentage of people who responded that way to date.
- **Life Hacks.** Check out https://youtu.be/UY_3SM9Q-pY for some interesting ways to deal with scratched doors, opening jars, stained fingers, falling asleep, temporary tattoos, and splinters.
- **ISIS.** The Islamic State's once-grand and terrorizing hold of Syria is down to just a small patch of land about 20 miles by six miles along the Euphrates River and is expected to fall within just a few months, a top French commander involved in operations there said 24 JUL. The U.S. has repeatedly said it is only in Syria to fight ISIS, however last week National Security Adviser John Bolton suggested U.S. troops would stay in country to stem Iranian influence.

- **White House.** The White House will no longer tell the public when Donald Trump speaks to foreign heads of government. It did not respond to a request for comment on how it will report the president's calls with foreign leaders. As long as silence is the policy, any foreign leader—or comedian—will be able to claim they've spoken to Trump and agreed, or disagreed, about any issue. Unless there are more tapes.
- **God Bless America.** For those of you who are 60+ go to https://youtu.be/UFv-fgQ9D_Y to reminisce on those in the entertainment business who are no longer with us.
- **Iran.** Iran's currency has plunged to another record low, dropping past 100,000 rials to the US dollar, as Iranians brace for 7 AUG when the United States is due to reimpose the first batch of sanctions on their economy.
- **Reward.** Army Criminal Investigation Command and the FBI have teamed up on the investigation of a spouse who was found dead in her home near Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, while her husband was deployed to South Korea. Authorities are offering up to a \$20,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction in the 10 JUL murder of Abree Boykin, 24, according to a 30 JUL release from CID.
- **Bahrain.** The military is raising the minimum drinking age for service members and Defense Department personnel in Bahrain to 21 years old.

[Source: Various | July 31, 2018 ++]

Jane Fonda Update 01 ► Regret Expressed for Controversial North Korea 1972 Visit

Jane Fonda said she's still confronted by Vietnam War veterans over [her 1970s anti-war activism](#) and welcomes the encounters. Such moments provide an opportunity to talk, she said, which needs to be done with what Fonda called "an open mind and a soft heart." The actress drew bitter criticism after being photographed atop an anti-aircraft gun during a controversial 1972 visit to North Vietnam. Meeting with TV critics 25 JUL to discuss a new HBO documentary on her life, she expressed regret for that moment. She said it was thoughtless to perch on the gun and called it "horrible" to think about the message her action sent to soldiers and their families, she said.



Jane Fonda speaks during the "Jane Fonda in Five Acts" panel during the HBO Television Critics Association Summer Press Tour at The Beverly Hilton hotel on Wednesday, July 25, 2018, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

It was an earlier meeting with U.S. soldiers in Paris that sparked her activism, Fonda said. Her belief that America always fought on "the side of the angels" was shaken by what she heard and later read. Her late father, the famed actor Henry Fonda, was a World War II veteran and Jane Fonda had served as "Miss Army Recruiter" in 1954. She felt betrayed and lied to by America's leadership over the war and decided she would do everything possible to help stop it as part of a movement, Fonda said. At age 80, Fonda looks back at her life in HBO's "Jane Fonda in Five Acts," from director-producer Susan Lacy and debuting this fall. Fonda continues to work, starring opposite Lily Tomlin on the Netflix series "Grace and Frankie" and working with Tomlin and Dolly Parton on a sequel to their hit 1980 movie "9 to 5." [Source: The Associated Press | Lynn Elber July 27, 2018 ++]

Cyber Defense Update 01 ► Russia's 2017 U.S. Hack Evaluated as Reconnaissance

Russian hackers who penetrated hundreds of U.S. utilities, manufacturing plants and other facilities last year gained access by using the most conventional of phishing tools, tricking staffers into entering passwords, officials say. The Russians targeted mostly the energy sector but also nuclear, aviation and critical manufacturing. Jonathan Homer, head of Homeland Security's industrial control system analysis, said during a briefing 25 JUL. They had the capability to cause mass blackouts, but chose not to, and there was no threat the grid would go down, the officials said. Instead, the hackers appeared more focused on reconnaissance.

The 2017 attack prompted a rebuke from the Trump administration earlier this year. The victims ranged from smaller companies with no major budget for cybersecurity to large corporations with sophisticated security networks, Homer said. Vendors were targeted because of their direct access to the utilities — companies that run diagnostics or update software or perform other tasks to keep the systems running. The victims were not identified. "This is a situation where they went in and said this is what they're looking for, and found weaknesses there," Homer said. The newly disclosed details of the 2017 hack come amid growing concerns over Russia's efforts to interfere in the November midterm elections and the recent indictments of a dozen Russian military intelligence officers accused of infiltrating the Clinton presidential campaign and the Democratic Party and releasing tens of thousands of private communications.

U.S. national security officials previously said they had determined that Russian intelligence and others were behind the cyberattacks. They said the hackers chose their targets methodically, obtained access to computer systems, conducted "network reconnaissance" and then attempted to cover their tracks by deleting evidence of the intrusions. The U.S. government said it had helped the industries expel the Russians from all systems known to have been penetrated. It wasn't clear if more had been compromised since news of the attack was made public earlier this year. Wednesday's briefing was intended to help businesses defend themselves from future attacks. Homer said the attack began in 2016 with a single breach that stayed dormant nearly a year before other infiltrations occurred in concentric circles closer and closer to the U.S. systems.

Hackers used a mix of real people downloading open-source information from company websites like photos and other data, and attacks that trick employees into entering passwords on spoofed websites. Hackers then use the passwords to compromise corporate networks. It's possible some of the companies are unaware they were compromised, because hackers used credentials of actual employees to get inside, which could make it harder to detect, officials said. [Source: The Associated Press | Colleen Long | July 26, 2018 ++]

Home Security Update 01 ► More Tips

Each year, there are reportedly 2.2 million burglaries that occur in the US. That's one every 15 seconds. Security companies use that fact to scare you into purchasing the best alarm and surveillance systems money can buy. If you want to spend all your hard-earned cash on that sophisticated gear, go ahead — that's entirely your choice. But, instead of going out and breaking your bank on enhancing your home's security, former Navy SEAL Clint Emerson, author of 100 Deadly Skills: The SEAL Operative's Guide to Eluding Pursuers, Evading Capture, and Surviving Any Dangerous Situation, wants to show you a few cheap, simple tricks that'll help protect your family.

1. **Make your property appear unpredictable** -- Intentionally display evidence of having children or dogs in your home. When your home has a great element of unpredictability — both children and dogs can make a lot of noise at a moment's notice — burglars will stay away. Is it a pit bull or a cute, little poodle? There's no way to know.
2. **Reinforce your exterior door frames** -- Burglars like to kick in entrances or pry them open with crowbars. By drilling in a few extra wood screws into your door's frame, you'll increase its sturdiness. Make sure you reinforce above and below the lock plates. Also, make sure you have solid door locks. Locks don't keep intruders out entirely, but the better the lock, the longer it'll take to bypass, giving you time to prepare.
3. **Have some security signage on the perimeter** -- Security stickers on your windows and signs posted on your front lawn show thieves that you might have your house wired — even if you don't. You can get these signs simply by having a sales representative come to your home for a consultation. There are some good security companies out there, so you may want to consider purchasing their services. Either way, it's free advertisement for them if you post a sign, so they'll be happy to provide.
4. **CCTV cameras** -- Closed-circuit television cameras are relatively inexpensive and can be found easily on Amazon. If you're going to spend cash on cameras, make sure they're high enough quality to ID an intruder. If your cameras' video quality is too pixelated, it'll do you no good.
5. **Light up your property** -- Keeping the exterior portions of your home well-lit takes away any nighttime concealment factor from someone who is looking to break into your home. Since bad guys don't want to be seen, blanketing your home with 360-degrees of light should provide added safety. Good luck not being seen lurking around this well-lit home.
6. **Use your neighbors as a security resource** -- A burglar will almost always look to your mailbox to see if you've let it pile up for a few days — it often means nobody's home. If you know you're going out of town, ask a trusted neighbor to pick up your mail and to keep an extra eye on the place. If they help you, make sure you repay them in kind.

[Source: Frontlines of Freedom Newsletter | July 27, 2018 ++]

Airport Security Update 05 ► Beware of the Wi-Fi | Not Secure

Do you hop on the public Wi-Fi connection every time you wait around at an airport? Beware that there is a big — and potentially costly — danger if you use that connection like it was your personal internet connection at home. Publicly accessible networks — like those airports offer — are not secure. They generally lack security measures such as protected passwords or encryption. In short, using a public Wi-Fi network can put you at risk of hacking or identity theft. Some public networks are less secure than others, though. A recent analysis by cybersecurity firm Coronet reveals which airports have the weakest networks from a security perspective. For its analysis, Coronet evaluated the Wi-Fi networks of the 45 busiest airports in the U.S., looking at device vulnerabilities and Wi-Fi network risks. The worst airports for network security starting with the least secure, are:

- San Diego International Airport
- John Wayne Airport, Santa Ana, California
- William P. Hobby Airport, Houston
- Southwest Florida International Airport, Fort Myers, Florida
- Newark Liberty International Airport, New Jersey
- Dallas Love Field
- Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport
- Charlotte Douglas International Airport, North Carolina

- Detroit Metropolitan Airport
- Boston Logan International Airport

At the other end of the spectrum, deemed the least vulnerable, is Chicago’s Midway International Airport.

The trouble with public Wi-Fi networks

We tend to think of our online activities like checking email or accessing cloud storage as private. After all, accessing email and other personal accounts requires us to enter a password. But others can access the information like passwords that you enter while on a public network. As Fran Rosch, an executive vice president at cybersecurity company Symantec explained last year, “What someone thinks is private on their personal device can easily be accessed by cybercriminals through unsecure Wi-Fi networks ...”

Symantec further explains in “[Protect Your Data — Critical Things to Know About Public and Hotel Wi-Fi](#)”: “Being on public Wi-Fi is a lot like having a conversation in a crowded room. The chances of being overheard by the people around you are high. When you send information over an unsecured Wi-Fi network, it’s sent without the extra layer of security or encryption that a private, secured network offers, so it’s relatively easy for hackers to access the information you type and send, including your login and password information.” So, while it may be convenient to hop on an airport’s network, ask yourself whether it’s worth the security risk. And at the least, refrain from accessing your bank, credit card or other financial accounts while on a public network. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karla Bowsher | July 22, 2018 ++]

DARPA Update 05 ► SHRIMP Program to Leapfrog Micro-Robot Technology

Swarms of micro-robots have been a staple of science fiction since Stanislaw Lem’s classic 1964 evolutionary tale *The Invincible*. The U.S. military has been studying “insect cyborgs” since 2006, but has struggled to build tiny machines that can do useful things without a power cord. On 17 JUL, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) launched a new effort to leapfrog the static state of micro-robot technology. A new program called SHort-Range Independent Microrobotic Platforms, or SHRIMP, is looking to reward researchers who can overcome the big barrier to micro-robot fielding: creating strong motors that sip power.



Called actuators, the electric motors that help robots move and bend are much less energy-efficient than their biological equivalents, which use electrochemical power. Researchers are slowly surmounting that obstacle for large robots, which can carry ever-more-efficient lithium-ion battery packs. But micro-robots aren’t big enough to carry the power supply they need to run their thirsty little legs and arms and do anything interesting, like navigate. “The current state of insect-scale robotics has focused primarily on mobility, with limited additional functionality due to constraints imposed by energy-inefficient actuation and limited energy storage at this scale. Thus, such robots tend

to be simple, possess limited intelligence, and lack the power, navigation, actuation, and control to accomplish tasks beyond moving,” notes DARPA’s broad agency announcement.

The participants will compete in a series of “Olympic-themed contests,” DARPA says. The Bugbot ‘Olympics’ competition will be divided into three parts. The first will look at new materials, seeking to increase the degree of force that the actuators can output; the second will look to increase the transduction efficiency of limbs and other appendages. The third phase will combine the first two phases. While they didn’t go into too much detail, don’t expect bugs to run a hundred-meter dash. The contest will include demonstrations of “static and dynamic displacements [meaning: powered joint flexibility] along with positional accuracy.” “Whether in a natural-disaster scenario, a search-and-rescue mission, a hazardous environment, or other critical relief situation, robots have the potential to provide much-needed aid and support,” said Ronald Polcawich, a DARPA program manager in the Microsystems Technology Office, or MTO, in a press release. [Source: Defense One | Patrick Tucker | July 18, 2018 ++]

U.S. Weapons Sales ► Exceeded 2017 Total Sales in First Half of 2018

As the Trump administration pushes the sale of American weapons as a key part of its plan to grow the economy, America has already eclipsed its overall defense trade total from last year. In an interview with Defense News, Lt. Gen. Charles Hooper, head of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, said that through the first two quarters of this fiscal year, the U.S. has signed \$46.9 billion in weapons sales to foreign partners and allies — smashing past the \$41.9 billion figure from all of fiscal 2017.

Hooper pointed to the messaging from the administration about arms sales, including the recently implemented Conventional Arms Transfer policy, as helping drive that situation. “Defense exports are good for our national security, they’re good for our foreign policy. And they’re good for our economic security. And as the administration and our leadership has said, economic security is national security,” Hooper said during the Farnborough International Airshow on 18 JUL. “So I think the overwhelming response to these changes from our partners has been very positive. In fact, now they’d like to know: ‘How this is going to affect me, how can I take more advantage of receiving the best equipment and best capabilities from the United States?’ ” he added.

However, the long-tail time frame for foreign weapon sales means giving credit for this push is difficult. Some of the cases likely date back to the Obama era and were only closed this year, while others will be more recent. And because major defense sales, such as large tranches of planes, can single-handedly boost the dollar figures, it’s hard to predict whether a bonanza is coming for U.S. defense firms. Sales totals tend to be volatile year over year, depending on what partner nations seek to buy. In FY16, sales totaled \$33.6 billion, while FY15 totaled just more than \$47 billion and FY14 totaled \$34.2 billion. There could potentially be problems on the horizon, as well. Throughout the show, industry members were asked if they were concerned about the impact American economic policies, including placing tariffs on traditional allies from Europe, could have on their bottom line.

The common refrain throughout the show was that industry is in a wait-and-see mode, although the commercial sector appears most concerned that expected sales of planes and rotorcraft to China could be impacted. For his part, Hooper said that issue has not come up in his discussions at the show. “I personally have not encountered it,” he said when asked about those conversations. “I have talked to many of our partners from around the world and of course our partners in this part of the world, and many of them remain convinced that the U.S. solutions to their security problems are the solutions they’re looking for and the best solutions to their problems.” [Source: DefenseNews | Aaron Mehta | July 19, 2018 ++]

Afghan Taliban ► **Trump Tactical Shift | U.S. Open to Direct Talks**

The United States is open to holding direct talks with the Taliban to encourage negotiations between the militant group and the Afghan government to end 17 years of war, U.S. officials said. That marks a tactical shift by the Trump administration, which has previously only appeared willing to participate in discussions with the Taliban if those talks also involve the Afghan government. The U.S. officials said 16 JUL that Afghan-to-Afghan negotiation remains the goal of any engagement with the militants. The officials were not authorized to speak to media and requested anonymity.

The Taliban have long refused direct talks with the Afghan government, demanding instead to negotiate with Washington. The militants have persisted in that stance despite Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's unilateral extension of a holiday cease-fire last month in hopes of encouraging the militants to come to the bargaining table. With the Taliban continuing to mount deadly attacks, Ghani ordered government forces to resume military operations this month. The unprecedented, three-day cease-fire by both sides had offered a rare glimpse of peace for Afghans during which militants fraternized with security force members. A Taliban official in the small Gulf Arab nation of Qatar told The Associated Press on 16 JUL that no American official or intermediary has been in touch with them to start direct talks, and it had only heard of it in the media.

The administration's willingness to hold direct talks with the Taliban was first reported by The New York Times on 15 JUL. Resolute Support, the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan, released a statement refuting the reports the United States is ready to join direct negotiations with the Taliban. The Taliban official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity because he was authorized to speak to journalists, said, "We wait for them to officially inform us." But he added that if the U.S. is interested in talks, it should take steps to get Taliban leaders off a sanctions blacklist and support the formal opening of the Taliban office in Qatar where its political representatives reside. The official reiterated the Taliban's call for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

Asked if the U.S. was willing to hold direct talks with the Taliban, the State Department said 16 JUL, the United States "is exploring all avenues to advance a peace process in close consultation with the Afghan government." The department added that "any negotiations over the political future of Afghanistan will be between the Taliban and Afghan government." Last August, President Donald Trump launched an Afghanistan strategy that centered on boosting the capabilities of Afghan security forces and aiming — with help from Pakistan and other interested nations — to compel the militants to negotiate. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Afghanistan last week to reinforce its support for talks. "The United States will support, facilitate, and participate in these peace discussions, but peace must be decided by the Afghans and settled among them. We expect that these peace talks will include a discussion of the role of international actors and forces," Pompeo said after meeting Ghani in Kabul on 8 JUL.

Afghan officials on 17 JUL rejected reports about the possibility of direct peace talks between the US and the Taliban, and maintained any negotiations would be an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process. "The peace negotiations will only be held under the leadership and ownership of the Afghan government, but the United States of America can have a facilitator role in this regard," said the CEO's deputy spokesman Omid Maisam. Meanwhile Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the reconciled leader of Hizb-e-Islami group, on 17 JUL said that US officials consulted him about the prospects of holding talks with the Taliban to end the 17-year-long war. Hekmatyar said: "I told them (Americans) that my suggestion to the Taliban was to enter into inter-Afghan dialogue, because it is good for the dignity of the people and it also helps to resolve the crisis in Afghanistan. But if they (Taliban) want to meet you (Americans), I don't see any problem with it and you (Americans) can jump-start the negotiations," said Hekmatyar.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, and ousted the Taliban government that had hosted al-Qaida. It has about 15,000 troops in Afghanistan, mostly for training government forces. The conflict appears stalemated, with insurgents controlling or contesting more than 40 percent of the country. The U.N. mission in Afghanistan said 15 JUL that 1,692 civilians were killed in violence in the first six months of this year,

the highest six-month death toll since the systematic documentation of civilian casualties started in 2009. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Matthew Pennington & Kathy Gannon | July 17, 2018 ++]

Trump-Putin Summit Update 01 ► What Russians Thought Of It

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, a master of diplomatic verbosity and sardonic barbs, summed up the results of the Helsinki summit in just three exuberant words: "better than super." After four years of getting short shrift by his American counterparts, Russian President Vladimir Putin was standing side by side with President Trump, who lavished him with the words of praise, respect and awe normally only heard on Russian state television. When Putin militarily intervened in Ukraine in 2014, President Barack Obama called Russia a "regional power" that threatened its neighbors out of weakness, not strength. Russia's annexation of Crimea set off a precipitous decline in relations with the United States. When he took office, Trump could not reverse the trend because of accusations that Moscow interfered in the 2016 election.

And then, without any change in Kremlin policy, Trump agreed to sit down one-on-one with Putin. "The summit was yet another small miracle created by Trump," columnist Edward Lozansky wrote in the newspaper Izvestia. "As much as they tried to humiliate Trump or give him unsolicited advice, the American president disdainfully brushed aside his enemies and confidently strode to his goal." The official government paper headlined its lead story on 17 JUL with the words "Ball in play" over a photograph of Putin giving a soccer ball to Trump during the post-summit news conference. State TV focused on the imagery of the two men meeting in the picturesque Finnish capital and used the words "substantive" and "productive" to describe a meeting that had produced no formal agreements — not even a final communiqué.

The business daily Vedomosti was more cautious, using the headline "Dialogue without guarantees." "They're not cracking open the champagne in the Kremlin but are getting ready for long, hard work," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a Russian political analyst. "They didn't plan to close any deals or move ahead on any issues. They wanted to legitimize dialogue — to bring it back." There is relief in the Kremlin that Trump didn't do anything unpredictable, make any demands on which further cooperation would depend or just appear ambivalent, according to Stanovaya. But despite the friendly atmosphere, she said, the Kremlin is aware Trump could still end up taking them by surprise.

Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center, says that in the short term, the Kremlin can be happy about Putin's burnished image as a statesman who holds his own with the U.S. president. "The long-term impact can still be pretty nasty, because both presidents missed the chance to move forward on really tough issues like strategic stability involving nuclear arms," said Gabuev. What's more, Trump's conciliatory, almost apologetic tone toward Putin — he blamed U.S. "foolishness and stupidity" for bad relations — may have played well on Russian television, but in the United States, it's causing outcry from Democrats and Republicans alike. "Judging by the reaction in the U.S., the whole press conference will create a stinky mess that will not easily go away," said Gabuev. Kremlin loyalists have been rushing to Trump's defense on social media.

- "Hysteria has begun in U.S. over Putin-Trump meeting in Helsinki," tweeted Alexey Pushkov, a Russian senator. "Mainstream media are gleefully attacking Trump. Enormous resistance to normalization of relations with Russia."
- "Freedom in America has clearly become the main victim of the establishment's fight against Trump the revolutionary," commentator Sergey Markov posted on Facebook.
- The arrest in the United States of Russian student Maria Butina shows that "millions can now be quietly arrested for their views," Markov wrote. Butina was charged with secretly working as a Russian agent just hours after the Helsinki meeting ended.

- "Putin will be cautious and observe what happens with the fallout from this summit," said analyst Gabuev. "If he discovers that Trump can absorb the damage, he will move very carefully toward a next meeting, but probably not in the U.S."

The summit came about after a phone call in March, when Trump congratulated Putin on his re-election to a fourth term and invited him to the White House. Putin's Washington visit may still be a ways off and depends on the political situation in the United States. If the Republicans have a strong showing in the November midterm elections and Trump gets a mandate to stay the course, Gabuev said, the two presidents will be able to start planning their next summit. [Source: NPR | Lucian Kim | July 17, 2018 ++]

Trump-Putin Summit Update 02 ► Trump Admission Of Error

Blistered by bipartisan condemnation of his embrace of a longtime U.S. enemy, President Donald Trump strained 17 JUL to "clarify" his public undermining of American intelligence agencies, saying he simply misspoke when he said he saw no reason to believe Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. election. Rebuked as never before by his own party, including a stern pushback from usually reserved Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the U.S. president sought to end 27 hours of recrimination by delivering a rare admission of error.

"The sentence should have been, 'I don't see any reason why I wouldn't, or why it wouldn't be Russia'" instead of "why it would," Trump said of the comments he had made standing alongside Vladimir Putin on Monday's summit stage in Helsinki.

That didn't explain why Trump, who had tweeted a half-dozen times and sat for two television interviews since the Putin news conference, waited so long to correct his remarks. And the scripted cleanup pertained only to the least defensible of his comments. He didn't reverse other statements in which he gave clear credence to Putin's "extremely strong and powerful" denial of Russian involvement, raised doubts about his own intelligence agencies' conclusions and advanced discredited conspiracy theories about election meddling. He also accused past American leaders, rather than Russia's destabilizing actions in the U.S. and around the world, for the souring of relations between two countries. And he did not address his other problematic statements during a week-long Europe tour, in which he sent the NATO alliance into emergency session and assailed British Prime Minister Theresa May as she was hosting him for an official visit.

"I accept our intelligence community's conclusion that Russia's meddling in the 2016 election took place," Trump conceded 17 JUL. But even then he made a point of adding, "It could be other people also. A lot of people out there. There was no collusion at all." Moments earlier, McConnell felt the need to reassure America's allies in Europe with whom Trump clashed during his frenzied trip last week. With no if's or but's, the GOP leader declared, "The European countries are our friends, and the Russians are not." Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump was trying to "squirm away" from his comments alongside Putin. "It's 24 hours too late and in the wrong place," he said. By dusk, hundreds of activists, led by attorney Michael Avenatti and actress Alyssa Milano, staged a protest near the White House, with chants of "traitor!" echoing along Pennsylvania Avenue.

Trump still maintained that his meetings with NATO allies went well and his summit with Putin "even better." But this reference to diplomatic success carried an edge, too, since the barrage of criticism and insults he delivered in Brussels and London was hardly well-received. Later Tuesday, Trump tweeted, "The meeting between President Putin and myself was a great success, except in the Fake News Media!" On Capitol Hill, top Republican leaders said they were open to slapping fresh sanctions on Russia, but they showed no sign of acting any time soon. "Let's be very clear, just so everybody knows: Russia did meddle with our elections," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, another

steady Trump political ally. "What we intend to do is make sure they don't get away with it again and also to help our allies."

In the Senate, McConnell said "there's a possibility" his chamber would act, pointing to a bipartisan measure from Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) to deter future Russian interference by ordering sanctions against countries if they do. Both parties called for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other officials to appear before Congress and tell exactly what happened during Trump's two-hour private session with Putin. Pompeo is to publicly testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 25 JUL. Schumer also urged the Senate to take up legislation to boost security for U.S. elections and to revive a measure passed earlier by the Judiciary Committee to protect Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian election interference. But minority Democrats have few tools to enforce anything.

In the House, Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi staged a vote 17 JUL in support of the intelligence committee's findings that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. But even that largely symbolic measure was blocked party-line by Republicans. Senators had floated a similar idea earlier, and Republican Jeff Flake of Arizona said he was preparing a bipartisan bill. But The No. 2 Republican, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, said sanctions may be preferable to a nonbinding resolution that amounts to "just some messaging exercise."

Trump's meeting with Putin in Helsinki was his first time sharing the international stage with a man he has described as an important U.S. competitor — but whom he has also praised a strong, effective leader. Standing alongside Putin, Trump steered clear of any confrontation with the Russian, going so far as to question American intelligence and last week's federal indictments that accused 12 Russians of hacking into Democratic email accounts to hurt Hillary Clinton in 2016. "I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today. "He just said it's not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be," Trump said. That's the part he corrected on Tuesday.

White House officials did not elaborate on how Trump came to issue the clarification, but administration aides described being stunned by his initial remarks 16 JUL. GOP leaders, outraged by Trump's comments in Helsinki, found out about his attempts to quell the outrage the same way everyone else did, as one aide put it, by watching and learning. After his walkback, Trump said his administration would "move aggressively" to repel efforts to interfere in American elections. "We are doing everything in our power to prevent Russian interference in 2018," he said. "And we have a lot of power."

Fellow GOP politicians have generally stuck with Trump during a year and a half of turmoil, but he was assailed as seldom before as he returned from what he had hoped would be a proud summit with Putin. Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul emerged as one of the president's few defenders. He cited Trump's experience on the receiving end of "partisan investigations." Back at the White House, Paul's comments drew a presidential tweet of gratitude: "Thank you @RandPaul, you really get it!" [Source: The Associated Press | Zeke Miller & Lisa Mascaró | July 17, 2018 ++]

Drain Deodorizing ► **Eliminating Smelly Kitchen and Bathroom Odors**



Odors emanating from the sink drain affect the atmosphere in the kitchen or bathroom in more ways than one. The cause of kitchen sink smells is often decomposing food in the garbage disposal or P-trap, but unless you're in the habit of dumping kitchen waste in the bathroom sink, smells from that drain usually come directly from the sewer. They occur because the drain vent is blocked and the P-trap has been drained.

Garbage Disposal Smells

When small bits of food get caught between the blades and impellers of a garbage disposal, it doesn't take long for them to decompose and create odors. To prevent the smells from building up in the first place, you should run water through the disposal for 20 seconds after every use. Once the damage has been done, clear the impellers by pouring ice cubes in the disposal along with a quartered lemon. Turn on the disposal for 15 seconds, then let the ice melt and flush with water. Don't forget to thoroughly clean the lid.

Odorous Kitchen Drain

If you don't have a garbage disposal, it's easier for large food items to get caught in the P-trap; they often get snagged by stringy waste such as celery fibers. You can kill the bacteria that cause the smells by pouring 1/2 cup of baking soda down the drain followed by warm tap water. If the problem persists, you may have to disassemble the P-trap and clean it. This isn't a major plumbing procedure - you can take the trap apart by hand in most cases - but it may not be a pleasant job. Have a bucket ready to catch the water and gunk in the trap, then hose out the trap outside.

Smells in the Bathroom

Smells emanating from the bathroom sink could be the result of bacteria growth on hair, soap and other bathroom waste, and if so, cleaning the P-trap and pouring baking soda in the drain are effective cures. If the drain has the characteristic sulfurous smell that comes from a sewer, however, the cause and remedy are different. The vent servicing the bathroom drain - and perhaps other vents in the house as well - could be blocked, and negative pressure in the pipes has pulled water out of the bathroom sink trap. To fix this, you may have to go on the roof.

Clearing the Vents

The purpose of plumbing ventilation is to allow air into the pipes to prevent P-traps from emptying, and if your house is a typical one, all the vents terminate in a single opening on the roof. If it gets blocked by leaves or debris, you'll probably notice that, in addition to smelly drains, some of your drains and toilets are sluggish. The solution may be as simple as climbing on the roof and pulling debris away from the opening. If you don't see any debris, spray water into the vent opening and clear the vent with an auger if the water backs up

Steps to take to clean drains

- Remove the stopper from the sink and wash out any debris lodged in it. For popup stoppers in sink drains, move the stopper to the open position and lift it out of the drain. Remove the debris caught around the popup stopper, wash with clear water and return it to the sink.
- Pour ¼ cup baking soda into the sink drain. Add ¼ cup white vinegar. The vinegar and baking soda bubbles, removing loose debris and deodorizing the pipes. Allow it to bubble for five to 10 minutes.
- Heat a kettle of water to boiling while the baking soda and vinegar is bubbling in the drain. Pour the boiling water down the drain to flush out the vinegar solution and any debris that becomes dislodged.
- Place fresh citrus rinds in sink drains that contain garbage disposals. Run the disposal with the tap running. The citrus rinds help deodorize any remaining smells in the drain as they are ground up.
- Inspect the trap beneath the drain for debris if odor is still a problem. Turn off the water and place a bucket beneath the U-shaped pipe beneath the sink. Loosen the retaining nuts holding the pipe in place and remove it from the drain. Clean out any debris in the pipe and replace it before using the sink again.

Steps to take to clean bathroom sink overflow

If you notice a foul odor coming from the overflow pipe in your sink, the pipe is probably harboring a layer of gunk and a colony of bacteria. Even though you can't access this pipe as easily as you can access the drain itself, you can

still clean it fairly quickly. You might be able to do the job using only household items, but if vinegar and baking soda don't do the trick, try oxygen bleach as a less-toxic alternative to commercial bleach.

- Combine 1/2 cup of baking soda and 1/4 cup of table salt to make a natural scouring mixture. Pour it down the sink.
- Pour 1 cup of warm distilled white vinegar down the sink. Wait while it foams, and let it work for 15 minutes. Notice whether any of the mixture emerges through the overflow pipe; it may or may not, depending on the force of the foaming action in the drain. If it doesn't, you are more likely to need the oxygen bleach later.
- Flush the drain with hot water for 30 seconds. Fill a turkey baster with hot water, and vigorously squirt the water into the overflow pipe to rinse that portion of the drain system as well.
- Check whether the overflow pipe still smells. If so, the cleaning mixture didn't foam far enough up the pipe to reach the problem. Open a window for ventilation, and fill the turkey baster with oxygen bleach.
- Insert the tip of the turkey baster into the overflow pipe. Forcefully squirt the oxygen bleach into the pipe. Repeat this three to four times to cover as much of the inside of the pipe as possible. Let the oxygen bleach sit for 15 minutes, or the length of time specified by the manufacturer.
- Rinse the pipe thoroughly by squirting in hot water with the turkey baster. Dip a cloth in some distilled white vinegar and wipe the inside of the overflow pipe to kill any bacteria living in the mouth of the opening. Allow the vinegar to evaporate.

Steps to take to eliminate pipe mildew

Mildew grows in dark, dank places, and sink pipes provide an ideal habitat for mildew spores to spread. The growth can contribute to clogged drains and release a foul odor into your kitchen or bathroom. If your pipes house a mildew colony, there's no need to resort to toxic, caustic chemical cleaners -- environmentally friendly household cleaners do the trick just as well. White vinegar kills mildew, and baking soda gently scours your pipes to wash the colony and any other accumulated grime out of your plumbing system.

1. Insert the tip of a funnel into the mouth of the drain. Pour 1/2 cup of baking soda through the funnel.
2. Pour 1 cup of distilled white vinegar down the funnel. Quickly pull the funnel out. The vinegar's reaction with the baking soda creates a frothy, mildly abrasive compound that cleanses the pipe. Wait 15 minutes or until the froth settles.
3. Run hot water down the drain for one minute. Wait five minutes, then run cold water down the drain for one minute.

Tip: If your pipes are made of metal, you can flush them once with boiling water instead of once with hot water and once with cold. Boiling water can melt plastic pipes and pipe joints, so only use it if you are certain that your pipes are solid metal.

Warning: Don't pour vinegar down the drain if you have recently used a chemical drain cleaner in it. The two compounds can react to produce a toxic gas.

[Source: Home Guides | Chris Deziel | June 16, 2017 ++]

Philippine Armaments Update 01 ► Russian Grenade Launcher Deal Impact

The Philippines is at risk of breaching sanctions imposed by the United States if it proceeds with the purchase of grenade launchers from a blacklisted Russian firm, a deal that could test its longtime security alliance with Washington. A senior Philippine general familiar with the deal said Manila had agreed in October last year to a 400 million peso (\$7.48 million) purchase of 750 RPG-7B rocket propelled grenade launchers from Russia's state-owned Rosoboronexport, but the transfer had yet to be completed.

U.S. sanctions were imposed last year against any country trading with Russia's defense and intelligence sectors. The law is designed to punish Russia for its 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, its support for Syria's government and alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Russia has donated assault rifles and trucks to the Philippines but the grenade launchers would be Manila's first purchase of Russian weapons. The Philippines has long relied on the United States as its main source of military hardware and support. If it goes ahead, the deal could add strain to a nearly 70-year-old security alliance that Washington has described as "ironclad", despite Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's disdain for the relationship with the former colonial power.

Duterte wants closer ties with China and Russia and has ordered the army and police to engage with countries which do not impose conditions on weapons sales. Some U.S. legislators campaigned to block sales of 26,000 assault rifles to the Philippines in May 2017 because of human rights concerns over an anti-narcotics campaign that has killed thousands of Filipinos. Duterte scrapped that deal, as well as the purchase of \$233 million worth of Canadian helicopters, over concerns by the sellers about how they would be used. A U.S. State Department official said foreign governments and private sector entities had been put on notice that "significant transactions with any of the 39 listed entities will result in sanctions". Rosoboronexport was blacklisted in April. American allies who buy weapons and equipment from Russia, the world's second-largest arms exporter, would also be penalized and could see the transfer of those arms disrupted.

The State Department official declined to say what specific sanctions the U.S. could impose on the Philippines if it goes ahead with the deal with Rosoboronexport, while a spokesman for the Treasury Department said it "does not telegraph sanctions or comment on prospective actions." A senior Philippines defense official, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, told Reuters the United States has not officially notified Manila about the restrictions on Rosoboronexport. "It's still a go until we are informed," he added. The army general familiar with the deal declined to comment on possible sanctions. Jose Antonio Custodio, a Philippine security expert, warned the Russian arms deal may affect Manila's security relations with allies, not only with its former colonial master the United States, but also with Japan and Australia. "If the Duterte administration keeps on elevating the military-to-military relationship with Russia, it may lead to push back from these allies given international sanctions on that country for bad behavior," he said. [Source: Reuters | Manuel Mogato | July 18, 2018 ++]

Quotations ► Military

One man with courage is a majority.

— *Thomas Jefferson*

In every battle there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten; then, he who continues the attack wins.

— *Gen. Ulysses S. Grant*

Army food: the spoils of war

— *Unknown*

"The object of war is not to die for your country, but to make the other bastard die for his."

— *General George S. Patton*

"I am not fond of speaking about politics because I don't have in my possession an army of 200,000 soldiers."

— *Frank Liszt (German composer)*

"My fellow Americans. I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes."

— *President Reagan, before a scheduled radio broadcast, unaware that the microphone was already on*

"The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer."

— *Air Force Motto*

"We, the willing, led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful. We have now done so much for so long with so little, we are now capable of doing anything with nothing."

— *Unknown*

Radio Operator: "Is there anything that we can provide?" Response from Marine Commander on Wake Island: "Send us more Japs!"

— **Reported to be one of the last radio transmissions received from the Marines on Wake Island before it fell to the Japanese, 1941**

"Gentlemen, we are being killed on the beaches. Lets go inland and be killed."

— *General Norman Cota, Omaha Beach, 1944*

"We are not retreating—we are advancing in another direction."

— *General Douglas MacArthur*

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."

— *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom."

— *Martin Luther King Jr.*

"We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us."

— *Winston S. Churchill*

[Source: Various | July 27, 2018 ++]

Retirement Humor ► See You at Walmart

Yesterday, I wore my Korean War Veterans' cap to Walmart. There was nothing in particular that I needed at the world's largest retailer; but, since I retired, trips to "Wally World" to look at the Wal-martians is always good for some comic relief. Besides, I always feel pretty normal after seeing some of the people that frequent the establishment. But, I digress, . . . enough of my psychological fixations. While standing in line to check out, the guy in front of me, probably in his early thirties, asked, "Are you a Viet Nam Vet?"

- "No," I replied.
- "Then why are you wearing that cap?"
- "Because I couldn't find the one from the War of 1812 . . ." I thought it was a snappy retort.
- "The War of 1812, huh?" the Wal-martian queried, "When was that?"
- God forgive me, but I couldn't pass up such an opportunity. "1946," I answered as straight-faced as possible.
- He pondered my response for a moment and responded, "Why do they call it the War of 1812 if it was in 1946?"
- "It was a Black Op. No one is supposed to know about it." This was beginning to be way fun!
- "Dude! Really?" He exclaimed. "How did you get to do something that COOOOL?"

Stormy Daniels and Queen Elizabeth went to the Pearly Gates on the same day, and both met with an angel to find out if they would be admitted to Heaven. The Angel said: "Unfortunately, there's only one space available in Heaven today so I must decide which one of you will be admitted." The Angel then asked Stormy if there was some particular reason why she should go to Heaven.

Stormy took off her top and said: "Look at these, they're the most perfect breasts God ever created and I'm sure it will please God to be able to see them every day, for eternity." The Angel thanked Stormy, and asked Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the same question. The Queen walked over to a toilet, pulled the lever and flushed it without saying a word. The Angel immediately stated: "Okay, your Majesty, you may go into Heaven."

Stormy was outraged and asked, "What was that all about? I showed you two of God's own perfect creations and you turned me down. She simply flushed a commode and got admitted to Heaven! "Could you explain that to me?" "Sorry, Stormy," said the Angel, "but even in Heaven, a royal flush easily beats a pair, no matter how big they are!"

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What's the difference between a duck and George Washington? -- Answer: One has a bill on their face and the other has their face on a bill

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Lexophile describes those that have a love for words, such as "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish," or "To write with a broken pencil is pointless" An annual competition is held by the New York Times to see who can create the best original lexophile. Here are some of the submissions:

- No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.
- If you don't pay your exorcist you can get repossessed.
- I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.
- I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.
- Did you hear about the crossed-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?
- When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.
- When chemists die, they barium.
- I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.
- I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.
- England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.
- Haunted French pancakes give me the crepes.
- This girl today said she recognized me from the Vegetarians Club, but I'd swear I've never met herbivore.
- I know a guy who's addicted to drinking brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.
- A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.
- When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A.
- I got some batteries that were given out free of charge.
- A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.
- A will is a dead giveaway.
- With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
- Police were summoned to a daycare center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.
- Did you hear about the fellow whose entire left side was cut off? He's all right now.
- A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.

- The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine last week is now fully recovered.
- He had a photographic memory but it was never fully developed.
- When she saw her first strands of gray hair she thought she'd dye.
- Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.
- Those who get too big for their pants will be totally exposed in the end.

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God's Plan for Aging

Most seniors never get enough exercise. In His wisdom God decreed that seniors become forgetful so they would have to search for their glasses, keys and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that it was good. Then God saw there was another need. In His wisdom He made seniors lose co-ordination so they would drop things, requiring them to bend, reach, and stretch. And God looked down and saw that it was good. Then God considered the function of bladders and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature, requiring more trips to the bathroom, thus providing more exercise. God looked down and saw that it was good. So if you find as you age, you are getting up and down more, remember it's God's will. It is all in your best interest even though you mutter under your breath. Nine Important Facts to Remember as We Grow Older

#9 Death is the number 1 killer in the world.

#8 Life is sexually transmitted.

#7 Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.

#6 Men have 2 motivations: hunger and hanky panky, and they can't tell them apart. If you see a gleam in his eyes, make him a sandwich.

#5 Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the Internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, maybe years.

#4 Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in the hospital, dying of nothing.

#3 All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

#2 In the 60's, people took LSD to make the world weird. Now the world is weird, and people take Prozac to make it normal.

#1 Life is like a jar of jalapeno peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow.

One Word Essays ► Longevity



Thought of the Week: "There's a big, wonderful world out there for you. It belongs to you. It's exciting and stimulating and rewarding. Don't cheat yourselves out of this promise."

- Nancy Reagan



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1. The Bulletin is provided as a website accessed document vice direct access. This was necessitated by SPAMHAUS who alleged the Bulletin's size and large subscriber base were choking the airways interfering with other internet user's capability to send email. SPAMHAUS told us to stop sending the Bulletin in its entirety to individual subscribers and to validate the subscriber base with the threat of removing all our outgoing email capability if we did not. To avoid this we notified all subscribers of the action required to continue their subscription. This Bulletin notice was sent to the 19,809 subscribers who responded to that notice and/or have since subscribed. All others were deleted from the active mailing list.

2. Bulletin recipients with interest in the Philippines, whether or not they live there, can request to be added to the RAO's Philippine directory for receipt of notices on Clark Field Space 'A', U.S. Embassy Manila, and TRICARE in the RP.

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