

# RAO

# BULLETIN

## 1 September 2018

### PDF Edition



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**\* DoD \***



## **U.S. Space Force Update 01 ► 6<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Branch in 2019 NDAA**

The Defense Department will establish a sixth branch of the armed forces, the U.S. Department of the Space Force, by 2020, Vice President Mike Pence announced 16 AUG. In a speech at the Pentagon, the vice president also announced plans to establish a new combatant command -- U.S. Space Command -- as well as a Space Operations Force and a new joint organization called the Space Development Agency. The announcement follows a seven-week review by DoD, directed by President Donald J. Trump, of "the process necessary to establish a space force as the

sixth branch of the armed forces.” A report outlining the results of the study is to be released 9 AUG. “In his inaugural address to the nation, President Trump declared that the United States stands 'at the birth of a new millennium, ready to unlock the mysteries of space,’” Pence said.

### **Space Force**

Just as advances in aviation technology drove the emergence of air as a new battlefield in the 20th century, advances in space technology have made it clear that space is the new battlefield for the 21st century, the vice president said. The U.S. will meet the emerging threats on this new battlefield, he said, and carry on the cause of liberty and peace into the next great frontier. “The time has come to establish the United States Space Force,” Pence said. The new branch will be separate from, but equal to, the five other branches, he said. “To be clear: the Space Force will not be built from scratch, because the men and women who run and protect our nation's space programs today are already the best in the world,” the vice president said. “Across this department and our intelligence agencies, there are literally tens of thousands of military personnel, civilians and contractors operating and supporting our space systems -- and together, they are the eyes and ears of America's warfighters around the globe,” Pence said.

### **Peace Through Strength**

Actions by U.S. adversaries make it clear that space is already a warfighting domain, the vice president said. “For many years, nations from Russia and China to North Korea and Iran have pursued weapons to jam, blind and disable our navigation and communications satellites via electronic attacks from the ground,” Pence said. “But recently, our adversaries have been working to bring new weapons of war into space itself.” In 2007, China launched a missile that tracked and destroyed one of its own satellites, the vice president said. And Russia is working on an airborne laser to disrupt space-based systems, he added. “Both nations are also investing heavily in what are known as hypersonic missiles designed to fly up to 5 miles per second at such low altitudes that they could potentially evade detection by our missile defense radars,” Pence said. “In fact, China claimed to have made its first successful test of a hypersonic vehicle just last week.” In every domain, America will always seek peace, the vice president said. “But history proves that peace only comes through strength,” he added. “And in the realm of outer space, the United States Space Force will be that strength.”

### **Action Steps**

The 9 AUG report represents a critical step toward establishing the Space Force, he said. It identifies several actions that DoD will take as the nation evolves its space capabilities, “and they are built on the lessons of the past,” Pence said.

- First, the report calls for the creation of the U.S. Space Command, a new unified combatant command for space. “This new command ... will establish unified command and control for our Space Force operations, ensure integration across the military, and develop the space warfighting doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures of the future,” he said.
- Second, the report calls for the establishment of a Space Operations Force -- an elite group of joint warfighters, specializing in the domain of space, who will form the backbone of the nation's newest armed service. This force will draw from across the military to provide space expertise in times of crisis and conflict, Pence said.
- “Third, the report calls for a new joint organization -- the Space Development Agency -- that will ensure the men and women of the Space Force have the cutting-edge warfighting capabilities that they need and deserve,” he said.
- Finally, the report calls for clear lines of responsibility and accountability to manage the process of establishing and growing the Space Force, including the appointment of an assistant secretary of defense for space, the vice president said.

“Creating a new branch of the military is not a simple process,” Pence noted. “It will require collaboration, diligence and, above all, leadership. As challenges arise and deadlines approach, there must be someone in charge who can execute, hold others accountable, and be responsible for the results.” Ultimately, Congress must establish

the new department, the vice president said. "Next February, in the president's budget, we will call on the Congress to marshal the resources we need to stand up the Space Force, and before the end of next year, our administration will work with the congress to enact the statutory authority for the space force in the National Defense Authorization Act," he said. [Source: DoD News, Defense Media Activity | Claudette Roulo | August 9, 2018 ++]

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## **U.S. Space Force Update 02 ► Needed to Protect American Satellites**

A U.S. Space Force is necessary to protect American satellites from being targeted by attack weapons in the hands of China and Russia, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said 14 AUG. Mattis' comments came days after Vice President Mike Pence announced ambitious plans to create a sixth, separate U.S. military warfighting service by 2020 to ensure American dominance in space. Speaking during a trip to Brazil, Mattis said repeatedly that the U.S. has no plans to put weapons in space, but he emphasized the vital and growing role that satellites play not just in military operations but in the world economy. He recalled China's use of a ground-based missile to destroy one of its own nonfunctional weather satellites in January 2007, which he suggested was a calculated demonstration to the United States of Chinese capabilities. "We understand the message that China was sending — that they could take out a satellite in space," Mattis said in remarks to about 270 military officers and civilians at Brazil's premier war college. "Since then our intelligence services have watched other nations, including Russia, develop a space attack capability." He was responding to a question from an audience member who expressed concern that the planned Space Force could lead to an international arms race in space.



**An Atlas V rocket carrying the SBIRS GEO Flight 4 mission for the U.S. Air Force lifts off from Space Launch Complex-41. U.S. The U.S. cannot ignore potential threats in space and will defend itself, Defense Secretary James Mattis said Tuesday, Aug. 14, 2018**

Mattis said the U.S. cannot ignore potential threats to satellites that are crucial to communication, navigation, weather information and other underpinnings of modern life. "So this is a reality," he said. "We are not initiating this. We are saying we will be able to defend our satellites in space. At the same time, if someone is going to try to engage in space with military means, we will not stand idly by. We don't intend to militarize space. However, we will defend ourselves in space if necessary." He did not say this meant the U.S. would respond to a satellite attack by attacking the aggressor's satellites or with any other use of force. But that scenario is one that worries many who have warned that space could become the next global battlefield. The U.S. military has worked on anti-satellite weaponry in the past but has no deployed weapon dedicated to that mission today. Asked later to elaborate on how the U.S. would respond to an attack on a satellite, Mattis said he preferred to maintain ambiguity. "I don't tell adversaries in advance what we will do or what we will not do," he said. "We will not stand idly by if someone tried to deny us the use of space." He added: "I wouldn't read anything more into" his comments.

Mattis' point about countering the space capabilities of other nations was reinforced Tuesday by the State Department's top arms control official, Yleem Poblete, speaking in Geneva at the U.N. Conference on Disarmament.



She said that despite Russian claims it wants to prevent an arms race in outer space, Moscow is developing new anti-satellite missiles and has given its forces a mobile laser system. She also voiced suspicion about Russia's deployment last October of a satellite whose behavior she said was inconsistent with its supposed purpose of conducting in-orbit space inspections. "Russian intentions with respect to this satellite are unclear and are obviously a very troubling development," Poblete said. Russia denies any hostile intent. The timing of Mattis's visit to Brazil, so soon after Pence announced the Space Force plan 9 AUG, was coincidental. Mattis's trip, which includes follow-on stops in Argentina, Chile and Colombia, had been in planning for many months.

In a speech prior to fielding questions from the war college students, Mattis made a detailed pitch for closer U.S.-Brazilian security relations. He noted that Brazil was an ally during World War II; later he visited a monument in Rio to Brazil's role in the conflict. He emphasized U.S. interest in partnering with Brazil in space research, an area in which China has shown growing influence in South America. The Chinese operate a space center in the Patagonia region of Argentina. Brazil's Alcantara space center is located near the equator, making it advantageous for space launches. The closer a launch is to the equator, the more velocity the rocket gets from the Earth's rotation. [Source: The Associated Press | Robert Burns | August 14, 2018 ++]

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## **Security Clearances Update 02 ► Policy Change Makes Revocations More Likely**

Troops with security clearances who have low credit scores or past-due bills could be at greater risk of having those clearances revoked, thanks to a change to the frequency at which background check officials look at financial data. "The Department of Defense (DoD) will now 'continuously' monitor the financial status of servicemembers with security clearances," the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau announced in an 20 AUG release. "This means that a past-due bill or an error on your credit report could jeopardize your clearance status."

Currently, background check reviews for clearance holders look at credit and financial data of clearance holders once every five to 10 years, the release says. But a change directed by the White House earlier this year shifts the administration of background checks from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to the Pentagon, and with that comes the new automated monitoring plan, officials said. "This new process might impact your DoD security clearance and prevent you from being deemed 'deployable,' which could greatly impact your military career unless you can prove to DoD that you were the victim of identity theft, fraud or a mistake, and that you're currently living within your means and are making a good-faith effort to resolve your unpaid debts," the CFPB release warned.

Pentagon officials did not respond to a request for clarification on how much a service member must be in debt or how low a credit score must be before a clearance is revoked or what troops who believe they could be impacted should do to address the problem. Financial stability is just of one of many risk factors investigators considered when determining whether or not troops and other employees can hold or keep a security clearance, according to the National Security Adjudicative Guidelines, last updated in July, 2017. "Failure to live within one's means, satisfy debts, and meet financial obligations may indicate poor self-control, lack of judgement, or unwillingness to abide by rules and regulations, all of which can raise questions about an individual's reliability, trustworthiness and ability to protect classified or sensitive information," the guidelines say. Other facets considered by investigators include sexual behavior, alcohol consumption and personal conduct, according to the guidelines.

Troops who are notified that their security clearance is being denied or revoked can appeal the decision with a hearing before the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals. Financial experts who specialize in military issues recommend troops take simple steps to avoid problems like monitoring their credit reports and working to paying bills on time. The shift of background check responsibility from OPM to DoD was made after a series of security incidents, including the 2013 attack on the Navy Yard, exposed background check system flaws. The DoD is expected to complete its takeover of the background check program in the next three years, according to the Associated Press. As of early July, 58 workers had their security clearances revoked as a part of the Pentagon's new monitoring system,

according to the Associated Press. Officials did not respond to requests for an update. [Source: Military.com | Amy Bushatz | August 27, 2018 ++]

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## **Transgender Lawsuits Update 09 ► Court Rules Against Government for 3<sup>rd</sup> Time**

For the third time in the four federal cases challenging the Pentagon's transgender ban, the court has ruled the government has failed to show what deliberative process it undertook to decide some transgender personnel should not be allowed to serve. In the lawsuit, *Doe v. Trump*, transgender service members and recruits are challenging the Pentagon's new policy on transgender service members, which forbids any recruit or service member experiencing "gender dysphoria" from serving, and implements additional restrictions on those transgender personnel already serving. But "gender dysphoria" is a broad term and technically anyone who is one who is uncomfortable with their biological sex, and identifies as another, could experience it. Since last fall, attorneys have filed four federal cases challenging the ban: *Doe v. Trump* in Washington, D.C.; *Karnoski v. Trump* in Washington State; *Stockman v. Trump* in California and *Stone V. Trump* in Maryland. The lawsuits have led to some of the Pentagon's new transgender policy being overruled, such as Mattis' earlier decision not to allow transgender recruits to enlist as of Jan. 1, 2018. They may now enlist if they meet recruitment standards.

In the cases of *Stone*, *Karnoski*, and now *Doe*, the courts have ruled that the Pentagon must comply with plaintiffs' request for discovery and produce the documentation that would show what deliberations and research Defense Secretary Jim Mattis relied upon when, at the White House's direction, he issued his recommendations to President Donald Trump on the restrictions to transgender service. In *Doe* on 24 AUG, federal district judge Colleen Kollar Kotelly said that DoD had not been forthcoming enough. "Despite the fact that one of defendants' main defenses in this action is that their decisions regarding transgender military service are owed great deference because they are the product of reasoned deliberation, study and review by the military, defendants have withheld nearly all information concerning this alleged deliberation. This is not how civil litigation works," the judge wrote, rejecting the government's request.

"The court said that the government can't continue to stonewall by refusing to disclose basic information about why it suddenly reversed military policy that permitted open service by transgender people," said Jennifer Levi, transgender Rights project director for GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD.) "Then we will either move for summary judgment based on what they disclose or possibly go to trial," said Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights who is also representing the *Doe* plaintiffs. The Pentagon did release a study it said at the time helped inform Mattis' decisions, which Minter said "had no basis in medical science." The study "is riddled with internal inconsistencies and false stereotypes," Minter said. "The government has refused to provide any meaningful information about how it came to such distorted and scientifically unsupported conclusions."

Each of the lawsuits was filed in the months since Trump's July 26, 2017, tweet about transgender service threw current policy up in the air. The Pentagon has, in the months since, worked to produce a policy that meets Trump's request, while acknowledging, and balancing for, the impossible place the tweet put the Pentagon in. Just a year prior, under former President Barack Obama, transgender service members — who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in operations against the Islamic State — had for the first time been allowed to serve openly, and many had already come out. Since then, each of the service chiefs has also made a point to say that no harm would come from having transgender service members within the ranks.

On 24 AUG, the Pentagon repeated what has been its response to the issue since the transgender ban became challenged in the courts. "In accordance with court orders, we will continue accessing and retaining transgender applicants and service members and all aspects of the previous policy are in effect," said Pentagon spokeswoman Air Force Maj. Carla Gleason. "All applicants who have a history of, or are receiving treatment for, a disqualifying medical condition must obtain a waiver or exception to policy. Because this matter is being handled in multiple



federal courts, and to avoid interfering with that process, I'm not going to be able to provide further details at this time." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Copp | August 24, 2018 ++]

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## **Cyber Defense Update 02 ► Senator's Pentagon Cyber Shortfalls Concern**

The Pentagon isn't taking strong enough action to ensure that defense contractors are protecting highly technical but unclassified information from hacking, according to the top lawmakers on the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Senate panel "has gathered information that suggests DoD is simply not doing enough to protect controlled, unclassified information," the lawmakers, including ailing Republican Chairman John McCain and Jack Reed, the panel's top Democrat, wrote to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis in a previously undisclosed letter obtained by Bloomberg News. "We are concerned with existing regulations and best practices" not being followed in matters such as contracts lacking appropriate cybersecurity clauses, computer networks operating without multifactor authentication for access, strong remote user policies and "insufficient third-party verification of compliance with cybersecurity standards," the lawmakers wrote last month.

The vulnerability of U.S. systems to hacking has been highlighted in recent years by incidents including attacks on banks and energy infrastructure, as well as efforts to infiltrate state election systems in 2016 and this year. Earlier this year, five pipeline operators in the U.S. said their third-party electronic communications systems were shut down by hackers. The U.S. says the biggest foreign hacking threats come from Russia, China and Iran. The Senate letter was prompted by a June story in the Washington Post that disclosed China this year hacked a small contractor that worked for the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Newport, Rhode Island, Reed's state. Republican Michael Rounds of South Dakota and Bill Nelson of Florida, the top senators on the committee's cybersecurity panel, also signed the letter.

At Mattis's request, the Pentagon's inspector general opened an inquiry a month before the letter was sent "to determine whether DoD contractors have security controls in place to protect" department-controlled, unclassified information "maintained on their systems and networks from internal and external cyber threats," according to a memo announcing the review. "We will perform the audit at contractor locations" where such information is stored, processed, and transmitted, according to the memo.

The lawmakers said in their letter that "time is of the essence to do more to defend" the information as "action is needed now to improve compliance with existing regulations and best practices, as well as increase the cybersecurity standard for defense contractors, with a single DoD official in charge." "I can confirm receipt of the letter," Heather Babb, spokeswoman for Pentagon Chief Information Officer Dana Deasy, said in an email. "As with all congressional correspondence, we will respond directly to authors of the letter."

The Pentagon modified Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation contract clauses in 2015 to include a section entitled 'Protecting Controlled Unclassified Information on Non-Federal Systems and Organizations'. "This action met with some resistance by industry and other non-federal entities" because the requirements "were viewed as more stringent than previous guidance issued by federal agencies in regard to protecting sensitive information on systems," Mark Riddle, the senior program analyst on "controlled unclassified information" for the National Archives Information Security Oversight Office, said in an email.

'Inconsistencies and Deficiencies'

The federal government adopted an interagency program in 2016 intended to standardize and strengthen protections for sensitive unclassified information. It was established "because of the inconsistencies and deficiencies and the related breaches and incidents in existing practices surrounding the protection of sensitive information" among all executive branch departments and agencies, Riddle said. The program allowed for the phased implementation among agencies, due to their varying size, complexity and resources available, he said. Captain

Danny Hernandez, a Navy acquisition spokesman, said “we treat the broader issue of cyber intrusion against our contractors very seriously.” Under federal regulations, “there are measures in place that require companies to notify the government when a ‘cyber incident’ has occurred that has actual or potential adverse effects on their networks that contain controlled unclassified information,” Hernandez added. “It would be inappropriate to discuss further details at this time.” [Source: Bloomberg | Anthony Capaccio | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **Defense Appropriations Bill 2019 ► \$857B Senate Bill Passed**

Senators on 23 AUG advanced an \$857 billion appropriations measure that includes full defense funding for fiscal 2019 and raises hopes that Congress may be able to avoid a government shutdown or short-term budget extension for Pentagon programs this fall. The measure, which passed 85-7, includes money for the departments of defense, health and human services, labor and education. The so-called “minibus” of appropriations bills was touted by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) as making America “stronger overseas and right here at home.”

Of the total, \$675 billion would be set aside for military spending next year, including nearly \$68 billion in overseas contingency funds. The levels are in line with the recently adopted defense authorization bill and the budget deal reached by Democrats and Republicans last spring. “The funds meet many of the requirements of our military commanders, equipping and training units to meet and to overcome the most dangerous of emerging global threats,” McConnell said before the vote. “As ever, we are to provide adequate training, weaponry and skills so that Americans always prevail on the battlefield.” Earlier in the week, McConnell predicted that passing the defense minibus would “put us on a pathway to avoid an omnibus or any kind of drama associated with the end of the fiscal year.” Lawmakers have until 30 SEP to either pass new appropriations for federal agencies, pass a temporary budget extension into the fall, or trigger a partial government shutdown.

Defense officials have repeatedly warned against either of the latter two. A shutdown — which President Donald Trump has hinted in ongoing fights with Democratic leaders on immigration funding — could force troops to work without pay and shutter a host of military family programs and resources. But Pentagon leaders have also warned that a continuing resolution, which would keep military spending at fiscal 2018 levels for weeks or months, would also be damaging to long-term defense priorities and planning.

In recent years, as lawmakers have fought over budget issues, those short-term budget extensions have become an autumn norm, and frustrated service officials who have to delay the start of new program starts and equipment purchases. The Senate’s August passage of the defense appropriations plan could help break that cycle, giving congressional staffers five weeks to negotiate a compromise between the separate House and Senate drafts of the fiscal 2019 budget. But a similar minibus including military construction and Veterans Affairs funding has been stalled in conference work for more than a month, over a \$1.6 billion VA medical program expense that party leaders have been fighting over how to fund.

Most of the debate on the defense minibus this week had been uncontroversial, save for some last-minute procedural issues on 23 AUG. Senators added amendments in recent days that would add money recovery efforts involving the remains of troops from North Korea, require more oversight of the Defense Department’s new electronic medical records system, and boost spending on suicide prevention efforts. The Senate defense appropriations plan includes:

- A 2.6 percent pay raise for troops in 2019, the same as the House plan.
- Only about half of the 15,600-person end strength boost approved in the defense authorization bill (NDAA).
- \$237 billion for readiness issues and \$34.5 billion for the defense health program.
- \$24 billion earmarked for Navy shipbuilding efforts covers 13 new ships, including two Virginia-class submarines, three DDG-51 destroyers and two Littoral Combat ships.

- \$42 billion more which will include 12 F-35 aircraft for the Navy and Marine Corps, \$720 million for new AH-64E Apache helicopters and \$240 million for three new V-22 Osprey aircraft.
- Hypersonics programs would receive nearly \$930 million in additional funding for ongoing research and prototyping efforts, and directed energy technology would receive another \$317 million.

House lawmakers are scheduled to return to Capitol Hill on 4 SEP from their August break. That chamber is scheduled to have legislative session for 11 days before the end of the fiscal year, and is expected to break for all of October in preparation for the fall mid-term elections. [Source: Military.com | Leo Shane III | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **National Museum of the U.S. Army Update 03 ► Final \$6M Donation Made**

The Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) has made a final \$6 million donation to secure ongoing construction of the National Museum of the United States Army. The donation to the Army Historical Foundation for museum construction brings AUSA's total financial commitment to \$42.5 million, making AUSA the single-largest donor. AUSA's contribution exceeds the combined contributions of the next 20 donors. One-third of AUSA chapters have also made contributions. "Without our association, the National Museum of the United States Army would still be an unfulfilled idea," said retired Gen. Carter F. Ham, AUSA president and CEO.

Ground was broken on Sept. 14, 2016, at Fort Belvoir, Va., for the 185,000-square-foot facility. Located on 84 acres, the museum is expected to contain artifacts, documents, images and artwork dating to the Army's earliest days. The site will also include a parade ground, amphitheater and memorial garden. Once the museum opens, it will be operated and maintained by the U.S. Army. Opening is expected in 2020. AUSA's support for the Army museum is an action in line with the educational nonprofit's core missions of supporting the U.S. Army, informing the America people about the vital role the Army has played in American history, and promoting and perpetuating Army values and traditions.

- "The Army Historical Foundation greatly appreciates the Association of the United States Army's matchless generosity and long-standing support of the National Museum of the United States Army Capital Campaign," said retired Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, the foundation's president. "AUSA's \$42.5 million financial commitment marks it as the leading and largest single donor to the campaign."
- "This gift is momentous," said retired Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, foundation chairman and former AUSA president and CEO. "It ensures this long-overdue tribute to our Army and its soldiers is coming true. Truth be told—without AUSA's commitment, no National Museum of the United States Army."

[Source: AUSA Weekly Bulletin | August 23, 2018 +]

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## **USS John S. McCain (DDG-56) Update 09 ► Collision Legal Battles Rages**

A year after 10 sailors died when the destroyer John S. McCain lurched left into a commercial vessel outside Singapore, a legal battle rages over who was responsible for the collision and who should pay for it. So far, 48 McCain sailors and families of the fallen have filed personal injury and wrongful death claims against the owner of the Alnic MC, a hulking oil tanker that collided with the warship inside the bustling Malacca Straits on Aug. 21, 2017, according to federal court records. Their claims total "well in excess of \$60 million," attorneys for Alnic's owner, Energetic Tank, Inc., wrote in court filings. At the same time, the U.S. government is pursuing its own claim against the Alnic's owners for the McCain's damages. The company seeks similar damages from the federal government.

Court filings indicate the Liberian-flagged Alnic suffered about \$300,000 in collision damage, but the shipping company's attorneys predict the costs to mend the McCain could reach \$100 million, a figure federal attorneys haven't repeated in their motions. Instead, they've concentrated on what they say are a long list of seamanship failures by the Alnic's crew. They failed to keep proper lookouts, lacked trained mariners on the bridge in congested waters, never communicated with the McCain and at no time sounded a danger signal, veered away from the warship or followed the international rules of maritime transit, filings contend.

Armed with the Navy's own reports into the collision and information gleaned from ongoing court-martial proceedings against several of the McCain's crew, Energetic Tank's attorneys say fault really lies with the Americans. "We have a pretty good idea of what the arguments are against the McCain and the competence of the crew," said Lawrence Brennan, a retired Navy captain, military attorney and professor at the Fordham University School of Law in New York. "Those are all locked in the criminal proceedings." "We then get into what the Alnic could have done, should have done, to avoid the collision," he said.

That collision killed Chief Electronics Technician Charles N. Findley, Chief Interior Communications Electrician Abraham Lopez, Electronics Technician 1st Class Kevin S. Bushell, Information Systems 1st Class Corey G. Ingram, Electronics Technician 2nd Class Jacob D. Drake, Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Timothy T. Eckels, Electronics Technician Dustin L. Doyon, Electronics Technician 2nd Class John H. Hoagland, Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Logan S. Palmer and Electronics Technician 2nd Class Kenneth A. Smith. Assessing how to apportion the blame for their deaths and the damages to both vessels will be key to resolving the legal battle, Brennan said. Attorneys for both the U.S. government and Energetic Tank declined comment. Court filings analyzed by Navy Times offer new revelations about the harrowing hours inside the McCain after it struck the Alnic:

- One complaint filed on behalf of Operations Specialist 1st Class Navin Ramdhun and his wife indicates he was trapped in a vessel compartment for more than two hours and feared he would die. The filing revealed that Ramdhun suffered injuries to his legs and face, a fractured arm and continues to experience psychological trauma. He and his wife are seeking \$5.5 million in damages.
- Chief Fire Controlman Brandon York sustained a "concussion, toxic chemical exposure and psychological injury," according to his filing which seeks at least \$1 million in damages.
- Another McCain sailor, Operations Specialist 2nd Class Jason Luangco, "was thrown to the deck and was covered with debris," sustaining injuries to his neck, back, arms and wrist, according to a court filing on behalf of the sailor and his wife. He continues to confront psychological problems and seeks \$2.5 million in damages, the paperwork shows.
- Chief Damage Controlman Doyle Ebarb alleges the McCain sailor "was thrown to the deck and sustained injuries to his neck, left elbow, feet, chin, fuel burns and post-traumatic stress disorder...anxiety and depression, due in part to his actions, as part of the damage control team, in attempting to rescue the sailors injured and killed in the collision." He seeks \$2 million.
- Alan Aaron was a "Medical Provider" on the ship and helped rescue several sailors but "he sustained chemical burns and psychological injuries," the filing states.

The case began in February, when Energetic Tank's attorneys filed a motion that sought to exonerate or limit the company's liability in the fatal disaster. The pre-emptive move was designed to buffer the company against claims that had not yet been filed, according to court records. Two months later, the U.S. government sued, asserting that Alnic's owners knew about the deficiencies aboard the tanker. Energetic Tank's attorneys fired back that Alnic's crew never could have avoided a collision caused by the McCain. The families of the fallen McCain sailors and their injured shipmates cannot sue the armed forces for negligence under a legal concept known as the "Feres doctrine," Brennan said. But they can bring claims against Energetic Tank, and the company can then seek compensation from the federal government if it is found that both sides were liable for the collision, Brennan said.

Citing an October report issued by the Navy, Energetic Tank's attorneys have said in a recent filing that the American government already has admitted "substantial fault for the collision." "The public record clearly reflects the vast array of errors — both large and small — which led to this tragic incident, from poor training and a persistent culture of grueling watch cycles and sleep deprivation, to negligent bridge management and faulty navigation practices," they wrote. Proving Alnic did nothing wrong "is a high factual threshold," Brennan said, and collisions rarely result in one side shouldering all the fault. In fact, if the Alnic is shown to bear even 1 percent of the blame for the incident, the claims against the company can proceed in court, according to Brennan.

Lawyers for Energetic Tank acknowledged in a court filing this month the logistical challenges of a case involving foreign seamen, foreign companies and U.S. sailors dispersed around the globe. Brennan said these cases are not unusual. "I can give you hundreds of these cases over the years," Brennan said. "Probably none as tragic as this." Brennan suspects the U.S. government didn't file its own separate suit for damages against the Alnic's owners because there's a lot of stuff that's embarrassing. "At the end of the day, the United States Navy is going to look bad," he said. [Source: NavyTimes | Geoff Ziezulewicz | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Disabled Vets Space "A" Update 02 ► 100% Disabled Vets Now Authorized**

When President Trump signed into law the new National Defense Authorization Act, disabled veterans were granted a huge travel perk that has virtually gone unnoticed. Not only will the new perk save veterans thousands of dollars, but it will increase morale, esprit de corps, and open the door for many veterans to connect with the military again in ways they can only image. One veteran said, "I'm shocked! I can't believe the military has opened this door to us." Under the new Disabled Veterans Access to Space-A Travel Act, veterans with a service-connected, permanent disability rating of 100% can hop on any scheduled or unscheduled military flight within the continental United States (and scheduled overseas flights) operated by Air Mobility Command (AMC).

The new Act would authorize veterans who have a service-connected, and permanent disability rated as 100 percent to travel on Space-A at no additional cost to the Department of Defense (DoD) and without aircraft modifications, according to military officials. Clarification on whether or not required caregiver accompaniment is authorized has not yet been promulgated. This is a huge benefit to disabled veterans who travel on aircraft. Many veterans find airports unaccommodating, and difficult to get around. Flying from military terminals are much less congested, and will probably be more suitable for disabled veterans.

To sign up for Space A Travel complete AMC Form 140, Space Available Travel Request (<https://www.amc.af.mil/Portals/12/documents/AFD-140926-014.pdf>) form and e-mail it to your desired AMC Passenger Terminal. Info you need to complete the form includes:

- Email address
- Personal information (Rank/Grade, First Middle Last Name)
- Service Branch (AF, Army, Marines, Navy, CG)
- Status (Active, Guard, Reserve, Retired, Disabled Veteran, etc.)
- Other Travelers (dependents names)
- Total number of seats required
- Travel status (See Travel Eligibility-Category I-VI). The form has not yet been modified to reflect 100% disability eligibility. In the interim suggest use Category VI until otherwise advised.
- Overseas Travel Ready Status (Have Required Passports/Visas etc.)
- 5-Destinations (Sign-up for up to 5 Destinations e.g. Germany, USA, Japan, Alaska, or Hawaii)

Note: Do Not Provide Personally Identifiable Information (PII) such as Social Security Numbers (SSNs)

[Source: USVCP | August 15, 2018 ++]

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## **NDAA 2019 Update 16 ► Servicemember's Pocketbook Impact**

Servicemembers will see a rash of changes with the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act that could impact their pocketbooks, especially if companion legislation to fund the newly signed law gains congressional approval in the coming weeks. Among the most significant changes, servicemembers are slated to get a 2.6 percent pay raise, which would mark the biggest increase in nine years. The increase, which is slated to go into effect 1 JAN, means servicemembers could see a change in their first paycheck of the new year on 15 JAN. “The biggest thing servicemembers will notice is the pay raise, obviously,” said James F. Naughton, Jr., associate director for government relations for Military Officers Association of America, a nonprofit, national organization. “The increase is due to military pay being tied to private sector wage growth.”

The Senate kicked off discussions this week of a spending measure that would fund the pay raises and more personnel concerns for servicemembers. “At stake is a 2.6 percent pay raise for U.S. servicemembers, the largest pay raise for troops in almost a decade,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Thursday in opening debate from the Senate floor. Also at stake are “the equipment, tools, and training they need to complete their missions. And funding to support the necessary programs we just authorized.”

The Defense Department budget moves on two tracks: the annual NDAA sets policy changes, expenditures for the military and how the money will be spent, while a defense appropriations bill, which is now slated to be part of larger labor, health and human services and education spending bill, is what actually moves money over to the Pentagon to support the plan. In addition to pay, the legislation directs benefit improvements and personnel reforms. For example, it enhances reforms of the Military Health System and installs the most widespread changes to the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act, or DOPMA, since it was enacted in 1980. DOPMA, which standardized military promotions across the armed forces, can now become more merit-based and let the services use civilian experience to establish new ranks for entering troops, let officers promote faster and remove expectations of retirement if a servicemember fails to promote twice.

The NDAA will also usher through reforms to reduce child abuse, domestic violence and sexual misconduct among the ranks, such as making domestic violence an offense for the first time under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. In addition, servicemembers could also see higher basic allowance rates, per diem reimbursements for extended travel, spousal employment improvements, stability for Tricare rates and improvements for military childcare and schools. Here are six provisions of the 2019 NDAA that could impact your wallet:



### **Long-term travel per diem rates**

Since cost-cutting measures were installed four years ago, active-duty servicemembers and Defense Department workers have seen reduced reimbursement rates for long-term travel that extends beyond 30 days, according to MOAA. The newly passed NDAA will repeal those per diem decreases. “In 2014, DOD cut per diem rates on long-term assignments for troops and civilians” while other federal agencies’ per diem rates were not reduced,” Naughton



said. “As a result, people were less likely to volunteer for those types of assignments. For DOD employees on a six month assignment, they lost out on \$5,400.”

For example, a servicemember traveling between 31 and 180 days saw their per diem rate drop by 25 percent, which amounted to \$108 a day. If the travel extended beyond six months, the rate then dropped 45 percent, which amounted to \$79 a day. By comparison, government workers outside of the Defense Department get \$144 a day, which added up to the \$5,400 gain during a six-month assignment when compared to Defense Department workers and servicemembers traveling for the same amount of time.

### **Basic housing allowance increases**

The 2019 NDAA repeals an annual 1 percent increase in out-of-pocket housing costs for active-duty servicemembers living on base. For the past four years, the Defense Department had limited the amount of Basic Allowance for Housing, or BAH, funding to military housing providers by at least 1 percent annually. In turn, servicemembers had to pay the difference to these providers under Military Housing Privatization Initiative contracts. BAH, a stipend provided to active-duty servicemembers living on and off base to cover average housing expenses, can be impacted by duty location, pay grade and dependent status. “To have to pay out of pocket for any portion of housing is a financial nightmare, especially in active-duty ZIP codes where there is a misalignment between BAH and the housing market,” said R. Kent Morrison, a 16-year Navy veteran who is now founder and president of an Austin-based security company, BSG Security Services. “Even with the pay increase included in the defense spending bill, servicemembers are not making enough money to pay for portions of their housing. The out-of-pocket cost places a tremendous burden on servicemembers and their families, especially while deployed.”

The increase will give on-base housing providers more money to spend on maintenance and property improvements. An important concern since servicemembers have seen deteriorating living conditions at some on-base housing, Morrison said. “No servicemember expects to live in the lap of luxury, but to ask them to take on monthly housing payments results in additional financial strain and can lead to poor morale, especially among lower-ranking servicemembers,” he said.

### **Military spousal employment and businesses**

This year, lawmakers increasingly heard from military families on the challenges facing spouses hunting for employment, such as high unemployment rates and employers who turn away such workers when they learn they are part of a military family. Previously, federal agencies could use a special authority to hire military spouses without requiring they compete for the job so long as they had relocated for the military within two years. The 2019 NDAA will expand that effort on a trial, five-year basis that will let federal agencies hire a military spouse under a so-called “noncompetitive appointments” process even if they haven’t recently relocated for the military. The NDAA also directs the agencies to collect and report data on military spousal hires.

“I am also pleased by the bill’s enhancements to the career development and employment assistance program for military spouses, who also sacrifice so much for our country,” said Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (D-GA), who is co-chairman of the Congressional Military Family Caucus on Capitol Hill. The new law also requires the Defense Department to conduct an assessment and report on the “feasibility and advisability” of allowing military spouses to engage in small business activities on military bases in partnership with commissaries, exchange stores and other activities under Morale, Welfare and Recreation, a network of military support services. The report is due to Congress by March 2019.

### **Commissaries, other benefits more accessible to veterans**

The NDAA also includes provisions to allow Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipients, former prisoners of war and veterans with disabilities connected to their military service to shop at the discounted on-base store. It also extends that access to veteran caregivers. “If you have the Purple Heart, you should also have access to the commissary. It’s as simple as that,” Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI), who pushed for the change, said last month as the provision won momentum. “The added bonus to our bill is that it will strengthen the commissary system in the long run, which is good for both active-duty personnel and American taxpayers.”

In addition, the NDAA also expands access to Morale, Welfare and Recreation and Post Exchange privileges to these Purple Heart recipients, service-connected disabled veterans, former POWs, and their caregivers, Naughton said. "Previously, this benefit was only offered to Medal of Honor recipients and 100-percent disabled veterans," he said. "The hope is that this added benefit will increase foot traffic and revenue for commissaries, which have seen a consistent decline in sales."

#### **Tricare fees remain stable**

Unlike past years, Tricare, a health care program for military servicemembers, their families and veterans, won't face any new increases that will impact servicemembers, a key win noted Naughton. Earlier this year, a MOAA survey found military families are growing more dissatisfied with their Tricare medical insurance. Spouses of enlisted troops using Tricare plans were more likely than all others to cancel or postpone treatment out of cost concerns, according to the survey of 8,500 beneficiaries. "Another big win for troops is there are no new Tricare fees," Naughton said. "A Senate proposal would have lumped all Tricare beneficiaries into a new cost-share model, one that would've caused military families to pay more in enrollment fees, higher copays, and new non-network deductibles."

#### **New funding for childcare and military school children**

The NDAA will also authorize \$40 million in assistance to local schools with high concentrations of military children, Naughton said. Of that, \$10 million of that goes to children with special needs, he added. The law also allows the Secretary of Defense to issue interim security clearances for childcare services on military installations, he said. "This should help expedite the hiring of childcare workers and make it easier for families to access affordable childcare," Naughton said. MOAA also pushed against efforts that would have cut funding to pay for educational savings accounts for military children, which remains intact.

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Claudia Grisales | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **NDAA 2019 Update 17 ► Some of the Overlooked Parts**

Now that all the hubbub about the 2019 defense budget and the 2.6 percent pay raise has died down, let's check out some of the overlooked parts of the law that could affect you.

#### **Pay Raise**

Sure, a 2.6 percent pay raise is a good thing, but what will you really be getting. Well, an E-5 with 8 years' service will see around an \$81 increase each month, before taxes. After taxes it will probably be closer to \$50, still not bad. This still doesn't include your tax-free allowances like BAH or BAS, those numbers won't be available until January, but it looks like those amounts will probably go up by a similar amount, so an E-5 with 8 years of service could be looking at around \$100 more in their monthly check. Check out <https://www.military.com/newmembers/military-pay-calculator> for your specific details.

#### **Personal Money Allowance Going Away**

Currently only available to the Navy, the Personal Money Allowance was paid to O-9 or above, officers in certain command positions, and also to the MCPON (E-10). Starting next year, it will no longer be paid.

#### **Changes To Officer Personnel Systems**

Major changes are afoot in the officer ranks. The new law seeks to end standardized officer promotions based on years in service, instead allowing top performing officer to promote faster or even early. Branches will also be allowed to make temporary promotions in critical career fields. It will exempt some officers from promotion boards and allow officers to stay in for up to 40 years. The law also removes the dreaded "up or out" provision which discharged those officers who didn't promote in two cycles. Another provision allows services to bring in new officers at a higher rank than O-1 if they have sufficient civilian experience.

### **Career Intermission Program**

The Career Intermission Program has now been made permanent across all services. Service members can take a career intermission of up to three years under the new law. This works in tandem with the officer personnel changes above. Theoretically, an officer could leave the service as an O-1, get an advanced degree or civilian experience and come back in as an O-4.

### **Transition Assistance Changes**

The Transition Assistance (TAP) program will now have to begin a full year before separation for almost everyone. Previously it could start within 90 days of separation. TAP will now have at least three separate "pathways" depending on your situation. These pathways will be different depending on if you are being medically discharged, looking for work, planning to go to school, retiring, etc. The law gives DOD one year to come up with a plan.

### **Medals and Awards**

- Atomic Veterans - The law creates a new "Atomic Veterans Service Certificate", to honor retired and former members of the Armed Forces who are radiation-exposed veterans. Since most Atomic Veterans are pretty old, or have passed (the testing ended in 1962), this certificate will also be available to family members.
- Military Working Dog Handlers - The law will create a medal and commendation that will be available to military working dog handlers.

### **MWR Use for Veterans**

Purple Heart, Medal of Honor, service-connected disabled veterans, and family caregivers will be eligible to use MWR retail and lodging facilities starting in 2020. They may have to pay a surcharge. No word on how base access will be worked out for those who don't already have it.

**Space-A Travel** - Totally disabled veterans are now eligible for Space-A travel.

### **Navy, Navy, Navy**

Lots of changes for sailors, most of these relate to OPTEMPO and were related to the ship collisions last year. The one that stands out is the requirement for a 'Permanent Logbook'. "The Secretary of the Navy shall require that, commencing not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this act, key watchstanders on Navy surface ships shall maintain a career record of watchstanding hours and specific operational evolutions." Yep, career record. That means your permanent record, forever. So if you are an OOD, EOW, Conning Officer, or presumably any other high-profile operational position like JOOD, TAO, etc. you will have to maintain a record of all your watchstanding, showing every evolution you participated in. Fun!

**New UCMJ Article** - Article 128b will be added to the UCMJ, addressing domestic violence. It includes assault, intimidation, violation of a protective order, and damaging property or injuring animals in a domestic assault situation.

**High-Deployment Allowance for Reservists** - Adds reservists mobilized under Section 1104(b) to those eligible for the high-deployment allowance of up to \$1,000 per month.

**SGLI For Combat Zones** - Deploying to a combat zone? Your SGLI will automatically be increased to the maximum amount of \$400,000. No exceptions.

### **TRICARE Dental For Families**

TRICARE Dental for retirees will be going away in January 2019 and replaced with FEDVIP, the same dental insurance used by civil service members and government retirees. The new law will give active duty family members the option of purchasing dental insurance through FEDVIP instead of TRICARE in 2022.

### **No More Flat Rate Per Diem**

If you are TDY for more than 30 days at one location you used to be able to get flat rate per diem which paid you 75 percent of the maximum lodging allowance plus 75 percent of the Meals & Incidental Expense (M&IE) for your

location. You didn't need to submit receipts for your lodging. Effective 13 AUG, the day the legislation was signed, all lodging expenses must be substantiated by receipts. If you are TDY for more than 30 days you will get reimbursed the actual expense (not to exceed the location limit) for your lodging, and the full M&IE expenses.

[Source: Military.com | Jim Absher |August 15, 2018 ++]

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## **DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 31 AUG 2018**

**Fat Leonard** -- A federal grand jury in San Diego on 17 AUG charged three retired sailors — a captain and two senior enlisted personnel — in the ongoing Fat Leonard corruption scandal. Unsealed indictments allege that Capt. **David Williams Haas**, 50, took at least \$145,000 in bribes from Leonard Glenn “Fat Leonard” Francis, the Malaysian tycoon and defense contractor who since his late 2013 arrest in a San Diego sting has ratted out a string of corrupt sailors who steered ships to his port services. The portly Francis plied commanders and other key figures with cash, “Thai SEAL team” prostitutes, luxury resort rooms and other perks in order to bilk \$35 million from American taxpayers.

Prosecutors have charged 32 defendants and 20 have pleaded guilty to public corruption charges over the past five years. Separate indictments released 17 AUG targeted retired Master Chief Petty Officer **Ricarte Icmat David**, 61, and retired Chief Petty Officer **Brooks Alonzo Parks** for allegedly taking other perks from Francis. All three defendants allegedly traded on their rank and influence within the Navy to pay bloated invoices submitted by the now defunct company Francis led, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, and steer ships to ports it controlled or otherwise assist Fat Leonard by leaking internal military records on his commercial competitors, among other favors.

Criminal defense attorney Jeremiah J. Sullivan, III, told Navy Times that Haas will surrender voluntarily to federal agents on 30 AUG in San Diego. Haas currently lives in Kailua, Hawaii. “He is innocent and will be prepared to litigate his case in a court of law,” said Sullivan, who also represented convicted Lt. Cmdr. Todd Dale Malaki. Released from prison on 28 MAR, Malaki, 47, swapped classified Navy ship schedules and other sensitive information to Francis for cash, hotel rooms and prostitution services, the same allegations now dogging Haas. In 2011 Francis met Haas in Tokyo, feting the director of Maritime Operations for the Japan-based 7th Fleet at the Ritz Carlton and plying him and others with prostitutes at a cost of more than \$20,000, according to the grand jury documents. At around the same time, Francis was throwing a “50th birthday” party for the wives of Haas and others, court records indicate.

The next year, Francis allegedly spent more than \$75,000 buying Haas and his Navy cronies lavish hotel rooms, top-shelf booze and prostitutes at a luxury resort in Indonesia. In late 2012, the grand jury determined that Francis brought Haas and his co-conspirator, Cmdr. Michael Misiewicz, back to the Ritz Carlton in Tokyo. Serving a sentence of more than six years at the federal penitentiary in Lompoc, California, Misiewicz slid Francis a dossier containing classified 7th Fleet ship schedules and other documents that included information about ballistic missile operations in the Western Pacific Ocean. Prosecutors now say that Haas was in the room when he did it. Francis, Haas and Misiewicz then allegedly scanned a Navy organizational chart to pick potential heirs to their corrupt empire when Misiewicz returned to the United States from the 7th Fleet in late 2012.

The grand jury in San Diego also determined that Haas allegedly ordered Misiewicz to email Francis an internal Navy message outlining the upcoming port visit to Manila by the guided-missile destroyer Fitzgerald. But that was far from all, according to federal court records. Francis allegedly bought Haas prostitutes in Malaysia in 2013 when the 7th Fleet’s flagship, the Blue Ridge, pulled into Port Klang. And Fat Leonard always had more prostitutes ready for the captain in South Korea, Singapore and Sydney, prosecutors say. On June 24, 2013, Francis sent an email to his staffers, telling them about an upcoming port visit by the George Washington Carrier Strike Group to Malaysia. For that services proposal, he added, they should “screw them nicely.” Prosecutors allege the fix was in because

Francis already knew “my brother Capt Dave Haas” had rigged the port call through the Pacific Fleet commander as “(h)is farewell present to me” before the captain rotated back to San Diego. After the arrest of Francis in late 2013, the brass removed Haas, a Naval Academy graduate, from command of San Diego-based Coastal Riverine Group 1. He previously had commanded the guided-missile frigate Thach. Because he wasn’t indicted, however, the Navy allowed him to retire with his rank.

Far below Haas in rank, Master Chief Petty Officer David, 61, also was crooked, prosecutors contend. David held key logistics positions between 2001 and 2010 in the Western Pacific, including posts at the Fleet Industrial Supply Center in Yokosuka, Japan and aboard the amphibious warship Essex and the aircraft carriers Kitty Hawk and George Washington. When the Essex pulled into Hong Kong in late 2005, Francis allegedly handed David \$15,000 in cash so that the senior enlisted leader would approve inflated invoices, according to the charge sheets. David later allegedly emailed Francis thanks for the “wonderful Christmas present.” David allegedly emailed Francis again in early 2006, asking to see if they could “make some business again just like we did in Hong Kong” because he needed “some cash before I retire,” prosecutors allege.

In other correspondence, David would identify himself as “Bad Boy” — the sort of master chief who would let bogus invoices for water, trash, force protection and other services get paid — and Francis as “Boss.” David’s motives for the graft included the need for money to build a retirement home in the Philippines, prosecutors say. That’s why he allegedly took another \$15,000 cash bribe from Fat Leonard in 2009, according to the indictment. Investigators calculate that Francis paid David a total of \$40,000 in cash. In exchange, David allegedly leaked Fat Leonard classified information and internal data about his business competitors and sided with him in contract disputes involving the Navy, prosecutors allege.

The third indictment takes aim at Chief Petty Officer Parks, 46, a former logistics lead petty officer for the 7th Fleet; an assessor and instructor at the Afloat Training Group, Western Pacific; and until his early 2016 retirement a material and supply lead petty officer at Naval Supply Systems Command in Naples, Italy, where he currently lives. On June 20, 2006, Parks allegedly emailed an executive at Glenn Defense Marine Asia to arrange for a hotel suite while he was on liberty, writing, “It feels good living like a KING on an E-6’s salary!!!” That began a string of Fat Leonard payments for luxury hotel stays for Parks and other unidentified enlisted sailors or a female guest in Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur — with rooms ranging in price from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per night, according to the indictment.

On April 3, 2007, Parks informed Glenn Defense Marine Asia that he would assist on processing an invoice and noting the Navy would “take care of this immediately,” prosecutors allege. The next day, Parks told the company that he’d been bitten by the “Glenn Bug man” and assured them that “I’ve got your back like you’ve got mine,” according to the indictment. Parks then leaked Glenn Defense Marine Asia details on the Blue Ridge supply needs in the Philippines and competitor information about another ship’s port visit to Cebu. He also allegedly slid the company ship movement information for the guided-missile destroyers Paul Hamilton and Stethem. [Source: NavyTimes | Carl Prine | August 19, 2018 ++]

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**Greenville TN** -- The former head of the leading boot making company of the U.S. military was recently sentenced to federal prison for fraud after a scheme in which he imported Chinese-made boots labeled with “USA” to pass off as American-made. **Vincent Lee Ferguson**, 66, of Knoxville, Tennessee, was sentenced to more than three years in prison for the contract fraud earlier this month. The former president and chief executive officer will join his Wellco Enterprises, Inc. co-workers, former Senior Vice President of Sales Matthew Lee Ferguson, 41, and former Director of Marketing and Communications, Kerry Joseph Ferguson, 36, who were sentenced in June to six months in prison, according to a release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

Under the Berry Amendment, U.S. military uniform items must be manufactured in the United States. The company has been the lead boot supplier for the Department of Defense for more than 70 years. Between 2006 and

2012 alone, DoD paid more than \$138 million for combat boots. Ferguson and his executive team's Chinese import scheme began as early as December 2008 and lasted through August 2012, a time in which they sold more than \$8.1 million worth of the fraudulent boots, according to the release. Two shipments of fraudulent "USA" boots were seized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection. On each pair, Ferguson and his team had the manufacturer tear away "Made in China" tags prior to shipment.

"Falsely selling our military millions of dollars of combat boots by saying they were 'Made in the USA' when they are actually Chinese-knockoffs not only defrauds the government, but also defrauds the American soldier," said Defense Criminal Investigative Service Assistant Special Agent in Charge Robert Hammer. "Our soldiers rely on their equipment, from their guns to their boots, to protect this country, and counterfeit products could fail at a moment when they need them the most." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Todd South | August 20, 2018 ++]

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**Corpus Christi Army Depot --** Two supervisors have been arrested and charged with falsifying data on the main rotor blades for Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters in order to make non-conforming parts look like they met Army specifications, the Justice Department announced 27 AUG. **Albert Flores**, 57, of Corpus Christi and **Samuel Escareno**, 54, are both charged with one count each of conspiracy and falsifying records related to aircraft parts, the Justice Department said in a statement. The supervisors allegedly commanded subordinates at the depot "to make false entries and certifications on UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter main rotor blade dynamic balance data sheets," the Justice Department said. "The defendants allegedly did so in order for nonconforming rotor blades to appear to meet specifications when they actually did not." Corpus Christi Army Depot is a major military aviation repair hub on the Texas coast. The depot's website said the depot is "the largest rotary wing repair facility in the world," and boasts that since 2003 the facility has worked on 1,098 aircraft, 21,555 engines and a total of 411,398 components for the Army's UH-60 Black Hawk, CH-47 Chinook, AH-64 Apache, OH-58 Kiowa and the Air Force's HH-60 Pave Hawk. If convicted, both men could face 10 years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$10,000. [Source: ArmyTimes | Tara Copp | August 27, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Update 113 ► \$10M To Cover Anticipated Increased Recovery Workload**

Senate lawmakers 21 AUG backed adding \$10 million to their defense budget plans for next year to offset what they hope will be more expenses related to returning the remains of fallen U.S. combat troops from North Korea in the near future. The move, part of the fiscal 2019 defense budget debate in the Senate this week, follows a similar move by House lawmakers in June and all but guarantees a hefty boost for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency if both chambers can settle on a defense spending plan by the start of the new fiscal year, on 1 OCT.

Provision sponsor Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NE) said the move will ensure that DPAA officials will have the resources needed in coming months to increase their workload and processing as negotiations with North Korea progress. "For the families of those lost, this is a long-awaited opportunity to gain closure and to give their loved ones the respectful, dignified remembrance they deserve," she said on the Senate floor just before the 85-0 vote. "For the families of those lost in service, it is never too late to offer closure, and for our heroes in uniform, it is never too late to remember and to honor their sacrifice."

Last month, North Korean officials turned over to U.N. officials 55 cases of what are believed to be the remains of missing American combat troops from the Korean War. Included in that exchange was the military identification tag for Master Sgt. Charles H. McDaniel, an Army medic from Indiana killed in the opening months of the war. DPAA officials have said it could take months to provide additional identifications, as they painstakingly examine the remains and compare them to existing DNA databases. The remains exchange came after President Donald Trump's meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and resumes what had been a productive working



relationship between the two countries' defense departments on this issue. From 1990 to 2005, 229 fallen service members were identified and returned back to America.

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. The \$675 billion Senate defense appropriations bill, in line with House spending levels and previously agreed upon bipartisan budget levels for fiscal 2019, is expected to be passed by senators later this week as part of a package with education and Health and Human Services funding legislation.

Lawmakers have until the end of September to negotiate a compromise between the two chambers' different budget bills. Since the \$10 million in additional DPAA funding is included in both chambers' drafts, it's unlikely to be among the sticking points in that work. If lawmakers can't reach a deal by 30 SEP, they will need to pass a temporary budget extension to keep defense programs operating past then, a prospect that military leaders have often lamented for limiting their long-term planning. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **POW/MIA Recoveries ► Reported 16 thru 31 AUG 2018 | Fifteen**

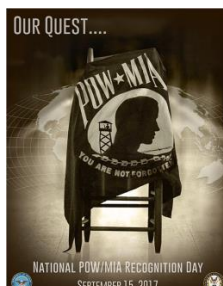
"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War 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

- **Air Force Col. Richard A. Kibbey** was a member of Detachment 5, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. On Feb. 6, 1967, Kibbey's rescue and recovery helicopter was hit by enemy ground fire, resulting in an internal explosion and crash. Kibbey was reported missing in action, but his status was later amended to deceased. Interment services are pending. Read about Kibbey.
- **Army Air Forces Capt. George Van Vleet, Jr.**, 35, of Fresno, Calif., whose remains were previously accounted for, will be buried August 18 in his hometown. Van Vleet was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, (Heavy), 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands. On Jan. 21, 1944, the B-24J bomber aircraft he was aboard crashed shortly after takeoff, killing all six crewmembers, including Van Vleet. [Read about Van Vleet.](#)
- **Army Air Forces Sgt. Alfonso O. Duran**, 22, of El Rito, N.M., whose remains were previously accounted for, will be buried Aug. 22 in Santa Fe, N.M. On Feb. 25, 1944, the final day of Operation Argument, Duran's aircraft came under attack by German fighters and anti-aircraft fire while he was on a bombing mission targeting Regensburg, Germany. Nine of the 10 crew members were able to bail out of the aircraft before it crashed, but were later captured. Duran's remains were never found, and he was later declared deceased. Read about Duran.
- **Army Pfc. George L. Spangenberg** was a member of Company E, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. On Nov. 2, 1950, Spangenberg was reported as missing in action following a battle in Unsan, North Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Spangenberg.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Joe S. Elmore**, 20, of Seminary, Ky., whose remains were previously accounted for, will be buried Aug. 18 in Albany, Ky. Elmore was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit was assembled with South Korean soldiers in the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the east side of the Chosin River, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces. Elmore was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing on Dec. 2, 1950. [Read about Elmore.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Kenneth B. Williams** was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit was assembled with South Korean soldiers in the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the east side of the Chosin River, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces. Williams was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read about Williams.
- **Army Pfc. Leo J. Duquette** was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces near Choch'iwon, South Korea. Duquette could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 11, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Duquette.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Mathis O. Ball, Jr.** was a member of Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces near Choch'iwon, South Korea. Ball could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 12, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ball.](#)
- **Army Pfc. Morris R. Worrell** was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment. Worrell was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942, and one of the thousands who were eventually moved to the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the remaining years of the war. Interment services are pending. Read about Worrell.

- **Army Pvt. William A. Boegli** was a member of Company L, 332nd Infantry Regiment, 81st Infantry Division. On Sept. 30, 1944, Boegli was killed while attempting to lead a group of litter bearers to evacuate wounded servicemen. His remains were not recovered following the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Boegli.](#)
- **Marine Corps Pfc. Robert K. Holmes**, 19, of Wichita, Kan., whose remains were previously accounted for, will be buried Aug. 20 in Salt Lake City. On Dec. 7, 1941, Holmes was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Holmes. [Read about Holmes.](#)
- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Herman W. Mulligan, Jr.**, 21, of West Greenville, S.C., whose remains were previously accounted for, will be buried Aug. 21 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. On May 30, 1945, Mulligan was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Marine Regiment, 6th Marine Division, engaged in heavy fighting against Japanese forces on Hill 27. A large cache of ammunition exploded during the battle, wounding dozens and killing Mulligan. [Read about Mulligan.](#)
- **Navy Aviation Chief Ordnanceman Otis E. Ingram** was a turret gunner aboard a torpedo bomber from U.S. Navy Torpedo Squadron Fifty One (VT-51). On July 27, 1944, Ingram's aircraft was the lead of four Avengers on a mission targeting the Japanese base at Malakal Harbor when it went missing. All three crewmembers, including Ingram were reported missing in action, and subsequently reported killed in action on Feb. 4, 1946. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ingram.](#)
- **Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Arthur Glenn**, 43, of Fort Wayne, Ind., whose remains were previously accounted for, will be buried Aug. 21 in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. On Dec. 7, 1941, Glenn was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Glenn. [Read about Glenn.](#)
- **Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Eugene K. Eberhardt** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Eberhardt. Interment services are pending. [Read about Eberhardt.](#)

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

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## VA Mission Act Update 04 ► A Glimpse Inside VA's Major Overhaul

The VA MISSION Act is the most massive comprehensive health care reform bill passed out of Congress in over 25 years. It was signed into law by President Donald Trump on 6 JUN. VA has quietly begun working on implementing these major changes but recognizes it can't do so without veterans' help. VA wants to know what questions veterans have about the VA MISSION Act as VA moves forward in rolling out these huge health system changes. While MOAA and other veteran service organizations (VSO) have started working with VA to implement the legislation, veterans are central to making the transformation smooth and in helping the department meet the very tight deadline mandated by Congress.

Passage of the VA MISSION Act signaled Congress' readiness to implement major changes in VA's health care system - seen by some congressional leaders as long overdue reform. One of the most significant changes veterans will see in the next few months is the elimination of the Veterans Choice Program, established in 2014, to provide temporary relief and help VA rebuild internal capacity to reduce long wait times for veterans seeking health care. A new, streamlined community care program will replace Choice and consolidate multiple community care programs currently managed by VA into a single program. A few other major changes veterans can expect to see are:

- The expansion of VA's comprehensive caregiver support program, opening up the program to eligible pre-9/11 veterans;
- Veterans and their doctors will be able to decide the best option on where the veteran should get their care, whether inside VA or in the community;
- More telehealth programs; and,
- Walk-in health care services with local community providers.

What would normally take three to five years to implement such massive system changes, Congress gave VA one year from the enactment of the MISSION Act to replace the Choice Program and two years to implement the caregiver program expansion. Last week, VA provided MOAA and other VSOs a little peek under the tent as to the rough timelines the department is working under to combine and implement the new community care program and walk-in care services over the next year. Here's generally what they know:

- Phase 1, June - October 2018. Build the operating structure, access and eligibility criteria, new veteran care contract agreements, and new competency standards for community providers; and, draft regulations.
- Phase 2, November 2018 - February 2019. Complete and test the operating structure and elements initiated in Phase 1; continue rollout of the new community care provider network; begin educating and training VA staff; and, finalized regulations.
- Phase 3, March - June 2019. Transition and begin operation of the new walk-in care and community care program; continue educating VA staff; continue rollout of new community care provider network; begin using new competency standards for community providers; publish regulations; and, end the Choice Program.

So here's what MOAA needs from veterans. They need you to send them your questions about the VA MISSION Act that you want VA to answer and communicate to veterans now and throughout the implementation of the system reforms. To help get you started, here are a couple questions MOAA has already provided to VA we think veterans will want to know:

- How can veterans expect VA to communicate with them as progress is made in implementing the MISSION Act and how can veterans provide feedback throughout the process?
- What does walk-in care mean and will I be charged for getting this care outside of my VA medical center?

Now, what questions are on your mind? You are requested to send your questions to [legis@moaa.org](mailto:legis@moaa.org) and MOAA will share your questions with VA as well any communication and marketing materials as they become available.

[Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Rene Campos | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Vocational Rehabilitation Update 05 ► Average Counselor-To-Caseload Ratio**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E) recently began the process of reducing the average counselor-to-caseload ratio, to one to 125 or below, through the hiring of 172 vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs). The hiring effort, which began early this summer, will help improve service to Veterans with service-connected disabilities and employment barriers, as well as help provide them with expedited services to improve their ability to transition to the civilian workforce. "The VR&E program is

much more than a benefits program,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “It’s a vital support network, where VA’s expert counselors work closely with Veterans on their personalized vocational rehabilitation goals. Congressional funding enables us to expand our team of counselors who are on the ground across the country working tirelessly for Veterans, and we appreciate their support.”

VA is committed to ensuring its counselors have manageable caseloads and the resources needed to ensure Veterans are receiving thorough, quality services. Currently, 941 counselors are working across VA’s 56 regional offices, as well as in out-based and satellite locations. Once hiring is complete for the additional 172 counselors, a total of 1,113 VRCs will be deployed in the field to serve Veterans. This includes 905 VRCs at regional and out-based offices, 132 Integrated Disability Evaluation System counselors at 71 military installations and 76 Veteran Success on Campus counselors at 105 institutions of higher learning. Since 2014, over 56,000 Veterans have either completed a rehabilitation plan, are employed or have achieved a greater independence in living through VR&E assistance. The VR&E program currently has more than 123,000 participants. For more information about VR&E, visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab>.

[Source: VA News Release | August 29, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Class Action Suits ► Watershed Decision Opens Possibility to File Against VA**

A [federal court ruling](#) this week opened the possibility for veterans to file suit against the Department of Veterans Affairs as a class rather than individuals, a move that advocates say could dramatically shift how legal cases against the bureaucracy are handled. The ruling, [Monk v. Wilkie](#), came from the [U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals](#). The eight-justice panel ultimately ruled against the plaintiff’s claim that their case should proceed as a class-action suit, arguing it failed to meet previously established standards for such legal consideration. But they did say that in “appropriate cases” in the future, class-action lawsuits would be entertained. “This is a watershed decision, and its importance should not be diminished merely because the court declined to certify this proposed class,” Chief Judge Robert Davis wrote in the opinion. “On the contrary, the court’s decision will shape our jurisprudence for years to come and, I hope, bring about positive change for our nation’s veterans.”

Fellow appeals court Judge Michael Allen said the decision “has been decades in coming and holds great promise as a means to address systemic problems in the VA system.” In private lawsuits, individuals must prove specific harm or damage to their personal situation in order to win judgment. But in class-action lawsuits, plaintiffs can show illegal or harmful activity against a larger group, bringing with it different standards for correction. Officials with the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School, which brought the suit on behalf of Vietnam veteran Conley Monk Jr., praised the decision as a historic step forward.

“(Allowing class-action suits) will allow our nation’s veterans to unite in fighting for prompt answers to their disability benefits claims,” said clinic law student Catherine McCarthy said in a statement. “The VA’s delays are intolerable, and we hope the court will exercise its class action authority to hold the agency to account.” Whether future cases will have an easier time establishing an eligible class remains to be seen. In this case, the panel of judges rejected Monk’s claim that all veterans facing lengthy wait times for benefits appeals cases should be able to collectively sue the department to force a quicker response. But the new legal avenue could open the possibility of groups of veterans with the same illness banding together to force VA to respond, or require policy changes based on problems a similar group has reported in navigating VA systems. Specific damages awards are not covered in the new ruling. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 24, 2018 ++]

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## VA Loans ► Assumption Pros & Cons

Those at all interested in real estate continue to watch the slow creep of loan interest rates. For now, the rates are staying competitive, but loan experts expect interest rates to increase in upcoming months. Assuming a VA Loan might become an attractive option in the near future for both military home buyers and sellers. Before diving into the pros and cons of assuming VA loan, here's a quick reminder of what a VA loan assumption is and who is eligible:

- Assuming a VA loan equates to taking over the mortgage of a homeowner without going through the long and expensive process of applying for a new mortgage. There is paperwork, but it's specifically designed for a VA loan assumption.
- VA loan assumption isn't restricted to active duty members and veterans. Anyone who the lender deems qualified to take on the payment amount is eligible to take over the loan.

Depending if you are the home buyer or home seller, there are reasons both for and against assuming a VA loan. Buyers need to thoughtfully consider all loan options, because assuming a VA loan may not work in your favor. Consulting a loan specialist with VA loan assumption experience is highly recommended.

### Pros

- If the VA loan is assumable, it negates the need to apply for a new loan. The buyer can avoid paying closing costs and appraisal fees, likely saving thousands of dollars.
- A first time VA loan user pays an average of a 2.15% VA funding fee, a second-time VA loan user pays even more, but the VA only charges a 0.5% funding fee on the loan amount for the assumption, which is far less than the other fees.
- If the original VA loan was approved at a very low interest rate, there's a good chance a new loan will have a higher interest rate. For example, if the loan was established with a fixed rate of 3.31% in 2011, and in 2018 the best VA loan interest rate comes in at 4.30%, it's easy to see the savings add up for the buyer.
- VA sellers have an advantage when the above situation occurs, because the buying pool increases to include those who would consider assuming a VA loan. Sellers often market the beneficial interest rate as a selling feature within the house's advertising.
- VA loans assumed by veteran buyers hold less of a risk for the seller because their full VA loan benefits are returned.

### Cons

- The buyer must certify that the loan assumption is for a primary residence only if they want to swap VA housing entitlements with the seller.
- If a civilian buyer assumes the VA loan, the remaining portion of the seller's VA entitlement in use stays with the original loan. The veteran cannot retrieve the remaining eligibility until the loan is paid off. This makes a short sale or foreclosure by the civilian owner something to consider, because the veteran owner loses that portion of their benefit.
- Lenders are not required to issue a VA Loan assumption. Some lenders do not have automatic authority to assume VA loans. They must send all requests to be reviewed by a VA loan office, and everyone involved with the home sale is subject to waiting for the VA to respond.
- Veteran buyers who want to assume a loan could be on the hook for an exceptionally large down payment. If the current veteran owner sells their home for more money than they owe on the loan, the VA loan assumers would have to come up with the difference for a down payment. For example: Sale Price \$400,000 with a VA Mortgage Balance \$325,000 would require a Down Payment of \$75,000. Remember, avoiding a hefty down payment is often one of the major reasons veterans use their housing benefit. For more information about down payments and equity associated with a VA loan assumption, read over [4 Common Questions About VA Home Loan Assumption](#).



After the process of assumption is completed, it's important that the original VA seller obtain their Release of Liability form. This document ensures the seller is not liable for the original loan in the future and the original terms of the loan pass to the buyer. VA loan assumption is just one of many options home buyers have available today. The home buying hunt should always start with plenty of research on topics like location and affordability, finances, and home ownership responsibilities. [Source: Military.com | Dawn M. Smith | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **VA National Archives Update 01 ► Update Requested on Relocation**

Republicans Mike Turner of Dayton and Warren Davidson of Troy joined both U.S. senators from Ohio 20 AUG to ask the federal government to provide “an update” on plans to locate the archives of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at the Dayton VA Medical Center campus. In a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the lawmakers wrote “we hope VA will move quickly to follow through” on a memorandum of agreement signed by former VA Secretaries Robert McDonald and David Shulkin to locate the VA archives in Dayton. “The greater Dayton area has established an organization, which has made meaningful advancements towards raising capital for the project,” the lawmakers wrote, adding that Dayton officials who signed the memorandum of agreement “have raised more than \$65,000 toward the project.” “We acknowledge the complexities involved in establishing a new office, and we appreciate the progress made thus far,” the lawmakers wrote.

In addition to Turner and Davidson, the letter was signed by Republican Sen. Rob Portman and Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown. The lawmakers released the letter along with a statement from Jeff Hoagland, president and chief executive officer of the Dayton Development Coalition saying the history office would be “a big honor for the Dayton region and for our veterans. It will also serve as a tourist attraction and assist economic development in West Dayton.” Two years ago, McDonald said his agency planned locate its national archives in two historic buildings on the VA center’s sprawling West Dayton campus. McDonald said the agency’s massive archives will be housed in the national headquarters facility which was built in 1871, and the clubhouse which dates to 1881. [Source: myDayton Daily News | Jack Torry | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Sexual Assault Care Update 13 ► Officials May Have Improperly Denied Benefits**

Veterans Affairs officials may have improperly denied benefits to thousands of military sexual assault victims in recent years due to paperwork and procedural mistakes, according to a department inspector general report released 21 AUG. The full report is available at <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-17-05248-241.pdf>. Investigators estimate that during a six-month stretch in 2017, VA officials may have wrongly refused benefits in more than 1,300 cases, potentially traumatizing victims seeking help that previous administrators had promised.

- “(The Veterans Benefits Administration) did not always fulfill its obligation to help veterans prove their military sexual trauma-related claims,” the report stated.
- “Staff did not follow required procedures for processing these claims, which potentially resulted in undue stress to veterans as well as a denial of compensation benefits for victims of MST who could have been entitled to receive them.”

In response, VA officials have promised a review of all denied military sexual trauma claims dating back to October 2016, with a goal of updated decisions by fall 2019. They also promised updated training for hundreds of claims processors and managers, to avoid similar problems in the future. According to the IG report, among the most common reasons for incorrect rejections was staff failing to request medical examinations even when existing evidence mandated one. Under VA guidelines established in 2011, department processors are instructed to take a “liberal

approach” when reviewing military sexual trauma claims because of established problems with documentation and reporting of such assaults.

Unlike other medical claims where a simple records review may determine validity of a case, the guidelines mandate that staff speak to veterans about the circumstances of their assault, look for “credible evidence” of post-assault stress, and consider outside medical records that support the claims. “(Staff) may deny an MST-related claim without a medical examination only if there is no evidence of the stressor, no evidence of a behavioral marker, or no evidence of symptoms of a mental disorder,” the report stated. Yet in numerous cases, claims processors never reached out to veterans or rejected their claims based solely on a lack of evidence in their military records. In fiscal 2017 alone, the Veterans Benefits Administration rejected about 5,500 military sexual trauma claims. The IG report found that of the cases they sampled, 49 percent were missing follow-up interviews, new medical examinations or other significant procedural work. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Outside Influence Update 01 ► Republicans Have No Plans to Investigate Allegations**

Top Republican lawmakers have no plans to examine the alleged influence that a trio of President Donald Trump’s friends have at the Department of Veterans Affairs, even as Democrats call for an investigation. The controversy peaked in recent weeks after reports that Marvel Entertainment Chairman Ike Perlmutter, Palm Beach doctor Bruce Moskowitz and D.C. lawyer Marc Sherman hold undue sway with VA leadership, including senior adviser Peter O’Rourke, who formerly served as acting secretary. Liberal veterans group VoteVets filed a lawsuit against the administration last week, claiming the VA is violating federal protocol related to private influence in matters of federal policy.

Scrutiny of the department is high as recently confirmed Secretary Robert Wilkie assumes control of a massive overhaul of the popular Veterans Choice Program giving veterans access to private doctors. Veterans groups are closely watching how the department will implement the bipartisan project, particularly whether it will funnel more resources away from VA facilities.

On 20 AUG, a handful of Senate Democrats on the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, led by Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, petitioned Chairman Johnny Isakson of Georgia to hold a hearing on the matter. The senators cited the three men’s reported interest in privatization, as well as their influence in a deal to revamp the VA’s electronic health records, as cause for concern. “While many of the reported incidents occurred prior to now-Secretary Wilkie’s tenure at the VA, it is imperative that we receive his testimony about his interactions and communications with the trio and what actions he has taken and what actions he plans to take to ensure decisions at the VA are being driven by what is best for our veterans without undue outside influence or direction,” the Democrats wrote in a letter to Isakson.

House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Ranking Member Tim Walz is also seeking details of correspondence from the department. But Republican leaders of both the House and Senate veterans committees don’t agree the issue warrants congressional intervention. Isakson said the problem was largely solved after Wilkie was sworn in last month. “I think we’re moving ahead,” he said. “Most of them are out of there.” Isakson added that the three men worked around the committee but never affected the committee’s agenda. “There wasn’t anything I could do about it,” he said. “It never caused us any trouble. It was certainly disruptive and held the VA back some, but we got a great secretary now.”

A spokeswoman for Tennessee Republican Phil Roe, Isakson’s counterpart on the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, said Roe also believes Wilkie is capable of running the agency independently despite outside pressure. The VA has also rejected the notion that the three friends ever had any direct influence over the department. “Secretary Wilkie has been clear how he does business — no one from outside the administration dictates VA policies or decisions — that’s up to him and President Trump,” spokesman James Hutton said in an email. “Period.”

But Democrats aren't satisfied. Democratic Reps. Julia Brownley and Ann McLane Kuster have petitioned VA Inspector General Michael Missal to investigate and asked Roe to hold a hearing on the matter. "Not only are these individuals making policy decisions without nomination by the President or Senate confirmation, they have reportedly made personnel decisions that adversely affected the careers of numerous VA employees who felt their counsel was contrary to the delivery of quality care to our nation's veterans," the congresswomen wrote to Missal.

Republicans are less concerned. Sen. Mike Rounds said he has concerns about the VA, but they don't include Trump's friends. "I don't know that it's necessary to investigate it," he said. "I think if the president wants to have discussions, he most certainly is welcome to bring in outsiders to have discussions." GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy said the issue has to be more than what he called "Trump derangement syndrome" on the part of the president's critics to warrant an investigation. Presidents routinely have friends and other informal advisers they seek out for opinions, he added. "I think it would have to make sure that it crossed those thresholds before I would be particularly concerned," he said. [Source: Roll Call | Lauren Clason | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## VA Spinal Cord Program Update 03 ► Policy Update Expands Exoskeleton Use

ReWalk Robotics, Ltd. announced that the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has updated its policy on using exoskeleton medical device for training and rehabilitation of qualifying Veterans with spinal cord injury (SCI). The updated policy provides expanded access for training to additional VA centers and private rehabilitation clinics through the VA's Veterans Choice Program, a program that allows veterans to receive care from a community provider paid for by the VA.

The new policy which was issued in June 2018, is an updated version of the original standard operating policy (SOP) issued by the VA in December 2015. Because of the new policy, the evaluation will now require all Veterans to flow through one of 24 designated spinal cord injury VA centers (SCI/D). Once a veteran is found to be eligible for training and procurement of his or her own exoskeleton system, the individual may be allowed to pursue training in one of three ways: at the applicable SCI/D hub center, at a qualified VA hospital designated by the VA's "hub & spoke" program, or at a qualified private rehabilitation center through the VA's Veterans Choice Program. The policy states:

*"If a Veteran with SCI/D is unable or unwilling to travel to a VA Exoskeleton Training Center for training, case-by-case consideration will be given to enable the Veteran and companion to receive training at a VA facility that does not have an exoskeleton training program or at a non-VA facility."*

"This revised policy is a great step forward that will potentially help many paralyzed Veterans who simply seek to walk again," said ReWalk CEO Larry Jasinski. "These significant SOP updates mean that numerous injured Veterans who have expressed an interest in obtaining a ReWalk, but have not been able to participate due to a lack of availability in their area, can now have access. We are pleased to see the VA build upon the SOP, taking into account the Department's own extensive research and its ongoing national trial." The revised policy has made available 142 ReWalk certified private and VA SCI/D training centers across the US to teach Veterans how to use ReWalk. Moreover, the network of VA SCI/D spoke sites may now be eligible to conduct training and provide additional opportunity.



ReWalk VA exoskeletons

As for the cost, ReWalk's Exoskeleton runs about \$100 thousand. \$70 thousand for the device plus a five-year policy to take care of it. The apparatus allows people with spinal cord injuries to stand up and move about by mirroring the natural walking pattern with mechanical motion to the hip and knees. ReWalk is the first exoskeleton to receive FDA clearance for personal and rehabilitation use the in United States. Go to <https://youtu.be/cBzwbbTPJg0> for a video of user's walking with the ReWalk's Exoskeleton. [Source: Wearable Technologies | Johanna Mischke | August 7, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Caregiver Program Update 50 ► Caregivers Face Long Wait for VA Assistance**

A lack of accountability resulted in caregivers for injured veterans being blocked for months – and sometimes years – from a Department of Veterans Affairs program created to assist them, a VA watchdog reported. Last year, lawmakers demanded the VA inspector general investigate the Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers program following news reports of the VA dropping veterans from the program with little notice. The program pays a stipend to family members or friends of injured post-9/11 veterans who provide personal care. The inspector general released findings 16 AUG that caregivers wait too long to be approved for the program. Once they're in, the VA doesn't consistently monitor veterans' conditions and whether they still need assistance.

“As a nation we make a promise to have our veterans' backs when they return home from war, and this report confirms that VA has not been holding up their end of the deal,” Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) said in a statement. The findings come as the VA is planning a major expansion of its caregiver program. Congress passed legislation earlier this year to open eligibility to all eras of veterans. The measure was part of a major VA reform package titled the VA Mission Act. In 2019, caregivers to veterans injured before May 7, 1975 will become eligible for benefits. Once that happens, it's estimated 16,900 additional caregivers will enroll. Two years later, people who care for veterans injured between 1975 and 2001 can participate. At that time, the Congressional Budget Office estimates the program will grow by another 24,700 caregivers.

“Considering the anticipated growth of the program, it is more important than ever that VA ensure the family caregiver program is operated effectively,” the inspector general report states. Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) urged the VA on 16 AUG to overhaul the way it manages the program. “The VA has one year before our bipartisan VA Mission Act expands the Caregiver Support Program to veterans of all eras,” Tester said in a statement. “The VA knows what it must do before then: fix it.”

To investigate the program, the inspector general's office reviewed 500 cases – 250 caregivers who were enrolled into the program from January to September 2017, and 250 who were dropped from it. The VA is supposed to approve or deny an application within 45 days. Of the 1,822 applications approved during that time, 1,189, or 65 percent, were delayed, the inspector general found. Of the delayed cases, 654, or 55 percent, weren't finished until three to six months after a caregiver applied. In one instance, a veteran and spouse in North Las Vegas, Nev., waited 238 days for the VA to approve their application for assistance. The spouse had quit their job to care for the veteran, who was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Another couple applied for the program in November 2014 through the Huntington VA Medical Center in West Virginia. The veteran, who struggled with mental health disorders, waited nearly three years to be approved.

The 16 AUG report exposed another problem with the program. In some cases, caregivers were receiving assistance that they no longer needed. During an eight-month period last year, the VA likely overpaid caregivers approximately \$41.6 million, collectively. “With the expected expansion of the family caregiver program... this dollar amount will be significantly higher if VA does not take steps to improve its management,” the report reads. Inspectors found one veteran with PTSD and traumatic brain injury had been receiving 25 hours per week in assistance since

2013. In 2014, a nurse noted the veteran was working full time. One year later, a different nurse documented the veteran required less care. No action was taken until 2017, the report states. During that time, the veteran's caregiver was potentially paid \$31,000 for care they didn't need.

The inspector general made six recommendations to VA officials, one of which is to ensure there's enough staff at VA medical centers to run the caregiver program. The VA was also asked to meet the 45-day standard to approve or deny applications and to better monitor veterans who benefit from the program. Carolyn Clancy, the former executive in charge of the VA health care system, said in response to the inspector general that the agency was already working to improve the program. The VA plans to implement all of the recommendations by June 2019 – the month the program is set to expand to more caregivers. "It is clear that it is beyond time for VA to begin implementing the report's recommendations and running the caregivers program as Congress intended to help meet the critical needs of our veterans," Murray said. "We will be watching to make sure they do." [Source: Stars & Stripes | Nikki Wentling | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Claims Backlog Update 159 ► Whistleblower Exposes Claim Problem**

Tens of thousands of veterans remain in the pipeline still waiting to learn if they will receive health care benefits, disability compensation or VA pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), but the agency is refusing to answer Congress's questions about the enormous backlog of claims that continue to grow daily. For example, the waiting list includes nearly 3,000 applications that are sitting at just one VA Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia. But, according to a VA whistleblower, VA staff refuses to acknowledge any of the claims as actual applications for benefits. VA staff would rather rationalize and justify reasons for not working on the claims, so that VA staff can attend to "more important matters," according to the whistleblower.

Scott Davis, a program specialist at the Health Eligibility Center in Atlanta, said, "The VA is attempting to downplay the number of veterans claims waiting to be worked on by ignoring the fact that those 1,833 veterans already applied." In other words, because some veterans have sent in duplicate applications, they get no attention whatsoever. Instead, Mr. Davis reported the VA plans to send out letters asking them to apply for benefits once again in what he calls "a poorly-timed outreach campaign." "VA should have processed these applications, and this is how the backlog gets started," Davis told the Washington Examiner. "The applications sit and sit and sit. No one works on them, and no one directs staff to work on the applications. So, they just collect dust" According to Mr. Davis, "If you're not enrolled in the VA healthcare system, you cannot get an appointment," he added. "They're acting as if it's the veterans' burden to correct this issue."

Mr. Davis noted the VA has refused to change the way it handles applications from combat veterans, even after a waiting list of 44,000 applications was exposed in July. "The significance is that VA still is not paying attention to veteran applications because of a misunderstood stipulation that is easily misinterpreted to keep people from working. Veterans from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam suffer the most" he said. "You would think that the recent exposure from the media would have made them more aware and eager to do the right thing, but the exposure seems to have strengthened their position to keep things as they are." Subsequently, that simply means more and more veterans will continue to wait as the backlog grows. [Source: USVCP Newsletter | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Agent Orange Claims Update 08 ► Advice On How to Get yours Approved**

Ray Gustavson served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam, and is a retired VA Rating Specialist (RVSR). He is currently working on a novel about the Civil War, and also is writing a self-help book for veterans who want to better understand

the complexities of the VA claims process. After he retired from the VA in October 2003, he began reading dozens of complaints on the Internet from veterans who had had their Agent Orange claims denied. This motivated him to help vets understand the VA claims process by explaining it in plain English so they have a better insight into how to prepare a claim and what to expect once they submit it. His comments are not intended to defend the VA or to apologize for its shortcomings. Those who are contemplating submitting a claim or have already done so are advised to read the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**VA Agent Orange Claim Submission**”. It should help you keep the door open for future approval in case your claim is initially denied. [Source: USVCP | August 18, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Pharmacy Update 10 ► Community Care Program | Walmart**

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) efforts to improve care coordination for Veterans, the department is working with pharmacy services provider Walgreens to coordinate patient and pharmaceutical care for VA-enrolled patients. With the click of a button, VA providers will be able to see the entire medication and immunization history of VA-enrolled patients who receive their prescription and immunization needs at Walgreens. “This arrangement is the first of its kind and it’s a strong collaboration,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Partnerships like this will help VA continue to improve the way we care for Veterans.”

As it expands its community care program, VA actively refines its ability to track medication prescribed by community providers. Prior to the arrangement, VA providers would ask patients to inform them about medications filled at Walgreens. With the VA-Walgreens exchange, VA providers can now easily view medications directly that are prescribed to VA-enrolled patients by community providers and filled at Walgreens pharmacies. For the past five years, VA and Walgreens have partnered to provide flu shots at no cost for enrolled Veterans, improving vaccination rates and access to immunizations.

VA exchanges standards-based medical information securely and electronically with participating community health care partners, such as Walgreens, to ensure the best possible care coordination and medication management. Currently, VA exchanges health information with over 170 community health care partners, representing 1,288 hospitals, 537 Federally Qualified Health Centers, 261 nursing homes, 8,649 pharmacies (including over 8,000 Walgreens pharmacies), and over 22,431 clinics. Additional information about the VA Health Information Exchange Program can be found online at [www.va.gov/vler](http://www.va.gov/vler). [Source: VA News Release | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **GI Bill Update 261 ► Test Reimbursement**

Do you need to take as the SAT, GRE, LSAT, a licensing certification, or even a journeyman or other employment-related test? Your GI Bill® can help you cover the fees, and the [Forever GI Bill](#) can make it a more useful option. If you’re a Veteran or service member using the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) to pay for your education and need to take a national test, certification, or licensing exam, beginning August 1, 2018 you’ll soon be charged the “true cost” of the test. Rather than being charged a full month of Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement benefits under the current practice, you’ll be charged entitlement relative to the actual cost of the test—a much better deal than being charged your full month’s entitlement benefits if the cost is below that amount. VA may reimburse a licensing or certification test up to a maximum charge of \$2,000 for a single test.

In addition, this change to the law adds a new covered test. It adds a national test that evaluates prior learning and knowledge and provides opportunity for course credit at a college or university. Something else to consider: Prior to passage of the Forever GI Bill, students were charged an entire month of entitlement, regardless the cost of the test.



No matter how well you do on the test, certification, or exam, a new law passed by Congress and signed by President Trump last August changes the way you're charged for those tests, certifications, or exams.

The new provision that changes the way Post-9/11 GI Bill students pay for their national tests, or certification and licensing exams is part of the [Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act](#), known as the "Forever GI Bill." As you know, many of these tests, licenses and certifications can open new doors to employment. The types of jobs covered by the licensing and certification tests include mechanic, medical technician, attorney, therapist, computer network engineer, website developer, and many others. There is no cap on the number of tests VA will charge to your entitlement, but you must have sufficient entitlement remaining to be reimbursed. Whether you're taking a test, exam, or certification to be a master electrician, a journeyman plumber, a lawyer, or a graduate student, they all fall under this new provision of the Colmery Act. To see a list of the national tests, or certification and licensing exams, visit <https://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weampub/buildSearchNE.do>.

If you haven't explored your options to use your education benefits, you can start by visiting the GI Bill Comparison tool at <https://www.vets.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool>. You can see how to maximize your education value and look up the college, training school, or apprenticeship program you're interested in attending. You can also see how much your GI Bill benefits will cover and if you'd have any out of pocket expenses. If you have any questions, call 1-888-GI-BILL-1 (1-888-442-4551). If you use the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), the Federal number is 711. You can also visit the GI Bill website <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

As always, be sure to follow us on our Facebook and on Twitter [@VAVetBenefits](#). These give you quick and helpful updates. GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>. Veterans Benefits Administration's Education Service delivers GI Bill® education benefits to Veterans, service members, and their families. Since 1944, the GI Bill has helped millions of Veterans pay for college, graduate school, and training programs. [Source: Vantage Point | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## VA Individual Unemployability Update 05 ► How To Obtain It

Individual Unemployability (IU) is a benefit service-disabled veterans can claim if they have service-connected disabilities that prevent them from substantially gainful employment. IU pays the veteran at the 100 percent rate even if the VA has rated them less than 100 percent. In order to be eligible, a veteran must be unable to maintain substantially gainful employment as a result of his/her service-connected disabilities. Additionally, a veteran must have:

- One service-connected disability rated at 60 percent or more, OR
- Two or more service-connected disabilities with a combined rating of 70 percent or more, with at least one individual disability rated 40 percent or higher.

Special consideration will be given for veterans when the following criterion is met:

- The veteran is considered unemployable due to a service-connected disability (or disabilities) but fails to meet the minimum percentage standards. In other words, if you don't meet the above standards but are still unemployable due to your service connected disability (or disabilities), OR
- There is evidence of exceptional or unusual circumstances to impairment of earning capacity due to service-connected disability (for example, frequent periods of hospitalization).

Veterans who are in receipt of IU benefits may work as long as it is not considered substantially gainful employment; it must be considered marginal employment. Substantially gainful employment is defined as employment at which non-disabled individuals earn their livelihood with earnings comparable to the particular occupation in the community where the veteran resides. Marginal employment is generally deemed to exist when a

veteran's earned income does not exceed the amount established by the U.S. Census Bureau as the poverty level for the veteran only. If a veteran is approved by the VA for IU, not only do they receive the 100 percent service-disabled rate of pay but they may also receive additional benefits including health insurance for their dependents, Property Tax Credit, a service-disabled military ID card and a \$10,000 life insurance policy with a waiver on monthly premiums.

To apply for IU download Veteran's Application for Increased Compensation Based on Unemployability form VA Form 21-894 at <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-8940-ARE.pdf>, complete it, and mail it to Department of Veterans Affairs. Evidence Intake Center, PO Box 4444, Janesville, WI 53547-4444 or FAX it to 1-844-531-7818. [Source: USVCP | VSO Tammy Javenkoski | August 15, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Health Care Billing Update 01 ► NH Situation Highlights Broader VA PMT Problems**

Months of unpaid invoices to the Department of Veterans Affairs has prompted a health care provider in New Hampshire to stop servicing more than a dozen veterans in New Hampshire. The Boston Globe reports owners of Right at Home stopped caring for 16 veterans as of 10 AUG because they were unable to get about \$60,000 in bills paid by the VA. Owners of the Londonderry company said 14 AUG they had been trying to get payments for months and warned the VA two weeks ago they would have to end services if they didn't get assurances their outstanding invoices would be paid. After putting in \$20,000 of their own money, they felt they had no choice but to suspend services.

"It's extremely frustrating," said Rich Sullivan, who co-owns the company with his wife Janet. "We're a small family business. We can't function properly for all our clients if we are not getting paid by one very large organization." The VA in a statement blamed the company for failing to include complete Social Security numbers on invoices and promised to make the payments once the correct invoices were submitted. "We regret any inconvenience this situation has caused Veterans, but the bottom line is that to process invoices from community providers such as Right at Home, VA requires that vendors include the Veteran's social security number on the claim form, which is a national standard used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services," Steve Piork of the VA Office of Public Affairs said. Sullivan called the response from the VA "woefully inadequate and not accurate."

- He complained the policy requiring Social Security numbers is new — for decades only the last four digits were needed — and that his company only learned of the policy through a voice mail. No one contacted them directly.
- Secondly, the couple said many of their claims go back until late 2017 and thus predate the policy change on Social Security numbers. Instead, they said some of their claims were mistakenly rejected while others were turned down after the VA changed the policy on the types of coding needed for invoices.
- Additionally, they said it was often difficult, if not, impossible to track the status of the claims or talk to anyone from the VA about their claims.

"We understand these things take time," said Janet Sullivan, who called each of the veterans to advise them that they would stop providing services such as housekeeping, bathing and meal preparation. "But if we are still waiting for claims to be paid for the end of last year and the beginning of this year, that is an extraordinary amount of time." While Right at Home was drawing attention to their VA billing woes, at least one New Hampshire politician said theirs was not an isolated case. "Payments issues with the VA have been a persistent problem. I've written to Secretary (Robert) Wilkie urging him to focus on resolving payment issues in New Hampshire as quickly as possible," Democratic Rep. Annie Kuster said in an email interview. "We cannot ensure quality care for the men and women who have served in uniform if we don't properly reimburse providers."

The VA said it has worked since January to speed up the processing of claims, boosting the numbers of claims processed each month from 140,000 to 700,000 in July. As for Right at Home, Rich Sullivan said they have seen

communication with the VA over their claims improve over the past week. But they are still waiting to be paid and have no guarantee their invoices won't be rejected again. The billing problems are just the latest setback for the VA in New Hampshire. Last year, then Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin removed top officials from the Manchester VA medical center and appointed the task force last summer after the Globe reported whistleblower complaints about substandard care and treatment at the facility. Several whistleblowers described a fly-infested operating room, surgical instruments that weren't always sterilized and patients whose conditions were ignored or weren't treated properly. [Source: The Associated Press | Michael Casey | August 15, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Lawsuit | Outside Influence ► VoteVets Claim Sunshine Law Violation**

A veterans group has filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration accusing it of secretly enabling a group of private individuals to have undue influence on decision-making at the Veterans Affairs Department, violating a decades-old federal sunshine law. VA allowed a “council” of three individuals who belong to the President Trump-owned Florida resort Mar-a-Lago to unlawfully influence policy and personnel decisions at the department without the required vetting or transparency, VoteVets, a left-leaning veterans advocacy group, alleged in its lawsuit. The individuals’ involvement and deeply entrenched policy roles came to light in a ProPublica report that examined internal emails and documents, as well as accounts from former officials.

The 1972 Federal Advisory Committee Act was designed to prevent the exact type of behind-the-scenes influence that the Mar-a-Lago group has exhibited, VoteVets wrote in the complaint, which was filed in the U.S. District Court the District of Columbia on Thursday. The law attempts to prevent “special interests” from driving “federal decision-making outside the light of public security, participation and debate,” the group argued. “When the government fails to adhere to the FACA’s requirements, public confidence in the government as a whole is diminished,” VoteVets wrote. “Where, as here that failure relates to the provision of critical benefits to America’s veterans, the consequences are particularly stark.”

Ike Perlmutter, CEO of Marvel Entertainment; Bruce Moskowitz, an internal medicine specialist; and Marc Sherman, an attorney, are the men in question. They were allegedly involved in making personnel decisions, pushing for new programs and potentially personally benefiting from the positions for which they advocated. They had direct lines of communication to the VA secretary and chief of staff, according to internal emails and accounts obtained by ProPublica.

The report prompted swift, bipartisan concern. Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, launched an investigation into the group’s role at VA, requesting an array of documents and records. Sixteen Democratic senators wrote a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie demanding he “right the ship” at the department and free it from “anyone’s political influence.” A spokeswoman for Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN), who chairs the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said the report demonstrated “yet another reason why the department needs permanent, strong leadership.” A spokeswoman for Sen. Johnny Isakso (R-GA), Roe's counterpart in the Senate, said Isakson “is aware of the individuals mentioned in the story and has concerns about the effect that outside individuals may have had on the VA.” VA’s inspector general also said it was aware of the report and it was “monitoring the situation.”

The advisory committee law covers “any committee, board, commission, council, conference, panel, task force, or other similar group” established by statute, the president or utilized by one or more agencies. The law requires such groups to file a charter with the General Services Administration and to follow an array of rules regarding their makeup; holding open meetings; and preservation and publication of records, studies, transcripts and other documents. VoteVets argued in its complaint that the Mar-a-Lago members made up such a group and skirted their legal requirements. None of them have relevant experience, VoteVets said, and the full extent of their influence is unknown. The advocacy organization said it was harmed by the Mar-a-Lago council because it has deprived the group of

participating in its meetings to represent its views. VoteVets asked the court to demand VA provide all documents, reports and other records relating to the group and that the individuals cease any contact with VA until they comply with FACA.

“It’s not just insulting that veterans were forced to sue the Trump administration to have a voice in its veterans policies,” said Will Fischer, VoteVets’ government relations director, “it’s dangerous, because we don’t know what other private interests may be affecting life and death decisions of veterans, under the shroud of darkness.” The individuals told ProPublica they have “no direct influence” at the department, a denial echoed by spokespeople at VA and the White House. VoteVets, however, said the Mar-a-Lago members’ influence helped explain the firing of former secretary David Shulkin and the administration’s push to boost the private sector’s role in providing health care to veterans. Earlier this year, Trump signed into law the MISSION Act, which made it easier for more veterans to seek outside care on the government’s dime.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said at a Cabinet meeting on 9 AUG he was meeting with Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney the next day to discuss next steps to expand the Veterans Choice Program. “We have the opportunity to do what has not been done in many years, and that is widen the aperture when it comes to the health choices available to veterans across the country,” Wilkie said. The secretary announced on 10 AUG VA had partnered with Walgreens to more easily share veterans’ histories of prescriptions and immunizations. Wilkie called the “strong collaboration” the “first of its kind.” [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse ► Reported 16 thru 31 AUG 2018**

**Springfield, MO** – A veteran was indicted by a federal grand jury 8/14 for making a bomb threat at the Veterans Affairs Clinic in Mount Vernon, Mo. **Richard Leslie Turner** III, 48, was charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Springfield. This indictment replaces a federal criminal complaint that was filed against Turner on July 19, 2018. The federal indictment alleges that Turner threatened on July 13, 2018, to blow up the Community Based Outpatient Clinic located at 600 N. Main St. in Mount Vernon. According to an affidavit filed in support of the original criminal complaint, Turner arrived at the clinic on July 13, 2018, for an appointment but was told the appointment had been changed. Turner became angry and left the clinic, the affidavit says, then shortly afterward another patient informed a staff member that Turner was in the parking lot making statements about obtaining explosives and blowing up the clinic. When Turner was contacted by authorities about making the threats, he allegedly became angry and stated that he really intended to blow up the clinic because the police had called him.

On July 17, 2018, Turner allegedly called the clinic and told a staff member that he intended to travel to the clinic and kill him. The charge contained in this indictment is an accusation, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charge must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence. [Source: Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney’s Office, Western District of Missouri | August 14, 2018 ++]

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**Los Angeles, CA** -- A man who operated parking lots for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Los Angeles was sentenced 20 AUG for bilking the agency of \$13 million and bribing the official who granted his parking contracts. **Richard Scott** of Santa Monica was sentenced to nearly six years in prison for conspiracy and wire fraud. He also was ordered to pay the VA \$12.6 million in restitution. He pleaded guilty in May. Scott, owner of Westside Service LLC, kept two sets of books for 15 years, stashing millions in unreported cash and millions more in over-reported expenses, a U.S. attorney’s statement said. Scott began bribing then-VA contracting official Ralph Tillman in 2003 and continued making “hush money” payments to Tillman after his retirement to continue the scheme and attempt to avoid termination of his parking contract, prosecutors said.

Court documents show Scott underreported revenue by at least \$4.6 million and over-reported expenses by at least \$8.2 million. Scott used the money to buy three condominiums in Santa Monica for \$7 million, a racing boat, and numerous high-end collectible cars, including several classic Corvettes and three Ferraris, according to court documents. Scott and his wife agreed to forfeit all of the assets. A message seeking comment from Scott's attorney, Gabriel Pardo, wasn't immediately returned. Tillman pleaded guilty in February to federal tax charges and lying to investigators when he denied taking bribes from Scott. He faces up to eight years when he is sentenced 27 AUG. [Source: Associated Press | August 20, 2018 ++]

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**Ebensburg, PA** -- A man was arrested in New York after authorities allege he tried to sell nearly 1,000 pounds of veteran grave markers believed to have been stolen from western Pennsylvania. State police in New York say 29-year-old **Ronald Cichinelli Jr.** of Johnstown faces charges of criminal possession of stolen property. Police said a Seneca County scrap yard reported that he offered for sale numerous brass veterans cemetery grave markers. The Cambria County veteran affairs office said some were stamped "Cambria County Ebensburg, PA." Cichinelli was taken to Seneca County jail in lieu of \$40,000 bond, and police said he likely faces charges in Pennsylvania, where officials said such theft is a second-degree misdemeanor. A listed number for Cichinelli couldn't be found 21 AUG and it's unclear whether he has an attorney. [Source: The Associated Press | August 21, 2018 ++]

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**Houston, TX** - A contractor will spend a year in federal custody after admitting he hired a disabled veteran to pose as his business partner to land a dozen lucrative U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs contracts over a six-year period. U.S. District Judge Alfred H. Bennett on 23 AUG sentenced **Henry Guillory** to one year in prison to be followed by two years of supervised release. The judge also ordered the former contractor to repay \$450,781.99 to the regional office of Veterans Affairs. Bennett allowed Guillory to remain free on bail until he is summoned to report to federal authorities. Guillory's defense lawyers declined to comment on the hearing. Guillory, 55, pleaded guilty on 1 MAY to conspiracy to commit wire fraud involving money transfers between 2012 and 2018. He admitted that he and his "partner" defrauded the VA of more than \$1.6 million in the scheme.

According to court documents, Guillory falsely claimed that a service-disabled veteran was the majority owner of his business. Guillory had his friend, Derrick Andre Chizer, sign up as his fellow contractor. The pair then landed 12 set-aside contracts for maintenance and construction work at the DeBakey VA Medical Center. Guillory made \$450,000 in the scheme. He gave Chizer \$38,000. Chizer, 56, of Pearland, also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and was sentenced in July to two years of federal probation. The contracting program was set up to benefit businesses owned by injured veterans. In their pleas, the men admitted they deprived legitimate businesses of being awarded those contracts. The contracts are intended for veteran-owned small businesses, and federal agencies can receive credit for hiring those businesses.

According to their pleas, the six-year scam began Nov. 21, 2012, when Guillory and Chizer registered a business, MEP Sales and Service, in Harris County. The following April, they filled out a form claiming Chizer was a service-disabled veteran with majority ownership of the company. Chizer is disabled and was honorably discharged as a petty officer after serving in the U.S. Navy from 1986 to 1989, according to his attorney. Guillory had majority ownership of the company, even though he claimed on official forms to be a minority owner. Veteran's Affairs awarded the company 12 small business set-aside contracts with a value of more than \$1.6 million. Guillory's sentencing was continued to give his lawyers an opportunity to present the argument that five of the 12 government contracts were properly awarded to Guillory, who is African American, because he is a minority business owner. The parties later concluded that all 12 contracts were properly included. Guillory requested another continuance for an expert witness to determine the fair market value of the contracts. The judge denied that motion on 23 AUG. [Source: Chron | Gabrielle Banks | August 23, 2018 ++]

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**Windsor, CA** - A 50-year-old man was sentenced 22 AUG to a year in prison and ordered to pay \$26,300 in restitution to the U.S. government after pleading guilty to theft of government property, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of California said. **William Michael Andrews** had pleaded guilty in federal court on 25 APR, admitting he had used his position as a caseworker at an East Bay nonprofit agency to obtain personal information on homeless veterans, the office said in a press release. Andrews used the information, including the veterans' Social Security numbers, to direct Veterans Administration grant money to his landlord to pay his own rent, rather than the intended purpose of paying for short-term rental apartments for homeless veterans. In all, he stole more than \$26,000, the release said. A federal grand jury indicted Andrews on 8 FEB. He pleaded guilty to theft of government property and a charge of identity theft was dismissed. Andrews will begin serving his sentence 16 NOV. [Source: The Press Democrat | Guy Kovner | August 22, 2018 ++]

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## **VAMC West Los Angeles Update 16 ► Homeless Vet Occupancy Goal | 1200**

A vast green space in one of the poshest neighborhoods in Los Angeles is slated to become a haven for homeless veterans. That's a big change for the campus of the VA West Los Angeles Medical Center. For years, parts of the property were illegally rented to a variety of commercial enterprises having nothing to do with helping veterans. This month, two men involved in those deals will be sentenced to federal prison for bribery and fraud. The nearly 400 acres of the VA West Los Angeles Medical Center were donated in the 19th century to be a home for old and disabled soldiers. But the land hasn't been used that way in decades. More recently it's been home to parking lots for school buses and rental cars, a commercial laundry for hotels, a storage facility for TV shows, among other uses having nothing to do with veterans.

So when he became secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2014, Robert McDonald examined all of those rental agreements. "The money didn't add up," he says. "There was some indication of payoffs, of bribery." If there's a sweetheart deal going on, who made that sweetheart deal and what are they getting out of it? There had been no public accounting of what the VA West Los Angeles took in from these rentals or where the money went. NPR obtained documents in 2012 that showed the rentals at the VA had brought in at least \$28 million and maybe more than \$40 million. At the same time, there was no action on plans to create housing on the campus for homeless vets. McDonald says the parking lot deals looked particularly fishy. "If there's a sweetheart deal going on, who made that sweetheart deal and what are they getting out of it?"

A man named David Richard Scott got a lot out of those deals. He had the parking concession on the campus and lied about how much money he took in. As a result, the VA didn't get what it was owed. According to court documents, Scott shortchanged the government more than \$13 million. In May, he pleaded guilty to fraud, forfeited millions in cash, cars and real estate, and agreed to serve nearly six years in prison. Scott got away with the scam because he was bribing another man named Ralph Tillman, who oversaw all the rental deals on the VA campus. Tillman has also pleaded guilty and faces a maximum sentence of eight years in prison.

"We need to rebuild veterans' trust in what we're doing on this campus," says Meghan Flanz, who is in charge of turning the VA West Los Angeles campus into a community for at least 1,200 chronically homeless veterans. The plan was part of a settlement of a lawsuit brought by homeless vets. Despite the history of conflict and corruption at VA West Los Angeles, Flanz moved from Washington, D.C., back to her native Southern California to take what she describes as her dream job. "This is a moral imperative," she says. "There are veterans who need housing. We've got the space to house them. The property was deeded to us to house them. So we will get this done."

The vision is huge. It encompasses not only housing with on-site services but places for residents to socialize, to get job training, to make music and art. The obstacles are also huge. They include the need to find funding to renovate some of the campus's many empty buildings or build new housing from scratch. But the VA does not foot the bill for veteran housing. It is now trying to hire a developer who knows how to piece together funds from an assortment of



local, state and federal programs. So out of the 1,200 or more veterans who might someday live on the campus, there are now just 54 who do — all of them in Building 209. It's the only one that has been converted to housing so far.



Building 209

William Williamson loves it. "I look at it this way: It was God-given to me," he says, "and I bless him and the people here at the building every day I wake up." Williamson who was a jet mechanic on an aircraft carrier during the Vietnam War. When the Navy was no longer his home, sometimes prison was. He says he did time for various things, "like grand theft auto," but "mostly [for] manufacturing drugs." The last time he got busted, he went away for 10 years. He lost his permanent housing three years ago in a roommate dispute. Then it was couch surfing, a shelter and, eventually, the street. That was "eye-opening," Williamson says. It was especially scary at night, "when you try to find a place to sleep, 'cause you never know what's going to happen."

Now Williamson lives close to all his doctors at the VA Medical Center who help him with his asthma, heart problems and nerve damage in both legs. And the social services in the building help him with everything from military benefits to grief over the death of a friend. An outside organization called Step Up on Second provides those services. But Tod Lipka, the CEO, says there's one thing his organization can't provide for the residents here — community. "Most people want to live in a neighborhood where other people are, but right now, for the first tenants, there's no other housing on the campus," which can make them feel isolated, Lipka says.

That will change. Two more empty buildings next to 209 are about to be converted to housing. But the renovations won't be done for almost two years. Even then, there will be just over 170 formerly homeless vets living on the campus. That's a small fraction of the number the VA hopes will someday live at this former home for old and disabled soldiers. [Source: NPR | August 15, 2018 ++]

**\* Vets \***



## MCRD Undercooked Meat Lawsuit Update 01 ► 2<sup>nd</sup> Lawsuit Filed

A second former Marine recruit exposed to undercooked meat at the service's West Coast boot camp has filed a federal lawsuit against the company that provided the food. **Michael Baker** Jr., 21, of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, filed the lawsuit

8 AUG in the U.S. District Court Southern District of California. Baker alleges that he was hospitalized because of his exposure, suffered kidney failure requiring dialysis treatment and received a medical discharge in March, a mere six months after he joined. Baker allegedly was one of 302 patients treated in late October for exposure to E. coli at both Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and Camp Pendleton, California.

According to the lawsuit against the food provider, the Maryland-based Sodexo, Inc., Baker alleges that he contracted Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome from his exposure. He first felt symptoms that included fatigue, abdominal cramps and diarrhea, which “grew in frequency and severity, and became grossly bloody.” He reported his condition to his senior drill instructor, who immediately sent him to the medical clinic. Baker was hospitalized for two months and required three separate admissions to the Intensive Care Unit. While in the hospital he developed pneumonia and was put on a mechanical ventilator for four days. His kidney’s then failed, and he required repeated dialysis treatments. He’s the second former recruit to file a lawsuit. Vincent Grano, 19, was discharged in June due to medical complications, alleged kidney failure and permanent kidney damages he claims he suffered from exposure to the undercooked meat.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention investigation identified two strains of E. coli present and traced the exposure to undercooked ground beef served to recruits at the dining facilities. Grano and Baker weren’t alone. Steven Posy, spokesman for MCRD San Diego, said that three recruits were discharged last year “based on medical conditions that may be associated with E. coli.” Citing privacy rules, Posy could not disclose details about the discharged Marines. Following the incident and investigation, he said officials increased medical inspections of the dining facilities and reinforced recruit hygiene practices. But officials did not modify the Sodexo food service contract.

Attorneys for Baker and Grano allege in their lawsuit that the investigation “showed that SODEXO, INC. employees routinely undercooked ground beef served to recruits, and only intermittently checked the temperature of foods, including ground beef, using an appropriate thermometer.” Sodexo’s Director of Public Relations, Enrico Dinges, responded to an earlier Marine Corps Times request for comment by noting that the CDC report “did not conclusively determine or identify the source of the E. coli.” [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Todd South | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **MCRD Undercooked Meat Lawsuit Update 02 ► 3<sup>rd</sup> Lawsuit Filed**

A third former Marine recruit has sued a food services provider to the service’s West Coast boot camp, alleging undercooked meat served to recruits gave him permanent brain and kidney damage, which led to his early discharge from the Corps. Tristan Abbott, 19, of Saline County, Arkansas, filed the federal civil lawsuit against Sodexo Inc. on 24 AUG, making him the third former recruit thus far to sue the Maryland-based company in connection with exposure to undercooked beef last year at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California. Vincent Grano, 19, was the first to sue this summer, followed in early August by Michael Baker Jr., 21. All three have made similar claims in court documents that they were exposed to the tainted food served by Sodexo, later developed E. coli-related symptoms and were hospitalized and later discharged early from the Marine Corps as a result.

The trio are part of a group of at least 302 Marine recruits treated for E. coli exposure at both MCRD San Diego and Camp Pendleton, California, in late October 2017. Though only three former recruits have filed lawsuits so far and the MCRD spokesman confirmed three had been discharged, an estimated 15 recruits developed a potentially deadly syndrome because of their exposure, and six of those became critically ill, according to the lawsuit. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention investigation identified two strains of E. coli present and traced the exposure to undercooked ground beef served to recruits at the dining facilities. Steven Posy, an MCRD San Diego spokesman, previously told Marine Corps Times that three recruits were discharged “based on medical conditions that may be associated with E. coli.”

Enrico Dinges, Sodexo's spokesman, responded to an earlier Marine Corps Times request for comment that the CDC report "did not conclusively determine or identify the source of the E. coli." Posy said that after the incident and investigation, he said officials increased medical inspections of the dining facilities and reinforced recruit hygiene practices. But officials did not modify the Sodexo food service contract. Abbott alleges that he was discharged from the Marine Corps on 27 APR after having developed Hemolytic uremic syndrome, or HUS, from the E. coli-contaminated beef and continues to suffer medical consequences from contracting HUS. He had arrived at recruit training only a few weeks before the incident, on Sept. 27, 2017. He and other recruits were exposed to E. coli in about a month later. He fell ill on Oct. 24, 2017, suffering from bloody diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and other symptoms, according to the lawsuit.

Days later, while at Camp Pendleton for training, his symptoms worsened. He was hospitalized on 29 OCT and was put on dialysis for HUS-related kidney failure within days. He remained hospitalized until the end of November. Abbott suffered permanent brain and kidney damage as a result, he alleges. The scenario of his medical injuries and discharge closely mirror those of fellow plaintiffs Baker and Grano. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Todd South | August 29, 2018 ++]

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## McCain's Brain Cancer Update 02 ► Farewell Statement

Rick Davis, Sen. John McCain's former presidential campaign manager and a family spokesman, read the following farewell statement from McCain on 27 AUG at a press conference at the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix:



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"My fellow Americans, whom I have gratefully served for sixty years, and especially my fellow Arizonans,

"Thank you for the privilege of serving you and for the rewarding life that service in uniform and in public office has allowed me to lead. I have tried to serve our country honorably. I have made mistakes, but I hope my love for America will be weighed favorably against them.

"I have often observed that I am the luckiest person on Earth. I feel that way even now as I prepare for the end of my life. I have loved my life, all of it. I have had experiences, adventures and friendships enough for ten satisfying lives, and I am so thankful. Like most people, I have regrets. But I would not trade a day of my life, in good or bad times, for the best day of anyone else's.

"I owe that satisfaction to the love of my family. No man ever had a more loving wife or children he was prouder of than I am of mine. And I owe it to America. To be connected to America's causes — liberty, equal justice, respect for the dignity of all people — brings happiness more sublime than life's fleeting pleasures. Our identities and sense of worth are not circumscribed but enlarged by serving good causes bigger than ourselves.

"'Fellow Americans' — that association has meant more to me than any other. I lived and died a proud American. We are citizens of the world's greatest republic, a nation of ideals, not blood and soil. We are blessed and are a blessing

to humanity when we uphold and advance those ideals at home and in the world. We have helped liberate more people from tyranny and poverty than ever before in history. We have acquired great wealth and power in the process.

“We weaken our greatness when we confuse our patriotism with tribal rivalries that have sown resentment and hatred and violence in all the corners of the globe. We weaken it when we hide behind walls, rather than tear them down, when we doubt the power of our ideals, rather than trust them to be the great force for change they have always been.

“We are three-hundred-and-twenty-five million opinionated, vociferous individuals. We argue and compete and sometimes even vilify each other in our raucous public debates. But we have always had so much more in common with each other than in disagreement. If only we remember that and give each other the benefit of the presumption that we all love our country we will get through these challenging times. We will come through them stronger than before. We always do.

“Ten years ago, I had the privilege to concede defeat in the election for president. I want to end my farewell to you with the heartfelt faith in Americans that I felt so powerfully that evening.

"I feel it powerfully still.

“Do not despair of our present difficulties but believe always in the promise and greatness of America, because nothing is inevitable here. Americans never quit. We never surrender. We never hide from history. We make history.

“Farewell, fellow Americans. God bless you, and God bless America.”

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Rick Davis | August 27, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Jobs Update 237 ► Tattoo Impact on Hiring and Salary**

Only a couple of decades ago, having a tattoo that couldn't be hidden behind respectable job interview clothes was a pledge of allegiance to the unconventional. Merely appreciating the look of tattoos or wanting to pay homage to a person, subculture, or concept (like “freedom”) was not enough to warrant getting inked in a visible spot. You had to be indifferent to the possibility that certain employers—okay, most employers—might judge you as too rebellious or unprofessional to join the team.

There's a possibility, however, that attitudes have shifted, according to an analysis of recent salary data by a trio of researchers from the University of Miami and the University of Western Australia Business School. After gathering data from 2,000 participants, they found no evidence of a statistical difference in earnings or employment levels among the tattooed and the non-tattooed, and this held true whether a person had a few tattoos or many, and whether the tattoos were visible or not. Even the tiny percentage of survey respondents who had tattoos self-described as “offensive” did not show any signs of economic suffering for it. (Note: Without similar past data, the researchers can't say whether we have long mischaracterized the effects tattoos can have, or when a shift happened.)

That said, a second recently published study, this one lead by a professor at Colorado State University, found that would-be hiring managers still don't want to see tattoos on job candidates and will offer people with tattoos and body piercings lower starting salaries. The only exception: Those managers with more body piercings were less likely to hire someone who didn't have any piercings or tattoos. It's possible that these studies can be read as Rorschach tests: you'll find your own bias—either toward tattoos or research methodologies—in your trust of one or the other.

In the study that found no career penalty for the tattooed, which was published in the journal *Human Relations*, the researchers gathered information from participants recruited online. They argue that this crowdsourced approach—sometimes viewed as more representative of a population than a standard survey sample—makes the findings more telling than previous studies, which have typically found anti-tattoo sentiment among hiring managers through questionnaires, not by examining their practices. Michael French, a professor of health economics at University of

Miami who led the study, told Quartz, “Sometimes what people say is not what they do, and our results suggest that when it comes to what they do, they don’t discriminate.” Although French and his team admit that tattoo acceptance may be skewed by industry, and that biases, therefore, may be masked within the data, they also hypothesize that as tattoos have become more fashion-statement than social-statement over the past twenty years, they’ve lost their edge in the eyes of recruiters.

The Colorado State University paper, which found evidence of bias against tattoos, also differs from previous studies in that these authors presented both an image and a resume, in the form of a fake LinkedIn profile, to the evaluators they recruited. All of the 143 participants asked to play hiring managers had spent at least a year in a managerial position and had recently contributed to a hiring process at their place of employment. To control for variables other than tattoo and piercings allotment in the ersatz candidates, they first insured through preliminary surveys that the contenders were deemed equally qualified and attractive, and they limited the race, age, and gender of the participants to twenty-something-year-old caucasian women. All of the images came from a stock photography company, so admittedly the mock images may not have been convincing.

Through creative photoshopping, the images of the job hunters were modified. Some of the women were given either “mild” tattoos (a dolphin or a sun) or “extreme” designs (one job applicant had a dragon on her neck). Some were altered to have mild piercings (one nose ring), and others to wear more obvious face jewelry, like a spike in an eyebrow. Assuming the results are meaningful, it would appear that tattoos, even the sweet ones, have yet to shake their history as marks of the risk-taking and rule-flaunting. Tattoos generally did make it less likely that a person would be “hired.”

The would-be hiring managers, who were tasked with filling the role of sales manager, also offered people with tattoos, or extreme body piercings, lower starting salaries. And the more extreme the tattoos, the less warm and competent the individual was seen to be. Applicants with either tattoos or piercings “were perceived as less committed than applicants without body art,” the authors write in the study, which was published by the Academy of Management. Participants who had more supervisory experience, however, were less likely to discriminate against body art. The authors speculate that they may have had enough experience with employees who had tattoos to avoid thinking in stereotypes.

In the real world, whether a tattoo holds someone back obviously comes down to a range of intersecting variables, including the look of the tattoo, the nature of the job, and the interviewer’s personal preferences. But French, who got himself a tattoo only after he had secured a position in academia, found that parents he knew remained cautious in the face of the evidence he published. One of his peers contacted him to comment on the interesting study, adding, “Please don’t talk to my 19-year-old daughter.” [Source: Quartz | Lila MacLellan | August 24, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Jobs Update 238 ► Google Career Development Program for Vets**

Google wants to make the transition back into civilian life smoother for U.S. military veterans by adding tools that help them find jobs or promote their businesses. One new feature is an initiative of **Grow with Google**, the company’s career development program. It helps veterans discover job openings relevant to the skills they learned while serving by entering the phrase “jobs for veterans” into Google’s search engine along with their military job codes. Employers and job boards can also enable the feature on their own sites by using Google’s Cloud Talent Solution, a machine-learning based job search platform.

In a Google announcement, Matthew Hudson, a Google Cloud program manager and former Air Force civil engineer who served three tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, wrote that veterans often miss out on opportunities because “there isn’t a common language that helps recruiters match a veteran’s experience with the need for their skills and leadership in civilian jobs. As a result, 1 in 3 veterans—of the roughly 250,000 service members who transition out

of the military each year—end up taking jobs well below their skill level.” For veterans who founded, own or lead a business, Google has added a new attribute to help identify them on Google My Business, Google Maps and mobile search listings. In a blog post, Google data scientist and former U.S. Army staff sergeant Sean O’Keefe wrote that more than 2.5 million businesses in the U.S. are majority-owned by veterans. The “Veteran-Led” attribute badge will appear on Google business listings alongside other attributes like “Has Wifi” or “Family Friendly.”

The company also said Google.org, its charity initiative, will grant \$2.5 million to the United Service Organizations (USO) to provide IT training, career support and Google Support Professional Certification, a course designed to prepare people for entry-level IT support jobs. [Source: Tech Crunch | Catherine Shu | August 28, 2018 ++]

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## **SBP Premium Update 03 ► Billing Error**

Defense Finance & Accounting Service (DFAS) is saying that many retirees who have VA pay their full or partial Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payment may be getting an erroneous bill from the Treasury Department. Current methods of paying for your SBP coverage are:

- Deductions from your retired pay
- Deductions from your CRSC Pay
- Deductions from your VA pay
- Direct remittance
- Paid Up Status

A change in the billing agency from DFAS to the Department of the Treasury Centralized Receivables Service is the cause of the mixup. Previously DFAS sent the monthly bills to those who choose direct remittance as their payment method, or those whose VA pay isn't enough to cover the monthly SBP premium. Unless you have made a change to your VA remittance for your monthly SBP premium, VA will still pay your recurring monthly premium amount (whether that is the full or a partial amount), so you don't need to pay the monthly premium amount shown on the Centralized Receivables Service bill.

DFAS and VA are working with the Treasury to fix the problem, but DFAS warns that you may get an erroneous bill next month as well. In April of this year a new law went into effect requiring DFAS to deduct SBP premiums from CRSC pay. There is no indication that this issue is related to that change. If you have any questions, you should contact DFAS directly at 1-800-321-1080 M-F 8 AM - 5 PM Eastern. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Support | Major League Baseball ► Not What You Would Expect**

A military softball tournament at the All-Star Game. Veteran tributes. Surprise military family reunions. Camouflage uniforms. Checks to charities. At face value, Major League Baseball (MLB) loves veterans and military families. The league appears to check the right boxes, until you dig deeper, which is what Marine veteran Nick Francona did as one of the few post-9/11 veterans employed in MLB.

He loves baseball and grew up around the sport and played through college. He always dreamed of working in a front office, but delayed that pursuit until after serving in the Marine Corps. He never imagined that he would eventually walk away from baseball, pushed out for standing up for myself and all veterans and military families. He was turned into a pariah by an institution that glorifies veterans in public while failing them miserably in private.



His personal wake-up call came when he was assistant director of player development for the Los Angeles Dodgers. He informed his boss, Gabe Kapler, now manager of the Philadelphia Phillies, that he was going to get a traumatic brain injury screening for recurring morning headaches. This simple notification spiraled out of control. He was called a “damaged veteran,” and urged to take a leave of absence. When he wouldn’t leave on his own, he was pushed out. It took seven months for MLB to conduct an investigation, which turned out to be a sham, with the results never being shared. He turned down a settlement, recognizing that he would be shut out of baseball and wouldn’t be able to help other veterans.

Despite this dispute, Francona was hired by the New York Mets and encouraged to help MLB better serve veterans and military families by improving their programs. He took this charge seriously, proposing initiatives that would improve MLB’s support for a community it claims to care about. It was only when he experienced pushback on low-cost, high-value proposals that he realized the crass and cynical commercialism of the league overshadows efforts to genuinely support the veteran and military communities. While he doesn’t see widespread malice across MLB front offices — and players are often very supportive of veterans — there is a dangerous combination of apathy and ignorance that has caused MLB to fail miserably in employing veterans and engaging meaningfully with military families.

When it comes to the MLB’s employment of veterans, the numbers speak for themselves: In 2017, MLB boasted of having 10 veterans in a workforce of approximately 5,000 across team and league offices. The league has existing mechanisms in place, including diversity programs, that could increase the number of veterans working in baseball, but MLB has ignored numerous suggestions to modify these programs to include veterans. Rather than take simple action, the league instead advanced a bizarre, unsupported narrative that there were “closeted” veterans across baseball who refused to reveal themselves.

Francona has counseled dozens of veterans who wanted a fair shot at a career in baseball, only to find the door slammed in their face. Some shared stories of outright discrimination, with teams ending interviews over concerns about their ongoing military service. Other veterans with impressive resumes were baffled when they couldn’t get an interview for a job they were overqualified for because they didn’t “have relevant experience” in the eyes of the recent college grads screening their resumes. While many American employers compete for high-performing veterans because they see the value to their bottom line, MLB treats veterans as a problem to be handled out of sight until they are trotted out for the sake of patriotism.

MLB’s true motives are most apparent when it comes to Memorial Day. Despite being criticized for callously exploiting Memorial Day in 2017 to sell apparel, MLB officials refused to acknowledge they were missing the mark in 2018, insisting it was merely a “messaging issue.” In their eyes, the real problem was that they were criticized, not that they exploited the memory of fallen troops to sell apparel. MLB officials refused to answer questions about the amount donated from each item sold or where the money went. Even more troubling, MLB rejected efforts to pay tribute to individuals in a more meaningful way.

Francona expects MLB will respond to his allegations by noting that he was fired by multiple teams; they said as much when pressuring him to leave quietly. And that’s true. He was fired most recently by the Mets in June for criticizing MLB’s lack of transparency and engagement around Memorial Day 2018. The Mets told him that he did a tremendous job for the organization, but that his comments were “not compatible with a career in baseball.” His real crime in the eyes of MLB was standing up for the right of veterans to be more than just figureheads for our national pastime. The truth was inconvenient and he was a liability.

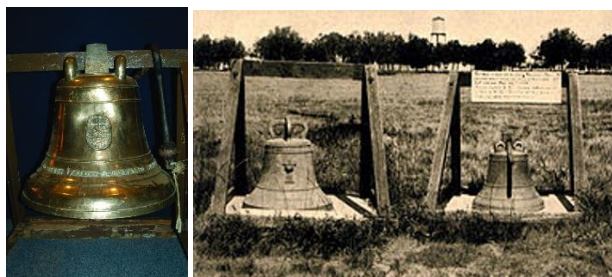
MLB has no legal obligation to support service members, veterans and military families. But by choosing to utilize veterans and military families for commercialized patriotism and financial gain, the league incurs an ethical and moral obligation to align words and actions. For years, MLB has ridden on the coattails of veterans to please its fan base; now the league needs to evolve internally to actually benefit veterans and military families. It’s not too late. While Francona’s tenure with MLB is done, the league can still do the right thing by truly opening its doors to veterans and military families. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Nick Francona | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## Bells of Balangiga Update 01 ► Wyoming Vets Oppose Return to the Philippines

Veterans and lawmakers from Wyoming have voiced their objections to a Pentagon plan to return church bells seized by U.S. troops more than a century ago after a battle during the Philippine-American war. These objections come as veterans groups such as the American Legion face internal divisions over whether to support returning the bells, which some see as a war memorial and others as a mark of shame. Philippine nationalists viewed the war, which lasted from 1899 to 1902, as a war of independence, while the United States, which took the islands after the Spanish-American War, regarded it as an insurrection. “These bells are memorials to American war dead and should not be transferred to the Philippines,” Wyoming’s U.S. senators and congresswoman said in a letter published 13 AUG. “We oppose any efforts by the Administration to move the Bells to the Philippines without the support of Wyoming’s veterans community.”

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis gave notice last week that he would seek to return all three bells held by America — two in Cheyenne, Wyo., and one at Camp Red Cloud, South Korea — to the Philippines. They were seized from a church after the 1902 Battle of Balangiga, in which 48 American troops were killed by Filipino rebels. Wyoming’s congressional delegation is working on the next steps to keep the bells, said a spokeswoman for Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, who signed the letter together with Sens. Mike Enzi and John Barrasso.



The Balangiga Bell (left) on display at the 2nd Infantry Division Museum, Camp Red Cloud, South Korea and the two exhibited (right) at Fort D.A. Russel, now F. E. Warren AFB. The 2nd ID claims townspeople presented it the bell in 1902, while a new book says U.S. troops seized the bell after burning the town.

In July, the Veterans of Foreign Wars approved a national resolution in favor of returning the bells — a move that was crucial for Mattis’ approval, said Sonny Busa, a Filipino-American Army veteran. The resolution was adopted thanks to the efforts of members of VFW posts in the Philippines, said Dennis Wright, a retired Navy captain and member of VFW Post 2485, near what used to be Clark Air Base. The next step, said Wright, who is also a member of the American Legion, is to submit a resolution in favor of returning the bells at the American Legion’s weeklong national convention beginning 24 AUG.

The American Legion adopted a resolution in 2016 supporting the current location of the bells, saying returning a military monument would set a precedent for countries to make similar demands for relics from other wars. “They’re disturbing a war memorial,” Todd White, a former national vice commander of the American Legion, told the Wyoming Tribune Eagle on 7 AUG. “Those bells have been there for 113 years, and to arbitrarily give them back to the Philippines ... I don’t understand that.” Wright describes the Wyoming veterans who oppose the bells’ return as “misinformed and misguided.” No veterans from Wyoming served in Balangiga, he said, and a memorial to the dead from the battle already exists in Sackets Harbor, N.Y., home of the unit that fought that day.

Pro-return veterans say they plan to donate replacement bells to the state of Wyoming if the original bells go back to the town of Balangiga, where villagers have built a tower to house them. [Source: Stars & Stripes | J.P. Lawrence | August 13, 2018 ++]

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## **Texas Vet Cemetery Update 10 ► Center Texas State Veterans Cemetery Grant**

A \$2.7 million grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration will fund an expansion and improvements at the Center Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen. The grant announced 16 AUG will fund construction of 3,000 columbarium niches for urns containing the cremated remains of veterans and an improved lane for funeral corteges. “We will continue to work with and support states like Texas to provide grants which reflect the needs, resources and preferences of the local Veteran community,” Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves said in a press release. The project will develop about an acre, the press release said. No further details were provided. The cemetery, which was opened in January 2006, occupies a 174-acre site that used to be part of Fort Hood. It is located at 11463 State Highway 195, Killeen, TX 76542-4945 Email: [doug.gault@glo.texas.gov](mailto:doug.gault@glo.texas.gov) Phone (254) 616-1770 and is open daily 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Mon and Sun: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm.



The Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement VA’s National Cemetery Administration. The program assists states, territories and federally recognized tribal governments in providing gravesites for Veterans in those areas where VA’s national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy their burial needs. Any cemetery assisted by a VA grant must be maintained and operated according to the operational standards and measures of the National Cemetery Administration. [Source: KWTX 10 | Brandon Hamilton | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Deportations Update 23 ► Jose Maria Martinez | USMC**

Marine Corps Vietnam veteran Jose Maria Martinez is not your typical deported immigrant. First, he doesn’t want your sympathy. He was busted in 1997 at a South Texas border checkpoint with 267 pounds of marijuana in his car. “I screwed up, it was bad. It was so bad it pisses me off sometimes,” Martinez said. He’s an ardent Trump supporter and cheers at the thought of a wall. In our in-person encounter, he made clear that reporters, save for Fox, were purveyors of “fake news.” His personal views on former President Barack Obama landed him in Facebook jail. He takes a hard line on those who are in the U.S. illegally. To the day he was deported, he thought he was a U.S. citizen.

It was February 2002. He’d just completed five years in federal prison for the drug bust. He’d served his time. Martinez was ready to be released, start over. Instead, immigration agents walked into his holding cell in Oakdale, Louisiana. “They said they were going to deport me,” Martinez said. “I said, ‘You can’t, I’m a U.S. citizen.’” Their reply shocked him. “No, you’re not.” The next two weeks were a blur. He appeared before an immigration judge. Jose Maria Martinez believed to his core he was a citizen, because in the box on his official military discharge papers where it asks “U.S. citizen,” the Marine Corps had checked “Yes.” But when the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service

looked at his records, it found nothing in the files to support that he'd completed the naturalization process, an official said on the condition of not being named.



“According to government records, Sgt. Martinez did not qualify for citizenship or naturalization. After his arrest and incarceration for the aggravated felony, the Department of Justice deported him under Section 237(a)(2)(A)(iii) of the [Immigration and Naturalization Act]: convicted of a crime for which a sentence of one year or longer was imposed,” the official said. At his 2002 deportation hearing, Martinez said the judge told him he had a case and could probably win, but he’d have to go back to jail to wait for a hearing, which might take two years. Martinez’ other option was to be deported. Two more years incarcerated, after five years in prison. “No way,” Martinez said. He wanted to be free. In the second week of March 2002, agents walked him across the bridge into Mexico. He had \$187 and the clothes on his back. He made a quick plan to survive. He bought tacos, then a lawnmower. “I’m a fighter, a survivor,” he said. “I painted houses, mowed lawns, sold food on the street.”

To understand how Martinez thought he was a U.S. citizen requires some backtracking. Martinez was one of five kids born in Matamoros, Mexico. Their mother died in 1951 giving birth to the youngest. A close friend adopted all five, obtained visas and she and her husband brought the children to Texas in 1956 to raise them. Their adoptive mother became a U.S. citizen shortly before she died in 2000. Two of the boys, Jose Maria Martinez, and his elder brother, Jose E. Martinez, joined the military but followed wildly different paths. The elder Jose E. Martinez joined in the Air Force, served for 20 years and became a U.S. citizen. He served on the Senate Armed Services Committee as a professional staff member and was later appointed by President George H. W. Bush to be an assistant to the president on personnel and national security matters, then directed Bush’s trade and development program.

The younger son, Jose Maria Martinez was attracted to a rougher life. He wanted be in the military, too, but be a Marine. He craved fighting and was expelled from high school in the 10th grade after getting into five fights in a single day. In 1966, at the age of 17, he convinced his adoptive parents to sign the consent forms to allow him to enlist early. “I took the oath in San Antonio and got on a plane to San Diego,” he said. He was assigned as an infantryman and mortar man and deployed in 1967 to Vietnam with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Division. He and several other Marines started naturalization classes, Martinez said, but then they were pulled into operations.

Martinez was just 18 years old when his battalion engaged at Con Thien, a desperate and drawn-out firefight near the North Vietnamese border. He rattles off others: Cam Lo. The Washout. Crossing the Ben-Hai. His memory flashes from firefights to mortars to carrying dead and wounded to the landing zone. He remembers a final exchange with a badly wounded Marine at the LZ after offering him a light. Would the cigarette extinguish before he died? Martinez wiped his eyes. He did. But he’d asked for that life, Martinez said. “I’m a grunt,” he said. “I’d prayed that I would be able to go to war, and by God’s grace I was.”

His older brother also served in the war through the Air Force, but admits their experiences were vastly different. “What [Jose Maria] went through in Vietnam, I don’t wish on anyone,” his brother said. When Martinez got back from Vietnam, he could not detoxify or stabilize. The Marines assigned him to man the brig, then to teach combat tactics to new infantrymen. “I got drunk most of the time, just about every day,” Martinez said. “A lot of fights. I just

didn't give a shit anymore." After a heavy night of drinking out at bars near Camp Pendleton, Martinez got into a violent fight. An Oceanside police officer responded; Martinez said he never identified himself as a cop. Martinez hit him, too, cracking the officer's jaw. He spent six months in state prison. After that, the military gave Martinez a general discharge under honorable conditions in 1972. His DD214, that all-important discharge paper that sums up a service member's career, said U.S. citizen, Martinez didn't question it.

Martinez slipped through the cracks. There was no post-war PTSD counseling, and the clerical error cost him the awareness that his citizenship was not complete and still required him to do more work to get it done, said his daughter Marina Herrera. Martinez worked on building that "normal life," but was unstable. His first wife learned to wake him from a distance with a broom. Another time he woke up underneath their house. His wife decided it was safer to leave him there. "You were yelling, 'incoming!'" She said. He doesn't remember that. Martinez got a manufacturing job in Texas and got promoted to manager with a \$65,000 paycheck. Each step of the way, his DD214 was accepted as proof of citizenship. Martinez maintained all the trappings that he viewed as part of that duty. He paid his taxes. Voted Republican. Served on juries. It wasn't enough. A second marriage failed. He kept looking for a high. When Martinez was tempted with an offer to start ferrying drugs across the Texas-Mexico border, he jumped.

"The adrenaline [from making the border crossing] was so high. I hadn't had that adrenaline high since I was in war. It's the best drug in the world. I looked for it," Martinez said. All of that came to a halt at the Sarita, Texas, border patrol checkpoint in September 1997. Martinez is now 69, and he's spent the last 16 years in Mexico. He is still Marine to his core. He works out in the dark each morning, before the rest of the town wakes. He pushes five sets of 55 crunches and runs the plaza of Progreso, Mexico, a hot and dusty border town of bars, pharmacies and street vendors. He only allows himself to drink on Saturdays, the night he goes out dancing. The rest of the week is work, home, and hard exercise, "in case I can be of service to the Marine Corps again," he said. Martinez does not want favors, he wants what's his.

"I was never illegally in the United States. Never, ever, ever, ever," Martinez said. "When I joined the Marine Corps I was legally in the United States. And ever since I got [deported] I've never, ever tried to go back into the United States of America. I've been here [in Mexico] all this time." What deportation has cost Martinez — and the questions surrounding how INS agents and an immigration judge handled his case — continue to drive his children and family and a legislator to help bring him home. "When I committed my crimes, I was sentenced to five years in federal prison. I paid my debt to society. Five years," Martinez said. "Then they deported me. So that would be my second punishment. Then they took away my VA help. That would be my third punishment. And then they took away my Social Security. I put in for Social Security when I turned 62, and hell, they said 'Yes.' They approved it but then said they couldn't send it to me because I was deported. And I was like, 'Damn! I put into it for 30 years.' All in all, I was punished four different times. Not just once, four times."

Herrera has difficulty understanding how someone who served the country in combat could be left to fail, when it was clear her father needed help. The whole family acknowledges the severity of the drug charges, but emphasizes that Martinez did not hurt anyone but himself. "Had he committed an offence that was unforgivable or incredibly heinous, we would all have accepted his fate and left it at that. However, that's not the case," Herrera said. Her father is more circumspect. "There comes a point in time in your life when after all that stuff in 'Nam that you don't give a shit about anything," Martinez said. "And then later on you start healing. And that's when you change your life again, I guess."

Attorney Elizabeth Ricci, who has been consulting with Martinez' family, thinks there's a chance he could be allowed to return to the U.S., based on a 2010 Supreme Court decision that found non-citizen defendants must be informed of the deportation consequences of a guilty plea. Martinez has said that never occurred during his 1998 drug trial in Corpus Christi, Texas. Military citizenship paperwork errors are common, Ricci said. She's had at least a dozen military clients deal with the same issue. "There are 640,000 foreign-born veterans alive," Ricci said. "I don't know how many of them mistakenly believe they are citizens [based on their paperwork], but it has to be in the thousands."

Herrera is trying to get her aging father home. "I would love to take my father on an honor flight to D.C. to see the Vietnam memorials, or to Virginia to the Marine Corps museum. I attended the unveiling of the Vietnam memorial statue at the Texas Capitol and I wept," Herrera said. "Seeing all the veterans, wondering who among them might have fought next to my father, or if my father saved any of their lives, well, it made me very emotional. Especially knowing that my father may never be able to see it, to see any of it, and that the only way I can bring him home right now is in a body bag." Martinez' brother, too, is still working to get him home, and still seems uncomfortable with how his brother's life turned out, given his own political fortune. "The biggest fault he did is he thought he was a U.S. citizen and he never bothered to check," said the elder Martinez, who has tried multiple times over the decades to help his brother. "It hurts a great deal that I am not able to do anything."

These days, Jose Maria Martinez runs a small cell phone shop along Progreso's main street. His shop is dotted with pre-paid calling cards and decorated with Marine Corps flags. Veteran friends travel to visit; Martinez threw Progreso's first Marine Corps birthday last year and he's got another planned for this 10 NOV. Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, D-Texas, has talked about Martinez' case with President Donald Trump. He believes the Marine's life would have taken a different path if he'd had help adjusting after the war, and he's trying to get legislation passed that would allow Martinez and other vets like him to come home. "I don't think we have invested enough in bringing home our troops, in terms of mental health and transitioning themselves back into society," Gonzalez said. "And that's why they find themselves in trouble."

Martinez' last bad stretch of nightmares occurred in 2016. He could only sleep one to two hours at a time. He'd push his runs to 3:30 a.m. to try and tire himself out. Martinez can't see a doctor for help with the PTSD because he can't access VA health care. He used to keep a .22 handgun under the store counter for self-protection but couldn't stop thinking about turning it on himself. He tossed the gun and keeps a machete there now instead. More than anything else, he is still a Marine. "I'm a Marine, I always will be until I die," Martinez said. "Then, like they say, you are a dead Marine." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Tara Copp | August 14, 2018 ++]

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## **Toxic Exposure | Base Water Update 14 ► Cannon AFB New Mexico**

Officials at Cannon Air Force Base say its drinking water is safe but that they're inspecting groundwater monitoring wells to assess the potential for groundwater contamination from past firefighting activities. The Eastern New Mexico News reports the inspection is prompted by contaminants found in monitoring wells on the base near Clovis and the contaminants are from foam no longer used in firefighting. Base spokesman J.P. Rebello says there's "no known contamination pathways to municipal drinking water sources" and that the inspection is intended to determine whether there's contamination outside the base. Col. Stewart Hammons, commander of the 27th Special Operations Wing, said officials are committed to conducting a thorough investigation and to protecting the health of Air Force personnel and area residents. [Source: The Associated Press | August 26, 2018 ++]

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## **Toxic Exposure | Lead ► Ft. Benning On-Post Housing Lead Poisoning**

Medical data shows that 31 children living in on-post housing at the Army's Fort Benning suffered harmful levels of lead poisoning, according to a new investigative report published 16 AUG by Reuters. The children were exposed to the lead in military family housing on base via lead-based paint, dust and peeling or flaking of painted areas in the aging homes, according to the report. The Villages of Benning is comprised of housing complexes for married and single soldiers. The investigation also found Army housing and other structures with dangerously high levels of lead at Fort Polk, Fort Riley, Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Fort Knox and the United States Military Academy at West Point.



Data showing an alarming number of children testing positive for blood-based lead was provided to Reuters by the Army. The reporting discovered that from 2011 to 2016, the Army identified more than 1,100 children who tested above the Center for Disease Control's elevated lead level threshold. The investigation by Reuters has resulted in mixed reactions from the military that vary by installation and command. Fort Knox contract housing announced a lead-abatement initiative in response to the findings, while Fort Benning's command issued messages to its families to not participate in any investigation regarding the lead. The Army declined to comment on the lead findings by Reuters. However, a written statement was released to Reuters by Col. Kathleen Turner, an Army spokeswoman. "We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment on all of our installations."

According to the Villages of Benning website, there are homes that are newer or recently renovated. However, much older homes do exist for families to reside in. For example, families have been housed in the area known as the "Iron Triangle" dating back to before World War II. This isn't the first report of problems in military family housing. A [2015 report](#) by the Military Times found that bases in the Washington area had hundreds of deficiencies that were considered potentially dangerous. Many of the on-post housing for military families is managed by private contracting companies. According to Reuters, "Private contractors house some 700,000 Americans at more than 100 military installations nationwide, including an estimated 100,000 children ages 0 through 5." According to the Army, families who rent homes built before 1978 are given lead-oriented disclosure forms before they can sign the lease. This is required by federal law for all landlords in the U.S. Lead was used in house paint before 1978.

The Army Public Health Center maintains an Army Lead Program on their website. The U.S. Army Lead Program falls under the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management. The organization's [homepage](#) said it offers "a resource to Major Army Commands and Installations for management of lead and asbestos in Army facilities. But the link for "Training Information" under the Lead Program Overview tab reads "unavailable."

According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC) website <https://www.cdc.gov>, "Lead affects virtually every system in the body ... Very severe lead exposure in children (blood lead levels  $\geq$  380  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ) can cause coma, convulsions, and even death. Lower levels cause adverse effects on the central nervous system, kidney, and hematopoietic system. Blood lead levels as low as 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , which do not cause distinctive symptoms, are associated with decreased intelligence and impaired neurobehavioral development. Many other effects begin at these low blood lead levels, including decreased stature or growth, decreased hearing acuity and decreased ability to maintain a steady posture," explains the CDC website on the range of effects of lead. [Source: ArmyTimes | Neil Fotre | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## **Toxic Exposure | Lead Update 01 ► Army Drafts Base Testing Plan**

The U.S. Army has drafted a plan to test for toxic lead hazards in 40,000 homes on its bases, military documents show, in a sweeping response to a Reuters report that found children at risk of lead poisoning in military housing. The inspection program, if implemented, would begin quickly and prioritize thousands of Army post homes occupied by small children, who are most vulnerable to lead exposure. Ingesting the heavy metal can stunt brain development and cause lifelong health impacts. The lead inspections would cost up to \$386 million and target pre-1978 homes to identify deteriorating lead-based paint and leaded dust, water or soil, according to the military documents.

A draft Army Execution Order says the program's mission is to mitigate all identified lead hazards in Army post homes in the United States. In homes where dangers are detected, the Army would offer soldiers' families "temporary or permanent relocation" to housing safe from lead hazards, it says. The Army's mobilization comes after Reuters published an investigation on 16 AUG (<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-military-housing>) describing lead paint poisoning hazards in privatized military base homes. It documented at least 1,050 small children who tested high for lead at base clinics in recent years. Their results often weren't being reported to state health authorities as required, Reuters found. Behind the numbers were injured families, including that of a decorated Army

colonel, J. Cale Brown, whose son JC was poisoned by lead while living at Fort Benning, in Georgia. The article drew a quick response from lawmakers, with eight U.S. senators demanding action to protect military families living in base housing.

The Army's planned response is laid out in military documents, including the draft Execution Order, minutes from a private meeting attended by top Army brass, and other materials. One priority, detailed by Under Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy in an 22 AUG meeting, is for the military's response to counter any sense "that we ... are not taking care of children of Soldiers and are not taking appropriate action quickly enough," meeting minutes say. "The Army will remain focused on the actions to assess, inspect, and mitigate risks to Soldiers and Families," the minutes say, citing McCarthy and Vice Chief of Staff General James C. McConville. Army spokeswoman Colonel Kathleen Turner acknowledged plans are being formulated but said no decisions have been made. "Out of an abundance of caution, we are going above and beyond current requirements to ensure the safety of our soldiers and their families who work and live on all of our installations," Turner said in a statement. "We are currently evaluating all options to address these concerns."

Old lead-based paint becomes a poisoning hazard when it deteriorates, and poor maintenance of military base homes can leave legions at risk. About 30 percent of service families – including some 100,000 small children – live in U.S. military housing owned and operated by private companies in business with the military. There are nearly 100,000 homes on U.S. Army bases, and the lead inspections are expected to focus on the approximately 40,000 built before a 1978 U.S. ban on the sale of lead paint. The plans depart from guidance that appeared on the Army Public Health Center's website as recently as last week, which "discouraged" lead-based paint inspections in Army homes. The website has since been updated and omits that language. Under the plans, the documents show, the Army would:

- Inspect all pre-1978 Army family housing units nationwide, including visual lead-based paint assessments by certified personnel, swipe-testing for toxic lead paint dust, and testing of tap water. Some homes will also receive soil testing. This phase alone, described as "near term actions," will cost between \$328 million to \$386 million, the Army's Installation Services director estimated.
- Temporarily or permanently relocate families when hazards are found. "If a Family or Soldier are concerned with potential negative impacts from lead; the U.S. Army will offer them a chance to relocate to a new residence," the documents say. "We must do everything we can to maintain that trust."
- Conduct town hall meetings on Army posts to address residents' lead concerns. The Army intends to do so with "empathy," the meeting minutes say. "Tone is key and can be just as important as the actions we take."

The documents leave some questions unanswered. They don't say how long it would take to inspect all 40,000 homes. Also unclear is whether the Army has funds immediately available for the program, or would need Congressional authorization to set them aside. The Army would ensure that the private contractors who operate base housing "are meeting their obligations" to maintain base homes, the documents say, and would require them to show compliance with lead safety standards through independent audits. The documents do not discuss whether private housing contractors would bear any of the costs of the lead inspections, or how any repairs would be funded. In most cases, Army post homes are now majority-owned by private real estate companies. Under their 50-year agreements with the Army, corporate landlords operating military housing agreed to control lead, asbestos, mold, and other toxic risks present in some homes, particularly historic ones.

The Army plans come as base commanders and housing contractors face a wave of complaints about potential home lead hazards, and a rush of military families seeking lead tests for their children. Last week, the hospital at Fort Benning, where Reuters reported that at least 31 small children had tested high for lead exposure in recent years, began offering "walk-in" lead testing. Some concerned families are already being relocated; in other homes, maintenance workers are using painter's tape to mark peeling paint spots that residents found contained lead by using store-bought testing kits.

Lead poisoning is preventable, and its prevalence in the United States has declined sharply in recent decades. Still, a 2016 Reuters investigation documented thousands of remaining exposure hotspots, mostly in civilian neighborhoods. Last week, eight senators, including Republican Johnny Isakson of Georgia and Democrat Claire McCaskill of Missouri, pushed amendments to legislation to examine and address the military's handling of lead exposure risks. In coming weeks, Army officials plan to meet with lawmakers to address their concerns, the military documents show. [Source: Reuters | Joshua Schneyer & Andrea Januta | August 28, 2017 ++]

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## **Vet Presidential Support ► Trump Letter Response to Vet**

Several weeks ago, Richard LaBrash, representing Salem Oregon local veterans, wrote to President Donald Trump about issues facing local vets. Trump's letter of response is reprinted below.

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***Dear Mr. LaBrash,***

Thank you for taking the time to express your views regarding our Nation's veterans.

The United States shines as a beacon of freedom and security around the world because of the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform. There are more than 18 million veterans in our country, each of whom made a sacred vow to defend our Nation. Because we will never be able to repay fully our heroes for their sacrifices, we must guarantee that they have access to extraordinary medical care, education and support as they return to civilian life.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has suffered from years of scandal that have shown the need for providing our veterans with more support. Accordingly, my Administration has enforced strict accountability standards for VA personnel, bringing urgently needed reform to the Department. I issued an Executive Order that initiated critical transparency reforms at the VA and signed into law the Veterans Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, which establishes additional safeguards to protect whistleblowers and enables the VA to fire failing employees.

My Administration is also making great strides to modernize the healthcare services available to our veterans. These advancements include an expansion of the VA's Anywhere to Anywhere healthcare, which allows providers to use telehealth technology to remotely treat veterans, regardless of geographic location. I also signed into law the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act to ensure continued access to the Veterans Choice Program, which provides eligible veterans the choice of private care if they face an excessive burden in accessing VA care or face wait times over 30 days from the clinically indicated date. Additionally, I signed legislation to streamline the appeals process for disability compensation claims within the VA.

I am taking action to help veterans transition back to civilian life and to expand opportunities for veterans after they leave military service. I issued an Executive Order that directs the secretaries of Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a Joint Action Plan to provide seamless access to mental health treatment and suicide prevention resources for transitioning service members in the year following their military service. Further, I signed legislation that lifted a 15-year limit on veterans' access to their educational benefits.

Thank you again for writing. Please visit [www.WhiteHouse.gov](http://www.WhiteHouse.gov) to learn more about what I am doing to put our veterans first and [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) to learn more about the benefits and services that the VA provides to our veterans and their families. As President, I am committed to honoring the promise our Nation made to the men and women of the Armed Forces by providing them with the resources and care they deserve.

[Source: <http://www.thesalemnewsonline.com> | Opinion | August 14, 2018 ++]

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## **Obit: Roy Rushton ► 17 JUN 2018 | WWII & Korea**

Roy Rushton spent three-quarters of his 100 years with both a bullet and a piece of shrapnel in his body — souvenirs from the Second World War that the paratrooper wouldn't let keep him from serving later in Korea. He lived life with grit. The Tanner Hill, Pictou County, man died June 17, but the stories of his many adventures will be shared Saturday at a memorial service in Pictou, N.S. He's been remembered by fellow soldiers as a man they looked up to for his demeanour, experience, judgment and calming presence.



Rushton's battle experience began on the evening of June 5, 1944, when he leapt from a plane the night before D-day. With that jump, he became one of 450 paratroopers who landed behind enemy lines in France to try to secure positions before the Allied forces arrived. Rushton hit the ground in Varaville. Hours later, he would get struck by shrapnel while running along a hedge. The piece of metal would remain in his body for the next 74 years; despite the pain it caused, the shrapnel sat too close to a nerve to be removed. His family had it taken out after he died. Rushton's wife requested that the shrapnel that had plagued him all his life be removed posthumously. Rushton's Second World War service came to an end on March 24, 1945, just months after he'd survived the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium.

Although the Pictou County man lived through a battle that saw 75,000 Allied casualties, he was shot in the thigh after he crossed the Rhine River and landed in western Germany. He was 27. The bullet would never be removed because doctors told him there could be complications. As a young man, Rushton worked on his family's Pictou County farm. He felt called to leave, however, when Canada entered the Second World War. Afterwards, he bought and ran a store in Salt Springs, Pictou County. But like the metal in his body, soldiering remained in Rushton's blood. When the Korean War broke out, he handed his store's keys over to his mother.

Age and his injuries, however, made a return to the battlefield more painful, his friend says. "The physical strain, no doubt, must have been a great deal more on guys in their 30s, particularly guys who had been wounded in the leg and were carrying a bullet around with them," said Vincent Courtenay, 84, a fellow Korean war veteran who befriended Rushton later in life. Robert Rushton, one of the soldier's four sons, recalls that the injury affected his father. "In particular, when he was climbing the mountains in Kapyong in Korea he found that it bothered him — although he did continue on to do his job as a soldier." But it wasn't in Rushton's nature to complain or let on about the injury to others.

His former brother-in-arms Bernie Cote, 89, was unaware of the bullet lodged in Rushton's leg; he only learned about it through speaking to CBC News. Instead, what he remembers of the soldier he served alongside in 1951 was his laidback attitude and the way in which he inspired the men around him. He was a "real guy from down East," Cote said. "And all the guys in the platoon thought the world of him." Rushton's previous wartime experience made him a role model for those serving alongside him, Cote said. "When you get somebody that knows something and you don't know nothing, they were like a father figure to you," said Cote, who was then 22 to Rushton's 33. "You felt safe with them."

An example of this came when Rushton's platoon worked to capture Hill 532, a mountainous piece of terrain named for the fact that it was 532 metres above sea level. Their platoon led the offensive and Rushton took charge after his platoon officer was injured at the start of the mission, says Courtenay. He says Rushton and his comrades fought all day through ankle-deep snow to get to the heavily-defended summit before the Pictou County soldier made a critical decision. "His platoon had taken many casualties — they were virtually out of ammunition — and he asked the captain in charge of the company to call off the action," Courtenay says. "If they took the position, because it was close to nightfall, they were going to get counterattacked and would just be wiped out." The commander agreed. The next morning, the Allied forces took Hill 532 with little opposition. Courtenay credits Rushton's decision with saving numerous lives. And while Rushton started the battle as a corporal, he finished as a sergeant.

Rushton's service in Korea came to an end in 1951 because of a hearing problem, his son said. Once he was discharged, Rushton returned to running his store for several years. He and his wife Margaret raised four sons together, two of whom would also join the military. And Rushton never abandoned military life. He joined different regiments and later served as an instructor with the Halifax Rifles, Pictou Highlanders and Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He worked as a commissionaire and later started his own small appliance repair business. Even in retirement, Rushton kept his sense of adventure. He exercised it by travelling and in his decision to jump out of an airplane at 65, his son says. As the jump unfolded, Rushton looked to be in danger of landing in a water reservoir. "He started playing with the cords and he ended up slamming into the side of the hill, just below the airport," his son recalls. "He hurt his knee — he couldn't walk on it for about three weeks — but that's the type of adventurous man he was. He would do things out of the blue, just like that."

Rushton became involved with several veterans' groups. And he returned to Korea in 2003 as part of a trip to Kapyong organized by Veterans Affairs Canada. Rushton never spoke of the trauma of war, choosing instead to focus on the happy moments he shared with his comrades. His stories always focused on the funny moments he had overseas and the good people who served at his side. He never discussed the horrors of war, his son said, but his actions sometimes hinted at the pain to which he'd been a witness. When he was a young boy, Robert Rushton said he'd sometimes come home to find his father listening to I'll Sail My Ship Alone by Hank Williams with tears in his eyes. "As the years went on and as I became a soldier, it became quite clear to me exactly what he was doing," Rushton's son said. "Reminiscing." [Source: CBC Network Report | Richard Woodbury | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **Obit: Ray Emory ► 20 AUG 2018 | Pearl Harbor Survivor**

A Pearl Harbor survivor who pushed to identify buried unknown remains from the 1941 attack died 20 AUG at age 97. Ray Emory lived through the early morning Japanese aerial bombing but never forgot those who didn't. He spent the past few decades doggedly pushing for those unknown buried remains to be dug up, identified and returned to their families. Emory died "died peacefully and without pain" in a hospital in Boise, Idaho, according to his family, said Billy Doughty, deputy director of public affairs for Navy Region Hawaii. He recently moved to Boise to live with his son. He left Hawaii because his wife had died and he didn't have any family in Hawaii. He planned to go fishing in Idaho.



**Pearl Harbor survivor Ray Emory salutes sailors who stood in an honor cordon on June 19, 2018, in Honolulu**

Before moving, he visited Pearl Harbor one last time in June. More than 500 sailors stood side-by-side on ships and piers to surprise him. They greeted him with salutes and cheers. "Chief Emory fought back that day, manning his machine gun, taking on enemy planes," Rear Adm. Brian Fort, commander, Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, said at the ceremony honoring Emory. "He continued to fight on throughout the War in the Pacific. He and his buddies, with help from the home front, helped create an unprecedented era of peace, stability and prosperity. Victory at the end of World War II was Ray's finest hour." During the attack on Pearl Harbor, Emory managed to fire a few rounds at the airplanes that dropped the torpedoes. He still had an empty bullet casing that fell to his ship deck.

In 2012, the Navy and National Park Service recognized Emory for his work with the military and Department of Veterans Affairs to honor and remember Pearl Harbor's dead. Bureaucrats didn't welcome his efforts, at least not initially. Emory says they politely told him to "go you-know-where." It didn't deter him. First, thanks to legislation sponsored by the late U.S. Rep. Patsy Mink of Hawaii, he managed to get gravestones for unknowns from the USS Arizona marked with name of their battleship. In 2003, the military agreed to dig up a casket that Emory was convinced, after meticulously studying records, included the remains of multiple USS Oklahoma servicemen.

Emory was right, and five sailors were identified. It helped lay the foundation for the Pentagon's decision more than a decade later to exhume and attempt to identify all 388 sailors and Marines from the USS Oklahoma who had been buried as unknowns in a national cemetery in Honolulu. Since those 2015 exhumations, 138 sailors from the USS Oklahoma have been identified. About 77 have been reburied, many in their hometowns, bringing closure to families across the country. [Source: The Associated Press | Jennifer Sinco Kelleher | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **Obit: John McCain ► 25 AUG 2018 | POW, Senator & Vet Advocate**

Arizona Sen. John McCain, a former prisoner of war in Vietnam who became one of the nation's most prominent defense policy voices, passed away Saturday at the age of 81. The onetime Navy pilot and longtime lawmaker was among the best known veterans in America, and has arguably been the most influential and consistent military advocate for the Republican Party over the last three decades. His death not only leaves open a Republican seat in an already contentious Senate but also leaves an enormous hole in American political debate over the roles, responsibilities and challenges of the armed forces.





In an October 2017 speech to students at his alma mater — the Naval Academy — McCain commented that he had worked as a public servant nearly his entire adult life “sometimes unwittingly and often imperfectly.” He said the thought of helping promote America gave him a sense of purpose and honor. “Even in the worst of times — and they come for most of us — you’ll know that to serve this country is to serve its ideals, the ideals that consider every child on Earth as made in the image of God and endowed with dignity and the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” he said. “It is a noble cause. It is your cause, and it’s worth living and dying for.”

McCain was diagnosed with brain cancer in summer 2017 but continued his work in the Senate through chemotherapy. The illness was the latest in a long line of health challenges for the senior Arizona senator, dating back to his imprisonment in Vietnam’s infamous “Hanoi Hilton” prison. That occurred in 1967, when then Lt. Cmdr. McCain’s Skyhawk aircraft was shot down during a bombing mission over Hanoi. He fractured both arms and a leg while ejecting from the plane, and he was refused proper medical treatment by North Vietnamese troops after his capture. In 1968, after his father was named commander of U.S. Pacific forces, the North Vietnamese offered to release his son as part of a propaganda campaign. The younger McCain refused, saying he would only leave if his fellow POWs were also freed. As a result, McCain spent five and a half years in captivity, facing frequent beatings and torture for his refusals to cooperate with his captors. The assaults left him unable to fully lift his arms for the rest of his life.

Upon his return — and after years of physical therapy — McCain served as the Navy’s liaison to the U.S. Senate, a position that led to his own political career. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1982 and to the Senate in 1986, the first of six terms in the chamber. He ran two unsuccessful campaigns for the presidency, first losing in the Republican primaries to then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush in 2000 and later losing in the general election to then-Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) in 2008. But the national exposure significantly raised McCain’s profile and helped establish him as a party leader on defense issues. He frequently sparred with Obama over the president’s foreign policy strategies, particularly in regard to combat drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan. But he also was a vocal critic of Bush during his presidency on the issue of torture in regard to U.S.-captured enemies.

However, his relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump proved the most contentious. Trump repeatedly mocked McCain during the 2016 election campaign, at one point making fun of his capture in Vietnam. McCain in turn repeatedly dismissed Trump as an unstable, unserious statesman, and implied Trump dodged military service during the Vietnam War because of fake injuries. That frosty relationship came despite both men’s stated desires to build up military readiness and funding. McCain had long been an advocate for bigger defense budgets and streamlined Pentagon operations, and he emphasized those priorities in both his committee legislation and public hearings in recent years. Given his military background — along with his 23-year career, both his father and grandfather were four-star admirals — McCain was also heavily involved in veterans policy and reforming the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Arizona was the center of the 2014 VA wait-time scandal that forced the resignation of then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, and McCain played the role of negotiator between Republican and Democratic lawmakers on the legislative response. Because of his illness, McCain has not traveled from Arizona to Capitol Hill since late 2017. But Senate Armed Services Committee staff have insisted that the chairman has maintained his leadership role on the panel, directing key policy decisions in the fiscal 2019 defense authorization bill signed into law earlier this month (and named in part for McCain).

Before his absence from Washington, D.C., McCain had focused many of his public remarks on the dangers of partisanship in the face of challenges facing the nation. In the Naval Academy speech, he also railed against “parties that preach resentful nationalism rather than enlightened self-interest” and pressed for more compromise and compassion in governing. “We have to fight against propaganda and crackpot conspiracy theories,” he said. “We have to fight isolationism, protectionism and nativism. We have to defeat those who would worsen our divisions. We have to remind our sons and daughters that we became the most powerful nation on Earth by tearing down walls, not building them.”

McCain's death also removes one of the few remaining Vietnam-era veterans from national elected office, a fact that the senator lamented in a CNN interview in spring 2017. He said he hoped the next generation of service members from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars could help rekindle civil debate on Capitol Hill, balancing passionate views with mutual respect. "I see talent coming up," he said. "I have great faith in our system of government over time." [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | August 25, 2018 ++]

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## **Korean War Vets ► Royce Williams | MOH Nominee**

During his 37-year career in the military, Royce Williams received a number of awards, including the Silver Star, and was praised for his leadership and piloting skills. He planned and led a successful aerial strike against the North Vietnamese, fiercely fought for proper repatriations of POW/MIAs and helped train a generation of Navy pilots. But for all his accolades and the lives he touched, what stands out most in his august career are 35 minutes that Williams was forbidden to reveal to anyone – even his wife – for 50 years.



Williams grew up near the South Dakota-Minnesota border, spending his days fishing, playing hockey and getting into mischief. "I was a lively kid, got in my share of trouble," he recalls. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father, a machine gunner in World War I. College wasn't in the cards, so Williams worked hard to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout – the first in his community – as a way to qualify for the Naval Academy so he could eventually become a naval aviator. As early as age 11, Williams dreamed of a military career. That's around the time he met Camilla "Cammie" Förde, on the first day of Sunday school at a Lutheran church. He still remembers that day, though he says he didn't know she would be the one until they were juniors in high school. "She sat across from me then. We started playing footsies or something."

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor interrupted their courtship. Williams, 16, answered the call to service by joining the Minnesota State Guard. As soon as he turned 17, he signed up for the naval aviation program and started his career after graduation. Williams stayed stateside, starting his Navy career in 1943 at boot camp in Corpus Christi, Texas, and winning his wings of gold in Pensacola, Fla., in 1945. His service continued through the Korean and Vietnam wars, in which he flew no fewer than 220 combat missions. During the Korean War, Williams served as a pilot for an F9F-5 Panther on board USS Oriskany. Everything changed the morning of Nov. 18, 1952. For Lt. Williams and others in a carrier task force – three aircraft carriers and about 20 Navy ships – in the Sea of Japan off Chonjin, North Korea, the weather wasn't ideal. "It was really a nasty day, heavy winds and snow, a big blizzard and low clouds," Williams remembers.

Around noon, he flew out on patrol with three others: flight leader Lt. Claire Elwood, Lt. j.g. John Middleton and Lt. j.g. Dave Rowlands. Williams was the most experienced of the pilots, charged with protecting the task force by flying a combat air patrol. Earlier that day, he had flown a combat strike against the Hoeryong industrial complex five

miles from the North Korea-Soviet Union border. As the four Panthers climbed to 12,000 feet, the Combat Information Center radioed them to warn of inbound bogies: seven Soviet MiGs. Moments later, a warning light signaled a problem with one of Elwood's fuel pumps. He and Middleton were ordered to hold back at 15,000 feet while Williams and his wingman climbed. As they approached 26,000 feet, they located the MiGs, which were about 50 miles to the north at about 50,000 feet. The MiGs broke into two groups and turned in opposite directions in an attempt to pin the two Panthers. "I lost sight of them when they dropped out of the contrail level," Williams says. "The controller said he lost contact with them on the radar."

That didn't last long. Four of them, still in formation, attacked Williams and his wingman. He pulled up and went after the last MiG within range, scoring a hit. For reasons still unclear, Rowlands followed the plane as it spiraled toward the earth. Now it was six on one. "I pursued the remaining three while the other three are coming from the other side," Williams says. "They climbed, and I was going to go after the single – he was the closest and just lost his wingman. He pulled up and into the sun and probably 2,000 feet above me turned in, and he was right in the sun when I saw the other two already turned and headed toward me. So I turned quickly to take them on." Williams lined up, challenging the MiG and firing until it disappeared under his wings. The remaining MiGs positioned themselves to take on Williams one at a time.

"I'm just turning, I'm just countering what they're doing and swivel-headed," he says. "I had an opportunity; a guy made a mistake. He overshot me and was level, and I came on around. I was close behind him. I opened fire, and a lot of pieces started coming off his airplane, and I had to maneuver rather drastically to avoid swallowing him. After that, I'm just back on the defense again." Williams maneuvered into position to take out a fourth MiG – "and had him smoking. The MiG didn't maneuver but slowed and started a slight descent." At that point, one of the MiGs "scored a 37-mm hit in the right wing stub, penetrating the engine accessories compartment," according to the official report that had been classified for half a century. Not only was Williams still outnumbered, his plane had been significantly damaged. The cable to the rudder had been severed and the hydraulic system was disabled. It was hard to fly. And Williams was out of ammunition.

He headed back toward the task force, but was still being pursued. "This guy just came around, and I can't turn," he recalls. "He's maybe 400 feet behind me just firing away. But I would push over and rounds would go over me. And I'd pull up, and they'd go under me until I got in the clouds, and I lost sight of him." Williams considered parachuting but knew he would not survive the frigid waters. He aimed to land his plane on Oriskany. As he fought for control, he used gravity and pilot skill to lower the landing gear and tailhook, barreling toward the ship at nearly 200 mph. The plane caught the wire and came to a halt, concluding an unprecedented feat in aviation. Williams' heroics likely saved the lives of his fellow pilots and prevented an attack on the entire task force.

### **An unwinnable battle**

During his 24-year Navy career, Top Gun graduate Ed Riley flew all sorts of planes, including MiG-15s. He says Williams' experience was highly unusual – the Navy rarely, if ever, practices scenarios of more than four-versus-one. "Typically, if you're in a one-versus-four, you're trying to get away from the battle," Riley says, noting that pilots will take "shots of opportunity" when possible. "You're not trying to prosecute the battle, because you know as soon as you start to prosecute someone, you're a grape for everybody else. So going one-versus-seven – you don't want to be there." Not only was Williams outnumbered, Riley says, but he was battling superior planes. The MiGs had more thrust, flew faster and "were pretty advanced for their time," while the Panthers were fairly limited in dogfights. Ultimately, Williams survived because of his "superior airmanship and superior bravery, throwing himself into a battle that was essentially unwinnable," Riley says.

### **'It was an eternity'**

Most dogfights last about five minutes. "It was an eternity," Williams says of the 35-minute air battle. He remained calm and focused during the intense exchange. "While I was fighting, I don't believe my adrenaline had kicked in," says Williams, who received the Silver Star the following April. "My breathing, blood pressure and so forth all remained pretty normal for what I was doing." Waiting for his debriefing, Williams suddenly realized how tired and

sweaty he was: “I’d never worked so hard at flying an airplane.” Somehow, he was uninjured except for minor cuts around his neck where the gasket from his flight suit rubbed against his skin. “I’m a God-fearing person,” he offers as an explanation of how he survived the dogfight virtually unscathed. “And I had done a whole lot more training than the other guys up there.”

His plane, however, bore the scars. A shipmate used a grease pencil to circle the perforations – all 263 of them. Some were minor while others were up to a foot wide. The plane was in such poor shape that the crew pushed it overboard to its final resting place. While Williams was calming his nerves in the ready room, tensions were escalating aboard the ship and in Washington, D.C. “They’re yelling to our squadron intelligence officer, ‘Get in here – Washington’s on the line ... they want to know now!’” A wrong move could very well have propelled the United States and the Soviet Union into World War III. Immediately, a phony report was sent to Washington, crediting Williams with a single kill and one probable damage, while Middleton was linked with a kill and Rowlands a probable. Even though Williams “knew Rowlands never fired a shot,” he was ordered to remain silent and meet with Senior Adm. Robert Briscoe when Oriskany reached Yokosuka, Japan, a week later.

Briscoe, commander of Far East naval forces, told Williams he would be credited with at least three kills but that he must never speak of the incident. It wasn’t just the risk of dragging the Soviets into a broader conflict; the United States didn’t want to reveal the existence of the brand-new National Security Agency (NSA). Agents from NSA, which was formed Nov. 4, 1952, were secretly aboard task force member USS Helena. From there, the agents monitored the fight and documented at least three kills by Williams, according to the agency’s report, which was declassified July 15, 2015. When Williams entered the flight in his pilot log book, his commanding officer stood by as he drew one-and-a-half Soviet flags, indicating the “official” number of kills at the time. As the years went by and the real story emerged, Williams modified the entry to reflect four Soviet flags.

But Williams never spoke of his secret as he continued his military career, serving in various capacities at home and abroad before eventually hanging up his uniform. Finally, sometime in the 1990s, the Soviets released the names of the four pilots Williams shot down. Williams was then free to reveal his heroic actions, though he remained reticent. Williams figured that since it happened so long ago, few people would care about it. He started by telling Cammie. “Ohhhhh, Royce,” he says, mimicking his late wife’s reaction of adulation and surprise. Royce wasn’t much interested in sharing the story, but Cammie told their family and friends. It was 2002 when Williams finally spoke about it publicly during an event at the Pensacola Naval Museum.

### **Fighting for recognition**

As more people hear about Williams’ heroics, support is growing for official recognition – something that should have happened 65 years ago. Last summer, the South Korean government honored Williams with its Ambassador for Peace Medal. He was among the Korean War veterans who returned to a hero’s welcome, meeting President Moon Jae-in, Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon and senior military leaders. “It was wonderful,” Williams says. “The South Koreans were so kind. It was so well done.”

Former Navy pilot Peter-Rolf Ohnstad was amazed to learn of Williams’ achievement. “When I first heard the story, I said, ‘I gotta meet this guy,’” Ohnstad remembers. “This is crazy. Unbelievable. He should’ve been my hero when I went through flight training. I never even heard of him. I thought, ‘He lives here? He’s alive? He’s in Escondido? I gotta meet this guy.’” Ohnstad and Williams are members of American Legion Post 416 in Encinitas, Calif. Ohnstad, his fellow Legionnaires and others are lobbying for Williams to be awarded the Medal of Honor. At the 99th National Convention in Reno, Nev., the Legion’s National Executive Committee approved Resolution 70, which calls for the Legion to petition Congress and the Department of Defense to so recognize Williams.

Years ago, retired Rear Adm. Doniphan B. Shelton – a combat veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam – became interested in Williams’ story. He secured endorsements from two four-star admirals, Thomas B. Hayward and Ronald J. Hays, before asking U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) to review the case. “There’s nothing wrong with the Silver Star that they gave him, believe me, but it’s not what he earned,” Shelton says, referring to Williams’ 35-minute dogfight nearly 65 years ago. Shelton, who also served as a pilot, says he’s never heard of an air battle similar to that

of Williams; neither have naval historians. That's part of what led Shelton to research the dogfight and push Congress to award Williams the Medal of Honor. In Shelton's San Diego home, a long table overflows with what looks like a battle plan – maps, sketches and other material related to Williams' actions.

"It's a question of recognizing heroic action where heroic action should be recognized," Shelton says. "In World War II, there was a strong clamor for heroes to be recognized all the time. That was not true in Korea. Nobody gave a s\*\*t about heroes in Korea. They kind of came back a bit in Vietnam, but not really. There's never been anything to supersede World War II from a standpoint of public support and wanting to recognize people for what they did. This remarkable aerial engagement of Royce Williams is unsurpassed before in Korea, Vietnam or since then." Ohnstad, too, is passionate about setting the record straight for Williams so that future aviators will know what transpired Nov. 18, 1952.

"Rectifying the record and getting him the proper award – that's really what this is about," he says. "This is a story that needs to be told. It sat there for 50 years. Nobody ever talked about Royce Williams. Nobody knew who he was. We need to make sure that Top Gun aviators know, the public knows, everybody knows." Williams, now 92, appreciates the support but is content to let others advocate on his behalf for a medal upgrade. "Wait and see ... wait and see." [Source: The American Legion | Henry Howard | October 19, 2017 ++]

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## **Korean War Vets ► Robert McCusker | Returned Wallet**

Sharon Moore had heard the stories about her father getting his duffel bag stolen on his way back from the Korean War. The New Hampshire woman never expected to see any of the contents. In July, Moore received a Facebook friend request from a stranger in France. She deleted it. But, the person responded with a Facebook message asking for help in finding the owner of a lost wallet. Attached were several black-and-white pictures, including one of her mother as a young woman, and another of her aunt, as well as a tattered Social Security card and Massachusetts driver's license. "I immediately saw my dad's driver's license and my mother's photo. I knew it was my dad's wallet," Moore said of her father, Robert McCusker, who died a day before her 20th birthday in 1983. "I couldn't believe it. Really, my dad's wallet after all these years? It was just weird."

The brown leather wallet was found in the basement of a building in Chatellerault, France, a small city about 185 miles (300 kilometers) southwest of Paris. Workers had tossed it out, but the building's owner, Patrick Caubet, noticed it on a pile of gravel and was drawn to the half-dozen photographs and what looked like official documents. On closer inspection, he saw a field ration permit dated September 1950 belonging to Cpl. Robert S. McCusker, as well as McCusker's Social Security card and other military documents. It was unclear how the wallet ended up in the building, although Moore said Caubet had heard that the building once was a social club for American officers and that officers might also have stayed there.

"The photographs made it very sentimental and personal, and really gave me the desire to find the family they belonged to," said Caubet, who works in communications for the French military. "My grandfather and father were also in the war," he said, adding that his grandfather had been injured by a shell in World War II and his father suffered serious burns in the Algerian War. "I would have loved it if someone had found papers or other things belonging to them and sent them to me."



Caubet, who was interviewed in French, found a friend who spoke English and together they found an obituary for Moore's mother, Jean McKenney McCusker, who died in 2014. They went in search of his surviving relatives listed in the obituary, first posting the wallet's contents on Caubet's Facebook page. That prompted some replies from friends, including one who surmised that the wallet's owner was possibly "a soldier who fell in love with a French woman." They tried contacting the Pentagon and the U.S. Embassy in Paris, but got nowhere. Then, Caubet sought the help of a French military office in Paris, which tracked down the names of McCusker's children in just days. Caubet found Moore on Facebook last month and shortly after the wallet was headed to Dover, New Hampshire.

"She was so happy to know there was this trace of her father," Caubet said. "She was almost ready to come to France with her brother to get the wallet. But I told her I could send it. I was so afraid it would get lost in the mail. But it arrived in less than a week. I was so happy." When the package arrived, Moore and her brother, Steven McCusker, filmed themselves opening the wallet and emailed the video to Caubet, so he could share in their joy. For Moore and her relatives, the wallet represents another part of a father who rarely talked about his time at war. He also fought in World War II, forging a birth certificate at the age of 15 and running off to the Merchant Marine. He then re-enlisted for the Korean conflict and received a Purple Heart after he was injured in a grenade attack.

Moore gave the wallet to her brother, Steven, who also lives in Dover, because she already has her father's Purple Heart, his dog tags and the flag from his coffin on display in her home. The family also sent Caubet a gift basket featuring maple syrup from her backyard, some of the candy her father enjoyed and a New England Patriots jersey. "It's just amazing. It's just amazing. To hold something he held every day, there are just no words," Moore said, adding that her father would have been "floored by the whole story and just thankful and grateful, especially because it was a soldier that helped get it back to us." [Source: The Associated Press Michael Casey & Jocelyn Gecker | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Vet Hiring Fairs ► Scheduled As of 31 AUG 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 | August 31, 2018 ++]



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## **Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule ► As of 31 AUG 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\vetans related websites and resources.

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

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

Note that events listed on the Military Retirees & Veterans Events Schedule may be cancelled or rescheduled. Before traveling long distances to attend an event, you should contact the applicable RAO, RSO, event sponsor, etc., to ensure the event will, in fact, be held on the date\time indicated. Also, attendance at some events may require military ID, VA enrollment or DD214. Please report broken links, comments, corrections, suggestions, new RADs and\or other military retiree\vetans related events to the Events Schedule Manager, [Milton.Bell126@gmail.com](mailto:Milton.Bell126@gmail.com). [Source: Retiree\Veterans Events Schedule Manager | Milton Bell | August 31, 2018  
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## **State Veteran's Benefits ► Arkansas 2018**

The state of Arkansas provides a benefits to their veteran residents in the categories listed below. To obtain more information on them refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits & Discounts – AR**”. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below benefits refer to <http://www.veterans.arkansas.gov>.

- Arkansas Veterans Home
- Financial Assistance
- Education Benefits
- Recreation
- Other State Veteran Benefits

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/arkansas-state-veterans-benefits.html> | August 2018  
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**\* 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 Suicide Prevention Update 49 ► H.R.2345 | National Hotline Improvement Act of 2018**

The National Hotline Improvement Act of 2018 was introduced in the house May 3, 2017, passed the House July 18, 2018, passed the Senate without amendment 1 AUG, and signed into law by President Donald Trump on 14 AUG. This legislation calls for a study to evaluate (1) the feasibility of designating a three-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system; and (2) the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), including how well it addresses the needs of veterans. The FCC will be required to submit a report to Congress including a recommended dialing code, a cost-benefit analysis comparing the three-digit code to the current lifeline number, and cost estimates for service providers, states, and localities. [Source: Johnson City Press | Brandon Paykamian | August 18, 2018 ++]

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## **VA Overpayments Update 03 ► S.2884 | Fair Debt Notice Act**

U.S. Senators Deb Fischer (R-NE), John Tester (D-MT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), John Cornyn (R-TX), Dean Heller (R-NV), and Marco Rubio (R-FL) have introduced the Veterans Fair Debt Notice Act - S. 2884. This legislation would address issues with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) debt collection procedures and provide veterans needed information about potential debts. "Many of our nation's veterans and their families are accidentally overpaid by the VA, only to later find they owe money back. Our bill would help veterans navigate the complicated VA bureaucracy in these confusing cases, and take steps to address the issue of overpayments in the first place. This is common sense bill our veterans need, and it has support from both sides of the aisle," said Senator Fischer.

Under the Veterans Fair Debt Notice Act, the VA would partner with Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) to create a new notice of indebtedness letter that explains why an individual owes alleged debts. The letter would also include steps the veteran can take to challenge or mitigate the debt. In addition, the VA would be directed to create a method to notify individuals of their debt electronically. Furthermore, this bill would direct the VA, and Department of the Treasury where applicable, to study and report to Congress on administrative issues leading to VA overpayments, and long-term solutions to provide more useful and timely information to veterans. [Source: TREA Washington Update | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Veterans' Treatment Court Update 27 ► H.R.2147 | House/Senate Unanimously Pass**

Congress unanimously passed a bill introduced by U.S. Sens. Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and John McCain (R-AZ) that calls for the Department of Veterans Affairs to hire at least 50 additional Veterans Justice Outreach specialists within the next year. These specialists help veterans who become involved in the criminal justice system gain access to treatment courts, which remove those veterans from traditional processes and provide assistance for those suffering from veteran-specific issues like post-traumatic stress disorder or substance abuse. The treatment courts help create a rehabilitation program for veterans, tailored to fit their specific needs.

U.S. Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT), McCain and Flake introduced the bill in the Senate in April 2017, and U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO) introduced the companion House bill. Both the House and Senate unanimously passed H.R. 2147, the **Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018**, on 22 AUG. "While veterans treatment courts

have a proven record of reducing recidivism rates, they are underutilized due to a lack of VJO specialists nationwide,” Flake said in a statement. “This bill will provide Veterans Treatment Courts with the necessary resources and manpower to deliver tailored and effective treatment to the veterans who need it.”

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Arizona released a statement in support of the bill early last year. “Our nation must never harm, only to re-harm, those who served as our defenders,” Jim Ellars, the VFW Department of Arizona national legislation officer, said in the statement. “We believe, as do the veteran courts, that rehabilitation through treatment is the proper approach to someone who may or may not recognize the problems that got them in trouble with the law.” [Source: KTAR.com | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## Capitol Hill Update ► Retiree & Vet Issues

### House Actions

**H.R.303** (Retired Pay Restoration Act) Cosponsors 92 – Referred to Committees: Armed Services; Veterans Affairs

- Permits additional retired members of the Armed forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special compensation.
- Introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)

**H.R.333** (Disabled Veteran’s Tax Termination Act) Cosponsors: 46 - Referred to Committees: Armed Services’ Veterans’ Affairs

- Permits retired members of the Armed forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50% to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans’ disability compensation.
- Extends eligibility for concurrent receipt for Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service.
- Introduced by Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA)

**H.R.3272** (Veteran Education Empowerment Act) Cosponsors 118 - Referred to Committee: Veterans’ Affairs

- Directs the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to carry out a grant program to provide Veteran student Centers at institutions of higher education to assist veterans in the pursuit of higher education.
- Introduced by Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL).

**H.R.4571** (Fair Access to Insurance for Retired [FAIR] Heroes Act of 2017) Cosponsors 9 - Referred to Committees: Armed Services, Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means.

- Expands eligibility for the TRICARE program to include certain veterans entitled to benefits under the Medicare program due to conditions or injuries incurred during service in the Armed Forces and to waive the Medicare Part B late enrollment penalty for such veterans.
- Introduced by Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA).

### Senate Actions

**S.66** (Retired Pay Restoration Act) Cosponsors 12 - Referred to Committee: Armed Services

- Permits additional retired members of the Armed forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special compensation.
- Introduced by Sen. Dean Heller (R-NV)

**S.591** (Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act) Cosponsors 35 - Referred to Committee: Veterans’ Affairs.

- Expands eligibility of the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veteran Affairs, to expand benefits available to participants under such program and to enhance special compensation for members of the uniformed services who require assistance in everyday life.
- Introduced by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA).
- Language included in S.2193, Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017.

**S.1198** (Veterans Care Financial Protection Act) Cosponsors 3 - Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs.

- Protects individuals who are eligible for increased pension under laws administered by the Secretary of Veteran Affairs on the basis of need of regular aid and attendance from dishonest, predatory, or otherwise unlawful practices.
- Introduced by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)

**S.2117** (Fair Access to Insurance [FAIR] Heroes Act of 2017) Cosponsors 1 - Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs.

- Expands eligibility for the TRICARE program to include certain veterans entitled to benefits under the Medicare program due to conditions or injuries incurred during service in the Armed Forces and to waive the Medicare Part B late enrollment penalty for such veterans.
- Introduced by Sen. Bill Nelson(D-FL)

**S.2193** (Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017) Cosponsors 0 - Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs.

- Streamlines and strengthens veterans' healthcare services at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and in the community to ensure efficient, timely and quality care.
- Introduced by Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA)
- Passed by committee on Nov. 29, 2017 and referred to the full Senate.

[Source: AUSA News | September 2018 ++]

### \* Military \*



## Military Parades Update 04 ► Trump's 2018 Veterans Day Parade Cancelled

The Defense Department says the Veterans Day military parade ordered up by President Donald Trump won't happen in 2018. Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman, said 16 AUG that the military and the White House "have now agreed to explore opportunities in 2019." Manning says the Pentagon had "originally targeted November 10, 2018," for the Washington event, intended "to honor America's military veterans and commemorate the centennial of World War I." President Trump canceled his desired military parade before Pentagon officials briefed him on cost estimates for the event, a Defense Department spokesman said 20 AUG. U.S. officials had told The Associated Press earlier in the day that the parade would cost about \$92 million, citing preliminary estimates more than three times the price first suggested by the White House. According to officials, roughly \$50 million would cover Pentagon costs for aircraft, equipment, personnel and other support for the November parade in Washington. The remainder would be borne by other agencies and largely involve security costs. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss early planning estimates that have not yet been finalized or released publicly. [Source: NCOAdvocate | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## Iranian Navy Update 01 ► Claims Full Control of the Persian Gulf

On 27 AUG, Gen. Alireza Tangsiri, the naval head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, said Iran had full control of the Persian Gulf. He added that the U.S. Navy, with its mission "to ensure freedom of navigation" worldwide, had no business being there. These are bold, provocative statements made to influence the ongoing negotiations over sanctions and the fate of the 2015 nuclear agreement. But such a threat needs to be backed up with hardware, and Iran feels it has what it takes to exert control over this vital waterway.



The geography favors the Iranians. They don't need to blanket the entire Gulf to control it, just the narrowest parts such as the Strait of Hormuz, and those passages are vital to the world economy. About 30 percent of the world's oil tankers pass through the Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz, which is only 33 km. (20 mi.) wide at its narrowest point. It's a natural chokepoint. But don't envision a WWII-style naval clash. The U.S. Navy would wreck the Iranian navy's large vessels and warplanes. The Iranians know this, and have developed tactics and tech meant to even the odds. Here's how they'll try, and how the U.S. Navy will respond.

The U.S. Navy is great at destroying large ships. Its entire kill chain of satellites, radar, warplanes, torpedoes, and missiles is optimized for destroying large ships and stopping air attacks. On that front, the Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said this year that a short-range defense system called the Kamand was ready to shoot down U.S. cruise missiles aimed at its destroyers. But Iran's strategy doesn't rely on large boats. This month, for instance, the Pentagon noticed a major Iranian military exercise in the Gulf that involved more than 100 boats. Most of these boats are not warships, but small speedboats. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps operates flotillas of small speedboats that, despite their small size, pose an outsized threat to U.S. ships.

These boats are armed with missiles; they rely on their numbers and speed to stay alive long enough to shoot those missiles. In 2018, the Iranian navy claimed to have outfitted them with new engines that allowed a longer range and higher speeds. One anti-ship cruise missile that can incapacitate a destroyer is not the right weapon against a speedboat — and the ammunition will run out. The U.S. Navy is not as adept with taking out small speedboats, especially ones that are staffed with crews willing to die to get close enough to take a shot or even ram a U.S. ship.

The swarm threat has been around a while now, and the United States has been looking for ways to thwart it. The short-term solution appears to be air power, with Navy and U.S. Air Force drills focused on gunning down small vessels from warplane cannons and helicopter rocket pods. A longer-term cure for swarming speedboats are lasers. They can target multiple vessels and never run out of ammunition. But lasers remain a future weapon and the sheer numbers of boats in the Iranian drill indicate a tough fight.

Iran would probably supplement its speedboat attacks with another emerging threat: missiles fired from shore that can skim the waves and damage a U.S. warship. Missiles like these have been shot at oil tankers from areas controlled by Iran-backed militias, and the lessons learned from these attacks could be used to perfect their use during an

attempted blockade. If the speedboats and missiles fail, the Iranians could always use a crude method to block traffic: park large ships in the narrow straits and scuttle them. Even blocking the Strait of Hormuz in this way would cause an economic catastrophe, and create a traffic jam of tankers that it could try to attack or seize. [Source: Popular Mechanics| Joe Pappalardo | August 27, 2018 ++]

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## **Underwater Drones ► Russia Unveils First Armed with an Assault Rifle**

A Russian state-owned arms maker reportedly unveiled the world's first underwater drone armed with an assault rifle that's designed to defend naval bases from enemy divers and assault teams. "The drone is fitted with an underwater assault rifle. It has undergone sea trials," Rostec, the company behind the drone's development, told Sputnik News at the International Military Technical Forum "Army 2018." "Full-fledged trials will begin closer to the start of winter. It is a unique project since no one has so far fitted [an underwater drone] with small arms. Moreover, very few [countries] in the world have underwater automatic small arms." It is unclear exactly what type of assault rifle the company has placed on the drone, but The National Interest reports that Russia developed the APS underwater rifle based on the AK-74 assault rifle in the 1970s. Whether the underwater system works is difficult to independently verify.

The purpose of this unusual unmanned underwater vehicle is, according to Sputnik, to "protect port facilities, bridges, naval bases and ships from enemy combat divers and underwater drones." Russia and China, like the US, have both put increased emphasis on underwater warfare, particularly powerful unmanned platforms. Russian President Vladimir Putin proudly boasted in March about the development of a new nuclear-powered underwater drone, which the US Department of Defense's Nuclear Posture Review references as a new "nuclear-powered, undersea autonomous torpedo." The Poseidon drone, designated as Kanyon by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), can "carry either conventional or nuclear warheads, which enables them to engage various targets, including aircraft groups, coastal fortifications, and infrastructure," Putin said earlier this year. Russia announced 18 AUG that it is also striving to develop unmanned warships.

China, on the other hand, is developing autonomous robotic submarines relying on artificial intelligence platforms to patrol the seas. These large, smart, low-cost unmanned underwater drones could be deployed in the early 2020s, the South China Morning Post reported in July, citing scientists involved in the project. The subs "can be instructed to take down a nuclear-powered submarine or other high-value targets. It can even perform a kamikaze strike," one researcher introduced, adding, "The AI has no soul. It is perfect for this kind of job." US underwater drones are primarily used for anti-submarine detection, minesweeping, and reconnaissance and surveillance missions. The US Navy uses bottlenose dolphins to defend its bases from underwater intruders and to locate sea mines. [Source: Business Insider | Ryan Pickrell | August 24, 2018 ++]

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## **Guard & Reserve Family Support ► Empirical Data Lacking**

National Guard and Reserve units are experiencing a high operational tempo, at home and abroad, and this toll is felt not only by the service members but also their support networks. Sadly, very little research exists today on the well-being of these Guard and Reserve families. Most studies place the focus on active duty families. And when Guard and reserve families are part of the sample, it is often at a very small percentage. It was evident at the Military Child Education Coalition National Training Seminar last month that reserve component families and their children have unique experiences and issues, such as being identified as a military student while their parent is activated. However,



because of a lack of data, it's hard to determine what the best actions moving forward are to soften the negative impacts that affect Guard and Reserve families.

Empirical data is crucial when proposing legislation to help this population of military families. Lawmakers want to see proof that there is a need for change and, without data, the proof is only anecdotal. MOAA calls on Congress to conduct an assessment and report on the wellbeing of Guard and Reserve families. No matter if the servicemember is deployed 2,000 miles away or 200 miles away, their families feel the logistical, financial, and emotional impact of their absence.

- **Logistical Impact** -- Being activated for Guard or Reserve duty can be a logistical nightmare. When on active duty orders, servicemember benefits change such as where they receive healthcare and price of their medical costshares. Switching benefits can be confusing to understand especially when preparing to leave your family for a deployment or state mission. Additionally, Guard and Reserve servicemembers do not have the same access to childcare benefits active duty personnel have. This makes it difficult for a Guard or Reserve family to transition from a two- parent household to essentially a single-parent household. When the servicemember is gone on duty, they must reassess childcare plans which sometimes involves their spouse leaving their job or cutting back hours at work.
- **Financial Impact** -- Recent reports suggest Guardsmen, specifically activated for state mission in Hawaii are experiencing a delay in pay. Due to the process of “after the fact pay system”, where Guard and Reserve members are paid only after the service, many are going weeks without pay which has a huge impact on their family budget and ability to pay bills. Additionally, those eligible for higher housing allowances are experiencing delays in receiving this extra compensation due to administrative inefficiencies. In addition to pay delays, Guard and Reserve families may have additional expenses related to some of the logistical issues mentioned above such as childcare.
- **Emotional Impact** -- Whether the servicemember is active duty, National Guard, or Reserve, being deployed overseas or on state active duty is extremely stressful on the family. Studies, such as Rand's 2016 study on impact of deployments, suggest that although deployments don't have a significant impact on long term psychological and behavior health of families, the short term impact on families can definitely be felt socially and emotionally. With servicemembers facing dangers from combat zones to wildfires, it is no wonder stress levels for families during this time increase.



MOAA continues to identify and address issues surrounding the Guard and Reserve population. They continue to be an active voice, uplifting the concerns of National Guard and Reserve families through support of efforts to:

- Collect more data on Guard and Reserve families
- Encourage more states to use Military Student Identifiers for Guard and Reserve children in schools and disaggregate data from their active duty student counterparts to address more specific issues
- Ensure employers are prepared for employing a Guardsman/Reservists so servicemembers can keep their job after extended duty periods
- Include Guard and Reserve language in appropriate legislation focused on active duty, but could benefit all components

- Educate Guard and Reserve families on their military benefits and how they change based on activation status
- Expand access to military benefits to Guard and Reserve families

[Source: The MOAA Newsletter | Eryn Wagnon | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **Navy Shellbacks ► No Pollywog is Exempt from Transition Ceremony**

A sailor's hazing-filled transition from a slimy pollywog to a trusty shellback during an equator line-crossing is a naval tradition unlike any other. Ritualistic pain, immensely questionable sanitation and excessive humiliation have seemingly forever been a requirement of entering King Neptune's royal court and becoming a son or daughter of the god of the sea. It's a right of passage that dates back over 400 years, when seasoned mariners sought to test new shipmates to ensure they were capable of withstanding long voyages at sea. Hundreds of years later, versions of the ceremony continue to be observed by navies throughout the world as a way to boost camaraderie and provide a welcome respite from the daily rigors of life at sea.



The hazing festival, intended to be inescapable, traditionally allows no one the chance to be spared the prerequisite misery prior to joining the ancient order of the deep. Not even President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was aboard the USS Indianapolis when it crossed the equator in 1936, was exempt from at least some form of embarrassment. "You will accept most heartily and with good grace the pains and penalties of the awful torture that will be inflicted upon you to determine your fitness to be one of our Trusty Shellbacks," the president's summons read. Roosevelt was made to plead his case before a seasoned sailor who dressed up as King Neptune, and had to go through some degree of embarrassment before he was granted the status of a Shellback. Like most sailors who went through this rite of passage, Roosevelt was given a certificate to show his status as a trusty Shellback.

Men who crossed the equator and completed the ceremony often received a certificate to commemorate the event. Decorated by drawings of mermaids and sea serpents, Roosevelt's certificate read:

### **Subpoena and Summons Extraordinary The Royal High Court of the Raging Main**

BE IT KNOWN, That we hereby summon and command you

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

Now the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, to appear before the Royal High Court and our August Presence on the aforesaid date at such time as may best suit OUR pleasure under penalty of eternal pickling.

You will accept most heartily and with good grace the pains and penalties of the awful torture that will be inflicted upon you to determine your fitness to be one of our Trusty Shellbacks and answer to the following charges:

**CHARGE 1.** Disregard of the traditions of the sea.

Specification: In that Franklin D. Roosevelt, having, for many years sailed the high seas and bounding main, entirely through kindly assistance, toleration and consideration of his Majesty Neptuneus Rex, has, for lo these many years, failed to appear in person to show allegiance to his Royal Highness, thereby masquerading as a man of the sea, and by this utter disregard added insult to other previous crimes.

**CHARGE 2.** Taking liberties with the piscatorial subjects of His Majesty Neptuneus Rex.

Specification: In that, Franklin D. Roosevelt, having taken liberties with the denizens of the Realm of Neptuneus Rex, by maliciously removing them from the depths of their recognized habitat, has permitted these acts to be publicized by print, town crier, and all other means of shameless publication; and, furthermore, has exaggerated this crime by the public humiliation of the greatest of these creatures of the sea, by stuffing them full of sawdust, and placing them in a position of eternal disgrace in a national museum where the eyes of all mortals may regard their pitiful and ignoble plight.

Disobey this summons under pain of Our Swift and Terrible displeasure  
Our Vigilance is ever wakeful, Our Vengeance is Just and Sure

NEPTUNUS REX  
Ruler of the Raging Main

DAVY JONES  
Clerk

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Less than a decade after Roosevelt became a shellback, the U.S. Navy was sailing for the Pacific and war with Japan, but despite the gravity of the time, salty sailors made sure their green shipmates adhered to the time-tested tradition of the line-crossing. Now, thanks to the Smithsonian Channel and the naval officer who originally filmed the festivities, you can enjoy enhanced color footage of that very tradition from aboard the USS Knox. The footage does not disappoint. Check it out at [https://youtu.be/cKwnYxG6\\_IM](https://youtu.be/cKwnYxG6_IM). [Source: NavyTimes | J.D. Simkins | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## Army Recruiting Update 08 ► Younger Teens/College Dropouts To Be Targeted

The likely next leader of Army manpower management told senators 20 AUG he'll push for more recruiting efforts targeting younger high school students and college dropouts, in an effort to keep up with increasing personnel demands. "The Army for many years has been very focused on recruiting out of high school, 17, 18, 19-year-olds," said E. Casey Wardynski, President Donald Trump's nominee to be assistant Army secretary for manpower and reserve affairs. "We have to market the Army more effectively before they get to 17. We have to put the Army in the set of things young adults are thinking about ... much earlier."

The comments came at Wardynski's confirmation hearing, after questioning from Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) on how the Army can meet rising recruiting goals without lowering enlistment standards. Legislation signed into law earlier this month calls for a boost of 4,000 active-duty soldiers in Army end strength in fiscal 2019, the third year in a row that personnel target has risen. Wardynski, who called the personnel quality challenge the top issue facing him in the new role, believes the country still has enough potential recruits to avoid any lowering of standards. But doing so will require changes in how service officials think about recruiting.

- "We have to use new technologies, new approaches that meet these young adults in an environment which is relevant to them," he said.
- "We also need to pay attention to the fact that a great number of young adults are going into college but not completing it, either for financial reasons, or improper fit, or other reasons. There's about 400,000 who

leave junior college each year without completing it and about 400,000 who leave college. That's a market the Army could approach."

Earlier this year, a Defense Department report noted that more than 70 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds are ineligible for military service, due to fitness standards, past criminal activity, or failed education requirements. Wardynski also said he's optimistic that new officer personnel system changes included in the annual defense authorization bill will give planners more flexibility to fill critical needs quickly, both through adding outside experts and retaining specialists already in the ranks.

Sen. Angus King (I-ME) raised concerns that most military recruits come from military families, a cycle he said is likely not sustainable and limits public exposure to the Defense Department. Wardynski said he sympathizes with those worries, and plans on looking at why military service is more appealing to those youths "so we can answer how can we have other kids feel that comfortable enlisting, too." Wardynski served 30 years as an Army officer, including work as director of the service's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis. In recent years, he worked as the superintendent of Huntsville City Schools in Alabama. [Source: ArmyTimes | Leo Shane III | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Military Immigrant Enlistment Update 04 ► 36 Discharged Immigrants Reinstated**

At least three dozen immigrant recruits who were booted from the U.S. Army after enlisting with a promised pathway to citizenship are being brought back to serve, according to court records filed 20 AUG. Since Aug. 17, the U.S. Army has reinstated 32 reservists, and revoked discharge orders of another six enlistees who had sued. Another 149 discharges have been suspended and are under review, said Army Assistant Deputy for Recruiting and Retention Linden St. Clair, in the filing. The reinstatements follow an Associated Press story in early July that revealed dozens of immigrant enlistees were being discharged or had their contracts cancelled. Some said they were given no reason for their discharge. Others said the Army informed them they'd been labeled as security risks because they have relatives abroad or because the Defense Department had not completed background checks on them. They had enlisted under the [Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program](#), known as (MAVNI), to increase the number of soldiers with critical language or medical skills. The reinstatements come weeks after the Army reversed course, suspending the discharges at least temporarily. [Source: The Associated Press | Garance Burke & Martha Mendoza | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **Military Laser Attacks ► Growing Rate in Middle East | Dangerous Problem**

Hostile forces in the Middle East are targeting American pilots with laser pointers at a growing rate, imperiling aircrews and reflecting a problem more widespread and longstanding than the Pentagon has previously acknowledged. American pilots operating in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, the three most prominent conflict zones for American troops, experienced most of the more than 350 lasing incidents reported over the last seven months by aircrews operating across the Middle East, officials at U.S. Air Forces Central Command in Qatar said. That is a significant increase from the approximately 400 lasing incidents reported for the region during all of 2017, according to officials, and marks an upswing after a decline in recent years.

Lasing attacks appear to be an easy way for enemy combatants to harass and try to distract military pilots, both in planes and helicopters. The rate of lasing incidents so far this year is on track to top the roughly 600 incidents reported in 2016 and match 2015, when there were a total of about 700 incidents in the Middle East, according to officials. The numbers of lasing incidents had not been previously disclosed. The Pentagon earlier this year acknowledged a spate of attacks in two other regions. Several incidents occurred in and around an American base [in Djibouti in east Africa](#),

where laser beams appeared to come from a nearby Chinese base. A handful of incidents took place in the [East China Sea](#), where U.S. pilots were hit by laser beams that may have come from Chinese personnel or from fishermen operating in the area, according to U.S. military officials. China has denied involvement in the incidents.



Those incidents accounted for comparatively fewer attacks than in the Middle East. The number of incidents may be related to the frequency of U.S. military aircraft operations, officials said. Flight operations against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and against the Taliban in Afghanistan have grown more intense in recent years. Hostile forces typically point small, hand-held lasers at pilots in flight, especially during landings when they are most visible from the ground, in an attempt to distract them, officials said. Such lasing could result in an accident, though officials said there haven't been any mishaps as a result of lasing. It is unknown how coordinated or organized the attacks are: officials declined to discuss specific details about the perpetrators. The attacks against military crews have resulted in minor injuries, including short-term vision impairment and headaches, military officials said. Officials said they were not aware of any permanent injuries resulting from the attacks, most of which occurred near major population centers or military air bases in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

"Lasing attacks are dangerous and have the potential to confuse, temporarily interfere with the vision of our aircrew, or to permanently damage the eyesight of our service members," said Capt. Bill Urban, a U.S. Central Command spokesman, in an email. Central Command is responsible for U.S. military operations in the Middle East. In many cases, American aircrews take off and land aircraft in places that aren't accessible to enemy forces, but lasers are a relatively cheap and available weapon used to harass aircrews from afar, even thousands of feet away, officials said. "It is exceedingly difficult to pinpoint the origin of a short laser engagement, so we can't definitively source most laser attacks," Capt. Urban said. "We assess that many likely come from insurgents and terrorist organizations like [Islamic State], al Qaeda and others."

Lasing attacks have long been a nuisance for commercial pilots. The Federal Aviation Administration reports thousands of lasing incidents each year, which can range from individuals using small "cat lasers," or in some cases, more powerful "military grade" lasers. The FAA reported more than 2,800 lasing incidents in the first six months of 2018, about on par with the more than 2,700 reported incidents between January and June 2017. Since 2004, there have been at least 55,000 lasing incidents reported by civilian pilots including in the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, Italy and Canada, said Patrick Murphy, a laser expert and editor of [laserpointersafety.com](#), an educational site that tracks the misuse of consumer-type lasers. Of those, he said, "there are no documented or proven cases of permanent case of eye injury," Mr. Murphy said. But aiming lasers at pilots raises a number of concerns, including "flash blindness," which can be produced by a small, hand-held laser as far away as a mile, Mr. Murphy said. Lasers can also cause pilots to experience vision-blocking glare up to 5 miles away, he said. The bigger worry is about distraction, targeting an aircrew as it attempts to land a plane.

Laser pointers range widely in power and capability. They include "cat lasers," marketed primarily for digital presentations and playing with pets, which nonetheless can be used as a visual distraction up to 2 miles away. Larger hand-held lasers, known as "class four" devices, are more powerful and are capable of causing eye damage or even



skin burns if used at very close range. The most damaging laser pointers are green, because the eye sees the color green as the brightest, Mr. Murphy said. Military officials avoid discussing what they are doing to mitigate against lasing attacks. Mr. Murphy said one of the main things pilots can do is get educated about attacks by lasers, including using them inside flight simulators. Pilots can train to manage laser attacks, and can use laser glare-protection glasses that can diminish the lasers as a distraction. Commercial firms also offer glare-resistant screens that may help reduce the effects of a laser beam. [Source: Wall Street Journal | Gordon Lubold | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## Army Credentialing Assistance Program ► Limited User Test to Begin in Fall

A new Program is set to begin a one-year limited user test in Texas this fall before a projected rollout to the entire service in fiscal year 2020. The program, which has similar rates and eligibility as tuition assistance, will provide Soldiers up to \$4,000 each year to pay for credentials that will prepare them for life after the military. When fully implemented, the program will allow Soldiers to choose from more than 1,600 credentials currently offered on the Army's Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) website <https://www.cool.army.mil/index.htm>. The website allows soldiers to get their credentials in four easy steps:

- **Find & Select Related Credentials.** Use the website's FIND feature to see how your Army training and experience matches up with civilian credential requirements. It's easy to use and you can search by MOS code or title.
- **Learn About Credential Requirements.** Once you have selected a credential, learn about its requirements.
- **Learn About Available Resources.** Most credentials have fees associated with them. Learn about resources that can help you pay them.
- **Apply For and Take The Exam.** Army COOL is not a credentialing organization. You do not sign up for or take exams from Army COOL. Once you know what certification you want to take, you will contact the credentialing organization or test vendor to schedule and take the exam. You should contact your personnel office for entry into your service record and also have your training entered into your Joint Service Transcript.

Many of those credentials offer promotion points and are recognized by civilian industry, including jobs in healthcare, plumbing, information technology and aviation repair. "It better prepares our Soldiers for the marketplace," said Col. Sam Whitehurst, director of the Army's Soldier for Life program. "Whether the emphasis in the marketplace is on an educational degree or whether a certificate or license, this program is going to ensure our Soldiers are well-rounded as they enter the civilian workforce." The assistance program builds on the Army's Credentialing Program, which was created in 2015. While that program only authorized Soldiers to take credentials in areas related to their military occupational specialty, the new program eliminates that requirement.

"If an infantryman is interested in transiting into the health industry after they get out of the Army, there are some professional entry-level credentials that they can start to work on while they're still in," said Maj. Sean McEwen, director of Soldier for Life education and training. In the initial test, every Soldier stationed at Fort Hood, in addition to Army National Guard and Selected Reserve Soldiers who serve in Texas, will be able to choose from nearly 30 different credentials. "It's truly going to be supportive of the total Army here in Texas," said Michael Engen, the education services officer at Fort Hood. Some credentials being offered in the limited user test will include certifications to become a computer systems security analyst, personal trainer, or emergency medical technician.

As the first step in implementing the program, the test will validate how the program is administered and forecast future demand and requirements. Due to its large population and community partnerships, Fort Hood was chosen to be the first installation for the test, and officials said the pilot program may include other posts in the future. Historically, about a quarter of Fort Hood's 40,000-Soldier force uses tuition assistance and/or pursues higher education. "I'm really optimistic that we're going to have a more significant portion of our community more actively



engaged with their personal professional development because of the credentialing assistance program," Engen said. When the test officially launches Sept. 6, many Soldiers stationed in Texas will be able to speak with education officials and register for courses. The courses cannot start until Oct. 1 and will be subject to availability and funding, Engen said.

Under the program, Soldiers can receive up to \$4,000 annually in combined tuition assistance and credentialing assistance, according to Human Resources Command. The funds can go toward academic, vocational, and technical type courses that lead to a credential or license, and/or the exam Soldiers may need to complete. Since it does not have the same limitations as tuition assistance, credentialing assistance has more flexibility on what it can pay for. That could include course registration and other academic fees, as well as associated learning materials. Even "boot camp" pre-certification training may be covered by the program, Engen said. Each year, over 25,000 Soldiers already take advantage of credentials offered by the Training and Doctrine Command and the Medical Command. The assistance program looks to add to that success, and perhaps, attract people to the Army.

"We're going to see a growth in professional readiness for a lot of our skilled MOSs," McEwen said. "We also expect this is going to be a tool to help us recruit and retain talent. People are going to identify the Army as an organization that values skilled and trained professionals." And if Soldiers do decide to get out and pursue a civilian career, they will be ready. "When you look at this program, it really demonstrates the Army's commitment to being a Soldier for Life," Whitehurst said. "We ensure our Soldiers are prepared to fight and win our nation's wars while they serve. But through this program, we invest in their futures so that they become productive and successful veterans." [Source: Army News Service | Sean Kimmons | August 14, 2018 ++]

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## **Navy Deploy-Or-Out Policy ► Deployability Is An Individual Responsibility**

Sailors who don't want to see their careers derailed by a missed dental appointment better keep those teeth cleanings on their radars. Individual sailors are responsible for maintaining their own deployability, which means staying on top of medical and dental checkups, as well as legal or administrative problems on their records. If they don't, it could end up wreaking havoc on future fitness reports, Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer told reporters at the Pentagon last week. "That's no longer my responsibility; that is your responsibility as a sailor," he said. "And by the way, I'm going to judge you on that."

The Navy made meeting deployment criteria the responsibility of every sailor in a service-wide administrative message released last fall. So far, it hasn't affected evaluations or FitReps. But that could change soon. "You can expect additional policy announcements on this in the future," said Lt. j.g. Stuart Phillips, a spokesman for the chief of naval personnel. Poor marks for failing to meet deployability requirements would affect one's career just as low ratings for bad performance would, he said. Holding sailors and officers accountable is part of a larger Navy strategy to push responsibility down the chain of command whenever possible. It's meant to empower commanding officers and sailors, Spencer said, especially after the Pentagon announced earlier this year that any service member who's been unable to deploy for more than 12 months would face separation. "We really believe this is the best way to get after that, is to push the responsibility down," Spencer said.

The Navy supports Defense Department efforts to improve readiness and lethality, Phillips said. By increasing individual accountability, Navy officials expect to see a dramatic improvement in the number of officers and sailors who are deployable, he added. Spencer said the service wants to make it easier for sailors to track their own deployability by making electronic file folders available to everyone. That will give sailors a "one-stop shop" to check on the status of a host of career requirements. "And it goes into your fitness report -- your performance on that responsibility," Spencer said. "So we now have a metric and a tool to drive that metric."

The Navy is increasing its communications with the fleet to ensure everyone is aware of the new deploy-or-out policy, Phillips said. Officials are notifying anyone who's been non-deployable for more than 12 months on 1 OCT, and they expect sailors at risk of missing requirements to take immediate action. "We are collecting and analyzing the data to identify the issues that affect deployability," he said. "... We expect to see near instantaneous improvements in medical and dental readiness."

[Source: Military.com | Gina Harkins | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## **Military Coffee ► The Life Blood Of Every Branch.**

The secret to the United States military won't be found locked inside a room at the Pentagon nor encrypted on a secure network behind a firewall. It's found in mugs on messy workstations, in the hands of a sailor half-asleep just off of watch and brewed in chow halls all over the globe. It's coffee. "If the Taliban or al-Qaida ever poisoned the coffee supply, the entire military would be combat ineffective in less than a day," Richard Siemion, a former Army infantry officer and combat veteran, joked in an interview with Military Times. While Siemion's analysis is based off no actual research, his observation, as one who spent seven years in uniform, speaks to the importance of the liquid fuel as the life blood of every military branch.

Looking back through history, coffee's importance to American and military culture becomes abundantly clear. After the Boston Tea Party in 1773, Americans began drinking java more often because consuming tea, the drink of the enemy at the time, was considered un-American. The military, however, didn't completely embrace its need for caffeine until the Civil War. Coffee's importance to morale was noted by Union cavalryman Ebenezer Nelson Gilpin, who wrote in a April 1865 diary entry that life without coffee was unbearable. "Everything is chaos here," he wrote. "We are reduced to quarter rations and no coffee... and nobody can soldier without coffee." Even eventual-President William McKinley was taught an important lesson while in making sure the Union fighting man was adequately caffeinated when, as a 19-year-old, McKinley delivered hot coffee to front-line soldiers.

Also of historical note is that the Navy coined one of the more well-known nicknames for the beverage after President Woodrow Wilson's Navy secretary, Josephus Daniels, banned alcohol onboard ships at the outbreak of World War I. Coffee stepped in to fill the void left by the much-preferred booze, and though the origin is disputed, old salts say that sailors, who were not exactly pleased with having their spirits taken away, referred to the replacement as a "cup of Joseph" in honor of Josephus, which was then shortened to "cup of Joe." These many years later, recognizing a service member's caffeine intake remains just as important. The Army Medical Research and Material Command recently developed the [2B-Alert Personalized Alertness and Cognitive Performance](#) mobile app so soldiers could individually calculate when and how much caffeine to consume for maximum effectiveness.

Which brand is consumed most, though, is the real question. While the Department of Defense is unable to provide statistical data of coffee consumption by brand per service member, an independent Military Times investigation uncovered some answers, starting with information from the Defense Logistics Agency, or DLA. The DLA is a "logistics combat support agency, providing worldwide logistics support in both peacetime and wartime to the military services as well as several civilian agencies and foreign countries," the agency's website states. In short, the DLA connects with the coffee vendors that wind up supplying military installations. With data obtained from the DLA, rankings were compiled showing which CONUS locations received the most coffee during fiscal year 2018. Rank is determined by the total pounds of coffee received, with number one being the greatest amount.

1. Fort Polk, Louisiana
2. U.S. Army Special Warfare Center, Fort Bragg, North Carolina
3. Food Service Subsistence Activity, Fort Bragg, North Carolina
4. Amphibious assault ship Kearsarge, Norfolk, Virginia

5. Yakima Training Center, Yakima, Washington
6. Guided-missile destroyer Ralph Johnson, Everett, Washington
7. Aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush, Norfolk, Virginia

The top four coffee consuming regions for the U.S. military outside of CONUS during fiscal year 2018 are also listed below.

1. Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan
2. Afghanistan
3. Southern Europe
4. United Arab Emirates, Oman

In terms of what brands occupy the biggest corner of the military's coffee distribution throughout CONUS, Maxwell House and S&D sit atop the rest. Overseas, Maxwell House distributes primarily to Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Southern Europe, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Djibouti and Kenya, while S&D remains the most popular in Afghanistan. Coffee options in MREs, meanwhile, are limited. According to Michael Tuttle, a representative of DLA, the coffee in MREs is "determined by the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center when they develop the MRE and the contents. Traditionally, MREs have contained Folgers coffee packages, but that's not due to service members requesting Folgers."

Individual branches of the military have some determination in deciding what brands of coffee they distribute to their men and women in uniform. However, the selection options come from the DLA. Ben Benson of the Naval Supply Systems Command discussed the typical coffee rotation for sailors. "For galleys ashore and afloat, common brands served in our galleys include Sara Lee, Maxwell House, Starbucks, Joffrey and Georgia, a Japanese brand provided on the carrier Ronald Reagan," he said. Navy Exchanges provide an array of brand options, including bagged coffee led primarily by Folgers, North Star, and Starbucks, K cup coffee led by Green Mountain, Starbucks, and Trilliant, and ready to drink coffee, with Starbucks, Monster Java and Dunkin' Donuts leading the way. Fifteen Navy ships also have coffee bars managed by Navy Exchange Service Command's Ships Store Program.

The Air Force, meanwhile, "has four authorized coffee programs that support dining facilities," said Angelina Cesarez, spokeswoman for the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center and Air Force Services Activity. Those four include S&D, Sara Lee, Maxwell House and Nescafé. On the more commercially popular side, Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts remain formidable forces in the coffee culture of the military, and both companies have locations on military installations throughout the world.

"Starbucks shows up in four distinct ways on bases, installations and Navy ships," said Jonathon Cruz, a spokesman for Starbucks. The first is through our fully branded Starbucks Retail Licensed Stores across the globe in approximately 100 locations. These are identical to the stores that Starbucks owns and operates in the public domain. The second is through our 'We Proudly Serve' program. Thirdly, we show up in commissaries, where we offer our retail coffee down the aisle. Lastly, while there are no licensed stores on aircraft carriers, through our partnership with NEXCOM, we do serve espresso and blended beverages on all 10 carriers. In addition, select military mess halls, ships and submarine galleys brew Starbucks coffee."

Service members have access to 34 Dunkin' Donuts locations on military installations in the U.S., as well as 10 more located on international bases, said Julia Block, a spokeswoman for Dunkin' Donuts. Unfortunately, the Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard did not respond to an inquiry about preferred brands of coffee. So, while that remains unknown, one thing is certain: that morning cup of dark roast is starting to smell a whole lot like freedom.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Neil Fotre | August 14, 2018 ++]

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## Navy Terminology Update 01 ► Origins

Every profession has its own jargon and the Navy is no exception. For the Navy, it's *bulkhead*, *deck* and *overhead* and not *wall*, *floor*, and *ceiling*. Some nautical terminology has found its way into everyday use, and you will find the origins of this and Navy terminology below. More terminology will be added from time to time.

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### Eight Bells

Aboard Navy ships, bells are struck to designate the hours of being on [watch](#). Each watch is four hours in length. One bell is struck after the first half-hour has passed, two bells after one hour has passed, three bells after an hour and a half, four bells after two hours, and so forth up to eight bells are struck at the completion of the four hours. Completing a watch with no incidents to report was "Eight bells and all is well."

The practice of using bells stems from the days of the sailing ships. Sailors couldn't afford to have their own time pieces and relied on the ship's bells to tell time. The ship's boy kept time by using a half-hour glass. Each time the sand ran out, he would turn the glass over and ring the appropriate number of bells.

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### Fathom

Fathom was originally a land measuring term derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "faetm" meaning to embrace. In those days, most measurements were based on average size of parts of the body, such as the hand (horses are still measured this way) or the foot (that's why 12 inches are so named). A fathom is the average distance from fingertip to fingertip of the outstretched arms of a man -- about six feet. Since a man stretches out his arms to embrace his sweetheart, Britain's Parliament declared that distance be called a "fathom" and it be a unit of measure. A fathom remains six feet. The word was also used to describe taking the measure or "to fathom" something. Today, of course, when one is trying to figure something out, they are trying to "fathom" it.

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### Feeling Blue

If you are sad and describe yourself as "feeling blue," you are using a phrase coined from a custom among many old deepwater sailing ships. If the ship lost the captain or any of the officers during its voyage, she would fly blue flags and have a blue band painted along her entire hull when returning to home port.



### Forecastle

The appropriate pronunciation for this word is *fo'ksul*. The forecandle is the forward part of the main deck. It derives its name from the days of Viking galleys when wooden castles were built on the forward and after parts the main deck from which archers and other fighting men could shoot arrows and throw spears, rocks, etc.

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### Galley

The galley is the kitchen of the ship. The best explanation as to its origin is that it is a corruption of "gallery". Ancient sailors cooked their meals on a brick or stone gallery laid amidships.

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[Source: <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/traditions/html/navyterm.html> | August 2018 ++]

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## Warships That Will Change The Future ► USS Enterprise (CVN-80)

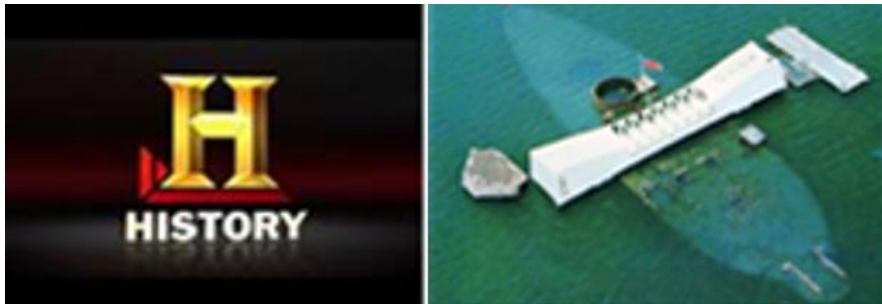


Say hello to the up and coming pride and joy of the United States Navy, the USS Enterprise. She will be the ninth United States naval vessel to bear the name, and is scheduled to be constructed and in operation by 2027. This ship will enable the United States to flex its muscle anywhere in the world that it pleases. With an arsenal of over 90 fighter jets (more than most countries' air forces), this giant super carrier will be able to sail the seven seas for more than 25 years before needing to stop at a port. General characteristics

- Class and type: Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier
- Type: Nuclear Aircraft Carrier
- Displacement: About 100,000 long tons (100,000 tonnes) (full load)[2]
- Length: 1,106 ft (337 m)
- Beam: 134 ft (41 m)
- Draft: 39 feet (12 meters)
- Installed power: Two A1B nuclear reactors
- Propulsion: Four shafts
- Speed: In excess of 30 knots (56 km/h; 35 mph)
- Range: Unlimited distance; 20–25 years
- Complement: 4,660
- Armament: Surface-to-air missiles - Close-in weapons systems
- Aircraft carried: More than 80, approx. up to 90 combat aircraft
- Aviation facilities: 1,092 ft × 256 ft (333 m × 78 m) flight deck

[Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS\\_Enterprise\\_\(CVN-80\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Enterprise_(CVN-80)) | August 17, 2018 ++]

\* **Military History** \*



## Japan WWII Apology ► Emperor Akihito's Deep Remorse

For his last time, Japan's Emperor Akihito addressed a memorial service<sup>15</sup> AUG marking the end of World War II. Once again, he expressed "deep remorse" for the war. It was in keeping with what by all appearances has become a mission for Akihito over his 30-year reign: to make amends for a war fought in the name of his father, Hirohito. The 84-year-old monarch is set to abdicate next spring. "Reflecting on our past and bearing in mind the feelings of deep remorse, I earnestly hope that the ravages of war will never be repeated," Akihito said in a two-minute speech on the 73rd anniversary of Japan's surrender.



**Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko attend a memorial service for the war dead at Nippon Budokan martial arts hall Aug. 15, 2018, in Tokyo. Emperor Akihito has expressed deep remorse over his country's role in World War II as he made his last appearance at a ceremony marking the end of the hostilities.**

As emperor, he has made unprecedented visits to the Philippines and other Pacific islands conquered by Japan early in World War II and devastated in fierce fighting as the U.S.-led allies took them back. Though Akihito has avoided a direct apology, he has subtly stepped up his expressions of regret in recent years in carefully scripted statements on the war. His words have taken on greater importance as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sought to move Japan beyond its troubled past since coming to power in December 2012. Opponents of Abe's policies have grabbed onto the emperor's statements as a counterbalance to the prime minister's push to revise Japan's war-renouncing constitution and build up its military. Akihito's World War II-related trips and pronouncements form part of a broader effort to bring the royal family closer to the public. In so doing, he has won over pacifists, leftists and other critics of the emperor system in a way his father was never able to do.

Hirohito, who was worshipped as a living god until the end of the war, remains a controversial figure even today, with historians still debating his responsibility for the war. During his father's reign, Akihito himself was almost hit by a Molotov cocktail on a 1975 visit to Japan's southern Okinawa island, where tens of thousands of civilians died in intense fighting near the end of World War II. He has since visited the island 10 times. Okinawans warmly welcomed him and his wife Michiko earlier this year in what was likely his last as emperor. Akihito was 11 years old when he heard his father's voice announcing Japan's surrender on the radio on Aug. 15, 1945. During the subsequent U.S. occupation of Japan, he was tutored in English by Elizabeth Vining, a Quaker, an experience that experts say gave Akihito his pacifist and democratic outlook.

Though Hirohito hardly changed the wording of his 15 AUG message for a quarter century, Akihito's has evolved since he became emperor after his father's death in 1989. On the 50th anniversary of the war's end in 1995, he expressed for the first time the hope that the same tragedy would never be repeated. The same year, then-Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama acknowledged Japan's wartime aggression and made a landmark apology to victims in the rest of Asia. His successors expressed remorse to other Asian countries until Abe dropped them and any reference to aggression in his Aug. 15 remarks beginning in 2013. He has pledged that Japan will not repeat the devastation of war, and did again



Wednesday. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe also sent a religious offering to a Tokyo shrine that honors the war dead, including convicted war criminals. He has avoided visiting the shrine since 2013 in a bid to avoid overly angering China and South Korea, which see the Yasukuni shrine as a symbol of Japan's military aggression.

In his 70th anniversary address in 2015, Akihito started using the expression he used Wednesday, stronger words than he had used previously. The contrast with Abe captured media attention, with the prime minister portrayed as a nationalist pushing for a stronger military versus a pacifist Akihito. Abe wants Japan to stop dwelling on the past, while the emperor doesn't want his country to forget it. Akihito visited China early in his reign and has traveled to some of the harshest World War II battlefields in the Pacific. His 2005 visit to the U.S. territory of Saipan was hailed as a statement of his desire to be part of the postwar healing process. Akihito traveled to the western Pacific nation of Palau in 2015 and the Philippines in 2016.

While his 15 AUG address is always short, Akihito has expressed his thoughts about the war more clearly in annual birthday remarks and on overseas trips. He has repeatedly stressed the importance of studying history and passing it down to the next generations. "Now that the memories of the war have started to fade, I think it is extremely important for everyone to study time and again the course of history Japan has followed and to reflect on peace," he said in his 2011 birthday address. His son, Crown Prince Naruhito, has largely echoed his father's pacifist stance, but it is unclear if the first postwar-generation emperor will be able to strike a similar chord with today's younger Japanese.

[Source: The Associated Press | Mari Yamaguchi | August 15, 2018 ++]

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## **Willow Run ► Henry Ford's WWII B-24 Bomber Plant**



Henry Ford saw war coming and began building B-24 Bombers at Willow Run near Detroit 6 months BEFORE Pearl Harbor! Henry Ford was determined that he could mass produce bombers just as he had with cars, so he built the Willow Run assembly plant and proved it. This was the world's largest building under one roof at the time. He built one B-24 every 55 minutes! Ford had its own pilots to test them. And no recalls! The long hanger at Willow Run, Michigan has a 90 degree turn in it so Ford would not have to pay taxes in the next county. That short end is being saved and restored today as a museum. The big hanger doors are still operational after all these years. A video of the plant's operation and the product it produced is available at <https://www.youtube.com/embed/iKlt6rNciTo?rel=0>

[Source: Frontlines of Freedom Newsletter | August 24, 2018 ++]

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## Nazi War Criminals ► Suspect Deported to Germany | Age 95

The last Nazi war crimes suspect facing deportation from the U.S. was taken from his New York City home and spirited early 21AUG to Germany, following years of efforts to remove him from the United States. The deportation of the 95-year-old former Nazi camp guard, Jakiw Palij, came 25 years after investigators first confronted him about his World War II past and he admitted lying to get into the U.S., claiming he spent the war as a farmer and factory worker. Palij lived quietly in the U.S. for years, as a draftsman and then as a retiree, until nearly three decades ago when investigators found his name on an old Nazi roster and a fellow former guard spilled the secret that he was "living somewhere in America."



**In this Monday, Aug. 20, 2018, frame from video, Jakiw Palij, a former Nazi concentration camp guard, is carried on a stretcher from his home into a waiting ambulance in the Queens borough of New York.**

Palij told Justice Department investigators who showed up at his door in 1993: "I would never have received my visa if I told the truth. Everyone lied." A judge stripped Palij's citizenship in 2003 for "participation in acts against Jewish civilians" while an armed guard at the Trawniki camp in Nazi-occupied Poland and was ordered deported a year later. But because Germany, Poland, Ukraine, and other countries refused to take him, he continued living in limbo in the two-story, red brick home in Queens he shared with his wife, Maria, now 86. His continued presence there outraged the Jewish community, attracting frequent protests over the years that featured such chants as "your neighbor is a Nazi!"

According to the Justice Department, Palij served at Trawniki in 1943, the same year 6,000 prisoners in the camps and tens of thousands of other prisoners held in occupied Poland were rounded up and slaughtered. Palij has admitted serving in Trawniki but denied any involvement in war crimes. Last September, all 29 members of New York's congressional delegation signed a letter urging the State Department to follow through on his deportation. Richard Grenell, the U.S. ambassador who arrived in Germany earlier this year, said President Donald Trump — who is from New York — instructed him to make it a priority. He said the new German government, which took office in March, brought "new energy" to the matter. The deportation came after weeks of diplomatic negotiations. Grenell told reporters that there were "difficult conversations" because Palij is not a German citizen and was stateless after losing his U.S. citizenship, but "the moral obligation" of taking in "someone who served in the name of the German government was accepted."

Palij, with a fluffy white beard and a brown, newsboy-style cap atop his head, was wrapped in a sheet as the agents carried him down a brick stairway in front of his home and into a waiting ambulance. He ignored a reporter who shouted, "Are you a Nazi?" and "Do you have any regrets?" His attorney, Ivars Berzins, did not immediately return telephone or email messages. Palij landed in the western German city of Duesseldorf on 21 AUG. The local government in Warendorf County, near Muenster, said Palij would be taken to a care facility in the town of Ahlen. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that "there is no line under historical responsibility," adding in comment to German daily Bild that doing justice to the memory of Nazi atrocities "means standing by our moral obligation to the victims

and the subsequent generations." German prosecutors have previously said it does not appear that there's enough evidence to charge Palij with wartime crimes.

Now that he is in Germany, Efraim Zuroff, the head Nazi-hunter at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said he hoped prosecutors would revisit the case. "Trawniki was a camp where people were trained to round up and murder the Jews in Poland, so there's certainly a basis for some sort of prosecution," he said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem, adding that the U.S. Department of Justice "deserves a lot of credit" for sticking with the case. "The efforts invested by the United States in getting Palij deported are really noteworthy and I'm very happy to see that they finally met with success." Palij's deportation is the first for a Nazi war crimes suspect since Germany agreed in 2009 to take John Demjanjuk, a retired Ohio autoworker who was accused of serving as a Nazi guard. He was convicted in 2011 of being an accessory to more than 28,000 killings and died 10 months later, at age 91, with his appeal pending.

Palij, whose full name is pronounced Yah-keev PAH'-lee, entered the U.S. in 1949 under the Displaced Persons Act, a law meant to help refugees from post-war Europe. He told immigration officials that he worked during the war in a woodshop and farm in Nazi-occupied Poland; at another farm in Germany; and finally in a German upholstery factory. Palij said he never served in the military. In reality, officials say, he played an essential role in the Nazi program to exterminate Jews in German-occupied Poland, as an armed guard at Trawniki. According to a Justice Department complaint, Palij served in a unit that "committed atrocities against Polish civilians and others" and then in the notorious SS Streibel Battalion, "a unit whose function was to round up and guard thousands of Polish civilian forced laborers."

After the war, Palij maintained friendships with other Nazi guards who the government says came to the U.S. under similar false pretenses. And in an interesting coincidence, Palij and his wife purchased their home near LaGuardia Airport in 1966 from a Polish Jewish couple who had survived the Holocaust and were not aware of his past. The Justice Department's special Nazi-hunting unit started piecing together Palij's past after a fellow Trawniki guard identified him to Canadian authorities in 1989. Investigators asked Russia and other countries for records on Palij beginning in 1990 and first confronted him in 1993. It wasn't until after a second interview in 2001 that he signed a document acknowledging he had been a guard at Trawniki and a member of the Streibel Battalion. Palij suggested at one point during that interview that he was threatened with death if he refused to work as a guard, saying "if you don't show up, boom-boom."

Though the last Nazi suspect ordered deported, Palij is not the last in the U.S. Since 2017, Poland has been seeking the extradition of Ukrainian-born Michael Karkoc, an ex-commander in an SS-led Nazi unit that burned Polish villages and killed civilians during the war. The 99-year-old who currently lives in Minneapolis was the subject of a series of 2013 reports by the AP that led Polish prosecutors to issue an arrest warrant for him. In addition to Karkoc, there are almost certainly others in the U.S. who have either not yet been identified or investigated by authorities. The American public did not become fully aware until the 1970s that thousands of Nazi persecutors had gone to the U.S. after World War II.

Some estimates say 10,000 may have made the U.S. their home after the war. Since then, the Justice Department has initiated legal proceedings against 137 suspected Nazis, with about half, 67, being removed by deportation, extradition or voluntary departure. Of the rest, 28 died while their cases were pending and 9 were ordered deported but died in the U.S. because no other country was willing to take them. [Source: MilitaryTimes | David Rising, Randy Herschaft, & Michael R. Sisak | August 21, 2018 ++]

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## **USS Abner Read (DD-526) ► Stern Found | Ripped Off By Japanese Mine**

Daryl Weathers remembers trying to pull men from the sea off Alaska's Aleutian Islands after a U.S. Navy destroyer hit a mine left by the Japanese following the only World War II battle fought on North American soil. The explosion,

which ripped the stern off the USS Abner Read, also covered many of the men in oil, which prevented some from being rescued. "They were so slippery, you couldn't get ahold of them," Daryl Weathers, who was aboard the ship when it hit the mine, said this week from his home in Los Angeles. The remaining 250 crew members made the ship watertight, and it limped back to the West Coast for repairs. Only one body among the 71 men killed was recovered.



**Daryl Weathers (center) poses for a picture at his home in Seal Beach, Calif. Weathers was aboard the USS Abner Read (left) after it hit a sea mine left by the Japanese after they abandoned Kiska Island in Alaska's Aleutian Islands in 1943. Sunken stern (right) is believed to contain the remains of 70 sailors who were never recovered.**

Nearly 75 years later, scientists using multi-beam sonar discovered the 75-foot stern about 290 feet (88 meters) below the Bering Sea. The scientists from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego, and the University of Delaware found it last month during a research mission funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The researchers confirmed the discovery with a remotely operated craft, which provided high definition video in real time to those on the research ship.

"To hit success is obviously extremely joyous for everybody. There's lots of cheering you know, it's like scoring a touchdown," said Andrew Pietruszka, an underwater archaeologist with Scripps. The euphoria ended with the realization that it was the final resting place for U.S. service members. Those aboard the research vessel held a wreath-laying ceremony to honor the dead. There are no plans to raise the stern. "We take the protection of these wrecks seriously because we believe that they are war graves," said Paul Taylor with the Naval History and Heritage Command.

The original stern of the Fletcher-class destroyer named for a naval officer killed in the Civil War lay on the seafloor. The area is a crowded underwater remnant of the Battle of Attu, which became known as WWII's forgotten battle, though it was the only fought in North America. Japanese forces took Attu Island in June 1942 and captured about 45 Aleuts as prisoners of war. U.S. forces reclaimed Attu on May 30, 1943, after a bloody battle that left nearly 2,500 Japanese and 550 Americans dead. The Abner Read was sent to look for Japanese submarines. During one of the ship's figure 8 maneuvers, the explosion blew off the stern. "We thought it was a submarine that got us with a torpedo," Weathers said. "We were waiting for another torpedo." Weathers said the crew put boats in the water to help rescue the men. "So many," he said. "We couldn't find them all." It was nearly impossible to pull the men covered in oil into boats unless they were wearing life jackets, which gave rescuers something to grab onto. "The water was so cold, you were only good for a few minutes in there, then you had hypothermia," Weathers said. "They just give up. I seen the guys just say, 'Oh, forget it,' and just quit swimming."

The ship never sank and was refitted and returned to duty. After getting a new stern, it fought in the South Pacific until Nov. 1, 1944, when a Japanese plane dropped a bomb on the rear engine room and then dive-bombed the deck, striking the gun Weathers had been manning. The kamikaze attack during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines sank the destroyer, killing 22 sailors. Weathers said he knows he's one of the lucky ones, twice surviving attacks on the Abner Read. First launched in 1942, the ship had a "short life, but it was very active," he said. [Source: The Associated Press | Mark Thiessen | August 15, 2018 ++]

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## Post WWII Photos ► Moscow Victory Day Parade



Soviet soldiers with lowered standards of the defeated Nazi forces during the Victory Day parade in Moscow, on June 24, 1945. (Yevgeny Khaldei/Waralbum.ru)

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## Military History Anniversaries ► 01 thru 15 September

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

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## WWII Bomber Nose Art [13] ► Special Delivery



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## Medal of Honor Citations ► Barney F. Hajiro | WWII



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

### **BARNEY F. HAJIRO**

**Rank and organization:** Private, 42d Regimental Combat Team

**Place and date:** 1944, Bruyeres and Biffontaine, France

**Entered service at:** Honolulu Hawaii, February 1942

**Born:** September 16, 1916 Territory of Hawaii

### **Citation**

Private Barney F. Hajiro distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action on 19, 22, and 29 October 1944, in the vicinity of Bruyeres and Biffontaine, eastern France. Private Hajiro, while acting as a sentry on top of an embankment on 19 October 1944, in the vicinity of Bruyeres, France, rendered assistance to allied troops attacking a house 200 yards away by exposing himself to enemy fire and directing fire at an enemy strong point. He assisted the unit on his right by firing his automatic rifle and killing or wounding two enemy snipers. On 22 October 1944, he and one comrade took up an outpost security position about 50 yards to the right front of their platoon, concealed themselves, and ambushed an 18-man, heavily armed, enemy patrol, killing two, wounding one, and taking the remainder as prisoners. On 29 October 1944, in a wooded area in the vicinity of Biffontaine, France, Private Hajiro initiated an attack up the slope of a hill referred to as "Suicide Hill" by running forward approximately 100 yards under fire. He then advanced ahead of his comrades about 10 yards, drawing fire and spotting camouflaged machine gun nests. He fearlessly met fire with fire and single-handedly destroyed two machine gun nests and killed two enemy snipers. As a result of Private Hajiro's heroic actions, the attack was successful. Private Hajiro's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon him, his unit, and the United States Army.



Hajiro was born in Hawaii, the second to the eldest of nine children born to Japanese immigrant parents. His parents had moved from Hiroshima to Maui during World War I. Two of his siblings died in infancy. The family



was poor, and Hajiro left school to work, first in the sugarcane fields of Maui and later as a stevedore in Honolulu. Two months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and performed menial labor as part of an engineering battalion. In March 1943, Hajiro volunteered to be part of the Army's all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The 442nd was mostly made up of second-generation Americans citizens of Japanese descent from Hawaii and the mainland. The unit was sent to Europe and in May 1944 fought the Germans in Italy, north of Rome. From there the 442nd was redeployed to France.

For his actions in battle in late October he was recommended for the Medal of Honor. Afterwards, in another firefight, he was shot in the shoulder and wrist leaving his left arm partially paralyzed. He was able to rejoin the 442nd in Monte Carlo, but was barred from further combat duty. He was then sent back to the United States to recover. He received the Distinguished Service Cross and the World War II Victory Medal before he was honorably discharged.

In 1948, he was awarded the Military Medal by the British government. A 1990s review of U.S. military service records for personnel of Asian descent who had received the Distinguished Service Cross during World War II led to Hajiro's Distinguished Service Cross being upgraded to the Medal of Honor. President Bill Clinton presented Hajiro the Medal of Honor during a ceremony at the White House on June 21, 2000. Twenty-one other former U.S. military personnel of Asian descent also received the Medal of Honor during the ceremony, fifteen of them posthumously. In 2004, the French awarded Hajiro the Legion of Honor. Hajiro was the oldest living Medal of Honor recipient for seven months. He died at Maunalani Care Home, Honolulu, Hawaii on January 21, 2011 at age 94 and was buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. [Source: <https://history.army.mil/moh/wwII-g-l.html> | August 2018 ++]

## \* Health Care \*



## Tricare Catastrophic Cap Update 06 ► How It Works

When it comes to staying healthy, some years are better than others. Perhaps you or your family faced a bumpy road this year. There may have been extensive medical tests or procedures, lengthy hospital stays, or weekly doctor visits. You may have reached — or are close to reaching — your [catastrophic cap](#). A catastrophic cap is the most you pay out of pocket for covered services each year. This protects you because it limits the amount of out-of-pocket expenses a family pays for [TRICARE covered medical services](#).

Your catastrophic cap amount depends on who you are. For active duty family members or families using TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS), the cap is \$1,000 per family, per year. Those in a retiree category have a catastrophic cap of either \$3,000 or \$3,500, depending on your beneficiary group:

- Group A - If you or your sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before January 1, 2018, you are in Group A; or

- Group B - If you or your sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurs on or after January 1, 2018, are in Group B.

The catastrophic cap applies to all covered services. This includes annual deductibles, pharmacy copayments, and other cost-shares based on TRICARE-allowable charges. The catastrophic cap doesn't apply to:

- Services not covered by TRICARE
- Any amount that [non-participating providers](#) may charge above the TRICARE allowable charge (i.e. The maximum amount TRICARE pays for each procedure or service. This is tied by law to Medicare's allowable charges.)
- TRICARE Prime [point-of-service](#) charges
- Enrollment fees for [TRICARE Prime](#) and [TRICARE Select](#)
- Monthly premiums for TRS, [TRICARE Retired Reserve](#) or [TRICARE Young Adult](#)

What happens when you reach your catastrophic cap in a calendar year? You don't pay any more of the TRICARE-allowable charge for covered services. But you'll have to pay for services that don't fall under the catastrophic cap protection. These include amounts billed by non-participating providers (up to 15 percent above the allowable charge), point-of-service charges, and all costs for non-covered services. If you're an active duty member who retires mid-year, don't worry. The full deductible and cost-shares credited towards the previous family cap will be credited to the new cap.

Learn more about [TRICARE costs](#) or download the *Costs and Fees Sheet* on the [TRICARE Publications page](#). You can also view and compare health plan costs using the new [TRICARE Plan Comparison Tool](#). Take command of your health and understand your TRICARE benefit in 2018. [Source: TRICARE Communications | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## **Tricare Retirement Impact Update 01 ► 90 Day Window**

When you retire from active duty, your TRICARE plan options will change. Retiring from active duty is a Qualifying Life Event (QLE). A QLE allows you to enroll in a new TRICARE plan or change your coverage options within 90 days of the life event. As a retiree, you'll need to take action to enroll in a TRICARE plan if you want to continue to receive coverage for civilian care. What actions do you need to take to continue TRICARE coverage?

- First, update your information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). The next steps depend on which TRICARE plans you are eligible to use.
- If eligible, you can reenroll yourself and eligible family members in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select. Depending on the plan you choose, you'll pay the single or family enrollment fee. There is no TRICARE Select enrollment fee for Group A retirees.
- Depending on your eligibility, there may be other TRICARE plans for you and your family after retirement. Visit the TRICARE Plan Finder to learn about your options. For dental or vision coverage, you may also be eligible to enroll in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program beginning in 2019.

### **When do you need to reenroll in TRICARE coverage?**

If you want to keep TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select with no break in coverage, you must enroll within 90 days after your retirement date. If you don't enroll in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select within 90 days of retirement, you'll only be eligible for care in a military hospital or clinic on a space-available basis. The effective date of coverage will be your retirement date. If you enroll in a TRICARE plan more than 90 days after your retirement, your request will be considered a new enrollment. If you have a break in TRICARE coverage, you and your eligible family members can only receive care at a military hospital or clinic on a space-available basis until

you have TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select coverage again. Active duty service members pay nothing out of pocket and their family's costs are minimal. However, depending on their TRICARE plan, retirees may see an increase in their enrollment fees, copayments, cost-shares, and other fees.

#### **How do you reenroll in TRICARE coverage?**

- Use the Beneficiary Web Enrollment [Beneficiary website](#) (not available overseas).
- Call your regional contractor <https://tricare.mil/About/Regions>
- Mail your enrollment form. Go to "Forms and Claims at <https://tricare.mil/FormsClaims>" on the TRICARE website to download forms.

Understanding your TRICARE options will help you and your family make the best health care decisions. Learn more at <https://tricare.mil/LifeEvents/Retiring> about your TRICARE plan options after retiring from active duty.

[Source: TRICARE Communications | August 29, 2018 ++]

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## **Hydrogen Peroxide Solution ► Uses and Precautions**

Hydrogen peroxide is a mild antiseptic used on the skin to prevent infection of minor cuts, scrapes, and burns. It may also be used as a mouth rinse to help remove mucus or to relieve minor mouth irritation (e.g., due to canker/cold sores, gingivitis). This product works by releasing oxygen when it is applied to the affected area. The release of oxygen causes foaming, which helps to remove dead skin and clean the area. This product should not be used to treat deep wounds, animal bites, or serious burns.

#### **How to use Hydrogen Peroxide Solution:**

- Follow all directions on the product package. If you are uncertain about any of the information, consult your doctor or pharmacist.
- Do not use in the eyes or apply over large areas of skin.
- If you are using this product on the skin, clean the affected area before use. Apply a small amount of product on the affected area, usually 1 to 3 times daily or as directed by your doctor. If you apply a bandage after using this product, let the area dry first.
- If you are using this product as a mouth rinse, mix with an equal amount of water before using. Swish in the mouth over the affected area for at least 1 minute, then spit out. Do not swallow this product. Rinse up to 4 times daily or as directed by your dentist or doctor.
- Use this product regularly in order to get the most benefit from it. To help you remember, use it at the same time(s) each day.
- Tell your doctor if your condition does not improve in 7 days or if it worsens. If you think you may have a serious medical problem, seek immediate medical attention.

**Side Effects** -- Redness, stinging, or irritation at the application site may occur. If any of these effects persist or worsen, contact your doctor or pharmacist promptly. If your doctor has directed you to use this product, remember that he or she has judged that the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects. Stop using this medication and tell your doctor if you have signs of a skin infection (e.g., heat, tenderness, pus). A very serious allergic reaction to this product is rare. However, seek immediate medical.

This product is safe to use during pregnancy. It is unlikely that this product passes into breast milk. Consult your doctor before breast-feeding. This medicine may be harmful if swallowed. If someone has overdosed and has serious symptoms such as passing out or trouble breathing, call 911. Otherwise, call a poison control center right away. US

residents can call their local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. Canada residents can call a provincial poison control center.

**Hydrogen peroxide hucksterism exposed --** According to a new investigative report:

- "35% food-grade hydrogen peroxide" is widely available in health food stores and promoted with numerous testimonials on Web sites to treat Lyme disease, skin problems, leukemia, brain tumors, and other ailments.
- Health benefits are often promised from drinking a few drops of hydrogen peroxide diluted in a glass of water.
- According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there is no official definition for "food-grade."
- Following reports of injuries and death, FDA issued warnings about internal use of hydrogen peroxide in 1989 and 2006.
- No scientific evidence supports the use of hydrogen peroxide as a remedy.
- Two individuals ended up at Detroit Receiving Hospital with gas blockages in the bloodstream caused by hydrogen peroxide and would have died or likely been permanently disabled without emergency intervention with hyperbaric oxygen therapy.
- Nearly 300 cases of poisoning caused by the ingestion of high-concentration hydrogen peroxide were reported to the National Poison Data System between 2001 and 2011. Among them were 41 life-threatening gas blockages in the bloodstream.
- Hydrogen peroxide poisoning may be confused with other medical problems and not get reported.
- Serious health problems have resulted from accidental ingestion of hydrogen peroxide.
- The Illinois Poison Center advises consumers regarding solutions of greater than 12% hydrogen peroxide: "Don't buy it! Don't try it! Don't bring it in your house! End of discussion."
- Concentrated (at least 35%) hydrogen peroxide is considered a "chemical of interest" by the Department of Homeland Security, a high-priority precursor chemical that can be used to build improvised explosive devices.
- The thwarted bomber in a 2016 New York City terror plot was found to have ordered 40 pounds of concentrated hydrogen peroxide.
- The U.S. Postal Service considers hydrogen peroxide a hazardous material and doesn't accept shipments of hydrogen peroxide at greater than 20% concentrations.
- The sale of anything greater than 12% hydrogen peroxide is banned in the U.K. to individuals without a license.

The Texas State Board of Pharmacy and the Texas Department of State Health Services both received copies of an FDA warning letter in November 2006 to hydrogen peroxide marketer Mark Ovard, then of Wolfe, Texas, but neither state agency appears to have taken any action after Ovard failed to make changes FDA requested. Ovard now works out of Crystal River, Florida and is associated with a network of companies that promote hydrogen peroxide. [Savage K. How peddlers of 'food-grade' hydrogen peroxide exploit the sick and the desperate. Undark. August 20, 2018]. Dr. Barrett, who commented in the article on the overall failure of regulatory agencies to stop the marketing of such products, pointed out that no regulation or policy will be effective until their sale is no longer profitable. [Source: Web MD & Consumer Health Digest #18-34 | Stephen Barrett MD | August 26, 2018 ++]

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## **Malaria Drug ► FDA Newly Approved | Could Eradicate Disease**

A new malaria drug that could help eradicate that disease has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration and will be considered for the Defense Department's use. Two different forms of the new drug Tafenoquine have

been approved by the FDA for the prevention and treatment of malaria, which is the top infectious disease threat to military members deployed overseas, according to the Army Medical Materiel Development Activity. Malaria is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Despite the use of preventive drugs and personal protective equipment, malaria remains a significant threat to the warfighter, officials said. The new Tafenoquine drugs are:

- Krintafel, a single dose treatment for the cure of the *Plasmodium vivax* form of malaria, approved July 20. The current drug must be taken for 14 days to be effective.
- Arakoda is a preventive malaria drug taken for the three days before travel, then weekly, during time in areas known to have mosquitoes infected with the malaria parasite. It was approved 8 aug. It protects against all malaria, including *Plasmodium falciparum*, which is a serious, deadly form of malaria.



**A new drug has been approved to fight malaria, which is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito.**

Tafenoquine has the potential to help eradicate malaria, according to officials with the Army Medical Materiel Development Activity. It is “highly effective” in the prevention of malaria, because it attacks the malaria parasite during multiple stages of its life cycle. No other FDA-approved anti-malaria drug can provide this protection, so it’s a substantial improvement over current therapies, officials said. It kills parasites in both the blood and the liver. Most of the currently used drugs don’t kill the liver form of the parasite, which can sleep in the liver and bring a relapse of malaria months or years later. Tafenoquine was originally discovered by scientists at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, and is the first new FDA-approved anti-malaria drug in more than 18 years.

The malaria drugs that are currently used primarily are those that require daily doses, including doses afterward for further protection. Instead, Tafenoquine (Arakoda) requires weekly doses for prevention, and a single dose following return from an area with malaria. A big advantage to Arakoda over current drugs is the weekly dose, said Army Col. Andrew Wiesen, director of preventive medicine in the DoD office of health readiness policy and oversight. For the drugs that are taken daily, within a required tight time frame, “if you miss a dose, you could expose yourself to risk. We like these drugs because of their infrequent dosing interval. “Primarily right now, it will be most important for troops deploying to specific areas where this kind of malaria, *falciparum* malaria, exists, and where there’s known resistance to other types of prophylactic agents that we could use instead.”

A spokeswoman for 60 Degrees Pharmaceuticals said officials expect Arakoda will be available in the first quarter of 2019. A spokesman for GlaxoSmithKline pharmaceutical company said officials “plan to make Krintafel available in the U.S. as soon as possible.” Officials are focused on adding it to the tri-service formulary, which is a list of brand name and generic drugs and supplies that Tricare covers; and evaluating it for use as a force protection medication, according to Defense Health Affairs officials. Once Tafenoquine is available commercially, it would be up to the individual health care provider as to whether to prescribe it. In some cases it could be used as an alternative when the patient can’t take other malaria drugs for some reason. If it’s added to the repertoire of drugs for force protection medication as a potential malaria drug, the exact choice could also be up to the command or individual health care providers.

The FDA approval came after more than 25 clinical trials involving more than 3,000 trial subjects, with the Army Medical Materiel Development Activity and 60 Degrees Pharmaceuticals. There have been a variety of issues with certain antimalarial drugs in the past, including mefloquine, also known as Lariam, once widely used by the military.

In 2013, the Defense Department designated mefloquine as the antimalarial drug of last resort after the FDA required a black box warning on its label, noting it can cause permanent psychiatric and neurological side effects.

According to 60P, tafenoquine should not be given to people with a history of psychotic disorders or current psychotic symptoms. Testing for G6PD deficiency must be performed before tafenoquine, because of the risk of hemolytic anemia. 60P has committed to do safety surveillance studies to continue to gather data. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | August 26, 2018 ++]

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## Body Temperature ► How It Is Regulated & What Fever Is

A healthy body functions best at an internal temperature of about 37°C (98.6°F). But everyone has their own individual "normal" body temperature, which may be slightly higher or lower. Our bodies also constantly adapt their temperature to environmental conditions. It goes up when we exercise, for instance. And it is lower at night, and higher in the afternoon than in the morning. Our internal body temperature is regulated by a part of our brain called the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus checks our current temperature and compares it with the normal temperature of about 37°C. If our temperature is too low, the hypothalamus makes sure that the body generates and maintains heat. If, on the other hand, our current body temperature is too high, heat is given off or sweat is produced to cool the skin. Strictly speaking, body temperature refers to the temperature in the hypothalamus and in the vital internal organs. Because we cannot measure the temperature inside these organs, temperature is taken on parts of the body that are more accessible. But these measurements are always slightly inaccurate.

People get a fever when their brain sets the body temperature higher than normal. This may happen as a reaction to germs such as viruses or bacteria, but it can also happen as a reaction to substances that are made by the body, such as prostaglandins. Our body produces prostaglandins to fight off germs. A body temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or more is considered to be a fever. Temperatures above 39.5°C (103.1°F) are considered to be a high fever, and very high fever is defined as any temperature above 41°C (105.8°F). A temperature between 37.5°C and 38°C is an elevated body temperature.

The regulation of body temperature doesn't always work perfectly in younger children. Compared to older children and adults, they also sweat less when it is warm, and it takes longer for them to start sweating. That is why they are more likely to react with a fever. Babies and young children have a higher body temperature than older children. This is because their body surface area is larger in relation to their body weight. Their metabolism is more active too. Newborns usually have an average body temperature of 37.5°C. [Source: Informedhealth.org | Newsletter | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## PTSD Assistance Update 03 ► Finding The Right Therapist For You

Finding the right therapist and developing a relationship based on mutual trust is an important step in your mental health journey. A strong relationship and your discoveries in therapy can inspire you to make positive and lasting changes in your life. But finding the right person might take some time. Here are three things to keep in mind.

**1. Be Patient** -- Many people who start mental health treatment experience a rapport right away. Others may have to meet with several therapists before something clicks. Veterans are no different, and you shouldn't hesitate to move on if something isn't right. It is not a waste of time to spend a few sessions with a therapist who turns out to be the wrong fit. Each step is a learning experience. "I went to quite a few therapists before I found the right one," says Jennifer, a U.S. Navy Veteran. "You've just got to make sure you find the therapist you connect with. And it's OK



to say no to a therapist you don't, because you can't connect with everybody." Your primary care doctor, another health care provider you trust, or a VA patient advocate can help you through this process.

**2. Keep an Open Mind** -- The right therapist may not look exactly like the person you pictured and may not be just like you. Sometimes differences in age, gender, or background can help you see things from a different perspective. "She's never been in the military. She's a lot younger than I am. This is not going to work," said David, a U.S. Army Veteran, recalling his reaction to meeting his new therapist for the first time. "And I found out that she was full of insight and her specialty was also PTSD with combat Veterans." Some Veterans prefer to work with therapists who have a military background. They may feel that therapists who are Veterans themselves can relate to their issues better than a civilian can. But civilian counselors can be just as effective as Veteran therapists.

"There's a lot of service members that don't want to talk to a civilian psychologist, or a counselor, or a psychiatrist, because they just don't feel like they'll understand," says Erin, a U.S. Army Veteran. "But you don't know until you go to that counselor." No matter what you may be experiencing, find support for getting your life on a better track.

**3. Be Honest** -- Being honest in therapy and opening up about your experiences and how you're feeling are key to making progress. Becoming comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings with a professional may also lead to better communication with your family and loved ones. "Talking to the psychologist actually helped me be able to talk to my wife better," says Brandon, a U.S. Army National Guard Veteran. "You get comfortable telling your psychologist things that you don't think you should tell anybody, and then you can start breaking some of those things down to your spouse better."

Honesty about the therapy experience itself is important, too. "If you're going and you're finding you're just not making that connection, you need to be honest and find someone else," says Marcus, a U.S. Army Veteran. "I didn't do that [at first], and I can't help but wonder if I'd have just been honest up front and said, 'I don't think this is helping. Can I see someone else?' what I might have been able to avoid going through."

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To learn more about how to find a therapist and how to choose the right one check out

- <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/therapy-med/finding-a-therapist.asp>; and/or
- [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/therapy-med/choosing\\_a\\_therapist.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/therapy-med/choosing_a_therapist.asp)

[Source: VA's Make The connection | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## Sleep Update 10 ► Is It Possible to Catch Up

It's Friday and you're clocking off, and after a few sleepless nights you want to tuck yourself up early and catch up on all the sleep you've lost. But does it really work that way? During sleep our memories from the day are solidified and our brain does a bit of a clean-up sorting through the things we need to hold onto and discard from the day. We also get the rest we need to ensure we can function properly the following day. But not all of us manage to get eight hours sleep per night, and might miss out on some of these benefits. So we asked five experts if it's possible to catch up on missed sleep later. Three Out Of Five Experts Said Yes Here are their detailed responses:

### Chin Moi Chow, Sleep researcher - Yes

We can catch up on sleep, but not on the exact number of hours lost. Catching up on sleep is essential, since sleep is a biological necessity. The body has only one way of dealing with lost sleep. With acute sleep loss, sleep pressure increases and we cannot resist sleep. We dive into a long, deep sleep when a sleep opportunity arises (such as extended sleep on weekends). In this recovery, we make up deep sleep. But we have lost the opportunity to transform unstable memories into the more stable form. And a single extended sleep episode is not sufficient for a full recovery

from chronic sleep loss. Intrusive microsleep episodes or daytime napping often occur when the need is pressing. The consequences of chronic sleep deprivation are severe, including decreased performance, gastrointestinal disorders, and increased risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease—death being the ultimate consequence.

**Leonie Kirszenblat, Neuroscientist - Yes**

Yes, in the short term. If you have a bad night's sleep you will feel like you need to sleep more the following night. This is because the brain detects when we haven't had enough sleep, through the accumulation of 'sleep pressure.' Sleep pressure causes physiological changes to the brain, to tell your brain when it needs to sleep more. Although you can catch up on a bit of lost sleep, being chronically sleep deprived is bad for the brain. This is because sleep rewires connections between your brain cells, helping you to consolidate important memories, and forget things that are probably less important. So catching up on sleep on the weekend is unlikely to help you remember things you learnt earlier in the week. Sleep also helps to flush out toxic proteins linked to neurodegenerative disorders. That's why consistently getting enough sleep is better for learning and maintaining a healthy brain in the long term.

**Siobhan Banks, Sleep researcher - Yes**

We are physiologically driven to get sleep when we go without. The pressure for sleep builds while we're awake until, finally if we haven't slept for many days, we will fall asleep anyway—even standing up. The world record for the longest time awake is 11 days, and the young man who reached this recorded caught up on his lost sleep by sleeping 14 hours in one go. But our ability to 'catch-up' depends on how chronically sleep deprived we are. If you have been accumulating a sleep debt for some time it can be harder to catch up. You may need many nights of good quality sleep to catch-up and we know that can be difficult. If you chronically don't get enough sleep or it's of poor quality (for example, when you have a sleep disorder like sleep apnoea), it could take many days of good sleep to wake up feeling refreshed.

**Gemma Paech, Sleep researcher - No**

While we may be able to sleep for longer periods of time following sleep loss, for example sleeping in on the weekends, we can never recover lost sleep hour for hour. Rather, following sleep loss, sleep becomes deeper, which can help our alertness and functioning return to normal. The bad news though, is that sleep loss can accumulate over time, affecting our overall health and well-being. The long term effects of a repeated sleep restriction/recovery schedule are unknown. Sleeping in on weekends may also affect our circadian timing system, resulting in what we call "social jet lag." It can be possible to reduce the effects of sleep loss by extending sleep, or "banking sleep," prior to a period of sleep loss. But the best way to avoid the adverse effects of sleep loss is to get consistently adequate sleep across the week.

**Melinda Jackson, Psychologist - No**

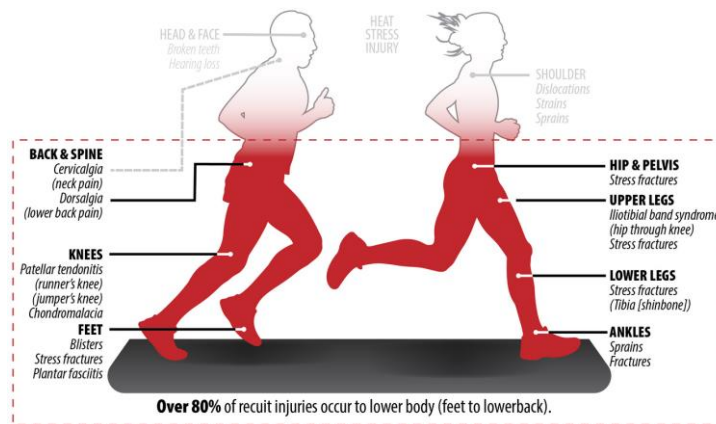
If we try and sleep for longer the next day to make up for lost sleep, we will impact our rhythms in the next cycle. Our sleep-wake cycle is based on a 24-hour rhythm; once we move into the next cycle our biological clocks essentially 'reset.' For example, if we are sleep restricted during the working week, and then compensate for this by sleeping in on the weekend, we might find it hard to fall asleep at our usual bed time on Sunday evening. It's best to keep a regular sleep and wake schedule, as our brains have an inbuilt compensatory mechanism for sleep loss and will adjust the intensity of sleep depending on our need.

[Source: GovExec.com | Alexandra Hansen | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **Running & Sports Injuries ► Reducing the Risk**

In the last year, more than half of all Soldiers were diagnosed with an injury. Those injured are usually treated through outpatient visits but may be severely limited in their ability to perform certain physical activities for weeks or months. In some cases, injuries even result in medical discharges from the Army.



### Running: the number one cause of Soldier injuries

Two-thirds of Soldiers' injuries are musculoskeletal damage to a lower-extremity (i.e. the knees, ankles, lower legs and feet). Most are common cumulative conditions called overuse injuries. Overuse injuries occur over several hours, weeks or months from repeated low intensity forces to muscles, bones, joints, tendons and ligaments. Common overuse injuries include knee pain syndrome and chondromalacia ("runner's knee"), Achilles tendinitis, low back pain and stress fractures. Overuse injuries are the most frequent "injury problem" within the Army, costing billions in medical care and lost duty time. These injuries result from the substantial load bearing (i.e. on-foot) physical training conducted by Soldiers.

"Running is the primary activity that contributes to the injury problem among Army recruits and Soldiers," explains Tyson Grier, a kinesiologist (i.e. skilled in the anatomy, physiology, and mechanics of body movement, especially in humans) in the Injury Prevention Division of the Army Public Health Center. "Other activities such as foot marching further add to the stress on the lower body, increasing injury risk." So is running bad for you? The simple answer is "no." Running is a very effective way to improve aerobic fitness--and being aerobically fit has been proven to reduce one's risk of injury. For example, recent data show that Soldiers who have slow 2 mile run times (i.e., men who take more than 15 minutes and women who take more than 19 minutes) have a higher risk of injury. Even Soldiers who "look" fit and are within body fat standards have a higher injury risk if they run slow.

So, though scientific studies have determined excessive running can increase injury risk, the right amount of running is still an effective way to improve and maintain aerobic fitness and resilience against injury. The key is finding the right balance. To reduce your risk of overuse injury:

- Mix up your training. Follow a training regimen that balances running with other aerobic exercises (swimming, biking, stationary elliptical or bike machines), strength training (resistance bands, plyometric or weight-training), speed and agility (e.g. shuttle runs), and balance work.
- Avoid running on repeated days. Alternate with low impact exercises.
- Use running shoes in good condition. Most people only need a comfortable, non-worn running shoe that fits. "As general guidance, replace running shoes every 300-500 miles or if any part of the sole starts to wear" recommends Grier. Evidence has not supported the value of "special" running shoes (control, arch, cushion or minimalist).
- Take a load off your feet. Ruck marching should not be used as an alternative to running. Carrying a heavy load long distances contributes to lower extremity injury. Avoid long runs and distances marches on back-to-back days.
- Pay attention to pain. Pain, especially in a joint (knees, ankles, hips) or bones (shins, feet) can mean you are increasing distance or frequency too quickly. If this is the case, the first step is to reduce running or consider

an alternative exercise. If pain persists, seek medical evaluation.

### **Other training and sports injuries**

Soldiers also experience serious acute injuries such as head concussions, broken teeth, broken limbs, sprained joints and torn ligaments when participating in sports. These sports injuries have required more medical evacuations from deployment than combat injuries. A critical aspect of injury prevention is being aware of personal factors that increase your chance of being injured. Factors to be aware of are:

- A previous injury makes you more prone to re-injury to the same part of the body.
- Continued use exacerbates tissue damage and can increase the severity of an injury.
- Female Soldiers have higher risk for stress fracture injuries so should ensure optimal bone health through proper nutrition and a healthy weight.
- Being overweight or underweight (compared to a healthy BMI between 18.5 and 25) increases your injury risk.
- Smoking and drug/alcohol use can slow bone and tissue healing and increases injury risk.

Soldiers who prevent common injuries improve their performance and overall unit readiness. Consider changing your training regimen or behaviors to reduce your risk! For additional information, email the APHC Injury Prevention Division at [usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.injuryprevention@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.injuryprevention@mail.mil) or go to the APHC Injury Prevention Webpage at <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/discond/ptsaip/Pages/default.aspx>.

[Source: Health.mil | Sarah Dobson & Veronique Hauschild | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **TRICARE Podcast 463 ► Choosing/Changing Providers - Heat Rash - Catastrophic Cap**

**Choosing/Changing Providers** -- Whether you're looking to change your primary care manager, or find a specialty care provider, you have options with TRICARE. With directories at your fingertips, you can take command of your health and your TRICARE benefit. When you enroll in TRICARE Prime, you'll either choose or be assigned a primary care manager, or PCM, who will manage all of your routine, non-emergency, and urgent health care. In most cases, when you live near a military hospital or clinic, you'll be required to have a PCM at that facility. If you don't list a PCM on your enrollment form, TRICARE will choose one for you. Active duty service members will be assigned a PCM at their military hospital or clinic.

TRICARE Prime Remote active duty service members and families are assigned a TRICARE network provider to serve as their PCM when available. If no network providers are available, they may choose a non-network provider. The TRICARE East Region and TRICARE West Region online directories can help you find a new provider, refer to [TRICARE.mil/finddoctor/allproviderdirectories](http://TRICARE.mil/finddoctor/allproviderdirectories). Call to confirm the provider is accepting new patients. With TRICARE Overseas Program Prime, or TOP Prime, you're assigned a PCM and get most of your care from that PCM at a military hospital or clinic, or in the TRICARE civilian provider network. If you don't have an assigned PCM, your TOP Regional Call Center will coordinate your care.

If you're enrolled in TOP Prime Remote and don't have an assigned PCM, then International SOS will assist you with your health care needs. If choosing a civilian PCM is an option for you, or you wish to change to another PCM at your military hospital, there are three ways to submit your change — by phone, online, or by mail. The change is effective the date you submit the change, or a date you specify up to 90 days in the future.

TRICARE Select enrollees can seek care from any TRICARE-authorized provider, either in or out of network. You may choose any TRICARE-authorized provider to act as a PCM, and you'll make your own specialty appointments without a referral. Use the search directory at [TRICARE.mil/finddoctor](http://TRICARE.mil/finddoctor) to find providers who accept TRICARE.

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**Heat Rash** -- Heat rash is common in the warm summer months, but military personnel and amputees may be especially at risk. The common term “heat rash,” usually refers to a collection of small, two- to four-millimeter reddish bumps on the skin. These are caused by a temporary blockage of the sweat glands, resulting in skin irritation. Any activity or condition that induces sweating can lead to heat rash, including hot and humid environments, physical activity, fever, and clothing or gear blocking or rubbing the skin. Anyone can be affected, including children and adults. When the symptoms include itching or irritation, mild topical corticosteroids such as hydrocortisone may be used, as well as topical antibiotics.

For amputees, sweating and skin blockage are a regular part of life. For such patients, additional interventions are often required to reduce sweating and improve the fit and comfort of their prosthetics. These interventions may include procedures once thought to be only cosmetic such as laser hair removal and Botox injections to reduce sweating. These procedures have been game-changing advances that are becoming routine in military treatment facilities. In addition, daily application of a non-irritating roll-on antiperspirant under the prosthetic liner may also be helpful.

If you or your child are experiencing itchy, unidentified, small, red bumps that you believe could be heat rash, call to the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line at [TRICARE.mil/NAL](http://TRICARE.mil/NAL). The MHS NAL allows you to speak with a registered nurse 24/7 for no cost. A registered nurse will help you choose the right level of care for yourself, your child or other family member, schedule military hospital or clinic appointments, and much more.

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**Catastrophic Cap** -- A catastrophic cap is the most you pay out of pocket for covered services each year. This protects you because it limits the amount of out-of-pocket expenses a family pays for TRICARE-covered medical services. Your catastrophic cap amount depends on who you are. Refer to [TRICARE.mil/catcap](http://TRICARE.mil/catcap) for specifics on the yearly amount depending on your military status. The catastrophic cap applies to all covered services. This includes annual deductibles, pharmacy copayments, and other cost-shares based on TRICARE-allowable charges. The catastrophic cap doesn’t apply to:

- Services not covered by TRICARE
- Non-participating providers charges above the TRICARE-allowable charge
- TRICARE Prime point-of-service charges, and
- Enrollment fees and certain monthly plan premiums.

When you reach your catastrophic cap in a calendar year, you don’t pay any more of the TRICARE-allowable charge for covered services. But you’ll have to pay for services that don’t fall under the catastrophic cap protection. Learn more

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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> | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## **TRICARE Podcast 464 ► Disaster Preparedness - Child Dental Care - Nurse Advice Line**

**Natural Disaster Preparedness** -- With wildfire and hurricane season underway, it’s important to remember that you need to plan for natural disasters. Access to your TRICARE benefit and the resources available to you may change during a disaster. Stay informed and learn the best way to keep your family safe during a weather-related emergency. Make sure your family can access your TRICARE benefit during an emergency by:

- Signing up for disaster alerts. Find out if emergency TRICARE policies apply to your enrollment area by signing up for email or text alerts at [TRICARE.mil/DisasterInfo](https://www.tricare.mil/DisasterInfo).
- Keep key medical information accessible. This includes copies of medical records, your uniformed services ID card, and a list of current illnesses and prescription bottles for all family members. Schedule time to update your information a few times a year.

If you're displaced during a disaster, you may be unable to get to your regular doctor for care. TRICARE may also authorize referral waivers when there's a state of emergency. If seeking non-network care during an emergency, keep your receipts. File any claims with TRICARE as soon as possible. TRICARE announces any emergency benefits in the disaster alert along with the effective dates.

If your enrollment area qualifies for emergency procedures, you can access emergency prescription refills at any TRICARE retail network pharmacy. Call ahead or bring in your empty prescription bottle. To find a network pharmacy, go to [express-scripts.com](https://www.express-scripts.com), scroll to the bottom of the page and click TRICARE Beneficiary Log In.

Always be aware and prepared for how your family's access to care may change during a weather-related emergency. Receive text alerts about your health benefit and get real-time weather updates through [fema.gov/mobile-app](https://www.fema.gov/mobile-app). Following these tips will help you get the care you need, no matter the forecast.

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**Child Dental Care** -- Make sure your kids head back to school with clean teeth and healthy habits, regardless of age. Follow these tips from the American Dental Association, or the ADA, to help your child keep that winning smile all school year:

- Establish brushing as a family activity: Lead by example and your kids will follow. Don't just set a timer and supervise brushing. Make brushing twice a day for two minutes an event. Play your child's favorite song and have a two-minute dance party!
- Start a routine and stick to it: You may be tempted to let your child skip brushing after a long day or during times when your schedule is different (like vacation), but keep at it. Consistency is the key to developing strong habits.
- Reward good brushing behavior: What motivates your child? Stickers? Make a reward chart and let him or her add one every time he or she brushes. If your child is a reader, let him or her pick out the bedtime story.
- Go shopping for fun tooth brushing materials: Let your child pick out his or her own toothbrush and toothpaste, preferably one with the ADA Seal of Acceptance. Choosing a character toothbrush or a fluoride toothpaste in an interesting flavor or color makes basic brushing more exciting.

For more TRICARE dental news, refer to the August 2018 TRICARE Dental Newsletter, Issue 3 at [TRICARE.mil/Publications](https://www.tricare.mil/Publications).

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**Nurse Advice Line Overseas Accessibility** -- Since 2014, the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line, or MHS NAL, has been available stateside by calling 1-800-TRICARE and choosing option 1. In April, the MHS NAL expanded to those countries with an established military hospital or clinic, including regions in the Pacific, Asia, and Europe. The MHS NAL is never for emergencies. In an emergency, go to the nearest emergency care facility and then call the Medical Assistance number for your overseas area. The new MHS NAL website, gives you the option to discuss your health concerns with a registered nurse in a secure web or video chat. With the MHS NAL you can talk to a registered nurse 24/7 at no cost concerning matters such as:

- Urgent and pediatric care questions and;
- Scheduling same-day appointments at military hospitals or clinics when available.

The next time you need help making immediate decisions about your health needs, remember that the MHS NAL is just a phone call or click away. For more information about the MHS NAL, visit [mhsnurseadvice.com/home](https://mhsnurseadvice.com/home).



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> | August 23, 2018 ++]

## \* Finances \*



### Prescription Drug Costs Update 08 ► Cocktail Medications

Common medications like ibuprofen or naproxen don't cost a lot on their own. But in several instances, drug manufacturers blend those kinds of medicines into one tablet and then sell the combined drug for hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Why it matters: Patients and the public are paying huge sums of money for cocktails of old medications that are cheaper when bought separately. Experts say the system is loaded with perverse incentives, and that pharmaceutical companies and intermediaries like pharmacy benefit managers have worked in tandem. The details: Here are four combination drugs that industry experts have highlighted as notably pricey examples. List prices come from Elsevier's Gold Standard Drug Database.

- Duexis, made by Horizon Pharma: \$2,482 for a 90-pill bottle
- Vimovo, made by Horizon Pharma: \$2,482 for a 60-pill bottle
- Treximet, made by Pernix Therapeutics: \$880 for a 9-pill bottle
- Caduet, made by Pfizer: \$580 for a 30-pill bottle

Each of these drugs is made up of two different medications that can be bought in pharmacies as over-the-counter pills or as generics for a total of \$20 or less. Vimovo, for example, is a mixture of Aleve and Nexium. Clinicians and researchers largely agree the prices of many combo drugs do not match the value of the separate alternatives that cost far less. "It's certainly not worth \$580. I'd gladly swallow twice," Michael Rea, a pharmacist who started Rx Savings Solutions to help employers with drug spending, said of Caduet, which treats high blood pressure. It's worth noting that Treximet and Caduet have generic competitors on the market — meaning they are generic combinations of drugs that are still cheaper separately. By the numbers: These are the aggregate sales of each drug.

- Duexis: \$674 million from 2013 through the first six months of 2018.
- Vimovo: \$540 million from 2013 through the first six months of 2018.
- Treximet: \$693 million since the drug was launched by GlaxoSmithKline in 2008 (Pernix bought the drug in 2014).
- Caduet: more than \$4 billion since the drug came out in 2004 until Pfizer stopped reporting individual sales in 2014.

Drug companies and middlemen like pharmacy benefit managers have been enemies as of late, each side pointing to the other as the root cause of high drug prices. But people still pay for these kinds of combination drugs because pharmaceutical companies cut deals, in the form of rebates, to PBMs as a way to keep their drugs on lists covered by insurance. All four of the drugs above are "non-preferred" on Express Scripts' national formulary for 2019, an Express Scripts spokesperson said. They are not excluded from coverage, but they are not preferred drugs in the class and often come with higher copays.

Drug makers and PBMs had been tight partners before they needed someone to blame. Drug companies have argued their combination pills offer convenience and ensure people take both medicines they need. Pfizer said in a statement: "This is a question of patient choice. Comparing the price of a branded combination medicine to individual generics is apples to oranges." The company added that Caduet is cheaper per pill than its brand-name components (Lipitor and Norvasc, both of which are also Pfizer products). Horizon Pharma submitted a statement that said its drugs had "no approved generic, over-the-counter or clinically equivalent medicines" and that taking the component drugs separately "will not work in the same way." Pernix Therapeutics did not respond. For more on the combination drugs made by Horizon Pharma check out these [ProPublica](#) and [Bloomberg](#) articles. [Source: Prescription Justice | Bob Herman | August 13, 2018++]

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## SSA COLA Update 03 ► 34% Buying Power Loss since 2000

Social Security benefits have lost 34 percent of buying power since 2000, according to the 2018 Social Security Loss of Buying Power Study recently released by The Senior Citizens League. This is the biggest loss of buying power recorded since 2012, and that was the biggest loss that The Senior Citizens League's study has recorded to date. The findings represent a significant one-year loss of 4 percentage points in buying power, with the loss increasing from 30% to 34% from January 2017 to January 2018. The loss occurred even though beneficiaries received a 2% annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2018. Housing and medical costs — particularly for home heating expenses and Medigap premiums — were among the most rapidly-rising costs over the past year. The study examines the growth, since 2000, in the price of goods and services that are typical for retired and disabled households, and compares that to the growth in Social Security benefits due to annual COLAs. Here's a chart of the costs that are increasing the fastest.

Item	Cost in 2000	Cost in 2018	
	Average cost \$ or numeric data	Average cost \$ or numeric data*	Percent Increase
1. Medicare Part B monthly premium	\$45.50	\$134.00	195%
2. Prescription drugs			
Annual average out-of-pocket	\$1,102.00	\$3,172.72	188%
3. Home heating oil (gal.)	\$1.15	\$3.22	181%
4. Homeowner's insurance (annual)	\$508.00	\$1,342.05	164%
5. Medigap	\$119.00	\$306.64	158%
6. Propane gas (gal.)	\$1.01	\$2.60	157%
7. Real estate taxes	\$690.00	\$1,579.06	129%
8. Total medical out-of-pocket expenses national average people age 65 and up	\$6,140.00	\$13,304	117%
9. Oranges (lb.)	\$ .61	\$1.33	117%
10. Pet services and vets	\$109.300*	\$233.317*	114%

\* Where no average prices are available, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI-U numeric data are used.

The loss of buying power is an early indicator of whether the Social Security COLA will climb in the following year. Based on consumer price index (CPI) data through May of this year, we estimate that the COLA for 2019 will be about 3.3%, the highest since 2012. However, that number could change, since there are still several months of price data to be released before the Social Security Administration announces the COLA in October.

More than 1,057 respondents participated in The Senior Citizens League's annual senior survey, which was conducted from January through March of this year. Participants confirmed that monthly household expenses made steep increases over the past year, far in excess of the dollar amount that their COLAs increased benefits. More than half, 56%, indicated their monthly expenses went up by more than \$79. Yet 50% of survey respondents said that their COLA increased benefits less than \$5 per month, after the increased Part B premium for 2018 was deducted from their Social Security benefits. The study found that, since 2000, COLAs increased benefits a total of just 46%, while typical senior expenses have jumped 96.3%.

The survey found that a person receiving the national average Social Security benefit in 2000 — \$816 per month — would have \$1,193.10 per month by 2018. However, because retiree costs are rising at a substantially faster pace than the COLA, that individual would require Social \$410.30 more per month, or \$1,603.40 in 2018, just to maintain his or her 2000 level of buying power.

The study examined the increase in costs of 39 key items between 2000 and January 2018. The items were chosen because they are typical of the costs of most Social Security recipients, and include expenditures like Medicare Part B premium, that are not measured by the index currently used to calculate the COLA. Of the 39 items analyzed, 26 increased faster than the COLA over the same period. "This study illustrates why Congress should enact legislation to provide a more fair and adequate COLA," says The Senior Citizens' Executive Director, Shannon Benton. "To put it in perspective, for every \$100 worth of groceries a retiree household could afford in 2000, they can only buy \$66 worth today," Benton adds. To help protect the buying power of benefits, TSCL supports legislation that would base COLAs on the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E). Want to read more about rising costs refer to <https://moneywise.com/a/costs-rising-fastest-for-older-americans>. [Source: TSCL Advisor | August 2018 ++]

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## Dental Insurance Alternatives ► Do You Really Need Insurance?

You need medical insurance, if only to protect against the cost of an accident or illness so expensive that you could be ruined financially. But do you really need dental insurance? About [77 percent of Americans](#) had dental insurance at the end of 2016, according to the National Association of Dental Plans. Two-thirds — about 164 million people — had private coverage. Nearly 84 million got coverage through a publicly funded program, such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program and Tricare.

Dental insurance undoubtedly is a blessing for millions of Americans. Still, it might not always be worth the cost. It depends on your plan, your needs and the cost of the services available. If the cost of your plan is too high — or if you don't like your coverage options — here are 10 other ways to cut dental costs:

**1. Self-pay** -- It may be less expensive to pay out of pocket than to buy a plan. Fees vary by dentist's office and by geographic region. According to the [CostHelper website](#), you can expect to pay \$70 to \$200 to have your teeth cleaned, and \$20 to \$250 or more for X-rays.

**2. Preventive care** -- In many cases, the best way to save on dentistry is to take excellent care of your teeth and gums, and to learn and deploy healthy dental routines. For example, fruit juices, carbonated drinks and acidic foods can help wear away your tooth enamel. So brushing — and reducing intake of such foods — can be a big help. The American Dental Association tells you [how to brush correctly](#) and [how to floss](#) effectively.

**3. Cut back to one cleaning a year** -- [Studies have shown](#) that for many folks, visiting the dentist twice a year does not deliver notable benefits compared with one exam a year. If you don't have serious dental issues, you can probably get by with one cleaning annually. But don't skip that one annual cleaning and exam. Seeing the dentist annually can save you from costly and serious problems.

**4. Discount dental plans** -- Discount plans charge an annual fee in exchange for discounted services from network providers. Before you buy into a plan, look over its list of covered procedures to see if they are ones you are likely to use. [PolicyGenius](#), an independent insurance broker, says: If you know you're going to be spending some time in the dentist's chair soon — and especially if you require an expensive dental procedure immediately — the right discount plan could save you hundreds of dollars.

**5. Request 10 percent off** -- Some dentists will take 10 percent off the cost of a visit or procedure if you pay at the time of the visit. Others offer a discount for cash. If your dentist doesn't provide a discount, ask if he or she can do so. Or, shop around for a dentist, gathering recommendations from friends and then phoning those offices to find out if they offer a discount.

**6. Charitable clinics** -- Look for low-cost or free dental clinics offered in your community and staffed by dentist volunteers. Find [opportunities in your area](#) through America's Dentists Care Foundation. Another charitable organization with volunteer dental professionals is [Dentistry From the Heart](#), a global nonprofit organization. Or ask [your state's dental association](#) about low-cost care.

**7. Dental schools** -- Dental schools at many colleges and universities around the U.S. often offer free or reduced-cost care. Accredited programs are listed at the [ADA website](#).

**8. Federally qualified health centers** -- Private health centers offering dental services exist in cities and counties across the country. They receive some government funding and charge according to what you can afford. [Use the clinic locator](#) at the federal Health Resources and Services Administration website.

**9. Consider dental tourism** -- Dental tourism — traveling to other countries to get treatment, often at a fraction of the U.S. cost — is a huge business. Among the top countries that have a thriving dental industry catering to foreigners are: Mexico, Thailand, Spain, Turkey, Czech Republic, Costa Rica, Poland, Philippines, and Hungary. Do plenty of research to ensure you are getting safe and high-quality care. [The American Dental Association has](#) information and cautions about dentistry outside the U.S.

OSAP, the [Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention](#), tells how to assess infection-control practices in a dentist's office and gives a checklist for obtaining safe dental care abroad. It cautions: The decision to visit another country for dental care should go beyond simply comparing prices or even evaluating the dentists' expertise. Countries differ in their standards for infection control and safety. The use of fresh gloves, sterile instruments and safe water are not standard practice in all countries. Without these precautions, patients could be infected with diseases such as hepatitis B.

**10. Try a rural dentist** -- Dentist fees in rural counties typically are lower than in urban areas. Comparison shop for the procedure you need by phoning offices of American Dental Association member dentists outside your metro area and asking about fees. Click here to [locate an ADA member dentist](#).

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Marilyn Lewis | August 27, 2018 ++]

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## Cellphone Carrier ► Advantages of Switching

Changing carriers may sound like a hassle -- but it's easier than ever, and the savings and perks you can get from it make it an even easier decision. Did you know that most cellphone plans don't lock you into a contract anymore? Gone are the days where you're stuck with the same cellphone carrier for two years, unless you're willing to pay hundreds of dollars in early termination fees. These days it's easy to switch, and in many cases you can save yourself a lot of money by doing so.

### 1. Access to special deals

The biggest benefit to switching cellphone providers is getting access to the latest deals and promotions. Carriers are offering special deals on cellphone plans and phones all the time — and most of these are only available to customers who switch from another carrier. There are free phone plans, buy-one-get-one-free cellphone deals and other substantial discounts offered — all because carriers are trying to lure customers from their competitors.

## **2. A better cellphone plan for your dollar**

If you've been on the same cellphone plan for years, it's likely your plan is outdated and you're not getting the best value for your money. Carriers change their cellphone plans quite regularly in order to stay competitive in the market — offering more data, higher speeds and bigger discounts. If you're on an outdated cellphone plan, you'll probably be able to find a better plan that offers more high-speed data and other benefits at the same or even lower price.

## **3. Extra add-ons with newer plans**

In addition to calling and data, cellphone plans commonly offer other attractive perks to entice new customers. Some of Sprint's plans now offer free Hulu service, AT&T offers a free live TV streaming service and on-demand TV shows and movies, and T-Mobile adds a Netflix subscription to eligible plans. Not only are carriers offering free entertainment packages like these, but they're also adding travel benefits to their plans. Sprint and T-Mobile both include free international roaming, while Verizon's higher-tier plan includes five days of international roaming for free each month!

## **4. What if you are still paying off your phone?**

As mentioned earlier, most cellphone plans don't lock you into a contract anymore, so you won't need to pay early termination fees if you switch carriers. However, if you're still paying for your phone through monthly installments (i.e., equipment installment plan) then you'll still need to pay your remaining balance. This can deter a lot of people from switching carriers, but there is an option for you to switch carriers without being stuck with a huge final bill. Sprint currently has a "[Clean Slate](#)" program that offers up to \$550 when you switch to help pay for any termination fees and remaining phone payments. You'll need to trade in your current cellphone to receive this credit, but Sprint has a variety of cellphone deals available when you switch.

## **5. How do you switch?**

[Switching carriers](#) is easy! Simply find a plan that's right for you, sign up with your new carrier, and they'll do the rest. Make sure you don't cancel your current cellphone plan if you want to keep your existing phone number. Your new carrier will port your number over from your old carrier, and your account will be closed once that happens. If you close your account before your number has been ported over to your new carrier, you risk losing your phone number.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Tina Chang | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **Social Security Spouse Benefit ► Divorcee's Eligibility on Ex-Spouse's Account**

Because the divorce rate is rising sharply among the 50-and-over population. So, many people may find themselves wondering whether or not they can draw benefits on their spouse's account. The short answer is, yes, you can claim ex-spousal benefits even though your ex-spouse has not claimed his own benefits, provided that he is at least 62. In fact, ex-spouses actually receive favorable treatment from the Social Security Administration relative to spouses. If you were still married, you could not claim spousal benefits until your husband actually started his own benefits. Your ex-spousal benefit at your full retirement age will equal one-half your husband's retirement benefit at his full retirement age. Your ex-spousal benefit is reduced if you have your own retirement benefit, or if you claim early, before your full retirement age.

If your ex is a year younger than you that has no bearing on your eligibility for spousal benefits as long as he is at least 62. Other requirements:

- First, you must have been married for at least 10 years.
- Second, you cannot currently be married. If you ever remarried, but are not currently married, you could receive ex-spousal benefits from either ex-spouse (but not both), provided you meet the 10-year rule for both.
- Third, if you have your own benefits, any ex-spousal benefits will be coordinated with your own benefits. For you to receive any ex-spousal benefits, your own benefits at your full retirement age must be less than one-half your ex-husband's benefit at his full retirement age. This rule applies even if you claim prior to your full retirement age. There is one exception to this rule. It arises if you were born prior to 1954 and you have reached your full retirement age. In that case, you can claim ex-spousal benefits without claiming your own benefits at the same time, meaning that the "less-than-one-half" rule stated above does not apply to you, until you apply for your own benefits. If you were born prior to 1954, you can defer claiming your own benefits, allowing them to grow up to age 70. However, if you were born in 1954 or later, you must claim both benefits simultaneously.

A final point: If you claim ex-spousal benefits, your ex-husband's benefits are unaffected. In fact, he does not even need to know that you have claimed benefits on his record. Likewise, if he has remarried and his current wife qualifies for spousal benefits, her benefits are unaffected by your claim on his record. If you want to dive more deeply into this issue, you should take a look at <https://www.ssa.gov/planners/retire/divspouse.html>. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Russell Settle | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## Car Insurance Update 19 ► 10 Tips to Cut Its Cost

Car insurance can be a pain in the neck to understand, but failing to do so can cost you big bucks. Not all policies are the same, and small changes can add up to big savings. Reviewing your auto insurance policy can uncover new ways to save. Here are some tips that can help you reduce car insurance premiums.

**1. Increase your deductible** -- Increasing your car insurance deductible from \$200 to \$500 or \$1,000 can cut your collision and comprehensive coverage premium costs, notes the Insurance Information Institute. Afraid you won't be able to meet that amount if you're involved in a car accident? Create an emergency fund to cover the cost.

**2. Choose the pay-as-you-drive option** -- Several insurance companies will give you a break on your premiums if you let them use technology to track your driving behavior. These companies generally monitor things such as:

- How many miles you drive.
- How often you slam on the breaks.
- The time of day you drive.

For example, sign up for [Allstate's Drivewise](#) and you immediately get a 3 percent discount on your premium, plus up to 15 percent cash back after 50 trips — and every six months thereafter — if you drive safely. Other insurers with similar programs include [Progressive](#) and [State Farm](#).

**3. Comparison shop** -- Prices change, so it's important to compare what you're paying now with rates at other companies. The lowest price doesn't always mean the best policy for you. You want a company that's not only financially stable but also offers dependable and timely service. In addition, each insurer sets rates based on its own in-house criteria. So, your profile may net you better rates at one insurer than another.

**4. Ask about discounts** -- Insurance companies offer a variety of discounts to qualifying policyholders. For example:

- Over-50 discount
- Multivehicle discount
- Teenagers with GPA of 3.0 or higher discount
- Loyal customer discount



- Antitheft devices discount
- College student discount
- Accident-free discount
- Moving violation-free discount
- Low annual mileage discount

Check with your insurance company to make sure you're getting all of the discounts you qualify for. Some companies won't offer price breaks unless you ask for them.

**5. Carpool** -- How much you drive in a year is a factor in how much you pay for insurance. Ask your insurance company if you can save by reducing your mileage and by how much. Carpooling can significantly reduce the mileage you put on your wheels, saving you money on premiums as well as reducing the wear and tear on your car.

**6. Purchase only what you need** -- If you own an older vehicle, you may not need to carry comprehensive and collision coverage. The Insurance Information Institute says: As a rule of thumb, if your older car is worth less than 10 times the insurance premium, having collision and/or comprehensive coverage may not be cost effective. To find out whether this is true for you, check the value of your car. The III says you can find out what your car is worth for free on websites such as Kelley Blue Book, National Association of Auto Dealers (NADA), and TrueCar. Keep in mind that if you drop these coverages and have an accident that's your fault, you'll be on the hook for the full value of your car. This is another instance where a healthy emergency fund is critical.

**7. Bundle up** -- You might get a better rate on your car insurance if you also buy your homeowners and other types of insurance from the same company.

**8. Notify your provider of any changes** -- Changes in your driving patterns can yield large savings. If your daily mileage decreases because of such factors as carpooling, relocation or a shorter commute — or you no longer drive to work because you now work at home or have retired — your rates will likely follow suit, because you will be less likely to be involved in a crash. Also, removing drivers who no longer operate your vehicle from the policy will reduce your premiums.

**9. Maintain good credit** -- Like it or not, many insurance companies equate bad credit with a higher likelihood of filing claims. That means a bad credit score can result in higher premiums.

**10. Don't pay monthly** -- Your car insurance company likely offers a discount for paying your bill all at once instead of in monthly installments. The savings can be substantial.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Allison Martin | August 22, 2018 ++]

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## Drug Price Gouging Update 04 ► Manufacturer's Claim Constitutional Right

States around the country are clamping down on pharmaceutical companies, forcing them to disclose and justify price increases, but the drug manufacturers are fighting back, challenging the state laws as a violation of their constitutional rights. Even more states are, for the first time, trying to regulate middlemen who play a crucial role by managing drug benefits for employers and insurers, while taking payments from drug companies in return for giving preferential treatment to their drugs. The bipartisan efforts by states come as President Trump and his administration put pressure on drug companies to freeze prices and reduce out-of-pocket costs for consumers struggling to pay for drugs that often cost thousands of dollars a month.

Twenty-four states have passed 37 bills this year to curb rising prescription drug costs, according to Trish Riley, the executive director of the National Academy for State Health Policy, a nonpartisan forum of policymakers, and several state legislatures are still in session. The burst of state activity on drug costs recalls the way states acted on

their own to pass laws to expand health insurance coverage in the years before Congress passed the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

- **CT:** “In the absence of federal action, states are taking the lead in combating high drug prices,” said State Representative Sean Scanlon of Connecticut, a Democrat. A bill passed unanimously this year by the Connecticut General Assembly illustrates a popular tactic: States are shining a spotlight on drug price increases as a first step toward controlling costs. Under the Connecticut law, drug companies must justify price increases for certain drugs if the price rises by at least 20 percent in one year or 50 percent over three years. Insurers must identify their 25 highest-cost drugs and the 25 with the greatest cost increases when they file their annual rate requests with the state Insurance Department. In addition, the middlemen, known as pharmacy benefit managers, must disclose the amount of rebates and other price concessions they receive from drug companies.
- **UT:** Republicans have their own reasons for concern. “As state legislators, we are responsible for the wise stewardship of taxpayers’ money,” said State Representative Norm Thurston of Utah, a Republican. “The state spends a lot of taxpayers’ money on prescription drugs, through Medicaid, corrections and jails, state employees, higher education employees and their dependents. We should be sure we’re getting the best deal.” In response to a bill introduced by Mr. Thurston, the Utah Health Department is studying possible ways to import prescription drugs from Canada, and he is working with a Republican state senator on a bill to require the reporting of price information by drug companies.
- **CA:** California has adopted a law requiring drug companies to provide advance notice of price increases, together with a detailed statement of the reasons for the increases. In addition, insurers must file annual reports showing the percentage of premiums attributable to drug costs. “Californians have a right to know why their medication costs are out of control, especially when pharmaceutical profits are soaring,” Gov. Jerry Brown said. Drug companies have filed suit to block the California law, which they describe as “unprecedented and unconstitutional.” The law “exports California’s policy choices” to the rest of the country and violates the First Amendment by compelling drug manufacturers to explain their price increases, said the lawsuit, filed by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.
- **NV:** PhRMA, along with the Biotechnology Innovation Organization, also went to court to challenge a law signed by Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada, a Republican. The Nevada law requires manufacturers of diabetes medicines, such as insulin, to report detailed information, including the production costs for each drug, the amount spent to market it, the profits earned on its sales and the amount of rebates paid to pharmacy benefit managers for sales of the drug in Nevada. Drug companies dropped the lawsuit in June after Nevada agreed that certain information in the drug price reports could be kept confidential.

Reining in drug costs is a top priority for state officials who run Medicaid, the health program that serves more than 70 million low-income people.

- **OK:** Oklahoma will soon start paying for some prescription drugs based on how well they work. If a drug does not perform as promised, the manufacturer will refund the cost of the drug or another negotiated amount. “If a drug claims to keep people out of the hospital and doesn’t, the manufacturer may be liable for the cost of the hospitalization,” said Nancy Nesser, the pharmacy director of the Oklahoma Medicaid program.
- **NY:** New York has imposed an annual cap on drug spending in its Medicaid program. If spending is projected to exceed the cap in any year, state officials must identify drugs responsible for the excess costs and try to negotiate additional rebates with drug manufacturers to keep spending under the cap. If a drug company balks, the state can restrict access to its drugs or impose controls on their use, based on advice from an independent panel that reviews the drugs’ costs and clinical benefits. In the first year of the program, which ended in March, spending was on track to exceed the target, but state officials say they extracted \$60 million in additional savings for the state through negotiations with companies that produce 30 particularly high-cost drugs.

- **OH:** In Ohio, Medicaid officials announced this past week that they had a new way to pay for prescription drugs. Pharmacy benefit managers will no longer be allowed to keep any of the payments they receive from drug manufacturers. The money must be passed on to Medicaid health plans and used for the benefit of Medicaid recipients, starting 1 JAN. Ohio officials said they wanted to know whether the benefit managers had been overcharging the state, but were frustrated in trying to obtain drug pricing information. “It’s shrouded in secrecy,” said Tom Betti, a spokesman for the Ohio Medicaid agency. “We intend to open up the black box.”

**Maine** adopted a law last month doing something that Congress has been trying, without success, to do for several years. The law requires manufacturers of brand-name drugs to make samples available to generic drug companies trying to develop inexpensive copies of those products. Generic drug developers need the samples to show that a low-cost generic copy is equivalent to the brand-name original. The stated goal of the Maine law is to promote competition, so consumers do not have to pay “monopoly drug prices.” A growing number of states have passed laws to ensure that pharmacists can inform customers of less expensive options. These laws ban “gag clauses,” which prevent pharmacists from telling consumers when they could save money on prescriptions by paying cash rather than using their health insurance.

**Maryland** tried a particularly bold approach. After reports of huge increases in the prices of certain generic drugs, Maryland banned “price gouging,” defined as an unconscionable increase in the price of any “essential off-patent or generic drug.” A drug company that flouts the law could be fined \$10,000 and be required to pay refunds to consumers. The lobby for generic drug companies, the Association for Accessible Medicines, filed suit to block the law, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, in Richmond, Va., struck down the law, saying it interfered with interstate commerce in violation of the Constitution. Under the law, it said, Maryland would regulate prices in transactions that occur wholly outside its borders — prices charged by drug makers to wholesalers — regardless of whether any pills were ever shipped to Maryland. In a lengthy dissent, Judge James A. Wynn Jr. said that Maryland should be able to protect the health and welfare of its citizens. The court, he said, was accepting the drug companies’ view that they were “constitutionally entitled to impose conscience-shocking price increases” on consumers. [Source: The New York Times | Robert Pear | August 18, 2018 ++]

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## Pharmacy Insurance Copays ► Sometimes Cheaper to Buy Direct

Two years ago Gretchen Liu, 78, had a transient ischemic attack — which experts sometimes call a “mini stroke” — while on a trip to China. After she recovered and returned home to San Francisco, her doctor prescribed a generic medication called telmisartan to help manage her blood pressure. Liu and her husband Z. Ming Ma, a retired physicist, are insured through an Anthem Medicare plan. Ma ordered the telmisartan through **Express Scripts**, the company that manages pharmacy benefits for Anthem and also provides a mail-order service.

The copay for a 90-day supply was \$285, which seemed high to Ma. “I couldn’t understand it — it’s a generic,” said Ma. “But it was a serious situation, so I just got it.” A month later, Ma and his wife were about to leave on another trip, and Ma needed to stock up on her medication. Because 90 days hadn’t yet passed, Anthem wouldn’t cover it. So during a trip to his local Costco, Ma asked the pharmacist how much it would cost if he got the prescription there and paid out of pocket. The pharmacist told him it would cost about \$40. “I was very shocked,” said Ma. “I had no idea if I asked to pay cash, they’d give me a different price.”

Ma’s experience of finding a copay higher than the cost of the drug wasn’t that unusual. Insurance copays are higher than the cost of the drug about 25 percent of the time, according to a study published in March by the University of Southern California’s Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics. USC researchers analyzed 9.5 million prescriptions filled during the first half of 2013. They compared the copay amount to what the pharmacy was

reimbursed for the medication and found in the cases where the copay was higher, the overpayments averaged \$7.69, totaling \$135 million that year.

USC economist Karen Van Nuys, a lead author of the study, had her own story of overpayment. She discovered she could buy a one-year supply of her generic heart medication for \$35 out of pocket instead of \$120 using her health insurance. Van Nuys said her experience, and media reports she had read about the practice, spurred her and her colleagues to conduct the study. She had also heard industry lobbyists refer to the practice as “outlier.” “I wouldn’t call one in four an ‘outlier practice,’” Van Nuys said. “You have insurance because your belief is, you’re paying premiums, so when you need care, a large fraction of that cost is going to be borne by your insurance company,” said Geoffrey Joyce, a USC economist who co-authored the study with Van Nuys. “The whole notion that you are paying more for the drug with insurance is just mind boggling, to think that they’re doing this and getting away with it.”

Joyce told PBS NewsHour Weekend the inflated copays could be explained by the role in the pharmaceutical supply chain played by pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs. He explained that insurers outsource the management of prescription drug benefits to pharmacy benefit managers, which determine what drugs will be covered by a health insurance plan, and what the copay will be. “PBMs run the show,” said Joyce. In the case of Express Scripts, the company manages pharmacy benefits for insurers and also provides a prescription mail-delivery service. Express Scripts spokesperson Brian Henry confirmed to PBS NewsHour Weekend the \$285 copay that Ma paid in 2016 for his wife’s telmisartan was correct, but didn’t provide an explanation as to why it was so much higher than the \$40 Costco price. Henry said that big retailers like Costco sometimes offer deep discounts on drugs through low-cost generics programs.

USC’s Geoffrey Joyce said it is possible that Costco negotiated a better deal on telmisartan from the drug’s maker than Express Scripts did, and thus could sell it for cheaper. But, he said, the price difference, \$285 versus \$40, was too large for this to be the likely explanation. Joyce said it is possible another set of behind-the-scenes negotiations between the pharmacy benefit managers and drug makers played a role. He explained that drug manufacturers will make payments to pharmacy benefit managers called “rebates.” Rebates help determine where a drug will be placed on a health plan’s formulary. Formularies often have “tiers” that determine what the copay will be, with a “tier one” drug often being the cheapest, and the higher tiers more expensive. Pharmacy benefit managers usually take a cut of the rebate and then pass them on to the insurer. Insurers say they use the money to lower costs for patients. Joy said a big rebate to a pharmacy benefit manager can mean placement on a low tier with a low copayment, which helps drives more patients to take that drug.

In the case of Ma’s telmisartan, Express Scripts confirmed to PBS NewsHour Weekend that the generic drug was designated a “nonpreferred brand,” which put it on the plan’s highest tier with the highest copay. Joyce said sometimes pharmacy benefit managers try to push customers to take another medication for which it had negotiated a bigger rebate. “It’s financially in their benefit that you take the other drug,” said Joyce. “But that’s of little consolation to the person who just goes to the pharmacy with a prescription that their physician gave them.” But Joyce said the pharmacy benefit managers also profit when collecting copays that are higher than the cost of the drug. In recent years, the industry has taken a lot of heat from the media and elected officials over a controversial practice called “clawbacks.” This happens when a pharmacist collects a copay at the cash register that’s higher than the cost of the drug, and the pharmacy benefit manager takes most of the difference. [Source: PBS News Hour | August 19, 2018 ++]

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## **Federal Student Aid Update 06 ► College Expense Assistance for Your Kids**

If you have a MilKid in college or in high school preparing for college, you've heard of the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA). And if you want financial aid for college, you and your MilKid need to complete the form. However, you still might ask: Just what is FAFSA, and how does being a military family affect it? First, FAFSA is administered by the Department of Education to determine the amount of federal student aid current and prospective

college students qualify for to help pay for college based on a calculated expected family contribution (EFC). There are four types of aid, which schools disburse to a student's account:

- Pell Grants: Students with low EFC can be eligible for a grant of up to \$5,815 (NerdWallet conducted a study in 2016 that found \$2.7 billion in aid from Pell Grants was lost by students not completing FAFSA.)
- Stafford Loans: This is a Federal Direct subsidized loan with a fixed interest rate of 4.29 percent (the interest is paid by the government while the student is attending school at least half time).
- Federal Perkins Loans: Similar to the Stafford Loan but for Title IV-eligible schools, which lend it directly to the student. Currently, its interest rate is 5 percent fixed.
- Federal Work-Study Program: Offers part-time work on campus with the federal government and school splitting the student's wages.

(Note: FAFSA should not be confused with the [CSS Profile](#). CSS is required by some colleges to determine student eligibility for the specific school's own need-based aid.)

Some details to know about FAFSA include:

- When you and your student complete FAFSA, you (the parents) will need your federal income tax return and W2s from two years prior (e.g., for the 2018-19 school year, tax information from 2016 will be needed) and other records of money earned, bank statements, records of investments, and records of untaxed income.
- Usually, FAFSA offers an IRS Data Retrieval Tool to help complete the form by automatically importing necessary tax information. This tool saves a lot of time and work.
- FAFSA is available each year Oct. 1 and needs to be completed by the stated deadline for prospective and current students.

For military families, here are some pieces of information to be aware of as respects to military pay and benefits:

- FAFSA will ask for a parent's assets, such as current checking and savings accounts and investments. However, requested assets do not include qualified retirement plans, which includes pensions. Refer to <https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/assetnetworth.htm>.
- The Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill and programs like the Yellow Ribbon program do not affect the EFC calculated by FAFSA and do not have to be reported on the form. Actually, many universities don't consider the GI bill as financial aid because the money for the GI bill is not to the school but to the student.
- Payments such as housing allowance (BAQ/BAH), subsistence allowance (BAS), and combat pay are looked at in calculating the EFC. These payments are reported on Worksheet B as untaxed income.
- Benefits such as disability, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, and VA educational work-study allowances also are reported as untaxed income on FAFSA.

Completing FAFSA can be complicated, and there are many facets to it (in fact, there are consultants who can be hired to help you get the most aid possible). Therefore, the above is not a comprehensive list. Do your homework and research. Here are some sites that will help:

- [U.S. Dept. of Education: Filling Out the FAFSA Form](#)
- [NerdWallet's FAFSA Guide](#)
- [A Step-by-Step Guide to Completing the 2018-2019 FAFSA](#)

[Source: MOAA Newsletter | Tom Wahl | August 16, 2018 ++]

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## **Military Exchange Scam ► Imposter Offering Big Ticket Items**

A retailer going by the name “Exchange Inc.” is attempting to dupe military shoppers into big-ticket purchases but has no relationship to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, AAFES said in an 8 AUG announcement. Scammers have operated as Exchange Inc. to broker the sales of vehicles and vehicle parts, AAFES said in the announcement.

It's not a new scam, officials said, but it's recently branched out to include the sale of boat engines. Some ways to tell whether you're dealing with an exchange impostor:

- AAFES isn't allowed to sell vehicles in the continental U.S. If you're buying a vehicle stateside, you're not buying from the exchange.
- The scammers frequently request payment via untraceable, generally unrefundable methods, such as third-party gift cards like Google Play cards.
- The transaction comes via a classified ad or a resale website. AAFES only operates on installations and via the exchange web portal.

Shoppers should verify any suspicious payment requests by calling the AAFES customer service line at 800-527-2345, officials said. Those who believe they have been scammed can file a complaint through the Internet Crime Complaint Center at [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov). [Source: MilitaryTimes | Noah Nash | August 10, 2018 ++]

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## **Amazon Job Scam ► Beware of Offers from "Amazon Cash Websites"**

It sounds like the perfect job: work at home, make thousands of dollars a month, and have a career with famous corporation. But this new twist on an employment scam is fooling victims into paying hundreds of dollars for a job at Amazon that doesn't exist. Reports to BBB Scam Tracker about this con have increased steadily this summer.

### **How the Scam Works**

- You receive a voicemail message inviting you to apply for a job at Amazon. Allegedly, the online retailer is hiring dozens of people to list products online, post reviews, and do other website work. The position pays well – targets report anything from \$20/hour to \$6,000/month – and you can work from home. Scammers use the names Amazon Cash Website(s), StockRetail.com, and WebStoreJobs.com.
- You are excited about the opportunity, so you fill out an application online. But there's a problem! According to BBB Scam Tracker reports, new employees have to purchase a \$200 "enrollment kit" before they can start work. If you pay up, the scammer will vanish. You will be out the money, and the new job never materializes.

### **How to spot a job scam:**

- Be cautious of any job that asks you to share personal information or hand over money. Scammers will often use the guise of running a credit check, setting up direct deposit, or paying for training.
- Check the business's website. Scammers frequently post jobs using the names of real companies such as Amazon to lend legitimacy to their cons. Check on the business's website for the position and/or call to confirm.
- Work at home at your own pace. Always be wary of work from home opportunities that are riddled with testimonials. Often the suggestion of real success is misleading. Suggesting that few hours and limited work will make one successful is a red flag.
- If a job looks suspicious, search for it online. If the result comes up in other cities with the exact same job post, it is likely a scam. In this scam, a designated number of jobs are available and applicants need to act quickly. This high-pressure tactic is another red flag.

### **For More Information**

For more about scams, go to BBB Scam Tips ([BBB.org/ScamTips](http://BBB.org/ScamTips)). To report a scam, go to BBB Scam Tracker ([BBB.org/ScamTracker](http://BBB.org/ScamTracker)). [Source: BBB Scam Alert | August 17, 2018 ++]

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## Tax Burden for Indiana Retired Vets ► As of AUG 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 Indiana:

### **Sales Taxes**

**State Sales Tax:** 7% (food and prescription drugs exempt)

**Gasoline Tax:** 56.40 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

**Diesel Fuel Tax:** 65.65 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

**Cigarette Tax:** \$1.00/pack of 20

### **Personal Income Taxes**

**Tax Rate Range:** Flat rate of 3.3% of federal adjusted gross income (AGI) for single are married. See tax info [www.in.gov/dor/4748.htm](http://www.in.gov/dor/4748.htm) & <http://www.in.gov/dor/4735.htm#military>.

**Personal Exemptions:** Single – \$1,000; Married – \$2,000; Dependents – \$1,000; \$1,000 is a base exemption. If dependents meet certain conditions, filers can take an additional \$1,500 exemption for each.

**Standard Deduction:** None

**Medical/Dental Deduction:** None

**Federal Income Tax Deduction:** None

**Retirement Income Taxes:** Social Security is exempt. Taxpayers 60 and older may exclude \$1,000 from military pensions minus the amount of Social Security and Railroad Benefits received. Taxpayers age 62 and older may deduct from their adjusted gross income \$1,000 from a federal civil service annuity. Out-of-state pensions are fully taxed. Homeowners can deduct up to \$2,500 from their income taxes for property taxes on their residence. To view information for seniors, [click here](#).

**Retired Military Pay:** Military retirees who are age 60 are entitled to deduct up to \$5,000 of military or survivor benefits.

**Active Duty or Reserve Military Pay:** Military personnel (regardless of age) on active duty or in the reserves may deduct up to \$5,000 of taxable military pay if it is not already excluded or deducted from their adjusted gross income.

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

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

**Military SBP/SSBP/RCSBP/RSFPP:** Generally subject to state taxes for those states with income tax.

Check with state department of revenue office.

### **Property Taxes**

[Property taxes](#) in Indiana are administered at the local level with oversight by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance. They are imposed on both real and personal property. Property, which is assessed at 100% of its true value, is subject to taxation by a variety of taxing units (schools, counties, townships, cities and towns, libraries, etc.) making the total tax rate the sum of the tax rates imposed by all of the taxing units in which the property is located.

Homeowners are eligible for a homestead deduction, which is \$45,000 or 60% of the assessed value of the homestead, whichever is less. A taxpayer entitled to receive a standard homestead deduction is also entitled to a supplemental deduction — 35% for a homestead with an assessed value of less than \$600,000, or 25% for a homestead assessed at more than \$600,000.

A [circuit breaker program](#) is aimed at helping residents by ensuring they don't pay more than 3% of their property value in taxes. The goal is to provide predictability in tax bills and equity among Hoosier taxpayers. For more information on property tax deductions, [click here](#).

### **Inheritance and Estate Taxes**

Indiana repealed its inheritance tax in 2013. For individuals dying after Dec. 31, 2012, no inheritance tax has to be paid. [Click here for details](#).

### **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 Indiana Department of Revenue site <http://www.state.in.us/dor>. [Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-alabama-iowa#INDIANA> | August 2018 ++]

**\* General Interest \***



## **Notes of Interest ► 16 thru 31 AUG 2018**

- **COLA.** The July 2018 CPI is 246.155, 2.7 percent above the FY 2018 COLA baseline. The CPI for August 2018 is scheduled to be released on September 13th.
- **USS Luce DLG-7 (DDG-38).** Reunion June 13-16 2019 in Jacksonville FL. POC Dan Lambrix @ [dannyboylamb2005@yahoo.com](mailto:dannyboylamb2005@yahoo.com).
- **Internet.** Thousands of miles of fiber optic cables in coastal communities may be underwater within 15 years due to rising sea levels, threatening internet access for millions of people, according to a study by researchers at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Oregon.
- **VA Staffing.** The Veterans Affairs Department has seen measurable increases in staffing, growing by 6,505 employees over 15 months. That came despite the enactment of a law that the White House and Republican lawmakers have touted as a successful tool to fire employees who either perform poorly or have engaged in misconduct.
- **Unmanned Army Vehicles.** The Army is ready for unmanned vehicles but not yet for a completely unmanned convoy. The 2020 iteration is called Expedient Leader-Follower because the Army still wants a human soldier driving the lead vehicle, with up to nine autonomous trucks following in its trail. But Oshkosh and Robotics Research said they could take the humans out altogether, if the Army wanted.



- **Agent Orange Missions.** From May 1960 to May 1971, the U.S. military sprayed a range of herbicides across more than 4.5 million acres of Vietnam and Southeast Asia to destroy the forest cover and food crops used by enemy North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops. To help with your disability claim the date each mission took place, the location where the herbicide was sprayed, the chemical used and the amount sprayed can be found at [http://users.neo.registeredsite.com/0/1/2/20893210/assets/Agent\\_Orange\\_Missions.pdf](http://users.neo.registeredsite.com/0/1/2/20893210/assets/Agent_Orange_Missions.pdf).
- **Lemon Uses.** Go to <https://youtu.be/FJvNWYkHNq4> to view nine Incredible Lemon Hacks For Your Home.
- **USMC.** The Corps is giving \$5,000 to recruits who go infantry for six years. It's the fourth year in a row the Corps has offered a \$5,000 to recruits signing up to become a grunt for six years.
- **Iraq.** At <http://www.betweeniraq.com> can be viewed an hour long documentary on Marines discussing their experiences while preparing for and serving in-country.
- **WWII Carriers.** At <https://www.youtube.com/embed/9dR3h2HdnBQ> can be viewed an eight minute clip on carrier operations in the South Pacific during WWII.
- **Last Fighter Pilot.** At [https://www.youtube.com/embed/6q\\_8lY12hEM?rel=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/6q_8lY12hEM?rel=0) can be viewed a three minute clip of Capt Jerry Yellin on war and survival 73 years after his enlistment to fight the Japanese in WWII.
- **Tasers.** At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zEscN-u6Q8> you can see what can happen when a guy is tasered and the taser hits a loaded magazine in his back pocket. Next time "maybe" he will do as he is instructed.
- **Nostalgia.** Lost in the fifties – another time – another place. At <https://safeshare.tv/x/FEDEwZHZXu#> you can reminisce your growing up years while listening to some good music.

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

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## RP Military Modernization Plan Update 01 ► President Doesn't Want Offered U.S. F-16s

The Philippine president is opposing an offer by the U.S. defense chief and other top American officials to buy F-16 fighter jets, saying such an acquisition would be “utterly useless” because his country needs lighter combat aircraft to fight insurgents. President Rodrigo Duterte scoffed 25 AUG at the offer he said was made in a letter by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, which came after the president was slammed by the U.S. for his deadly crackdown on illegal drugs.

After he took office in mid-2016, Duterte immediately took steps to revive once-frosty relations with China while often taking an antagonistic stance toward U.S. security policies. He had lashed out at former President Barack Obama, who raised concerns over human rights under Duterte. The Philippine leader, however, has cozied up to President Donald Trump. During a televised speech in a military ceremony in southern Davao city, Duterte read what he said was the letter to him by the three U.S. Cabinet officials, who cited the long alliance between Washington and Manila and assured American support for Philippine efforts to modernize its military. “We hope to partner in other

significant defense procurement (for) our mutual benefit, including through the Lockheed Martin F-16 multi-role fighter platform and your attack helicopter platform among other U.S. systems,” Duterte quoted the letter as saying.

The Philippines, however, doesn’t need the F-16s “and yet they dangled (them) before us after they humiliated us,” Duterte said. “It would be utterly useless to buy it. But I need attack helicopters and small planes for the counterinsurgency.” Duterte repeated his frustrations with the U.S., including the nondelivery of about 23,000 rifles, which the Philippine police sought to buy from an American supplier. The arms purchase got derailed after some U.S. legislators raised concern over Duterte’s police-led crackdown against illegal drugs, he said. He also renewed his demand for the return of three church bells seized by American forces as war spoils from the Philippines more than a century ago. The two governments have discussed the return of the Balangiga bells, named for the Philippine village from which they were taken in the early 1900s. “If they won’t return the Balangiga bells, we have nothing to talk about,” Duterte said.

Despite Duterte’s antagonism toward Washington, a Philippine security official said the government may buy combat utility helicopters from the U.S., among other countries, following the president’s order to cancel a multimillion-dollar deal to buy 16 helicopters from Canada. Known for his impromptu decisions and public outbursts, Duterte ordered the cancellation of the deal to acquire the Bell 412EPI helicopters after the Canadian government decided to review the 12 billion peso (U.S. \$224 million) contract due to concerns the Philippine military might use the utility helicopters in counterinsurgency assaults instead of just transporting troops and supplies. [Source: The Associated Press | Jim Gomez | August 25, 2018 ++]

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## **John Wayne ► 1974 Harvard University Invasion**

John Wayne never was able to join the military — when the draft first started in 1939, the then-unknown actor had a 3-A deferment because he was the sole supporter of four children — but that didn’t stop him from hopping in an armored personnel carrier and mounting an invasion with the 5th Armored Cavalry Troop. He had a cigar clenched in his teeth. He was about to lead the U.S. Army in an invasion of Harvard University.



In January, 1974, the Duke invaded Harvard Square with some of the Army's finest in response to a letter he received from the campus satirical newspaper, The Harvard Lampoon. In the letter, the paper said, "You're not so tough, the halls of academia may not be the halls of Montezuma and maybe ivy doesn't smell like sagebrush, but we know a thing or two about guts." The paper then challenged the conservative Wayne to come to Harvard, a place The Harvard Lampoon described as, "the most intellectual, the most traditionally radical, in short, the most hostile territory on Earth." They were challenging the actor to come to Harvard and debate against the students who called him, "the biggest fraud in history." Wayne accepted.

The letter was purely goading, but John Wayne wasn't about to let that bother him — he took the opportunity to visit in style. He mounted the procession from the halls of The Harvard Lampoon's on-campus castle, then drove to the door of the Harvard Square Theater through policemen, television crews, 'Poonies dressed in tuxedos, students, and even some Native American protesters. There was even a marching band in his honor. In the heart of liberal Harvard, the conservative actor was met by thousands of admirers. After signing autographs for a while, he took the stage. The first thing representatives of The Harvard Lampoon did was present Wayne with a trophy — made of just two brass balls. It was created just for him and awarded simply for coming to Harvard. "I accepted this invitation over a wonderful invitation to be at a Jane Fonda rally," he joked.

The Duke graciously accepted the award, noting that their previous guest was porn starlet Linda Lovelace and that seeing his invitation in an unmarked brown envelope was akin to being asked to lunch with the Borgias, a reference to the historical family's propensity for murdering their guests. With the pleasantries out of the way, Harvard's debate with John Wayne, a spokesman for the right, began. Taking questions from the audience, the Duke sat on a chair on the stage. The New York Times described the debate as one with "little antagonism, the questions often whimsical and the actor frequently drew loud applause."

John Wayne was a conservative in his political views, but he answered the students' questions thoughtfully and honestly, often with a wry smile. Asked what he thinks of women's lib, he said: "I think they have a right to work anywhere they want to [long pause] as long as they have dinner ready when we want it." The only question he seemed to rebuff was one asked about his testifying against fellow Hollywood personalities during the Communist witch hunts of the 1950s, which led to some being placed on the infamous Hollywood blacklist. The actor said he could not hear the question, even when it was repeated. "Is your toupee made of mole hair?" One student asked. "No," the Duke replied. "That's real hair. It's not my hair, but it's real hair."

Today, John Wayne and Harvard doesn't seem like a controversial mixture. In 1974, however, the students at Harvard were very much anti-establishment and John Wayne was a symbol of everything they mistrusted about their country, its history, and its government — especially while the Vietnam War and the draft remained a very recent memory. By 1974, Wayne's career was threatened by his well-known politics, so it's not really an exaggeration to say the actor was on his way into hostile territory. The Lampoon ended up doing what amounted to a celebrity roast with Wayne and he took it with a smile, even adding some funny jabs of his own: "Has President Nixon ever given you any suggestions for your movies?" a student asked. "No, they've all been successful," came the reply.

John Wayne never lost his sense of humor over politics — a lesson we should all take to heart today, liberal and conservative alike. What could have been a moment of sharp political divisiveness was settled with good humor and in the end, thunderous applause. [Source: We Are the Mighty | Blake Stilwell | August 16, 2018 ++]

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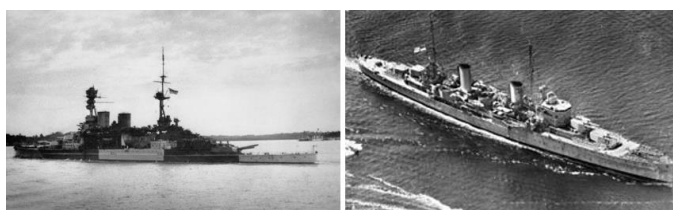
## **WWII Shipwreck Plundering ► Illegal Salvaging an Unfortunate Occurrence**

World War II-era shipwrecks containing the remains of hundreds of British sailors and civilians are now being plundered by pirates scrounging for scrap metal in Southeast Asia, prompting calls for a multinational investigation. The wrecks of four ships that were sunk in the waters off Malaysia and Indonesia have recently been looted for scrap metal, The Mail on Sunday newspaper reported. Several other British shipwrecks in the region have previously been looted, even though the United Nations International Salvaging Convention bans raiding sunken warships. U.K. Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson said 19 AUG the government "absolutely condemns" the unauthorized disturbance of any wreck containing human remains, according to Sky News. "I am very concerned to hear any allegations of incidents of Royal Navy wrecks being plundered in the Far East," Williamson said. "We will work closely with the Indonesian and Malaysian governments to investigate these claims."



The four vessels recently targeted by pirates include HMS Tien Kwang and the HMS Kuala, which were carrying evacuees from Singapore and bound for Java, Indonesia when they were attacked by Japanese bombers in 1942. The ship was sunk about 45 miles southeast of Singapore. The Mail reported the plundering operations were being carried out with Chinese-owned barges that drop massive anchors on a sunken ship to smash it. Cranes from the ships then collect the metal, which is taken to shipyards in Indonesia to be cut down before being sent to China, where it enters the world steel market. Vessels from World War II are particularly vulnerable to scrappers because they were built and sunk before nuclear explosions, so they have little "background radiation" from the atmosphere and are suitable for building medical equipment, experts told the news outlets.

The HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, both of which sank in December 1941 off Malaysia, have also been ripped apart, and at least half of their structures have already been stolen, according to the Mail. One of the few remaining survivors of the Repulse, 96-year-old Maurice Pink, told The Mail the pirates were being diabolical. "It is terrible, a diabolical thing to happen. I lost a lot of friends on the Repulse," he told the Mail. "They are desecrating a grave. They were designated as war graves for a reason because hundreds of men died."



**British battlecruiser HMS Repulse (left) sailing from Singapore on her last operation and HMAS Perth (right) in 1940**

The illegal salvaging of World War II-era shipwrecks has been an unfortunate occurrence throughout the region. Last year, divers discovered scrappers had left remaining only about 60 percent of the HMAS Perth, an Australian warship that sank in 1942 between Java and Sumatra. The Australian National Maritime Museum, which investigated the wreck last year, said that nearly 3,000 tons of metal had been removed. "It is with profound regret we advise that our joint maritime archaeologist diving team has discovered sections of the Perth missing," Australian National Maritime Museum director Kevin Sumption told The Sydney Morning Herald at the time.

Several other Dutch ships that sunk during the 1942 Battle of the Java Sea were also plundered by scrappers, and the USS Houston, an American warship which went down in the same battle, was found to have been targeted, too, according to a Navy report in 2014. "The site of the sunken ship is the final resting place of approximately 650 Sailors and Marines," the Navy report noted. "The assessment noted there were indications that unknown persons illegally removed hull rivets and a metal plate from the ship, as well as engaged in other unauthorized activities. U.S. and Indonesian representatives are currently coordinating to develop measures to limit continued disturbance of the site." [Source: Fox News | Travis Fedischun | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **Afghan Failures Update 03 ► War Plan Is Working Despite Recent Attacks**

Gen. John "Mick" Nicholson's final press conference as the top U.S. general in Afghanistan sounded a lot like his first ones two years ago. The commander of NATO's Resolute Support mission and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan defended the U.S. military's basic reasons for being there. He proclaimed that the allied effort was making progress. And he added a few new elements: praise for President Trump's year-old South Asia strategy, assurances that Afghan forces are denying military gains to some Taliban elements and bringing others closer to a negotiated peace. There is "an unprecedented opportunity for peace now," he told reporters 22 AUGat the Pentagon. But as Nicholson prepares to turn the 17-year-old war effort over to his successor, criticism of the American intervention is running high, fired this summer by U.S. casualties and the Taliban invasion of the city of Ghazni.



Reporters asked Nicholson how he could claim progress given the continued security troubles across the country. The general replied that the most important signal is that some factions of the Taliban appear to be open to negotiated peace talks. He noted that within six months of launching Trump's war plan, there were two peace offerings on the table. Within 10 months, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani offered a three-day ceasefire that produced striking images of Taliban fighters taking selfies with Afghan civilians. More recently, the U.S. and the Taliban reportedly have opened a bilateral channel with the Ghani's blessing. "Yes, it is a bit of an impasse, but despite that, we're seeing progress toward reconciliation," Nicholson said. "What I would say is focus on the talking part of this...given that the traditional metrics of fighting are not explaining why the Taliban are willing to talk now." He said the recent spate of Taliban attacks should be seen as an "attempt to increase their leverage in the negotiation and to maintain their cohesion."

Since the war's beginning, the U.S. has looked at the wax and wane of Taliban-controlled territory as a key metric of their success in Afghanistan. This year has seen a few micro-shifts in the map, but no significant progress by the Afghan government. As of May, 12 percent of Afghans lived in areas under Taliban control or influence, while 23 percent lived in contested areas, according to the latest report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. Nicholson and his superior, U.S. Central Command's Gen. Joseph Votel, told Congress earlier this year the conflict has stalemated. The strategic balance of power has remained essentially the same, with the Afghan government largely in control of the cities and the Taliban seizing territory in the more remote reaches of the country.

The recent assault on Ghazni, Nicholson said, was not a sign of Taliban success. "This was not a military victory by any stretch. They were driven out of the city, and it was done in about four days," he said. "Can they launch an attack for four days? Yes. Do those attacks succeed in gaining and holding ground? No." The Afghan military, meanwhile, has doubled its commando force and increased its air strikes, Nicholson said. And, he argued, the military's "first principles" of the mission continue to be met: The U.S. military is protecting the homeland. Trump's plan is succeeding at keeping pressure on al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and 19 other terrorist groups operating in the region, while shifting the burden of the fighting onto a growing Afghan military, Nicholson said. "That's what we're referring to when me and my predecessors have talked about the progress in the Afghan security forces," he said.

Critics see a more uncertain picture. The attack on Ghazni was a forceful display of Taliban resilience; it resulted in hundreds of Afghan casualties and forced the U.S. to call in airstrikes to counter the assault. NATO members announced this summer that they would boost troop levels, but only moderately. Meanwhile, civilian casualties have risen and a popular new book and reporting by the New York Times' C.J. Chivers about service members swept up in America's "Forever War" has thrust a painful spotlight back onto U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. But Nicholson, long a fierce proponent of the peace process, insisted that those hungry for evidence of progress should "expand the aperture and look at the process towards reconciliation."

- "In terms of progress, I sense there are very few within the conflict who retain a view that a major military victory is possible with the resources that we have," said Johnny Walsh, a former lead advisor on the Afghan peace process in the Department of State.
- "I think of the peace process less as a metric than as the stated—and rightly so—objective of the overall strategy. The military effort is fundamentally becoming an attempt to incentivize all parties to negotiate to a political settlement."
- He added that there is a "decent amount of evidence that that is possible." The signs of hope for a politically-negotiated peace over the last year—since the implementation of Trump's Southeast Asia Strategy—are not insignificant.

Nicholson will hand the mission to Lt. Gen. Scotty Miller, who currently leads Joint Special Operations Command, or JSOC, which conducts the military's hunt-or-kill counter-terrorism missions, among other tasks. Miller told lawmakers during his confirmation hearing that "I can't guarantee you a timeline or an end date" to the conflict—and Nicholson in his final press briefing cautioned that any peace process will have its "ups and downs, leap-aheads, two steps forward, one step back." That perspective is exactly what appears to be wearing thin on the war's critics.

In his final question from a Pentagon press briefing Nicholson was pressed on the suggestion that military leaders over the years have been too optimistic about “turning a corner” in America’s longest war. Nicholson seemed frustrated at the line of questioning, but conceded, “We certainly wanted to see this war be over many years ago.” [Source: Defense One | Katie Bo Williams | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## **Afghan Manning Levels Update 01 ► Private Contractor Troop Replacement Plans Rejected**

Defense Secretary James Mattis on 28 AUG shot down recently recirculated plans to privatize combat efforts in Afghanistan. “When the Americans put their nation’s credibility on the line, privatizing it is probably not a wise idea,” Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon. The former head of U.S. Central Command did not mention by name Erik Prince, the Blackwater founder who in recent weeks has shopped a plan to replace most U.S. troops in Afghanistan with private contractors. Mattis had been asked if there was an advantage to privatizing forces if there are going to be boots on the ground in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

About 14,000 U.S. military personnel are currently in Afghanistan to counter terrorist groups including the Taliban, al Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, as well as to train and assist Afghan forces. More than 3,000 troops were added to the fight after President Trump in August 2017 announced a new strategy to turn around the war, which top generals had compared to a stalemate at the time. Mattis said in his first Pentagon press conference since April, “The U.S. military remains in the 17-year war “in order to ensure America’s security. This is why we talk about an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned reconciliation process and we believe that the best way to get there is to ensure the Taliban recognizes they can’t win on the battlefield, they must negotiate,”

Prince, whose sister is Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, previously tried to sell Trump on his privatization plan last year. He has been pushing for it once more in media appearances, including on programs such as “Fox & Friends” that Trump is known to watch. There is little backing for such a plan among defense officials and lawmakers. [Source: The Hill | Ellen Mitchell | August 28, 2018 ++]

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## **Militarized Clothing ► Vogue New Coats | \$3500 Peacoat & \$2600 Jacket**

On occasion, one must look at oneself in the mirror and pose the all-important question: "Am I a monumental tool?" Well, by purchasing an in vogue new coat by one reputable fashion company, the answer to that self-interrogation will be an unhesitating and resounding “Yes!” Introducing the Wool-Cashmere Peacoat by Ralph Lauren, a \$3,495 peacocking piece of Navy-esque outerwear that is sure to keep you warm — and ostentatiously fashionable — as you brave the high seas alongside Captain Ahab in search of the white whale. “Call me Ishmael?” More like call me fabulous!



The noticeable addition of "naval rank insignia enhances the nautical heritage of this classic peacoat," Ralph Lauren's website claims. And the highest collar in the history of clothing is guaranteed to protect brave mariners from strong winds, as well inevitable wave after wave of insults from real sailors that will break upon this fortress of fashion like water on rock. Your fashion mission doesn't stop there, however. Accessorizing is vital, something Ralph Lauren acknowledges by displaying a belt buckle so prominent it appears it could anchor a destroyer. But if that doesn't suit your style, hop on over to Urban Outfitters and complement the new coat with a \$30 PT glow belt (shipping at <https://www.urbanoutfitters.com/mens-belts>) that can help navigate the rockiest of shorelines in the dark when a lighthouse simply isn't cutting it.

Why not flash even more naval expertise by lugging around some decorative scrimshaw in one of the coat's four pockets? Whatever you decide to compliment your easily affordable coat with, once you batten down the buttons, you'll instantaneously join the ranks of indisputable fashion authorities, a prestigious club that includes some of history's greatest seaman. It was Edward Teach, after all, better known as "Blackbeard," who, moments before he was beheaded in battle in 1718, said, "Damnation seize my soul if I give you my Ralph Lauren peacoat, or take any lesser peacoat from you." Brave sailors all. Thank you for your service. Here are a few things that can be purchased for \$3,500 instead of this dumb coat:

The British fashion group Burberry is selling a cotton silk regimental jacket that might look very familiar to U.S. Marines. The navy jacket trades the white belt, eagle, globe and anchor, and rank insignia Marines wear for an "army of brass buttons," according to its catalog description — but the style and red trim closely resemble an enlisted leatherneck's dress coat.



"The designer looked at a dress blue jacket and said, 'That's a cool jacket, but with 30 or 40 more buttons it could be way cooler,'" one commenter wrote on the Terminal Lance Facebook page. The biggest difference, though, is the price. A dress coat runs an enlisted Marine \$183.78, according to the Marine Corps Exchange website. The Burberry jacket is going for \$2,595 — that's equivalent to the cost of about 200 pairs of silkies, Marines' favorite short shorts. Matthew McLaughlin, deputy director for the Marine Corps Trademark Office, said the style is "flatteringly-similar" but doesn't infringe on any Marine Corps registered trademarks. "From a historical perspective, it's also helpful to remember that the general style of the garment is common to many military uniforms, which trace their style [cues] back to the 1800s," he said.

Burberry did not immediately respond to questions about the inspiration for the jacket or whether the company has fielded complaints about its likeness to the Marine dress coat.

[Source: MarineCorpsTimes & MilitaryTimes | Charlsy Panzino & J.D. Simkins | June 22, 2016 & August 24, 2018 ++]

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## Retirement Planning Update 17 ► How To Know You Are Ready

It seems like some people start thinking about retirement about the same time they start working. However, once you hit your 50s and 60s, the dream starts looking more like a reality. But it's a big decision. Before you quit the daily grind, be sure you're ready both financially and psychologically. Here are seven ways to know you're ready to say goodbye to the boss for good.

**1. You've calculated your retirement budget** -- Stop! You don't get to retire unless your budget says you can. That means calculating how much income you expect to have in retirement, how much you'll spend and how long your investments will last. You can play with online retirement calculators to get a picture of different scenarios, but we don't recommend you rely on them for a final answer. It makes more sense to bring in a professional financial planner who can help crunch the numbers and let you know if you will be able to live comfortably without a job.

**2. You don't have to file for Social Security early** -- When making budget calculations for retirement, do the numbers only work if you take Social Security benefits early? While there may be some good reasons to begin collecting Social Security at age 62 — such as if someone knows they won't live long in retirement — it's often better to wait until your full retirement age. That's 66 for those born sometime from 1943 through 1954. Taking Social Security early reduces benefits by a fraction of a percent for each month before your full retirement age. So, think twice before claiming early.

**3. Health insurance won't break the bank** -- If you're 65 and eligible for Medicare, health care expenses should not be a problem. However, if you plan on retiring earlier than age 65 or aren't eligible for Medicare, make sure you can pay for health insurance. Without a job providing the benefit, you'll have to buy a policy for yourself.

**4. Debt is under control** -- It's not that you can't retire if you're in debt. It's just that debt can make it hard to do all the great things you had planned for your senior years. Being saddled with debt not only means less money for fun activities like travel, but it could put a crimp in your ability to pay for long-term care if and when the time comes. If you're healthy, it might be better to work a few more years and get out of debt pronto.

**5. Health concerns make it difficult to work** -- Sometimes your body will let you know when it's time to retire — such as when your job is negatively affecting your health, or you physically can't do the job anymore. Ideally, the balance in your bank account will agree with your body. If it doesn't, you may be forced to take Social Security early to get by financially in retirement. Or, you could sit down with a scalpel and your budget and cut away all extra expenses.

**6. You've talked to your spouse** -- Your retirement isn't just about you. It's going to affect your spouse, too. So don't make any decisions without sitting down for a heart-to-heart with your beloved. If you're not on the same page about when and how to retire, it could make for a nightmare ending to your years together.

**7. There's so much you can't wait to do** -- Don't retire until you have plans for what to do with your free time. Living every day like a lazy Saturday will get old after about a week. Rather than leave the job you love because you're "supposed" to retire at your age, only quit if you have a long list of activities you wish you were doing instead.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Maryalene LaPonsie | August 23, 2018 ++]

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## Greenhouse Gas Emissions ► U.S. Reduction More Than Other Major Countries

America never ratified the Kyoto Treaty some two decades ago. We never enacted a carbon tax. We don't have a cap-and-trade carbon emission program. That environmental villain Donald Trump pulled America out of the Paris climate accord that was signed by almost the entire rest of the civilized world. Yet the latest world climate report

from the BP Statistical Review of World Energy finds that in 2017, America reduced its carbon emissions by 0.5 percent, the most of all major countries. That's especially impressive given that our economy grew by nearly 3 percent — so we had more growth and less pollution — the best of all worlds.

The major reason for the reduced pollution levels is the shale oil and gas revolution that is transitioning the world to cheap and clean natural gas for electric power generation. Meanwhile, as our emissions fell, the pollution levels rose internationally and by a larger amount than in previous years. So much for the rest of the world going green. The world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide emissions is China. According to the invaluable Institute for Energy Research, "China produces 28 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. India is the world's third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide and had the second-largest increment (93 million metric tons) of carbon dioxide emissions in 2017, more than twice as much an increase as the U.S. reduction."

This means it doesn't really matter how much America reduces its greenhouse gases because China and India cancel out any and all progress we make. Those who think they are helping save the planet by purchasing an electric car or putting a solar panel on their roof are barking up the wrong tree. There is no way to make progress on greenhouse gases without China and India on board — which they clearly are not. This latest data also proves that despite all of the criticism across the globe and in the American media, we were right to pull the U.S. out of the flawed Paris climate accord. Nearly every nation that signed on to Paris and has admonished America for not doing so, has already violated the agreement.

According to Climate Action Network Europe, "All EU countries are failing to increase their climate action in line with the Paris Agreement goal." All but five countries have even reached 50 percent of their current targets. So there you have it. The countries in the Paris climate accord have broken almost every promise they've made and the nation (the U.S.) that hasn't signed the treaty is doing more than any other nation to reduce global warming. Yet, we are being lectured by the sanctimonious Europeans and Asians for not doing our fair share to save the planet. It's another case study in how the left cares far more about good intentions than actual results. What apparently matters is that you say that you will wash the dishes, not that you actually do it. [Source: Newsmax Finance | Stephen Moore | August 22, 2018 ++]

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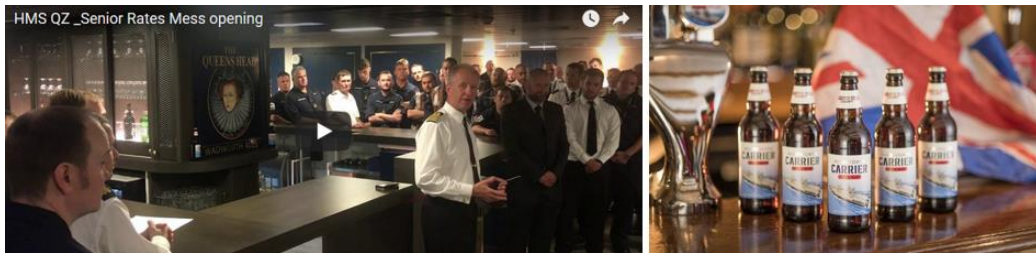
## **HMS Queen Elizabeth Update 01 ► Onboard Queen's Head Pub Christened**

The future flagship of the Royal Navy, the 65,000-ton aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, isn't scheduled to complete its first real deployment until 2021, but that hasn't kept the Brits from ensuring one morale-boosting element is installed and ready for duty. A new pub, known as the Queen's Head, was christened last week aboard the Queen Elizabeth and will be available to officers and senior enlisted during the ship's maiden transit of the Atlantic, a journey that began 18 AUG and one that features two embarked U.S. F-35B Lightning II aircraft from Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland.

The Wiltshire-based Wadworth brewery, which created an ale specifically for the ship's December 2017 commissioning — a beverage appropriately named "Carrier Ale" — was instrumental in bringing the pub to life. "It has been a long time in the planning, well before the carrier was commissioned last year," brewery CEO Chris Welham said in a Wadworth press release. "The Mess looks really great and will provide a relaxing environment along with some fine beer for the team on board when they have some downtime." What's on the drink menu? Wadworth brewery will be supplying a range of goods to the thirsty officers and senior enlisted onboard. Among those:

- 6X Ale — the 4.1 percent ABV beer described as "the jewel in Wadworth's crown" won gold at the recent World Beer Awards.

- Swordfish Ale — a blend of beer and an old Navy rum recipe combines for a flavor-packed, 5 percent ABV ale with a rum aroma.
- Carrier Ale — on the lighter side, a 3.6 percent ABV pale ale brewed specifically for the ship's commissioning.



View opening ceremony at [https://youtu.be/zxF\\_IVzG:W6w](https://youtu.be/zxF_IVzG:W6w) The specially-brewed Carrier Ale (right) will be available for purchase onboard

Wadworth will donate a portion of proceeds from every bottle of beer sold to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines charity, the pub christening announcement said. The ceremony was attended by Wadworth and Royal Navy personnel, including the Queen Elizabeth's commanding officer, Capt. Jerry Kyd, who addressed those in the pub. Aside from housing a pristine new bar, the prize of the Royal Navy is quite the specimen.

- The biggest warship the British Navy has ever produced.
- £3.1 billion (about \$4 billion USD) price tag.
- F-35B aircraft will be the primary jet featured onboard.
- 280 meters in length, 57 meters shorter than the United States Navy's new Gerald R. Ford supercarrier.
- 470 cabins accommodate about 1,600 personnel.
- 155,000 miles of electrical cable throughout the ship.

Portsmouth, England harbor will be the ship's home. Cheers! Maybe a perfectly functioning Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System isn't the only thing lacking on the supercarrier Gerald R. Ford. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | August 20, 2018 ++]

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## **Tattoo | Everence Kit ► Cremated Human/Pet Remains Ink Additive**

Getting inked as a member of the U.S. military is a borderline right of passage, a way to commemorate friends, family, hometowns, deployments, military actions, units and more. The juxtaposition of military culture to tattooing is so prevalent that finding an ink-free service member is infinitely more rare than the alternative. Now, military personnel immersed in that very culture who want to honor a loved one or carry a good luck charm along during a deployment have a ground-breaking new tattoo method available at their disposal. Cremated human or pet remains, or cremains, can now be added to any existing or new tattoo after a unique DNA collection process by Everence, a company that was inspired by Gold Star families to provide "a powerful new way to stay connected to the people and places that inspire you," a 15 AUG press release announced.





For \$350, customers can send in a sample of their loved one's cremains, the particles of which are then reduced, purified and microencapsulated in a medical-grade polymer ink additive that will can be forever preserved within a tattoo. Use of the collection kit requires no special expertise on the part of the artist and can be taken to any tattoo shop in the world for application, the release said. Everence, which got its name by combining the words "forever" and "reverence," previously only collected DNA samples, such as saliva or hair, from living participants, a process similar to Ancestry.com and one that was used by a retired Navy SEAL who had his wife's DNA included in a tattoo on his leg.

The company soon realized, however, that paying tribute to loved ones extended well beyond the living, so their diverse team of scientists from Brown and Duke universities got to work alongside some of the world's most renowned tattoo artists to remedy the issue. "Everence is about giving people the ability to stay physically connected to what inspires them," Patrick Duffy, Everence CEO and co-founder, said in the release. "We started out by enabling customers to turn DNA from a loved one or pet into Everence, but quickly recognized that we needed to do more for those whose loved ones are no longer with them."

Doing more included adding cremains to the list of substances that can be used to keep a loved one close. "We are expanding the types of material from which we can make Everence to include a wider range of people who may have collected cremains or hair from their loved one — human or pet — before their passing." Those interested in the innovative tattoo development can visit <https://everence.life> to learn more or to order a sample collection kit. [Source: MilitaryTimes | J.D. Simkins | August 19, 2018 ++]

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## Interesting Facts ► Bread Freshness

If you want to know how fresh the bread is in your grocery store, look at the tie or plastic tab that is holding the wrapper closed. Bread is delivered five days a week, Monday Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and the bread maker puts a different colored tie or tab on to designate which day of the week the bread was baked. Note that each bread company uses its own color code, so there isn't just one that will apply to everything on the shelf. [Source: <https://www.truthorfiction.com/shit> | March 17, 2015++]

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## One Word Essays ► Aspirations



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## Have You Heard? ► Definition of a Sailor | FORE! And aft | U.S. Special Forces Soldier

**Definition of a Sailor** -- Between the security of childhood and the insecurity of second childhood, we find a fascinating mass of humanity called sailors. They can be found anywhere: on ships, in bars, on leave, or in love and always in debt. Girls love them, civilians tolerate them and the government supports them, or so they claim.

A sailor is laziness with a deck of cards, bravery with a tattooed arm, and the energy of a turtle, the slyness of a fox, the brain of a genius, the sincerity of a liar, and the aspiration of a Casanova. When he wants something, it is usually indecent and immoral, or against Navy regulations. His favorite pastimes are girls, females, broads, dames and members of the opposite sex.

He dislikes Navy chow, answering letters, wearing his uniform, superior officers, and getting up in the morning. No other human being can cram into his shirt pocket; a comb, a little black book, a pack of gum, a church key, a pack of cigarettes, his girl's picture and what's left of last month's pay.

He likes to spend some of his money on girls, some on poker, most of it on booze, and what's left on foolishness. A sailor is a magical creature.

You can lock him out of your house, but not out of your heart. You can scratch him off your mailing list, but not out of your mind. So you might as well give up. He is your Far-away from home lover, your one and only, good for nothing, liberty minded, bundle of wrongdoing. But your shattered dreams become insignificant when your sailor comes home and looks at you with those Big bloodshot eyes and says: "Hiya Honey!"

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**FORE! And aft** -- A retired gentleman spent most afternoons at the local golf course. Every day he would spend about 3 hours out on the course, playing a round by himself. He would return to the club house where the resident pro would ask, "Don, how'd you shoot today?" to which the senior citizen would always reply, "Another perfect par." The golf pro (being of average intelligence) knew that there was no way the old man was shooting straight par every day, but since he was a regular customer, he didn't want to insult the man by accusing him of lying.

Finally, one day, the pro decided to accompany the old man on his daily round, just to see for himself. On the first tee, the older gentleman sliced the ball way off into the rough. He found his ball, but his second shot was even worse. Finally putting it into the first hole (a par 4) took him 8 swings. The golf pro thought to himself "I knew it. This old geezer's been lying all this time. There's no way he is gonna shoot anywhere near par."

They continued on, and the old man's game stayed the same, never once getting a par on any one hole. After almost 3 hours, they teed off on the 13th hole. The old man actually hit it straight down the middle - It was the best shot he had made all day! He promptly walked down the fairway to his ball, picked it up, and began walking back to the clubhouse.

The pro was confused. "Hey, that was a great shot. Where are you going now?" "Oh, I'm done." the old man replied with a smile, "That shot was number 72 ...another perfect par."

-Also-

A deaf mute guy walks up to a foursome on the first hole, hands one of the players a card that says: "I am a deaf mute, playing as a single, may I play through?"

The guy who reads the card is a real jerk. He shakes his head no, and points the deaf mute to go back.

A few holes later the jerk is standing in the fairway and gets hit in the back by a golf ball. He turns around, really angry, and sees the deaf mute holding up four fingers.

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**U.S. Special Forces Soldier** -- A large group of lingering Taliban soldiers is moving down a road when they hear a voice from behind a sand dune: 'One U.S. Special Forces soldier is better than 10 Taliban!'

The Taliban commander quickly sends 10 of his best soldiers over the dune whereupon a gun battle erupts, then silence. The voice then calls out, 'One U.S. Special Forces soldier is better than 100 Taliban!'

Furious, the Taliban commander sends his next best 100 troops over the dune and, instantly, a huge gunfight commences. After 10 minutes of battle, again silence. The American voice calls out once more, 'One U.S. Special Forces soldier is better than 1,000 Taliban!'

The enraged Taliban Commander musters 1,000 fighters and sends them across the dune. Cannons, rockets and machine guns ring out as a huge battle rages. Then silence.

Eventually one wounded Taliban fighter crawls back over the dune and, with his dying words, tells his commander, 'Don't send any more men! It's a trap! There are two of them!'

\*\*\*\*\*

## Memories ► FDR Passing



April 1945. Chief Petty Officer Graham Jackson plays "Going Home" as FDR's body is borne past in Warm Springs, GA, where the President was scheduled to attend a barbecue on the day he died.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Thought for the Week:

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation." — President George Washington





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