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AUSN ANALYZES FY15 NGRER

AUSN recently received the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report (NGRER) for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) from the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OSD-RA). Within the report are priority equipment needs of the United States Navy Reserve (USNR). Of these items is modernization of equipment used for missions including: patrol and reconnaissance, i.e. replacing legacy platform P-3C "Orion" with P-8A "Poseidon" aircraft, USNR Coastal Riverine Force (CRF), i.e. utilizing new MARK VI Patrol Boats, and acquisition of C-40A "Clipper" aircraft. AUSN is actively engaged with Congressional staff on these important priorities for the Navy Reserve.

FURTHER READING:

Stating that today's USNR provides "vital strategic depth and operational capabilities to the Navy and Nation," the report highlights the importance of the RC's equipment modernization program. According to the report, the Navy's RC units are to be equipped to accomplish all assigned missions and have an equipment and distribution program that is balanced, responsive to mission requirements, and is also sustainable. As such, the following initiatives have been initiated or proposed to modernize, improve, or change operational capabilities for the RC. Several programs worth highlighting pertain to the massive modernization taking place in the USNR's air capabilities.

One USNR aeronautical modernization program mentioned in the report is the procurement of 17 C-40A "Clipper" aircraft. The C-40A is supposed to replace the C-9B/C-20G aircraft that the USNR has been using. With currently 15 out of the 17 aircraft acquired thus far, the Navy was able to divest from the C-9B in 2014. Moreover, upon the acquiring the final two aircraft the USNR will be able to retire the C-20G airframe completely, while also meeting its wartime air logistics obligations. Meanwhile, the reconnaissance abilities of the USNR are also in need of modernization. To accomplish this, the NGRER continues to stress the necessity for the P-3C "Orion" aircraft to be transitioned to P-8A "Poseidon" Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance aircraft. Doing so would ensure the RC retains the skills and experiences needed to ensure that the Navy maintains its strategic imperative to provide surge capacity in support of major combat operations. Lastly, the USNR is also in the process of acquiring excess Marine Corps Reserve C-130 aircraft to fulfill its inventory requirement and reduce aircraft utilization rates to extend the useful life of the current inventory.

The Navy's RC is not just in the process of trying to procure aircraft, but also vessels and other kinds of equipment. The most important one illuminated by the NGRER is for the USNR's Coastal Riverine Force (CRF). Created in Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) when the Navy merged the Riverine Force and the Maritime Expeditionary Security Force, the CRF has a total of 7 squadrons (3 AC and 4 RC). According to the NGRER, "the scalable CRF units protect critical maritime infrastructure, embark in military and strategic sealift vessels, and escort fleet units operating in the and around foreign ports worldwide." Currently, the USNR CRF is in the process of trying to acquire for each of their squadrons the MARK VI Patrol Boats and Riverine Command Boats. The USNR RC claims that these vessels are required to support training for maritime infrastructure protection and high-value asset escorts in coastal waters.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on FY15 NGRER](#).

AUSN ANALYZES GAO REPORT ASSESSING WEAPONS PROGRAMS

AUSN received, at the end of March 2014, the annual Government Accountability Office (GAO) which is published to analyze the Department of Defense's (DOD) spending on weapons programs and suggest ways to improve procurement and cut costs. The GAO reported that while Congress and DOD had been taking meaningful measures to reduce spending and create cost efficiencies in weapons acquisition, a few programs were still falling short in terms of cost and schedule estimates. The report suggested that in spite of some near-term improvement, long-term solutions needed to be applied, such as encouraging more knowledge based approaches to procurement and reducing concurrent testing and production.

FURTHER READING:

The DOD Weapons Programs portfolio currently stands at **\$1.5 trillion**, and this is still the lowest point it has been in a decade. The GAO report noted that while some programs had increased costs, this could be partially explained by increases in the number of units procured. For example, the *Arleigh-Burke* Class (DDG-51) destroyer program added two ships to the procurement order at **\$1.3 billion** per unit. However, there were decreases in costs in other areas of the program due to production efficiencies, which gave the platform more buying power. Additionally, the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program removed three ships from its original procurement plan (55 ships down to 52 ships) last year and the program cost decreased by **\$3 billion**; however, almost half of this reduction was due to decreased costs elsewhere with the LCS program.

The report noted that the Navy's shipbuilding development costs specifically had increased the most, by 113% and four out of seven major programs reported delays of more than two years. The GAO report also took an in-depth look at some of the Navy's major programs individually. The CH-53K "Super Stallion" Heavy Lift Replacement Helicopter, the replacement for the CH-53E, is expected to provide increased range and payload, as well as increased survivability and maintainability while reducing total cost. However, the report expressed concerns that its critical technologies have not been tested and there is threat of design changes as the program moves forward towards production. A number of issues with production and parts have resulted in a 6 month delay in production and flight testing, which should begin late in 2014.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on GAO Report Assessing Weapons Programs](#).

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON MILCON AND BRAC PROPOSALS

*On 2 April 2014, the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee (SASC), Subcommittee on Readiness held a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB) request regarding Military Construction (MILCON) and Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) proposals. Notable witnesses included Mr. John C. Conger, Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and the Environment, the Honorable Sharon E. Burke, Assistant Secretary Of Defense for Operational Energy Plans And Programs, the Honorable Katherine G. Hammack, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment, the Honorable Dennis V. McGinn, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment, and Ms. Kathleen I. Ferguson, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment and Logistics. The hearing was held by SASC- Readiness Subcommittee Chairwoman, Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), and Ranking Member, Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), whereby Chairwoman Shaheen expressed concern about the 40% reduction in MILCON in the FY15 PB and the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) request was down to **\$6.56 billion** this year. Chairwoman Shaheen also stated that she was against another round of BRAC as the President requested another round set to begin in 2017. Ranking Member Ayotte was also concerned that the Portsmouth Naval shipyard, and other public shipyards, would not receive their mandated 6%*

of military construction funding as outlined in the FY15 PB request as well and was looking forward to getting explanation from the witnesses.

FURTHER READING (*Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request*):

Assistant Secretary Burke noted that the Department of Defense (DOD) is the nation's largest single consumer of energy and it is estimated that DOD will consume 96 million barrels of liquid fuel at a cost of **\$15 billion** in fiscal year 2015. Mr. Conger testified that while the 2005 round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) ran up far higher costs than anticipated, half of the recommendations from the GAO resulted in a total cost of **\$6 billion** with savings of **\$3 billion** a year. Assistant Secretary McGinn, in his testimony, stated that the FY15 PB request of just over **\$1 billion** supports several key objectives of 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). For instance, the Navy and Marine Corps are investing approximately **\$181 million** to enhance warfighting capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region including: facilities that will support current and future Marine Corps training requirements on Guam (**\$51 million**); modifications to existing facilities that enables the Marine Corps to relocate its unmanned aerial vehicle squadron to Marine Corps Base Hawaii (**\$51 million**); and a submarine training facility at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii (**\$9.7 million**). Additionally, he stated that the Navy is investing over **\$80.3 million** in projects such to support the basing of the new P-8A "Poseidon" in Washington State (**\$24.4 million**) and Florida (**\$21.7 million**) that will ensure the United States remains capable of projecting power in anti-access and area denial environments. Finally, the fourth and final increment of the Explosive Handling Wharf (**\$83.8 million**) at Naval Submarine Base Bangor and the Transit Protection System at Port Angeles (**\$20.6 million**), both in Washington state, support the objective of maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. Assistant Secretary McGinn continued by stating that of the **\$1 billion** request for MILCON, the Navy and Marine Corps together have programmed over \$301 million in operational and technical training and academic facilities. For example, the Navy will construct facilities to support training for the Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) home ported at Naval Station Mayport (**\$20.5 million**) and will continue efforts begun in FY 2014 to accommodate increased student loading at the Nuclear Power Training Unit in South Carolina (**\$35.7 million**). Assistant Secretary McGinn closed by stating that DOD is looking to work with Congress in order to create an efficient, cost saving round of BRAC starting in 2017, which he said the Navy fully supports.

Chairwoman Shaheen began questioning by asking Mr. Conger when savings could be expected to be seen from another round of BRAC and what the cost would be. Mr. Conger responded that DOD estimates the proposed 2017 round of BRAC would cost **\$6 billion** to implement and then an additional **\$2 billion** in the beginning years until year three when the savings outweigh the costs and by year six the DOD will have broken even and begin to save actual money with the closures. Ranking Member Ayotte asked Assistant Secretary McGinn about the mandated 6% of MILCON funding for public shipyards to which the Assistant Secretary responded that the Navy will do its utmost best to meet the 6% requirement in order to get the best product out of the shipyards and into the naval force. Senator Joe Donnelly (D-IN) wanted to know if mental health facilities were being prioritized within the general MILCON budget decrease in order to continue helping our Veteran's with any mental health issues they may have. Mr. Conger answered that DOD is maintaining mental health maintenance accounts but that there are construction reductions across the board with a 40% reduction in the budget.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS, DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM

*On 2 April 2014, the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee of Defense (HAC-D) held a hearing to discuss the current status of the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and the budget request for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15). The notable witnesses present included the Honorable Jonathan Woodson, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and Vice Admiral (VADM) Matthew Nathan, Surgeon General of the United States Navy. The hearing was presided over by HAC-D Chairman, Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ-11), and Ranking Member, Representative Peter Visclosky (D-IN-01). The hearing began with Chairman Frelinghuysen making an opening statement, noting the high rates of servicemembers suffering from amputations, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). He stated that the Department of Defense's (DOD) health budget had increased by a vast amount, from **\$19 billion** to over **\$47 billion**, in the past decade. He closed by stressing the importance of developing an effective electronic health record able to integrate servicemembers' files from the DOD to the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) when needed.*

FURTHER READING (*Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request*):

In his testimony, Assistant Secretary Woodson expressed his goal to modernize the TRICARE system, invest in and expand strategic partnerships, while modernizing the Military Health System (MHS) management. He explained that DOD has already seen vast cost savings, as it's on its way to **\$10 million** in reductions this year alone, where the DOD

originally had projected none. Dr. Woodson briefly explained how the FY15 budget request planned to improve the TRICARE program by decreasing over-utilization of services and allowing beneficiaries to choose their own providers, while including a modest increase in beneficiary out-of-pocket cost. He closed by adding that the FY15 budget requests **\$32 billion** for the Defense Health Program, a 2 percent decrease from FY14 appropriations. VADM Nathan stated in his testimony that recapturing private sector health care was a priority for Military Treatment Facility (MTF) commanders. He heralded the creation of the Defense Health Agency (DHA) as a milestone for military medicine and the goals of achieving cost savings in the MHS. VADM Nathan described how the recently implemented Navy CONUS Hospital Optimization Plan enhanced graduate medical education programs and used a population-based approach to establish targets for MTF enrollment.

After the opening statements, question began with Representative Kay Granger (R-TX-12) voicing concern that innovative and “experimental” treatments, particularly for traumatic brain injuries (TBI), were not covered by TRICARE and thus unavailable for servicemembers to utilize. Dr. Woodson replied that DOD was trying to develop flexibility concerning new treatments eligible under TRICARE and was working on getting them approved faster. When Representative Jim Moran (D-VA-08) suggested that DOD create a tiered system of paying for healthcare, Dr. Woodson agreed it was a plausible idea and had been considered before. He continued to say that this would entail retired Veterans of working age to pay higher fees than retired Veterans over the age of 65.

Next, Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN-04) and Representative Ander Crenshaw (R-FL-04) posed questions regarding vaccines for tropical mosquito-borne diseases. VADM Nathan agreed that, “an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of care,” but he did admit that it was difficult to produce and distribute vaccines when there were possibly four or more different strains of the same disease or virus and continued to state that testing requirements slowed down roll-outs of vaccines. Finally, Representative John Carter (R-TX-31) asked whether there was a chance that TRICARE would be abolished in the future and servicemembers would be switched to coverage under Affordable Health Care or Medicare. Dr. Woodson replied, and reassured, that this would not happen. He stressed that Veteran retirees are eligible for both TRICARE for Life (TFL) and Medicare and that Affordable Health Care was premium-based while TRICARE was not.

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW

On 3 April 2014, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held its hearing on the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The witnesses present at the hearing were Ms. Christine E. Wormuth, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans and Force Development at the Department of Defense (DOD) and Admiral (ADM) James A. Winnefeld, Jr., U.S. Navy (USN), Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS). The hearing was held by HASC Chairman, Representative Buck McKeon (R-CA-25), and HASC Ranking Member, Representative Adam Smith (D-WA-09). Chairman McKeon outlined the purpose of the hearing was to review and receive testimonies on the 2014 QDR. In his statement, the Chairman McKeon stated that while he believes it is a valuable internal process, he is afraid that it has become less of what the original law that created had intended it to be. Additionally, he noted that the QDR is calling for our military to perform all the duties they have always had to do, but this time with less money, resources, and training. This is particularly alarming since the QDR also recognizes that the world is becoming more volatile. Ranking Member Smith, agreeing with Chairman McKeon’s assessments, described that the problem with the QDR is that it has the daunting task of striving to do the impossible by trying to predict the future in the long and short term. In addition, he emphasized that with the sequester still looming over our military; it makes it even harder to predict what our strategy should be. Finally, he stated that the QDR does not prioritize the threats in its assessments, so it makes it very hard for Congress to determine what the strategy really should be.

FURTHER READING (*Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request*):

Secretary Wormuth testified that the QDR was outlined for the security and fiscal environment that the United States is currently facing. It involved the DOD’s assessment of what the security environment for the next 20 years is expected to look like. With three main pillars in mind— protecting the homeland, building security globally, and projecting power and in decisively— the QDR has the right strategy to ensure our nation’s security and interest are protected. Even so, the Secretary did address that readiness challenges were one of the major obstacles, in the short term at least, that DOD was going to have to work hard to overcome. ADM Winnefeld, in his opening statement, highlighted that the QDR takes into account the ways, means, and ends that the U.S. military has at its disposal for the “foreseeable future,” and uses these to create fields of risk regarding different possible strategies that the U.S. can adopt. ADM Winnefeld also noted that the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2013 did not go far enough to get the military’s funding back on track. If

Congress approves the recommendation made by the President's Budget (PB) for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15), then the QDR's strategy could be accomplished with only a moderate band of risk. Finally, ADM Winnefeld ended by making it clear that the QDR rebalancing outlines are more than just the new policy of pivoting to the Pacific, but also a plan to end the two wars and rebalance benefits and compensation for Active Duty and Reserves.

Following these opening remarks Chairman McKeon began the rounds of questioning with why the QDR is written as if the sequester is not coming back, when in truth it is the law and will be coming back if something is not done soon. Furthermore, he did not understand why the submitted levels were greatly different than what sequestration would allow. ADM Winnefeld responded that the purpose was to demonstrate the difference between what was actually needed in order to stay in a moderate band of risk. Doing so he said would demonstrate how bad things would really be if the law was not changed. Additionally, Chairman McKeon wanted to know what the witnesses thought the greatest risk was addressed in the QDR that Congress should be aware of. ADM Winnefeld answered that in terms of highest risk he saw that something like a terrorist attack was most likely at the top, but that the U.S. had measures to prevent such attacks from occurring. However, he believed that the constant threat to our interest was probably the highest risk regarding the possibility of losses of life for American servicemembers, and was something that needed more attention. Ranking Member Smith asked about what DOD was doing to address the spread of the ideology used by terrorist organization like Al-Qaeda. Secretary Wormuth responded that they understand that there is no size that fits all when it comes to combating terrorism, but that DOD would continue to have the capacity and capabilities moving forward to take on any threat that was moving against the U.S. or its interest. The most important tool at the U.S.'s disposal was its efforts to build partnerships with countries to combat the spread of such ideologies.

Further questioning by the Committee members included a variety of issues such as the reasoning of having a QDR, the reasoning of why the QDR assumes that sequestration will not be around in the future, and how the QDR outlines the integration of the Active and Reserve forces in the short and long terms. The Committee closed with Chairman McKeon asking how long the QDR took and the cost of conducting it. Secretary Wormuth answered that it took roughly six months to conduct and the cost was several millions due to the large number of man hours that were placed on it.

HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON VA TRANSPARENCY

On 3 April 2014, the House Committee of Veterans Affairs (HVAC) held a hearing regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responses to Congressional requests. The hearing received its testimony from the Deputy Secretary of the VA, the Honorable Sloan Gibson. A round of questioning and discussion took place to address the issues surrounding timely response to requests from the Committee and recommendations were made to provide for transparency, more efficiency, and stronger working relationships in the future. The hearing was held by HVAC Chairman, Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL-01), and HVAC Ranking Member, Representative Michael Michaud (D-ME-02). In the hearing, the point was continuously brought up that numerous requests which go unanswered or receive delayed response affects the shared goal of providing assistance and benefits to our nation's Veterans. The Committee was deeply concerned with a lack of oversight and transparency at the VA which leaves critical issues facing our Veterans, receiving either no response or much delayed response in regards to Congressional inquiries.

FURTHER READING (Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request):

Chairman Miller began the hearing making remarks on how he had introduced this topic and identified top concerns and issues with getting a valid response from the VA for requests for more information from Congress in regards to pending legislation. Chairman Miller stated that the trends of outstanding deliverables list regarding safety, mental health, and other services owed to Veterans is unacceptable and requires a drastic change. Though the Chairman did remark that the response rate has increased by 39% since 2009, there are still appeals for more joint hearings, staff briefings, or informal meetings to better improve the requests being addressed in a timely matter. Ranking Member Michaud commented that there must be an open line of communication and trust between the administration and Congress. Greater transparency results from collaboration and he will support the efforts to provide to our Veterans the assistance they deserve. The witness, Secretary Gibson, came into his position at the VA about 6 weeks ago and prefaced that despite his short time with VA he is committed to improving its work and outputs for Veterans. In his testimony, there was a focus on VA's shared goal of improving the healthcare and benefits to Veterans and building a foundation of trust through transparent actions. The VA works diligently and swiftly to deliver on their promises and responses to Congressional requests in a timely matter. Secretary Gibson believes that to improve VA providing information in the future requires collaborative efforts.

Chairman Miller deferred to Committee members for rounds of questioning after the testimony to promote discussion and greater understanding on the planned changes in VA. Ranking Member Michaud asked how the relationship between VA and the Committee can be improved. The conclusion from the last HVAC hearing on the subject, in September 2013, was to hold more informal discussion to speed up the response process. Secretary Gibson responded that the interactions between Congress and the Committee can utilize that particular mechanism and would be very effective. He ensured that the discussions should happen promptly and that VA is working diligently to make responsiveness what it ought to be. Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12) then asked the witness what needs to happen to have responses submitted on time and if the funding for VA should be increased or if more staff is needed? Secretary Gibson's response was that there is already timely submission of responses 90 percent of the time and they are working towards a goal of 100 percent. He also expanded that inquiries are processed and prioritized so that each inquiry receives a response in 30 days. The nature of the request typically is clear early on if it will take more than 30 days to respond and if so, then VA will work out a time frame with the requestor that will be satisfactory to both parties. Though Secretary Gibson repeatedly said that he takes ownership to any lapse in responses, the Committee still urged for specifics to address this problem. Representative Jon Runyan (R-NJ-03) asked what consequences will there be for VA when the job is not properly executed. He urged that there must be formal procedures throughout the leadership model to hold people accountable. Secretary Gibson spoke to this point that there are clear standards established and it is the leader's job to make sure the correct person with the correct skills is addressing the request. However, he did comment that rarely is there a result in termination or a sanction of that gravity. Secretary Gibson supported his employees in working through the issues and monitoring their performance improvement to hold them accountable. Further questioning by committee members lead to many Committee frustrations. Though all parties are working to the best of their abilities, timeliness in responses is a serious matter that must be addressed.

AUSN ON THE HILL

This week, besides monitoring Congressional hearings, AUSN held many meetings on Capitol Hill. Earlier in the week, AUSN met with senior staff of both the Majority and Minority side of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC). In discussion was proceeding forward on a Veterans omnibus bill after S. 1982 failed to pass in the Senate this past February. Options were discussed since the bill contained provisions of S. 629, Veteran Status for Reservists legislation, as well as S. 257, the GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act, which mandates in-state tuition rates for Veterans. Discussions regarding the future of this legislation are ongoing and AUSN will continue to be engaged in the conversation and developments regarding a Veteran bill coming to the Senate floor. Furthermore, AUSN met with staff of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) to discuss mefloquine exposure to certain Veterans and even current servicemembers as well as staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense to discuss Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) Navy equipment funding and military compensation and benefits provisions to be considered in the FY15 Defense Appropriations bill. In addition, AUSN also participated, and cosponsored, two events this week: the House Guard and Reserve Caucus Breakfast as well as the Senate Reserve Caucus Breakfast where the Chief of the Navy Reserve (CNR) discussed some goals, objectives and the future of the Navy Reserve along with the other Reserve Component chiefs.

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

S. 2190, Hire More Heroes Act. Introduced by Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO), the bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with healthcare coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

S. 2182, Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act. Introduced by Senator John Walsh (D-MT), the bill would expand and improve care provided to Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with mental health disorders or at risk of suicide, to review the terms or characterization of the discharge or separation of certain individuals from the Armed Forces, to require a pilot program on loan repayment for psychiatrists who agree to serve in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

S. 2179, Homeless Veterans Services Protection Act of 2014. Introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to waive the minimum period of continuous Active Duty in the Armed Forces for receipt of benefits for homeless Veterans, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish benefits for homeless Veterans to homeless Veterans with discharges or releases from service in the Armed Forces under other than honorable conditions.

H.R. 4363, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Mark Takano (D-CA-41), the bill would amend Title 10, United States Code, to establish a direct employment pilot program for members of the National Guard and Reserve, to be known as the "Work for Warriors Program."

H.R. 4359, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY-18), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to make memorial headstones and markers available for purchase on behalf of members of Reserve Components who performed inactive duty training or Active Duty for training but did not serve on Active Duty.

H.R. 4344, Military Sexual Trauma Claims Administration Reform and Eligibility Act (MST CARE Act).

Introduced by Representative Dina Titus (D-NV-01), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to establish a presumption of service connection for mental health conditions related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST).

In the advocacy section of the website, you can click on [Bills of Interest](#) to get daily revisions on Congressional action for all AUSN priority bills. We STRONGLY encourage you all to visit our [Advocacy](#) page, especially the [Capitol Hill Blog](#) which receives almost daily submissions when Congress is in session to see what AUSN is doing for you on Capitol Hill.

We also encourage you and your friends and family to visit the [AUSN FACEBOOK PAGE](#). If you have an account, please Login and “Like” us, which will allow you to see our [TWITTER](#) feeds and other updates from AUSN that shows us monitoring Capitol Hill on your behalf!

NEW LEGISLATIVE ALERTS

There were no new legislative alerts this week. When these alerts are sent to your email, please click on the **TAKE ACTION** link that is at the top of the alert email to send a letter response to your Members of Congress (a few of you have written in that you wish to send letters, but don’t know how). Please continue to go to the [Legislative Alerts](#) section on the AUSN webpage and/or check your e-mail and submit ones you haven’t seen yet to your Congressional delegation.

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week both the House and Senate will be in session. Notable hearings being monitored will be a hearing by the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC)- Subcommittee on Tactical Aviation (TACAIR) on the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) Budget request and the impact on military aviation programs, a House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC) hearing on assessing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Healthcare programs, a SASC- Subcommittee on Personnel hearing on the FY15 Budget and impact on personnel programs and finally, a SASC- Subcommittee on Seapower hearing on the FY15 Budget and impact on Navy programs. Additionally, AUSN will be meeting with Congressional staff including staff of the office of Representative John Fleming (R-LA-06). AUSN will also be participating in an ‘all stakeholder’ briefing on the Littoral Combat Ship next week as well as attending the Navy Reserve Officer of the Year ceremony at Fort Meyer in Virginia. Finally, AUSN will be attending the quarterly roundtable meeting of Veteran Service Organization’s (VSOs) with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) along with a roundtable discussion with members of The Military Coalition (TMC) and the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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