

# RAO BULLETIN

## 15 March 2012

### PDF Edition

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**VA Disputed Claims Update 05:** David McArthur, a small business owner, became emotional when he asked Mitt Romney what he will do to take care of veterans like his son, who suffers from severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). In tears, McArthur said to Romney, "The government has repeatedly denied services because his wounds aren't visible. He will never be able to return to the regular work force. This week President Obama's administration, again, cut his benefits. Sir, will you look me in the eye and tell me he'll be taken care of." Subsequently, McArthur shared his son's struggle of getting veteran benefits on the televised "Huckabee Forum 3: Jobs" program. On 11 MAR on Fox and Friends, McArthur was teary saying this isn't about just him, but also the thousands of other parents who face this reality on a daily basis. The Veterans Affairs department at a local level cares a great deal, McArthur acknowledged, but the problem he says is in Washington. He contended that this isn't a Democrat or Republican issue stating, "I don't even think our politicians really know what's going on. I think they're shielded from the truth."



His son suffered brain injuries from a sonic blast and as a result has migraines 70 percent of the time. Since his wounds are unseen, "He literally was told on the battlefield ... you're either stupid or faking. He went days without having the first MRI. Fortunately a lot of things have changed since then on the way they're handling it." McArthur said of his son who now lives with him, "When you see a young man that can't tie his shoes, that can't go down steps, that can't pick up his own daughter, can't bend over ..." and yet when people look at him they assume he's doing well because they can't get inside his head where the injuries are. He was recently informed by the VA that it would be 4 to 5 months before his son's claim would be processed. As a result of being able to ask Mitt Romney that question, his son received a call 5 MAR from a VA representative telling him that his claims are being processed and he'll have a check within a month. On 6 MAR he received another phone call saying the claim has been completed and the check is in the mail. "Come on folks, my son's important but so is every single one of those men and women that are out there that have been wounded like this," he said. To view the Fox and Friends interview refer to <http://foxnewsinsider.com/2012/03/11/update-wounded-marines-dad-asks-romney-about-veteran-benefits-sons-claims-being-processed/> [Source: Fox News Insider report 11 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Military Retirement Stats:** Following are the Congressional Budget Office updated budget projections on government expenditures for the military retiree and survivor community pensions and annuities:

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Retirees</b>								
Number (in thousands)	2,053	2,054	2,052	2,050	2,047	2,045	2,044	2,043
Average Benefit (in dollars) <sup>1</sup>	\$23,920	\$24,611	\$25,250	\$25,885	\$26,600	\$27,374	\$28,120	\$29,020

Total Payments for Retirees (in millions of dollars)							
\$49,107	\$50,547	\$51,825	\$53,058	\$54,452	\$55,980	\$57,468	\$59,301
Adjustment for Payday Shift (in millions of dollars) <sup>2</sup>							
-\$3,876	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,198	\$78	-\$4,277	\$0
Total Retiree Outlays (in millions of dollars)							
\$45,231	\$50,547	\$51,825	\$53,058	\$58,650	\$56,059	\$53,191	\$59,301
<b>Survivors</b>							
Number (in thousands)							
300	302	304	307	310	312	312	313
Average Benefit (in dollars)							
\$12,577	\$12,815	\$12,984	\$13,163	\$13,379	\$13,628	\$13,907	\$14,208
Total Survivor Outlays (in millions of dollars)							
\$3,775	\$3,876	\$3,946	\$4,048	\$4,148	\$4,247	\$4,346	\$4,443
<b>Total Outlays from the Military Retirement Trust Fund (in millions of dollars)</b>							
<b>\$49,006</b>	<b>\$54,423</b>	<b>\$55,771</b>	<b>\$57,106</b>	<b>\$62,798</b>	<b>\$60,306</b>	<b>\$57,537</b>	<b>\$63,744</b>

[Source: GBO Report 97 8097 0 7 602 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Veteran ID Card Update 01:** A controversial proposal requiring all Pennsylvania voters to show certain photo identification at their polling places could make it more difficult for many disabled veterans to cast ballots. The legislation being debated by the state House would not permit disabled veterans to use photo ID cards issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that are not stamped with an expiration date. Republicans who support the voter ID measure say the intention of the bill is to crack down on voter fraud, and they say requiring voters to produce a recent photo of themselves is crucial to the effort. But critics say the legislation is a slap in the face to Americans who served their country and are merely seeking to exercise their civic duty. "For me, it's the principle of the matter. ... You know what they went through to get that ID? I don't think most people do," said Gary Schreckengost, a retired U.S. Army infantry major in the Army Reserve and veteran of wars in Bosnia and Iraq. "For them to flippantly say, 'Oh, they can go get a driver's license' — you don't understand all the bureaucratic crap they've already gone through," said Schreckengost, who alerted local lawmakers to the issue. Ron Ruman, a spokesman for the Department of State, the agency that oversees election in Pennsylvania, said the bill would indeed require voters to show an ID that has an expiration date. IDs without an expiration date would not be accepted. "The Legislature can amend this when it wants to. In the meantime, those folks could apply for a nondriver's license photo ID," he said. "They've got to get to the driver's license center, but that's a one-time thing that's good for four years." State Rep. Scott Boyd, a Republican from West Lampeter Township, said the form of ID in question is a VA medical benefits card, which includes a photograph but no expiration date because the benefits are for life. He confirmed that the voter ID legislation under consideration now would not allow those cards to be used at polling places. He said he will work to revise the law if it passes and is signed by the governor. [Source: Lancasteronline.com Tom Murse article 12 Mar 2012 ++]

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**DoD Non-lethal Weapons:** A state-of-the-art millimeter-wave system developed by the Joint Non-lethal Weapons Directorate gives warfighters something more persuasive than shouting but less harmful than shooting when dealing with potentially hostile crowds, Defense Department experts said during a recent demonstration. "Active denial" technology gives warfighters something more persuasive than shouting but less

harmful than shooting when dealing with potentially hostile crowds. At a training area on Marine Corps Base Quantico in northern Virginia, members of the media gathered 9 MAR to watch two prototype active-denial systems -- one built onto a heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck, the other onto a Humvee -- deliver a man-sized heat beam to officials and experts, then to service members pretending to be angry protestors, then to fearless volunteers. The beam, from the same millimeter-wave technology used in airport body scanners, penetrates only 1/64th of an inch into a person's skin and cornea, heating water molecules in the tissue and generating an instinctive and irresistible urge to run from the effect. "For our forces out there operating in uncertain situations, what it gives them is decision time -- time to decide if there's a real threat without using lethal means," said Marine Corps Col. Tracy Tafolla, director of the Joint Non-lethal Weapons Directorate. "You're not going to hear it, you're not going to smell it, you're going to feel it, and that provides us with some advantages we can use," he said.



Stephanie Miller, chief of the radio frequency bioeffects branch for the Air Force Research Laboratory, said the frequency used in the active denial system is 95 gigahertz. "Our lab has studied ... how much energy it takes to produce the repel response of running away from the beam, how much energy to produce a blink response, which protects the eye, and then on the flip side of that, how much energy would it take to produce some form of injury, whether that's eye irritation or a skin blister," she said. "We understand what the safety margins are, and in fact, these systems have been designed so that you can't put enough energy on the surface of the eye in the time it takes a person to blink to cause damage to the eye." Miller's group also worked with scientists at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center to make sure the beam doesn't initiate skin cancer or make an existing cancer worse. And effects from the beam are temporary, she said. "If you open a hot oven and you get a blast of heat, your skin may feel a little tingly, a little tender," Miller said, explaining that's how the beam makes people feel for 10 to 15 minutes.

The technology may be state-of-the-art, but it's not new. Tafolla said that it's nearly 18 years old, and Diana Loree, assistant chief scientist for the Air Force Research Laboratory's directed-energy directorate at Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M., explained how it works. Each truck carries all the electrical generators and thermal systems the transmitters need, operator station included, independent of any grid, Loree said, calling it "a very simple piece of equipment." From the equipment built onto the truck, a high-powered vacuum called a gyrotron turns electricity into radio frequency waves and heat, and water systems in the equipment absorb this excess heat. "So the electromagnetic wave is created by that gyrotron and then is fed through a series of mirrors that illuminate a reflector antenna -- it's bouncing there and getting shape and then bouncing off a main aperture and coming downrange," Loree said. The beam goes in the direction that the operator is pointing, she said, adding that the operators have a simple set of controls. "They have several day/night cameras that look through the middle of the invisible beam so they know what they're targeting," she said, "and there's a simple touch-screen operation." The transmitter, Loree said, is 100 times the power of a standard microwave oven. "I can't pop a bag of popcorn with that 100-times-the-power transmitter, because the radio frequency is not penetrating deep enough to internally heat the material." [Source: AFPS Cheryl Pellerin article 12 Mar 2012 ++] American Forces Press Service

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**VA Cancer Treatment:** Older men treated for cancer at Veterans Health Administration hospitals do just as well, if not better, than men covered by Medicare, a new study suggests. That finding is a testament to

massive changes in the organization of the VHA started in the mid-1990s that made patient care more coordinated, strengthened preventive care and allowed medical mistakes to be spotted faster, researchers said. It seems like the VA is doing a good job of taking care of veterans, which is obviously a good story," said Mary Beth Landrum, the study's lead author from Harvard Medical School in Boston. The finding, she added, "does hint at the fact that this reorganization of health care may really work well" -- and could be a model for health care reform in the United States. Landrum and her colleagues compared men's chances of surviving a diagnosis of colon or rectal cancer, lung cancer, lymphoma or bone marrow cancer depending on whether they were treated at VHA hospitals or through Medicare, the government insurance program for the elderly, from 2001 through 2004.

All of the men were older than 65, while those treated at the VHA -- which is responsible for some 6.1 million veterans -- were more likely to be African American and from poorer communities. After accounting for as many differences as they could between the two groups of patients, the researchers found that men treated for colon cancer at the VHA survived an average of four years and one month after their diagnosis, compared to three years and seven months among Medicare patients. That improved survival seemed largely due to comprehensive screening at the VHA, and earlier diagnoses as a result. Guidelines recommended checking for signs of colon cancer in most adults age 50 to 75 every ten years with colonoscopy, or at shorter intervals if other screening methods are used. The same pattern held for men with non-small cell lung cancer: those treated at the VA lived an average of eight months post-diagnosis, while those on Medicare survived an average of six months. There were no differences in survival for rectal cancer, small-cell lung cancer, lymphoma or bone marrow cancer based on how men got their care.

The researchers said they can't be sure that some VHA patients lived longer because they got better treatment, in part because Landrum's team may not have been able to factor in all possible differences between the two groups of men. It's hard to be definitive about any of this," Landrum told Reuters Health. Still, she added, "There's really no evidence that outcomes are worse at the VA, and they may in fact be better." There are lessons to be learned" from the VHA's turnaround, said Dr. Stephen Edge, from the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, who wrote a commentary accompanying the new study in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. For example, he told Reuters Health, the VHA was the first organization to start widely using electronic medical records, so that the same patient could be treated at a VHA hospital in California one day, and another VHA hospital in New York the next. The veterans' organization also started a quality improvement program for surgeons to evaluate complications occurring during surgery, Edge added, which is now being used at a national level outside of the VHA. What achieves quality improvement is setting up a culture of change, a culture of quality, where people are rewarded for bringing up problems and not punished for bringing up problems," he said. An organizational commitment to quality works." [Source: Chicago Tribune Reuters Health Genevra Pittman article 9 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Women' History Month:** The Department of Veterans Affairs joins the nation in observing Women's History Month in March by honoring women veterans for their significant historical contributions and encouraging them to take advantage of the VA benefits they've earned. "VA honors women veterans of all eras for their courage and sacrifice," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki on March 8. "These veterans, and those who currently serve in uniform, are part of a proud history of women defending our nation. Today, women veterans are recognized for more varied roles and operations, but women have always been critical to our military." Women serve in every branch of the military, representing 15 percent of today's active-duty military and nearly 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve forces. They serve as gunners, police, pilots, truck drivers and fuel suppliers. By 2020, VA estimates women will constitute 10 percent of the veteran population. VA recently launched a "Stories of Service" video series depicting the role of women in the military, available at [www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov). In these three- to five-minute video vignettes, women veterans spanning various eras and service branches talk about their experiences in the military and how they made VA benefits work for them.

VA offers women veterans employment services, education benefits, compensation for service-connected illnesses or injuries, and home loan guarantees, as well as high-quality, gender-specific health care. As part of an aggressive initiative to improve health-care services for women veterans, VA established a call center to let women veterans know about services available to them. "We want women veterans to take advantage of VA benefits and services to improve their future," said Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, director of VA's Center for Women Veterans. "VA's mission is to serve veterans. When it comes to health care, VA understands women veterans," said Dr.

Patricia Hayes, chief consultant for VA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. "We can provide women veterans with health care that will keep them strong and healthy in all stages of their lives." For more information, call 1-800-827-1000 or visit <http://www.va.gov/womenvet>. [Source: Los Angeles Japanese News article 9 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Florida Vet Legislation Update 03:** The Florida Legislature has approved three veteran related bills this session:

- One sets aside August 7th each year as Purple Heart Day. The legislation does not establish an official government holiday, so state agencies, offices and the courts will remain open. What Purple Heart Day is meant to do: raise awareness and honor veterans who are wounded or have been killed in battle.



- The second bill allows veterans to have early registration at public universities that allow early registration for any other group of students such as athletes. Veteran students will get the same priority. "This will help insure that our veterans will get the necessary courses before their federal benefits run out," said Steve Murray, spokesman for the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs.
- The third bill allows veterans to earn some college credits from public colleges and universities for some of their previous military training. "That training will be evaluated by the American Council on Education," Murray said.

The bills will soon be on the governor's desk for action. Gov. Rick Scott served in the U.S. Navy so it's a pretty good bet that he will sign these three bills into law especially since the legislation was backed by the Florida Dept. of Veterans' Affairs, a state agency that he controls. [Source: WUSF 89.7 News Bobbie O'Brian article 12 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Korean War 60th Anniversary Update 01:** The North Carolina state Division of Veterans Affairs is seeking Korean War veterans and their families to recognize during the 60th anniversary of the Korean War conflict. The project is part of the Department of Defense's "Year of the Korean War Veteran," which will begin in June. More than 177,000 North Carolinians served in Korea between June 27, 1950, and Jan. 31, 1955, Gov. Bev Perdue said in a news release. State officials estimate that more than 72,000 of these veterans still live in North Carolina and others have family who live here. A certificate of appreciation can be obtained at [doa.nc.gov/vets/KoreanWarForm.aspx](http://doa.nc.gov/vets/KoreanWarForm.aspx). No documentation is necessary. The form can be filled out and submitted online by the veteran, a family member or a friend. Requests for certificates may be downloaded and mailed to: Korean War Veterans Certificate, N.C. Division of Veterans Affairs, 1315 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1315. The Department of Defense encourages Korean War veterans to share stories about their service with the Korean War Commemoration Committee's oral history project. Call 703-545-0522 or visit [koreanwar.defense.gov](http://koreanwar.defense.gov) or for information. [Source: <http://www.fayobserver.com> article 11 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Reserves Dental Benefit Update 01:** National Guard and Reserve members separating from active duty after an activation of 30 days or more in support of a contingency operation, began receiving the same dental care benefits as active duty service members effective Jan. 27, 2012. The TRICARE Active Duty Dental Program (ADDP) provides coverage to these members in the Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP). ADDP beneficiaries receive active duty dental benefit services as long as the referral and/or authorization requirements are met prior to receipt of care. Authorizations will not be granted for any dental care procedure that cannot be completed within the 180 day TAMP period. Benefits begin the day after a service member is separated from active duty. Family members and dependents are not eligible for ADDP benefits under TAMP, but remain eligible to purchase coverage through the TRICARE Dental Program. Service members receiving benefits under TAMP are ineligible for the TDP until the end of the 180-day transitional benefit period. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 9 Mar 2012 ++]

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**BRAC Update 24:** The Defense Department needs two rounds of the Base Realignment and Closure process this year and next to shed excess building space and save money, the deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment told a congressional panel 8 MAR. The two BRAC rounds would align with the department's strategic guidance for a leaner, more flexible force as it rebalances after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Dorothy Robyn told the House Armed Services Committee's readiness subcommittee in prepared remarks. "Of all the efficiency measures that the department has undertaken over the years, BRAC is perhaps the most successful and significant," she said. The department's fiscal 2013 budget request calls for a 5.5 percent reduction in military end strength in the next five years. "Simply stated, the cuts in force structure that we are implementing must be accompanied by cuts in supporting infrastructure, including military bases," Robyn said. "Absent a process for closing and realigning bases, the department will be locked in a status quo configuration that does not match its evolving force structure, doctrine and technology."

Robyn said the expense of maintaining bases that are excess to strategic and mission requirements would force the department to cut spending on forces, training and modernization. The department needs to close installations not only in the United States, for which it needs congressional approval, but also overseas, where it doesn't, she said. "The department's request for additional rounds of BRAC comes at a time when we are looking aggressively at where we can close bases overseas—particularly in Europe," Robyn said. The department already has made significant cuts in Europe, turning over more than 100 sites to host nations since 2003, she said. By fiscal 2015, the Army is expected to close another 23 European sites, she added. Still, Robyn said, the department "can do more to consolidate our infrastructure with the goal of reducing long-term costs while still supporting our operational requirements and strategic commitments." To do that, Robyn said, the department can reduce the number of "discrete" installation sites in Europe from more than 300 to about 200 -- those which currently house most activities -- and eliminate excess support infrastructure such as warehouses, administrative space and housing.

Acknowledging that BRAC closures are painful, Robyn said they "have left our military far better prepared to take on changing strategic challenges than it would have been had Congress and the department not had the courage to undertake them." While the department retains some authority to close and downsize installations, Robyn said, BRAC is a better process, allowing for more community support. The department spends about \$40 billion annually on building construction, sustainment and recapitalization, Robyn said, and an additional \$15 billion on support programs ranging from air traffic control to payroll to religious and recreational services.

"We cannot afford to maintain excess capacity," she said. In 2004, the department had 24 percent excess capacity relative to its force structure plans, Robyn said. The 2005 BRAC eliminated only about 3 percent of the department's capacity, as it was designed mostly to reconfigure excess space, rather than close it, because the military was in a

growth stage, she said. Some have criticized the 2005 BRAC as unexpectedly expensive at \$35.1 billion, however the savings also exceeded that of any other BRAC round, at \$4 billion each year, she said. Robyn asked that Congress move quickly to approve the BRAC rounds. "While some may view our request for a round in 2013 as aggressive, the magnitude of the cuts we are making in force structure means we simply can't wait," she said. "Leading U.S. corporations retain their vitality and market position by being able to adapt quickly to changed circumstances, and the U.S. military is no different." [Source: AFPS Lisa Daniel article 8 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Health Care Reform Update 46:** Buried deep in Section 3403 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) is a powerful board of unelected bureaucrats, the "Independent Payment Advisory Board" (IPAB) whose sole purpose is to save money by restricting access to Medicare where spending is "too high." Few Americans are aware that this rationing board exists. It embodies what Americans fear most about the law – unaccountable Washington bureaucrats meeting in secret making decisions that should be between patients and their doctors. A review of the IPAB powers makes it clear that Americans should be most concerned. Some of these powers include –

- Rationing health care. IPAB is required to achieve specified savings in years where Medicare spending is deemed "too high. The Board is also specifically tasked with cutting provider rates even further than the current proposed annual cuts which will reduce the number of providers willing to participate in Medicare and subsequently make it harder for seniors to obtain care.
- Medicare Trust Fund foots the bill for the IPAB. This means that IPAB's member salaries (\$165,300 for members and \$179,700 for IPAB's chairperson in 2012) will be paid directly out of the trust funds used to pay Medicare beneficiaries' health care claims. IPAB staff will also be paid out of the Medicare trust funds (up to \$145,700 per employee in 2012). So will all travel expenses and stipends.
- Ability to operate in secret. There is no requirement in the 2,200+ page health care law that requires IPAB to hold public meetings or hearings, consider public input on its proposals, or make its deliberations open to the public.
- The authority to accept, use, and dispose of gifts or donations of services or property. This provides a not so subtle invitation for lobbyists to lavish the unelected and unaccountable IPAB members with cash, meals, cars, vacations, or even houses.

A more detailed discussion of the IPAB, can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/6o4y51l> which is an abbreviated link to the House Ways and Means Committee discussion of the IPAB. Remove the apparent political bias and you have substance. The good news is that H.R.452, "Medicare Decisions Accountability Act of 2011", is scheduled for a House floor vote during the week of March 19-23. H.R.452 would repeal sections of the PPACA (aka ObamaCare) and would restore provisions of law amended by such sections related to the establishment of the IPAB. H.B.452 currently has 234 cosponsors. Readers are urged to use the USDR 'Take Action' link <http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/?style=D> to send an editable message to their Representative to cosponsor and vote for passage of this legislation when it comes to floor for vote. [Source: USDR Action Alert 8 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Social Security Taxation Update 08:** Unless you file a request for withholding income tax from your Social Security benefits, they will not deduct any withholding. This can mean that you owe taxes on as much as 85% of your Social Security if you have other income and the result will be a significant tax bill next April. You can ask Social Security to withhold federal taxes from your Social Security when you apply for benefits. If you are already receiving benefits or if you want to change or stop your withholding, you'll need a form W-4V from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This form is used for both the civilian and military community as DFAS will only

deduct additional taxes from your retirement/annuity pay if requested via a W-2P. You can download the W-4V form from <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4v.pdf> or call the IRS at 1-800-829-3676 and ask for Form W-4V, Voluntary Withholding Request to be sent to you. (If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call the IRS TTY number, 1-800-829-4059.)

When you complete the form, you will need to select the percentage of your monthly benefit amount you want withheld. You can have 7%, 10%, 15% or 25% of your monthly benefit withheld for federal taxes only. There is no provision for withholding for state income tax. Note: Only the percentages noted can be withheld. Flat dollar amounts are not accepted. If you want to know how much a particular percentage is equal to in dollars, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). Sign the form and mail it to Jamaica Teleservice Center, PPO Box 5800, Jamaica New York 11431-5800. If you need more information about tax withholding, read IRS Publication 554, Tax Guide for Seniors , and Publication 915, Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits . Please keep in mind that changing your withholding does not change your tax liability and you will have to pay any remaining amount owed when you file your return next April.

If you want DFAS to withhold additional taxes from your military pension or annuity use a W-4P form and send to Defense Finance and Accounting Center, U.S. Military Annuitant Pay, POB 7131, London, KY 40742-7131. There is no restriction on the additional dollar amount of withholding you can request. The form can be downloaded from <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4p.pdf>. [Source: Various Mar 2012 ++]

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**VA COLA 2013:** Current law requires automatic adjustments to Social Security and military retired pay based on a formula (CPI) that measures the rate of inflation. However, Veterans benefits like VA disability and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation still require legislation to authorize a similar increase. Typically the rate authorized is the same as Social Security. In recent years, increases for Social Security and federal retired pay are known for some time before Congress acts to raise VA payments. Last year, Social Security announced it's COLA on October 19 but Congress didn't agree to legislation authorizing a similar increase for VA recipients until November 2. On March 5, Representative Jon Runyan (R-NJ) introduced H.R.4142, the American Heroes COLA Act to make VA's cost-of-living adjustments automatic like Social Security and military retired pay. This bill has been referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and its passage would eliminate the period of uncertainty between the announcement of the Social Security COLA and action by Congress to raise VA's rates. [Source: AFSA On Call article 8 Mar 2012 ++]

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**DoD 2013 Budget Update 15:** It will soon be the last curtain call for some stateside U.S. Air Force bands. The Air Force announced 6 MAR that it will eliminate three of its bands and downsize two more as part of broader force structure measures designed to meet current budget constraints. The band reductions will eliminate 103 positions, the Air Force said. The bands will maintain current operations until about June 2013, when the staffing changes will begin. Personnel affected by the moves will be reassigned to other Air Force regional bands, with openings expected as a result of normal attrition, the Air Force said. The bands planned for deactivation are the USAF Band of Liberty at Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., The Band of the Air Force Reserve at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., and the Band of the Pacific-Alaska, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, according to an Air Force news release. The two bands to be reduced by more than half their current members are the Band of Flight at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, and The Heartland of America Band, at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., the Air Force release states.

The Air Force's bands in the Pacific and Europe theaters appear to be safe from the current round of cuts. A U.S. Air Forces in Europe spokesman said Wednesday that the 45-member USAFE Band was not being trimmed. The Air Force appears to be the first service to announce cuts to its bands program. But the Army, which lists 34 active-duty bands from Texas to Belgium on its website, could soon follow suit. "The Army is currently considering a Force Design Update for bands that best allocates personnel according to the Army's requirements and gains efficiencies," said Paul Prince, an Army spokesman at the Pentagon, in an email to Stars and Stripes on 7 MAR. "If any reductions are required among the Army's total number of band personnel, this decision will be made in a careful and deliberate manner to preserve force readiness."

Once thought untouchable, spending on the military's 154 bands came under scrutiny by some in Congress last year who argued the Pentagon couldn't afford to keep spending millions of dollars on military bands in the current austere budget environment. An attempt by some House members to reduce the Pentagon's band funding by \$120 million failed. Though he never formally proposed reducing spending on bands, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates brought attention to the issue when he observed that more money was spent on military band members than on State Department diplomats. The military says its bands serve as both a recruiting and public relations tool, inspiring patriotism and promoting the military mission both at home and abroad. The Air Force has 12 active-duty and 11 Air National Guard bands, according to the service's bands program website. The Air Force in 2013 will reduce its overall end strength by 3,900 active-duty, 5,100 Air National Guard and 900 Air Force Reserve members. [Source: Star & Stripes Jennifer H. Svan article 7 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Mobilized Reserve 6 MAR 2012:** The Department of Defense announced the current number of reservists on active duty as of 6 MAR 2012. The net collective result is 960 fewer reservists mobilized than last reported in the 1 MAR 2012 RAO Bulletin. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 52,587; Navy Reserve 4,763; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve 9,633; Marine Corps Reserve 4,834; and the Coast Guard Reserve 745. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 72,562 including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found online at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20120306ngr.pdf>. Reservists deactivated since 9/11 total 770,855. [Source: DoD News Release No. 160-12 dtd 7 at 2012 ++]

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**VA OEF/OIF Update 04:** OEF/OIF combat Veterans can receive cost free VA medical care for any condition related to their service in the Iraq/Afghanistan theater for five years after the date of their discharge or release. If you decide to use your VA Health Care Benefits:

- Enroll in VA Healthcare (You'll need your DD214, Photo ID, medical records, and current prescriptions).
- Schedule your first VA healthcare appointment for a baseline medical exam.
- Access your one time VA dental benefit (must be within 180 days of return from combat).
- Meet with your VA OEF/OIF/OND Care Management Team for help navigating VA benefits, post deployment screenings and to learn more about your benefits and services.
- Register for TRICARE benefits, if eligible.

To Learn more about obtaining at <http://www.oefoif.va.gov> or call 1-866-606-8216 (7am – 7pm CST M-F). [Source: Veterans Today article 7 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Military Lodging Update 01:** Here are some military bases to stay at on your way to Florida. All you need is a up to date ID Card. Call Air Force Lodging 1(888) 235-6343; Army Lodging 1(800) 462-7691; or Navy Lodge 1(800) 628-9466 and follow the prompts if you are going to be by a military base and want to stay at it. They will make a reservation for you if they have rooms available:

- Wright Patterson Base \$39.00: 1865 4th. Street, Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio 45433-7114~ Before Dayton Ohio. I-75 to I-40 East to S235 to Gate 12A
- Dobbins ARB \$39.00: 1430 First Street, Dobbins ARB, GA. 30069-5009 ~ In Marietta, GA. I-75 to Exit 261 and follow directions to the base.
- Clay Army National Guard Center \$44.00: 1000 Halsey Ave. SE. Bldg. 54 (678) 655-6393, Marietta, GA. 30060-3941 ~ Go on Dobbins ARB and follow directions to Clay.
- Robins AFB \$39.00: 215 Page Rd., Robins AFB, GA. 31098-1662 ~ Near Warner Robins, GA. I-75 to Exit 146. Follow directions.
- Moody AFB \$39.00: 3131 Coney Street (329) 257-4971),Moody AFB, GA. 31699-1511 ~ Near Valdosta, GA.
- Jacksonville NAS Cabins are \$69.00 a day Fully furnished: 6801 Roosevelt Ave. They also have a Navy Lodge.  
Jacksonville, Florida 32212-1192 ~ I-75 to I-10 East to I-295 south to Exit 10. Take s 17 left  
Approximately 2.5 Miles to the Main Gate.

[Source: VFW Post 6756 Leo Miller input 7 Mar 2012 ++]

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**DoD Lawsuit ~ Sexual Harassment:** Eight Navy and Marine Corps women are suing current and former leadership of the Navy and Marine Corps in an effort to change the way sexual assaults and rapes — and the victims who report those crimes — are treated by the military. It’s the second such lawsuit filed accusing the military of fostering a culture of sexual harassment and punishing those who report the abuse. The lawsuit filed 6 MAR alleges that nine current and former secretaries of defense, secretaries of the Navy and commandants of the Marine Corps “condoned a culture which allowed sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape” and failed to protect the women from those crimes; failed to properly investigate and prosecute offenders; and retaliated against servicemembers who reported being raped, harassed or sexually assaulted. “This is the first time I’ve had a voice in six years, so pardon if it’s a little wobbly,” said Elle Helmer, a former spokeswoman for Marine Barracks Washington and one of two plaintiffs who appeared at a news conference at the National Press Club. “I’m a statistic, but I’m not powerless.”



Left to right, Elle Helmer, Ariana Klay, Susan Burke, and Anu Bhagwati,

After her hiring in January 2005, Helmer said she was harassed and reported the abuse but nothing changed. In March 2006, she said she was raped by her commanding officer. For Helmer, the Marine Corps ideal of “Never leave a man behind” didn’t ring true once she reported the rape. “The minute you question the commander or how they do things, you are no longer one of them and they leave you behind,” she said. All eight servicemembers named in the lawsuit said they suffered retaliation after they reported abuse. Ariana Klay, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate and Iraq veteran, also appeared at the news conference. She was stationed at Marine Barracks Washington four years after Helmer, and said the command had “a frat-house culture.” After six months of “routinely being called a slut and a whore,” enduring verbal and physical sexual advances and false allegations of adultery, Klay reported the abuse. No action was taken, she alleges in the lawsuit; instead, she was told to “deal with it.” Klay said she was raped in August 2010 by a Marine officer and a former Marine. The officer was court-martialed and convicted of adultery and indecent language — a process Klay called “a farce”. “Our constitution forms a system of checks and balances, but I faced the military justice system unchecked,” said Klay.

Susan Burke, the plaintiffs’ lead lawyer, filed a similar suit in 2011 in Federal District Court in Virginia. This lawsuit focuses on the Navy and Marine Corps — rather than the entire Department of Defense — and was filed in Federal District Court for the District of Columbia with different defendants, Burke said. Cynthia O. Smith, a spokeswoman for the department, said she could not comment on the pending litigation but stressed that leaders “are committed to doing everything we can to ensure the safety, dignity and well-being of our people.” Panetta has asked for an assessment of how the DOD trains commanding officers and senior enlisted leaders on sexual assault prevention and response, Smith said. That is due in 120 days. Pentagon Press Secretary George Little also said he couldn’t comment on a pending lawsuit, but said Panetta had ordered measures in recent months to combat the problem. Among them, rule changes that allow servicemembers to quickly transfer units after reporting abuse. In addition, the DoD has allotted nearly \$10 million for training in 2012 to improve investigations and prosecutions “We acknowledge that there are issues, but at the same time we are taking aggressive measures to go after the problem,” Little said. [Source: Stars and Stripes Jennifer Hlad article 6 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Vet Mortgage Relief:** Troops victimized by unfair mortgage practices could see hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments, and other homeowners could see mortgage refinancing costs cut in half, under plans outlined by President Barack Obama on 6 MAR. White House officials had already offered some details of the new programs, part of a \$26 billion settlement announced last month between the government and the country’s major lenders. But in a news conference Obama said the moves would help protect struggling homeowners and pay back troops whose service was not respected by mortgage companies. “It is unconscionable that members of the armed forces and their families have been some of the most susceptible to losing their homes due to the actions of unscrupulous banks and mortgage lenders,” he said. “But over the last few years, that happened.” Under the plan, federal officials will review thousands of military mortgages started since 2006 for any irregularities. Troops or families who were illegally foreclosed upon would receive at least \$116,000, plus thousands more in punitive payments from the banks. In addition, troops who were wrongly charged interest in excess of 6 percent on their mortgages — in violation of federal protections for servicemembers — will be eligible for payments four times what they overpaid.

That would mean about \$9,000 for a military family with a \$200,000 mortgage and an improper 7 percent interest rate. Obama said the move could provide thousands of dollars to families still struggling to make ends meet, and force corrections in their current housing payments. The settlement also includes \$10 million for the Veterans Housing Benefit Program Fund, which provides low-cost loans to eligible veterans, and an expansion of the Homeowners’ Assistance Program, developed by the Defense Department to help cover some of the loss when servicemembers are forced to sell their homes due to a military-mandated move. Military homeowners will not have to apply to be eligible for the payouts or new programs. Federal officials have said they will review military and

mortgage records to search for discrepancies in the numbers, and contact affected troops. However, troops who believe they may be eligible can call 800-896-7743 for more information. [Source: Stars & Stripes Leo Shane article 6 Mar 2012 ++]

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**The “Dangerous” Veteran:** In a San Diego, California neighborhood, debate is raging: The Department of Veterans Affairs is planning to establish a residential treatment program for Veterans with PTSD and mild traumatic brain injuries. On its face, the idea doesn’t seem controversial. After all, given two wars in the past decade, the U.S. government is doing what it can to provide Vets with the best care possible. But that’s not how some San Diegans view the situation. They say the facility will be too close to a school. They say it’s “just the wrong place.” Without saying as much, this is an example where some in a community are simply not comfortable with what they view as damaged and potentially unstable Veterans being near a school. Of course, this attitude doesn’t take place in a vacuum, and it wasn’t formed recently. There is a reason people have such views of those who once protected them. If you’ve read the news lately, you may have seen one of several stories describing recent Veterans as “ticking time bombs” or as “dangerous” on account of post-traumatic stress. It’s a narrative that has persisted for decades, but a handful of recent high-profile incidents have resulted in headlines like these:

- Police get help with vets who are ticking bombs (USA TODAY) <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/story/2012-01-24/police-training-combative-veterans/52794974/1>
- Experts: Vets’ PTSD, violence a growing problem (CNN) <http://www.cnn.com/2012/01/17/us/veterans-violence/index.html>
- Veteran charged with homeless murders: Hint of larger problem for US military? (Christian Science Monitor) <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2012/0117/Veteran-charged-with-homeless-murders-Hint-of-larger-problem-for-US-military>

While these stories highlight horrific killings, the connection between disturbed murderers like Benjamin Barnes and Itzcoatl Ocampo and their service in combat is weak—despite what media reports and popular culture would have many believe. And such rhetoric, when solidified in the public consciousness, can have negative consequences for both Veterans and society—like causing Veterans to avoid seeking help or employers to avoid hiring them. “This is a huge misrepresentation of Veterans,” said Rich Blake, an Iraq War Veteran and psychology doctoral student at Loyola University Maryland. “Crazed? That’s even more extreme.” For the past two years, Blake has worked with Veterans who have PTSD in the residential trauma recovery program and the women’s mental health clinic at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. He doesn’t shy away from the obvious—that combat and wartime experience can have mental health consequences—which can contribute to some Vets acting out. But he throws caution to the idea that this is an epidemic. “[These incidents] are like shark attack stories,” said Blake. “People are scared of shark attacks but they don’t happen that often.”

In a 2007 report on Veterans in state and federal prison—the most current report of its kind—researchers at the Bureau of Justice Statistics worked to demystify the vagaries surrounding Veterans and crime. As it turned out, during the past three decades, the number of Veterans in state and federal prison had actually declined. And when the mental health of Veterans in prison was compared to that of their civilian counterparts, there seemed to be a trend: Civilians reported a higher rate of “any mental health problems” than Veterans—both in state and federal prison. When it came to psychotic disorder, which represents the more extreme end of the spectrum of mental health problems, the rates remained higher among civilians as well. When the survey was conducted in 2004, the Veteran population in the U.S. was 24 million. America’s prisons were home to 140,000 Vets—of which 21,000 had been convicted of murder. And while those numbers seem large, this accounts for less than 1/10 of one percent of the entire Veteran population. A far cry from what some in the media would lead us to believe.

**Appendix table 12. Recent history and symptoms of mental health problems among State and Federal prisoners, by veteran status, 2004**

Mental health problem	Percent of inmates in prison			
	State		Federal	
	Veterans	Nonveterans	Veterans	Nonveterans
<b>Any mental health problem</b>	54.4%	56.5%	42.9%	45.0%
<b>Recent history of mental health services<sup>a</sup></b>	29.9%	23.6%	20.7%	13.0%
Told had disorder by mental health professional	11.6	9.2	9.6	4.9
Had overnight hospital stay	8.5	5.1	3.6	1.9
Used prescribed medications	23.0	17.4	16.1	9.6
Had professional mental health therapy	21.1	14.4	11.4	8.0
<b>Symptoms of mental health disorders<sup>b</sup></b>	44.7%	49.7%	35.0%	40.2%
Major depressive episode	23.3	23.6	17.0	15.9
Mania disorder	38.1	43.8	31.2	35.5
Psychotic disorder	13.6	15.6	5.7	10.6

Note: Measures of recent mental health problems were based on criteria defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM-IV). See *Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates* <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/mhppji.htm>>.

<sup>a</sup>In year before arrest or at any time since admission.

<sup>b</sup>In 12 months prior to interview.

While a small fraction of Veterans have been convicted of murder, it often matters little in a media atmosphere which can place a premium on sensational headlines. In such an environment, Veterans are often stereotyped by those with an unclear understanding of what it means to live with PTSD. And the fact is, there is no limit to the number of reasons why a person might choose to become violent. “The headlines are irresponsible,” said Brian Hawthorne, an Iraq War Veteran and board member of Student Veterans of America. “Murder should be talked about but shouldn’t be centered on the instability of a few in our military population.” According to Gerhard Falk’s *Murder: An Analysis of Its Forms, Conditions, and Causes*, the occupations most likely to include murderers are laborers, service workers, and students. A comparison of those findings with the FBI’s Most Wanted list for violent crimes in 2012 shows a similar occurrence of occupations. Overwhelmingly, the top three offenders by occupation are general laborers, construction workers, and gang members. Of course, we rarely—if ever—see articles hinting at a larger problem within the laborer field or the construction field. Likely, this is because we inherently understand that occupation or work experience doesn’t typically factor into a propensity for murder. Then again, headlines that scream, “Man Yielding Concrete Mix Charged with Murder: Hint of a Larger Problem?” are likely not as profitable.

Unfortunately, this rehashed portrayal of PTSD, reminiscent of the Vietnam era, has the power to deter Veterans from openly speaking about their service—especially in today’s economic climate—when unemployment among younger Vets hovers between 20 and 30 percent. That concerns Iraq Veteran Ryan Gallucci, now with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. “Vietnam Veterans were stereotyped as the crazy Veteran, but over the years we’ve proven that isn’t the case,” said Gallucci, the VFW’s National Legislative Service Deputy Director. “What concerns us are today’s Veterans sitting down for a job interview and once they mention their military service, the tone of the conversation changes.” While most can discern between sensationalized news stories, the reality is that less than one percent of the population serves in uniform—leaving many with a slim exposure to today’s Vets. And this is the image they are fed—as seen in a January issue of *The Week*: Blackouts, flashbacks, night terrors, and sudden rages are common among veterans; suicide, alcoholism, and drug use have surged. PTSD has been cited as a factor in many acts of vets running amok. . .

As long as such language remains prevalent and acceptable, college admission offices, future employers, and those alike can peg today’s Veterans as “running amok” with the tendency to burst into “sudden rages”—quietly

widening the divide further between Veterans and civilians. “Overall this creates at most a hostile and at least uncomfortable situation for Veterans in school or the workplace,” said Hawthorne. “Teachers may not encourage Vets to share their opinions in the classroom out of fear of creating a negative environment.” Dr. Sonja Batten, the Deputy Chief Consultant for Specialty Mental Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs added, “The truth is, PTSD doesn’t have to and shouldn’t impede success in everyday life for Veterans. Years of research have demonstrated again and again that most people recover naturally after experiencing potentially traumatic events, and we have effective treatments for those who develop more significant problems with PTSD. I think what gets lost in these stories are the amazing strengths that our nation’s Veterans have.”

In fiscal year 2011, over 476,000 Veterans received treatment at VA medical centers and clinics across the country for PTSD. Of those, 99,000 were Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans. Dr. Batten expects more Vets to seek treatment in the coming years. “We have made progress in the fight against PTSD stigma,” she said. “Veterans are now more likely to recognize if something is wrong and come forward so that they can move on with their lives.” While the country has slowly begun to recognize post-traumatic stress—from “soldier’s heart” to “shell shock” to “combat fatigue”—there are still barriers preventing Veterans from seeking help. According to one survey of OEF/OIF Veterans, there is still legitimate concern over asking for care. With imbalanced portrayals of PTSD, these ideas will continue to fuel misunderstandings like the type seen in San Diego. But we have the leverage to change this—to make a conscious decision to understand what it means to live with PTSD. And to give those who have served a fair shot by stripping away those unwarranted stereotypes and seeing Veterans for who they really are. [Source: Vantage Point Kate Hoit article 6 Mar 2012 ++]

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## **Scams, Fraud and Hoaxes:** Is it a Scam or is it Real?:

1. You see an ad on television advertising gold coins. Is it a legitimate offer?
  - A. No, because gold coin sellers are notorious for exorbitant markups.
  - B. Maybe, maybe not.
  - C. Yes, because the station wouldn't run the ad if it were a scam.
  - D. Yes, because the price of gold is going up.
  
2. You get a call from this government agency. You don't believe it is legitimate. You could be right because more scammers pose as employees of this agency than any other.
  - A. The Internal Revenue Service
  - B. The Social Security Administration
  - C. The U.S. Postal Service
  - D. The Federal Unemployment Agency
  
3. Some websites charge \$9.95 for voter registration or to change your political party. Is this a reasonable fee?
  - A. Yes, some sites charge as much as \$20.
  - B. No. Many sites charge less than \$5.00.
  - C. No. They can both be done for free elsewhere.
  - D. Yes, it's not the best rate, but it is reasonable.
  
4. A lot of scammers try to get your money via the charity route. It's a good idea to avoid donating to any charity that is not familiar to you. Which form of charitable solicitation is least likely to be a scam?
  - A. By e-mail/Internet | B. By phone | C. Door to door | D. By mail

5. The incidence of bedbugs is on the rise lately and so is the number of bedbug control scammers. Research entomologist Richard Pollack suggests this is the best method for ridding your house of bedbugs.

A. Ionic or ultrasonic devices | B. Aerosol “bug bombs” | C. An insecticide “cocktail” | D. Electromagnetic devices

6. According to Scam Alert, what type of organization is the most frequently victimized by hackers?

A. Hospitals | B. Large universities | C. Law enforcement agencies | D. Financial institutions

7. Congratulations! You just won \$8,000,000 in the Jamaican lottery! You got that e-mail, you bit, and you wired them \$400. That was a mistake. But it would be a much greater mistake if you did this.

- A. Dialed the call back number for further instructions.
- B. Notified the IRS of your good fortune.
- C. Contacted the Jamaican Lottery.
- D. Called the Better Business Bureau.

8. Scammers actually have a way to create a phone number that's familiar to you, such as your bank, appear on your Caller ID. This might cause you to reveal information that could lead to identity theft. What's this technique called?

A. Caller ID spoofing | B. The Phone Dupe | C. The Friendly Fakeout | D. Dial-a-Dope

9. You get a call from someone claiming to be from the electric company saying your electric bill is overdue. They ask for your account number for verification purposes, and your credit card number. Why is this probably a scam?

- A. You're pretty sure you paid your last bill.
- B. A representative would have your account number on screen.
- C. You don't recall getting any past-due notices.
- D. A representative would never ask for a credit card number.

10. According to the FBI, older Americans are frequent victims of Internet scammers because they have nest eggs and because of this.

- A. They are not as adept on the Internet as younger people.
- B. They tend to leave their computers on for long periods, making access easier.
- C. They frequently are not even aware they have been swindled.
- D. They are less likely to report being swindled.

**Answers:** 1- B, 2-A, 3-C, 4-D, 5-C, 6-B, 7-A, 8-A, 9-D, & 10-D

[Source: AARP 30 Sep 2011 ++]

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**Pertussis:** To help bolster waning pertussis immunity (i.e. whooping cough) among Americans, a federal vaccine advisory committee expanded recommendations for the Tdap immunization to include all adults 65 and older. Vaccinating this age group is expected to reduce incidence of the disease in the U.S. and prevent pertussis-related complications among the elderly, who have an increased risk of developing pneumonia and being hospitalized than other age groups, according to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The committee recommends that physicians routinely administer GlaxoSmithKline's Tdap vaccine Boostrix to all adults

who have not previously received the immunization or who are unsure whether they received it. Doctors who only have Sanofi Pasteur's Tdap vaccine Adacel can use it to immunize adults, although it has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the 65-and-older group, ACIP said at a 22 FEB meeting in Atlanta. The 15-member committee advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on vaccine issues. Adacel is FDA-approved to prevent tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis in people 11 to 64 years old. Data show, however, that it is safe for use among older adults as well, said Jennifer Liang, DVM, a CDC epidemiologist.

The new guidance updates ACIP's June 2010 recommendation that Tdap be administered to adults 65 and older who anticipate having close contact with a child less than a year old. "Pertussis is not just a nuisance disease," said Thomas Clark, MD, MPH, a medical epidemiologist at the CDC. "It can cause severe and prolonged complications, including pneumonia that requires hospitalization. Coughing fits can be so bad they break ribs. Hopefully, enough people will get the [Tdap] vaccine that we'll see a real reduction in pertussis incidence." The CDC said there were 27,550 cases of pertussis reported in the U.S. in 2010, but many more cases, particularly those in older adults, go unreported. One reason for such underreporting is that the condition in older patients can be difficult to distinguish from other coughing illnesses, said Anna Acosta, MD, a CDC epidemiologist. The CDC estimates that there are 100 cases of pertussis per 100,000 adolescents and adults each year. Cases of the illness have been rising in the U.S. since the 1980s, particularly among children and infants who are too young to be vaccinated, the CDC said. A 2010 outbreak in California killed 10 infants and hospitalized more than 800 adults and children, making it the state's worst pertussis epidemic in more than 50 years. Contributing to the nationwide uptick in pertussis is improved reporting and surveillance of the illness as well as waning immunity, Dr. Clark said.

An individual's immunity against pertussis is 98% in the first year of completing the five-dose childhood vaccination series, Dr. Clark said. Within five years, immunity declines to about 70%. The American Geriatrics Society supports ACIP's new recommendation because there probably are significantly more cases of pertussis among adults than recognized, said Kenneth Schmader, MD, the organization's ACIP liaison. "When pertussis occurs in older adults, it can be pretty serious," said Dr. Schmader, chief of the Division of Geriatrics at Duke University Medical Center and director of the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center at the Durham VA Medical Center in Durham, N.C. "Since vaccination is a good preventive measure, why not keep it simple and recommend vaccinating all older adults? The simplicity of [the recommendation] is really important for practitioners," he said. CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH, has to approve the ACIP recommendation before it becomes official. Infectious diseases experts say his endorsement is likely. [Source: America Medical News Christine S. Moyer article 5 Mar 2012++]

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**TSP Update 26:** Monthly returns from Thrift Savings Plan investments showed a slight downtick in February, but still put in a solid performance after a disappointing finish to 2011. Stock-based funds have grown significantly for the year to date as well, with the I Fund gaining 10.77 percent, the S Fund increasing 11.88 percent and the C Fund rising 9.03 percent.

- The S Fund, which invests in small and midsize companies and tracks the Dow Jones Wilshire 4500 Index, experienced the most substantial slowdown, growing 3.99 percent in February after finishing January almost 4 percentage points higher.
- The I Fund, invested in international stocks, remained steady at 5.36 percent. January's figure was 5.14 percent.
- The C Fund, invested in common stocks on Standard & Poor's 500 Index, finished February at 4.34 percent, after increasing 4.5 percent the previous month, a huge gain over December 2011 levels.

- The TSP's fixed income bond offering (the F Fund) finished February at 0.05 percent, and its government-backed securities fund (G) posted 0.12 percent growth. Both those figures were just barely below January levels. The bonds have posted gains of 0.93 percent for 2012, and the securities in the G Fund have earned 0.25 percent for the year to date.

Life-cycle funds -- designed to move investors to less risky portfolios as they near retirement -- also finished February in the black. The L Income Fund for federal employees who have reached their target retirement date and have started withdrawing money, finished at 0.98 percent for the month and 2.16 for 2012 so far. The L 2020 Fund finished at 2.53 percent for February and 5.63 percent for 2012; L 2030 gained 3.10 percent for the month, and 6.99 percent for the year; L 2040 had monthly returns of 3.54 percent and 2012 growth of 8.03; and L 2050 finished February at 3.99 percent and has gained 9.05 percent for the year. All the monthly figures were slightly smaller than January's gains, falling short by 2 percentage points or less. [Source: Gov.Exec.com Amanda Palleschi article 5 Mar 2012 ++]

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**VA Lawsuit ~ Edgewood Update 01:** The moment 18-year-old Army Pvt. Tim Josephs arrived at Edgewood Arsenal in 1968, he knew there was something different about the place. "It just did not look like a military base, more like a hospital," recalled Josephs, a Pittsburgh native. Josephs had volunteered for a two-month assignment at Edgewood, in Maryland, lured by three-day weekends closer to home. "It was like a plum assignment," Josephs said. "The idea was they would test new Army field jackets, clothing, weapons and things of that nature, but no mention of drugs or chemicals." But when he went to fill out paperwork the morning after his arrival, the base personnel were wearing white lab coats, and Josephs said he had second thoughts. An officer took him aside. "He said, 'You volunteered for this. You're going to do it. If you don't, you're going to jail. You're going to Vietnam either way - before or after,'" Josephs said recently. From 1955 to 1975, military researchers at Edgewood were using not only animals but human subjects to test a witches' brew of drugs and chemicals. They ranged from potentially lethal nerve gases like VX and sarin to incapacitating agents like BZ. The military also tested tear gas, barbiturates, tranquilizers, narcotics and hallucinogens like LSD.



**A 1973 photograph of a group of veterans who became guinea pigs for secret drug and chemical experiments while serving in the Army. (photo: Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center)**

Tests began for Josephs almost as soon as he arrived at Edgewood for a two-month assignment on January 1, 1968. "Sometimes it was an injection. Other times it was a pill," Josephs told CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta. Josephs said he didn't know what drugs he was getting. "A lot of chemicals were referred to as agent one or agent two." Some weeks, he would undergo one test; other weeks, more, Josephs said. And when he

questioned the staff about whether he was in any danger, they reassured him: "There is nothing here that could ever harm you." Josephs was told he would be testing gas masks, boots and other clothing, he said. This top secret Cold War research program initially looked for ways to defend against a chemical or biological attack by the Soviet Union, thought to be far ahead of the United States in "psycho-chemical" warfare. But the research expanded into offensive chemical weapons, including one that could, according to one Army film obtained by CNN, deliver a "veritable chemical ambush" against an enemy. "This incapacitating agent would be dispersed by standard munitions, and the agent would enter the building through all non-protected openings," the film's narrator boasts.

"They want to use young men as guinea pigs and throw them away," said Josephs, now 63. But Josephs, 63, believes the chemical agents he received during his two-month stint at Edgewood did harm him, triggering health problems that continue to plague him four decades later. Even when he talks about Edgewood, he said, "I get a tightness in my chest." Days before his Edgewood duty ended, in February 1968, Josephs was hospitalized for days with Parkinson's-like tremors, symptoms he said have followed him on and off throughout his adult life. From Edgewood, he said he went to an Army installation in Georgia, where he experienced tremors so severe, he had to be admitted to the base hospital and given muscle relaxers. The Army then sent Josephs to Air Force bases in Thailand, in support of the war effort in Vietnam. He was told never to talk about his experiences at Edgewood and to forget about everything he ever did, said or heard at the Maryland base. President Nixon ended research into offensive chemical weapons in 1969, and the military no longer uses human subjects in research on chemical agents, said a spokesman for Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, as the facility is known now.



**18-year-old Army Pvt. Tim Josephs, then and now at 63.**

Josephs left his service when his three-year tour ended, and he began a career as a real estate agent. He married Michelle, a nurse, in 1977, but the couple decided not to have children, fearing his chemical exposure might somehow affect them. In his mid-50s, Josephs was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a progressive neurological condition that forced him to retire early. Medications cost \$2,000 a month, which he was paying for out of pocket. He applied for veterans benefits based on chemical exposure at Edgewood. Last year, the Department of Veterans Affairs granted him partial benefits for his Parkinson's for Agent Orange exposure during his time in Thailand, giving Josephs 40% disability. The letter granting him benefits made no mention of Edgewood. Josephs says he now takes two dozen pills daily. His symptoms vary from day to day. Sometimes, he has trouble swallowing. Other times, he experiences numbness in his joints or tremors. He says he tires easily. He blames his time at Edgewood for all this, and he has joined a lawsuit on behalf of Edgewood veterans seeking medical benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.... They gave him such high doses that he ... in the vernacular, he flipped out.

Gordon Erspamer, lead attorney in the suit, has reviewed the partial Edgewood medical records that Josephs was able to obtain with the help of his wife. Erspamer said Josephs probably received an injection of sarin or another nerve gas, because the records show that he received the drug P2S on February 1, 1968, to treat "organophosphate poisoning." During experiments that began on February 19, 1968, Josephs experienced Parkinson's-like tremors after receiving Prolixin, an antipsychotic medication, Erspamer said, prompting the Edgewood medical staff to give the

young soldier Congentin and Artane, two drugs used to treat Parkinson's symptoms. Erspamer said he sees a connection between Josephs' Parkinson's disease and the drugs he received at Edgewood. "Those substances affect the same region of the brain," Erspamer said. "Tim clearly had adverse health effects because they gave him such high doses that he ranged from overdose with one substance to the antidote, back and forth, and he actually had to get ... a very powerful antipsychotic drug because, in the vernacular, he flipped out."

In addition to medical benefits, the lawsuit is asking that the Defense Department and Department of Veteran Affairs find all Edgewood veterans and provide them with details of the chemicals they received and their possible health effects. Erspamer said the government has reached very few of the 7,000 or so Edgewood veterans, and the VA has turned down almost all Edgewood-related health claims. Court documents show that the Veterans Benefits Administration rejected 84 of 86 health claims related to chemical or biological exposure. "The whole thing stinks, and if the American people knew about it, they would not tolerate it. This kind of behavior toward our veterans would not be allowed to happen," Erspamer said. Josephs has not received any health benefits related to his time as a human test subject at Edgewood. "They're hoping we die off, so you apply [for benefits], you get turned down," Josephs said. "And it just goes on for years and years, and they just want to wear us down. They want to use young men as guinea pigs and throw them away."

The Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs declined face-to-face interviews with CNN, citing pending litigation. In a statement, the Defense Department said that it "has made it a priority to identify all service members exposed to chemical and biological substances ... and the VA has contacted and offered free medical evaluations to thousands of veterans." Josephs received his letter from the VA in 2008, four decades after he arrived at the Maryland base. "In order to best serve veterans and their families, VA continues to study the possibility of long-term health effects associated with in-service exposure to chemical and biological weapons," the letter promised. At the Army's request, The Institute of Medicine, an independent nonprofit organization that is the health arm of the National Academy of Sciences, produced a three-volume report in the 1980s on the long-term health of Edgewood veterans. The IOM decided in the end there wasn't enough information to reach "definitive conclusions." Josephs enlisted in the military fresh out of high school - at the height of the Vietnam War. "I really felt a duty to my country to go and serve," he said. "Things were different back then. You believed in your government. And you just wouldn't think they would give you something that would harm you intentionally." [Source: CNN David S. Martin article 3 Mar 2012 ++]

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**VA National Call Center:** Frustrated lawmakers bashed the Veterans Affairs Department at a Senate hearing 29 FEB for not handling the most basic service task -- answering the phone when veterans seek information from the department's National Call Center. Sen. Mike Johanns (R-NE) told VA Secretary Eric Shinseki that often when his constituents contact the NCC "the phone rings . . . [but] no one is there. I had high hopes for the National Call Center, but it is not working well." If veterans do manage to connect with someone, that individual often lacks the right information, Johanns said. The VA National Call Center (800-827-1000) is supposed to serve as a clearinghouse for information about a range of veterans benefits -- compensation and pensions, education, vocational rehabilitation, employment, home loans, and insurance. Johanns told Shinseki that in his view, VA created an expectation of service that it has not fulfilled.

Shinseki said he routinely phones the National Call Center to check on it, and at times has been disappointed with the response. He told Johanns that the NCC's performance has improved over the past six months thanks to development of the Veterans Relationship Management Program, including a new call queue system designed to reduce wait times. Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK) said his staff routinely tests the toll-free number, and as of 24 FEB could

not get an answer. When the National Call Center does answer, his staff gets "an inadequate response," he said. He told Shinseki that VA needs to improve call center operations because "customer service is the name of the game."

VA invested \$143.8 million in the Veterans Relationship Management Program in 2011, budgeted \$108 million for it this year and requested a \$111 million budget for it in 2013. Allison Hickey, VA undersecretary for benefits, told the hearing that VRM offers tools designed to eliminate queue frustration and provide call center agents with what she called a unified desktop on a computer screen to access the information they need to field questions. VRM includes a virtual hold feature that allows veterans to hang up, but still keep their place in the queue, with a call-back activated when it's their turn to talk to an NCC staffer. She said VRM also includes a feature that allows veterans placed on hold to schedule a call-back time at their convenience. The unified desktop, Hickey said, integrates information from 13 VA benefit databases on one server and screen, providing call center agents with easy access to benefits information. Johanns praised the VA eBenefits portal and website, which allows veterans to manage their benefits online, and urged an expansion of the system "as it pays real dividends." Hickey said surveys that VA has conducted show that "73 percent of veterans want to meet us online." [Source: NextGov.com Bob Brewin article 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Tricare Employer Health Plans Update 02:** Sen. Lindsey O. Graham ( R-SC) made a request to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) for a determination on the budgetary effect of regulations limiting the ability of employers to offer incentives to employees to use TRICARE. In response CBO has analyzed whether the limitation on employer incentives to TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries (section 707 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, Public Law 109-364) has resulted in budgetary savings for the Department of Defense. Section 707 restricts the ability of employers to offer subsidies and other incentives to their TRICARE-eligible employees to use TRICARE in place of employer-sponsored health care plans. CBO estimates that somewhere between 45,000 and 70,000 working-age military retirees accepted incentives prior to implementation of section 707 to use their TRICARE benefit (as much as 5 percent of the total population of working-age military retirees), with the vast majority of those incentives being in the form of employer-subsidized TRICARE supplements. Based on the available information, CBO estimates that there is a high probability that the enactment of section 707 has resulted in budgetary savings for the Department of Defense (DoD) and that the expected value of those savings is about \$55 million per year (in 2010 dollars). However, because of certain effects on federal revenues, the expected value of the net savings to the federal government as a whole is less: about \$30 million per year. [Source: CBO Itr 22 Feb 2012 ++]

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**Veteran Driver Licenses:** Louisiana lawmakers and their counterparts in other states are crafting legislation that would add military service to veterans' driver's licenses so they will not have to carry official discharge papers to prove their service. It's a shortcut that legislators say could come in handy, from securing state veterans' claims, to simply getting a military discount at a hotel or retailer. "The time that they have invested in us is priceless, for us and for our freedom," said Maryland state Sen. Jim Mathias, who is sponsoring such a bill in the Maryland General Assembly. "And this, respectfully, is the least that we can do to say thank you." More and more service members are returning home from overseas, and they need a more efficient way to prove eligibility for benefits that doesn't involve lugging around discharge papers, according to Jerry Boden, chief of staff for the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. "You wouldn't have to fumble through and pull out a piece of paper," said David Mills, 41, of Salisbury, Md., a former U.S. Marine infantryman and Desert Storm veteran. "Going for a discount, or just showing that you have served in the military, it's an asset. It's like being a donor on the back of your

driver's license. If it's there, it's great." Mills said he is concerned that there are people who might create fake IDs, may add the designation and fake their military service.

A dozen states passed laws in 2011 adding a veteran designation to driver's licenses, according to Boden: Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Utah. States pursuing legislation this year include Arizona, Illinois, Louisiana, New Jersey and South Carolina. It's much easier for a veteran to take advantage of the discounts or preferences offered by national chains such as The Home Depot or Jiffy Lube by simply handing over an official state ID, he said. A more serious reason, he added, is that veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder have been known to scuffle with law enforcement after they return home. If police at the scene realize they're dealing with a veteran, one who may have PTSD, it could help them better handle the situation, Boden said. Earlier this month, in Leesville, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal introduced his proposal. "This new designation is a simple way to ensure that all of our veterans are recognized for their sacrifices and that they have convenient proof of their service when applying for jobs, making use of veteran discounts, and requesting assistance for benefits," Jindal said. "Veterans should not be burdened with red tape to benefit from the services and discounts that they deserve." Louisiana state Sen. Robert Adley, R-Benton, will author the legislation. Adley's Senate District 36 in northwest Louisiana encompasses Bienville and Webster parishes and parts of Bossier, Claiborne and Red River parishes. [Source: USA Today Gannett article 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**VA Cemeteries Update 06:** The Department of Veterans Affairs has found more than 100 unmarked or mismarked graves at two more national cemeteries, adding to a mounting toll of problems at military burial grounds across the country. The latest problems — at Golden Gate and San Francisco national cemeteries in California — follow revelations at seven other cemeteries, disclosed by the VA last month, that scores of headstones stood over the wrong graves, in some cases for years, and that at least eight people were buried in the wrong place. The review of VA cemeteries, which began last year, is the latest in a series of troubling failings involving the remains of service members. Those mistakes have tainted some of the nation's most venerated military shrines, from Arlington National Cemetery, overlooking the Potomac, to the Presidio, on the shores of the Pacific.

VA officials said the problems at its national cemeteries were largely the result of sloppy work during renovations involving contractors. Headstones and markers were temporarily removed from the ground, cleaned while sod was repaired and then reinserted in the wrong places. In all, there have been a total of more than 200 misaligned headstones. Glenn Powers, a deputy undersecretary for the VA's National Cemetery Administration, said "the numbers of discrepancies remain small but are always unacceptable. We will make appropriate notifications to those family members that we can contact and, in keeping with our culture of accountability and continuous management improvement, fix the issues." The problems were first discovered at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio last July when officials tested the accuracy of new maps and realized 47 markers were one space over from where they were supposed to be. As a result of the misplaced headstones, officials said that four people ended up being buried in the wrong spots there. To save space at sought-after national cemeteries, family members are typically buried in the same plot. But with headstones in the wrong spots, some people were not buried with their loved ones.

VA officials on 28 FEB said that no one ended up being buried in the wrong spots at Golden Gate or San Francisco National Cemeteries. But they said Golden Gate had 33 graves with the wrong headstones and 18 that were unmarked. At San Francisco, which is at the historic Presidio, 48 graves had the wrong headstone and three were unmarked. They also discovered a headstone at an unoccupied grave at Riverside National Cemetery, also in California. The review, which was ordered in October, included only the sections of cemeteries that had undergone

the so-called “raise and realign” renovations in the past decade. In all, the VA says it has now checked 1.5 million graves at 93 of its 131 cemeteries. Now that it has completed that phase of the review, VA cemetery officials have pledged to review the more than 1.5 million gravesites, and could not rule out the possibility of finding more misplaced headstones and remains. It will do so under the oversight of Congress. U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, has said the committee would be investigating “the extent of these problems.”

Last month, Miller said that the VA must “put in place the proper oversight and procedures while renovations are taking place at its cemeteries around the country to ensure further graves are not disturbed. Irrevocable pain has been caused to the families of our veterans affected by these mistakes, and I don’t want one more family to have to endure a second burial again.” Last week, he visited Dayton National Cemetery, where officials found 14 headstones in the wrong places and two veterans who were buried in 1984 in unmarked graves that were already occupied. In a statement, he said he was “impressed by the local leadership in correcting these problems and setting in place procedures and processes to ensure mistakes don’t happen in the future. It is my hope that VA takes a comprehensive approach and determines procedures for all cemeteries as should be their policy.” At a Capitol Hill budget hearing this month, Steve Muro, undersecretary for memorial affairs at the VA’s National Cemetery Administration, expressed regret and said, “I will make no excuses for these mistakes.” He said that since the problems were discovered the VA has adopted stricter accountability procedures for remains, including requiring contractors to keep headstones at gravesites during renovations. In addition to the problems found in California, Texas and Ohio, the VA’s review also found mistakes at national burial grounds in New Mexico, New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania. [Source: Washington Post Christian Davenport article 29 Feb 2012 ++]

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**PTSD Update 92:** There seems to be growing evidence supporting a suspicion that The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) and some other veteran service organizations (VSOs) have been holding- that DoD has been using the diagnosis of a “personality disorder” to deny a member of the military benefits. “Personality disorder” is a preexisting condition according to the Pentagon. Members of the military discharged with this finding are not entitled to retirement or disability benefits. Since 2001 over 31,000 service members have been discharged due to “personality disorder.” The disorder results in inflexible badly adaptive behavior that may “impair performance and relationships.” Many organizations believe that the Pentagon has been using this diagnosis to get rid of those they think are troublemakers or to save money instead of diagnosing PTSD.

Recently an Army ombudsman wrote that a doctor at Madigan Army Hospital said that a PTSD diagnosis cost the government \$1.5 million and that his colleagues should be good stewards of tax money. After this report came out 14 service members who had their PTSD diagnosis reversed were examined again- this time at the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Six were reinstated. Then on 28 FEB while testifying before the Senate Budget Committee Secretary of Defense was asked about the Madigan controversy by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). The Secretary responded:” I was very concerned when I got the report about what happened at Madigan. I think it reflects the fact that frankly we have not learned how to effectively deal with that, and we have to. We need to make sure we have the psychiatrists, the psychologists, and the medical people who can make these evaluations because these are real problems” [Source: TREA News for the Enlisted 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**PTSD Update 93:** Tacoma-area Army psychiatrists who made the final determination on soldiers’ post-traumatic stress disorder diagnoses at Madigan Army Medical Center had a stellar national reputation until they fell under scrutiny this year. They once identified false claims made by a soldier who lied about killing an innocent Iraqi

girl in a ploy to gain a PTSD diagnosis, according to internal memos obtained by The News Tribune. It turned out the soldier had never deployed. They also were known to diagnose PTSD in soldiers who had been given clean bills of health from other clinicians – the opposite of what the forensic psychiatry team members are accused of doing now. “Quite frankly, they have an extensive track record for effectively diagnosing PTSD in hundreds if not thousands of active-duty military and Reserve personnel over the past several years without issue, and their success is unparalleled,” former Madigan commander retired Col. Jerome Penner told reporters. He led the hospital until March 2011.

In at least three separate investigations. The Army and elected leaders want to know whether the team adjusted behavioral health diagnoses for the right reasons, or whether it shortchanged service members who should get full PTSD benefits. Forensic psychiatrists at Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Maryland have overturned six Madigan diagnoses from last year, and the Army has invited more soldiers to come forward and seek new opinions. Washington Democrats Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Norm Dicks want to know if the Madigan doctors limited PTSD diagnoses in a misguided effort to save money. Their fears are rooted in fall presentations by Madigan’s Dr. William Keppler in which he urged colleagues to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Keppler told them a single PTSD diagnosis could cost as much as \$1.5 million over time. Careers are on the line. Madigan commander Col. Dallas Homas is on administrative leave. Keppler is barred from working with patients. Another forensic psychiatrist resigned, citing her concern that “all the investigations are a charade as the outcome has been predetermined.” I find that I can no longer work in a system that requires me to sacrifice my professional and moral principles to political expediency,” Dr. Juliana Ellis-Billingsley wrote 23 FEB.

Since the inquiries began, the Army has invited every soldier whose behavioral health diagnosis was changed at Madigan to get another review of their cases at Walter Reed. Madigan last year identified 17 soldiers who disagreed with their final diagnoses, according to multiple sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. They were invited in January to have their cases reviewed. Six had their PTSD diagnoses reinstated. Three opted not to take the Walter Reed review and eight had the Madigan results upheld. A Madigan source speaking on condition of anonymity because of the pending investigation said the forensic psychiatrists diagnosed 44 cases of PTSD among soldiers whose records initially indicated they were healthy during the same period in 2011 from which the 17 contested cases were pulled. Behavioral health diagnoses are important to former service members not only for their understanding of how they can seek treatment for war-related trauma, but also because they determine the level of disability benefits soldiers will receive for the rest of their lives. A PTSD diagnosis ensures soldiers will receive a lifetime disability rating of at least 50 percent. A veteran with no children rated as 50 percent disabled because of PTSD would receive about \$800 a month, while a veteran with no children and a diagnosis of 100 percent disabled by PTSD would receive \$3,000 a month, according to Department of Veterans Affairs benefit scales.

The Rand Corp. in 2008 estimated that about 20 percent of combat veterans would show signs of post-traumatic stress or major depression. About one in seven Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have sought treatment for PTSD at VA hospitals. Sen. Murray in an interview said she has discussed with Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho whether the military could be diagnosing PTSD improperly. Murray is the chairwoman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, and her views are shaped by experiences caring for Vietnam veterans at the Seattle VA. She has pressed for answers at Madigan, and last week she learned from Defense Secretary Leon Panetta that the Pentagon would conduct a broader review of how the military diagnoses PTSD. “I think it’s important to err on the side of the diagnosis that gives them the treatment they need,” Murray said. The Army has not yet said how many soldiers who passed through Madigan are challenging their diagnoses. Madigan in 2010 diagnosed 1,418 patients with PTSD, acute stress disorder and anxiety disorder – three common behavioral-health conditions that can be related to combat. Of the three, only PTSD is singled out for a guaranteed disability rating and accompanying pension. Over the past two years, the hospital diagnosed 1,699 soldiers with PTSD. So far, the public has been supportive of growing programs for PTSD and combat trauma. In January, the GAO reported the Defense Department spent \$2.7

billion on PTSD and traumatic brain injury programs between 2007 and 2010. The report said the Pentagon had not explained clearly if these programs were successful or redundant.

The reviews at Walter Reed are done with service members face-to-face. It's not clear if Madigan's forensic psychiatrists always met soldiers in personal interviews. Horoho told a House subcommittee that the Madigan team sometimes made decisions "administratively" based on case files. Madigan sources said those cases were rare and tended to happen when clinicians from the Department of Veterans Affairs reached different conclusions from active-duty Army doctors. That can happen because retiring soldiers might begin the process of registering for VA benefits before they leave the service. Some Madigan doctors apparently were skeptical of the VA diagnoses, which were sometimes conducted by private contractors with less experience working with the military, according to one memo. In some cases, Madigan psychiatrists found candidates for medical retirements who lied about deployments or who posted information on social media web sites that contradicted what they told clinicians. Madigan forensic psychiatrists were expected to carry out personality tests to determine whether a patient was misleading a clinician. They were to interview patients and ensure that commanders had verified the soldier's deployment history, according to a summaries of their standards.

One test used by the Madigan doctors was the Minnesota Personality Inventory, which helps psychologists assess whether someone is exaggerating or downplaying symptoms. In the civilian world, the test is often used in civil court cases in which plaintiffs seek financial damages for traumatic events. It's used to a varying extent by the military and by the VA in assessing a service member's disability. Forensic psychologist Steve Rubenzer in 2006 published a study in which he wrote that front-line clinicians often do not suspect that their patients have financial motives for seeking PTSD diagnoses. His study on malingering in personal injury cases was cited by Madigan doctors in memos they wrote to commanders after the Army surgeon general launched the latest investigations. "Clinicians may not know that a patient has (motivation to mislead a psychiatrist for financial gain), often do not suspect the possibility of malingering, and typically lack the training or tools to assess malingering even if they suspect it. Not surprisingly, they rarely find it." Rubenzer wrote six years ago in a passage cited by a Madigan doctor.

Rubenzer said that common notions of PTSD have changed since the Vietnam War; many civilians expect most soldiers will be debilitated in combat, and that those experiences would prevent them from holding down steady work outside of the military. "Those are two huge leaps," he said. Memos obtained by The News Tribune showed Madigan doctors were bristling at suggestions that they slanted their diagnoses to cut costs. "There has been no pressure by command to limit disability awards to soldiers, just a desire on the part of Madigan psychiatrists and psychologists to produce the most accurate description of soldiers current medical condition," Madigan medical retirement board physician Dr. Paul Whittaker wrote in a Feb. 16 memo to commanders. Another doctor who once supervised Madigan's psychiatry department felt his peers were being pilloried for doing the jobs they were asked to do by their commanders. "My perception is that they are getting punished in the media at a minimum for doing their best in making the right diagnosis," former Madigan Chief of Psychiatry Col. Kris Peterson wrote Feb. 6. "It is dismaying." [Source: The Olympian Adam Ashton | Posted 3 Mar 2012 ++]

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**VA Budget 2013 Update 03:** On 29 FEB the Senate's Committee on Veterans Affairs (SVAC) held its first hearing on the FY2013 proposed budget and the FY2014 Advanced funding budget. It was an extremely well attended hearing by the Senators of the Committee. Along with Chairman Patty Murray (D-WA) and Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-NC), Senators Akaka (D-HI), Isakson (R-), Brown (D-OH), Brown (R-MA), Tester (D-MT), Boozman (R-AR), Begich (D-AK),Johanns (R-NE), Moran (R-KS), and Isakson (R-GA). And most of them stayed! This is dramatic. They all were probably happy to be in a hearing where there is a proposed increase

in the budget; rather than a dramatic cut. (4.5% increase in discretionary funding.) For approximately 2 hours Secretary Shinkeki and his Under Secretaries of Health, Benefits, Memorial Affairs, the Assistant Secretary for IT and Chief Financial Officer answered questions about the VA operations and needs.

It was very interesting to learn that 67% of Iraq Afghanistan veterans have enrolled in the VA and that the VA is estimating that 600,000 more veterans will enroll in the VA in the next 5 years. That is a huge increase in needed services and claims. When asked how they were going to control the 1 million+ backlog in claims decisions with this dramatic increase in enrollees, they said (yet again,) that IT improvements will improve the situation. It is hoped that now that the VA has dramatically increased the number of claims adjusters to handle the cases they will provide the continuing training to their employees so that the initial decisions will be correct and consistent across the country. The Committee was also concerned about the proposed cuts in major construction and non-recurring maintenance, the availability of mental health care to veterans (especially in rural areas), the continued inefficiency of the VA's information hotline and, of course what can be done to increase employment for veterans. [Source: TREA News for the Enlisted 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**GITMO:** The military unveiled a new \$744,000 soccer field on 28 FEB, a dusty enclosure with two-toned gravel and fences topped by barbed wire — all designed as a quality of life improvement for cooperative captives. The goals were missing but the military had erected two guard towers, lights and surveillance cameras at the site outside a penitentiary-style building called Camp 6 where the Pentagon imprisons about 120 of the 171 captives here. News photography was forbidden for security reasons, said Navy Cmdr. Tamsen Reese, prison camps spokeswoman, whose public relations team released Pentagon-approved photos of the 28,000-square-foot field later in the day.



This photo provided by the Pentagon

The showcase soccer field — half the size of an American football field — is being built by Burns and Roe Services Corp., said a Pentagon spokesman, Army Lt. Col. Todd Bresseale. It should open in April, as the third recreation yard at Guantánamo's main prison camp complex, a year after construction began on what is currently the largest expansion under way at the decade-old detention center. The Obama administration estimates that it spends \$800,000 a year per captive on basic operating costs for the detention center, whose staff numbers 1,850 government employees from contractors to guards. When it was suggested that the price tag was excessive, Reese replied that this base's remote location at times doubles construction costs. It was also noted that the Pentagon estimates that it spends \$800,000 a year per captive on basic operating costs for the detainee camp. The National Association of

Uniformed Sources (NAUS) commenting on the expenditures in light of the proposed increases in medical cost to military retirees has expressed their concern on whether or not the people/terrorists in Guantanamo are prisoners. If it was determined that the field was absolutely necessary, why should American taxpayers charged for an American construction company to be flown there along with all their equipment and supplies? Why couldn't the prisoners be provided the hand tools to build their own field? In addition, NAUS finds it curious that the expenditure is listed at \$744,000, which coincidentally falls below the \$750,000 threshold needed for congressional approval on Guantanamo projects. [Source: Miami Herald Carl Rosenberg article 28 Feb 2012 ++]

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**GITMO Update 01:** Some members of Congress are questioning the wisdom of the Pentagon's spending \$744,000 on a soccer field to keep captives busy outside a \$39 million penitentiary-style building at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. "Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for crying out loud?" Rep. Gus Bilirakas (R-FL) said in a television interview. "Our deficit this year is \$1.2 trillion and we're spending this kind of money on terrorists?" Prison camp commanders unveiled the 28,000-square-foot soccer field during a visit last week by reporters to cover a Pakistani man's guilty plea to war crimes. Commanders called it part of the cost of doing business at the remote outpost and keeping captives diverted at the detention center. The yard opens in April after contractors install latrines and goals. Bilirakas, in his third term representing some Tampa suburbs, led the charge of indignation over the expense, dashing off a letter to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta.

Rep. Dennis Ross (R-FL) went further, and introduced the "NO FIELD Act." It's short for None of Our Funds for the Interest, Exercise, or Leisure of Detainees Act, and would strip the Defense Department's 2013 budget by \$750,000. "Gitmo should not be a place of comfort," said Ross, a freshman in Congress. "It should house the worst of the worst of the world's terrorists, not be a training ground for the World Cup." Rep Tim Huelskamp (R-KS) made a social media moment out of his dissatisfaction. He asked an apparently unaware Defense Secretary Leon Panetta about the expense at a hearing 29 FEB, then tweeted the Pentagon chief's ignorance. "Just asked Sec. Panetta if he knew about Gitmo Soccer Field. He said 'No,' " the former farmer from Fowler, Kan., reported on his Twitter page. He then posted the exchange on YouTube.

A military contractor, BRDC (Burns and Roe Dick Corp. Services), is building the new recreation yard outside Camp 6, a six-year-old, 200-cell prison where about 120 of the most cooperative of Guantanamo's 171 captives are kept. Camp 6 already has two smaller yards so troops call the new recreation yard the "Super Rec." Each cellblock is also equipped with large flat-screen televisions and exercise machines. Also, military psychological staff members teach an optional 90-minute weekly session called "Enriching Your Life" to help captives manage their indefinite stays. It's "based on acceptance and commitment therapy," said Air Force Maj. Michelle Coghill, a Guantanamo spokeswoman. Detainees engage in "experiential exercises" that include "mindfulness breathing meditations," storytelling and lectures to manage depression or anxiety and "flexibly handle unhelpful thinking and intense emotions while engaging in value-driven, life-enriching behaviors." The U.S. military also said, for the first time, that Guantanamo staff had given watches to "a very small number" of Camp 6 captives. Watches were taboo for years, although guards posted schedules for Islam's five-times daily prayers in prison recreation yards. In the earliest years of Guantanamo, the Pentagon presumed possession of a Casio wristwatch was a justification for indefinite detention as an "enemy combatant" because, the military said, a captured al-Qaida manual showed how to configure a Casio as a timer for an explosive device. "While we won't discuss specifics on makes, models or types," said Coghill, "we can say that these items have been assessed not to pose any force protection concerns."

The new soccer field is surrounded by guard towers and surveillance cameras and accessible by a secure walkway from the prison building, to reduce contact and conflict between captive and captor. Construction costs are high because all equipment and supplies are imported to the 45-square-mile base in southeast Cuba, said Rear Adm.

David B. Woods, who is in charge of the detention center. "That's probably the biggest misperception and lack of understanding of the expense of doing things down here," he said. "It's unlike any place else in the world mainly because we don't have the opportunity to capitalize on the local economy." The Obama administration calculates that it costs \$800,000 a year to keep a prisoner at Guantanamo, compared with about \$26,000 a year on U.S. soil. The base imports and consumes \$100,000 of fuel a day to make its own electricity and water and does no business with the Cubans across the minefield. An economic embargo on the Castro government forbids Americans from doing business with Cuba. Soccer has long been popular since the Pentagon permitted sports in its evolving 10-year effort to conform to the Geneva Conventions and reduce tensions between captives and a rotating guard force and detention center staff of 1,850 troops, agents and government contractors.

Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX), a former judge, ridiculed the new soccer field in a congressional floor speech on 1 MAR. "These radicals should be doing hard time, not soccer time," he said, conjuring up a future "terrorist soccer league." As an elected judge, Poe was known for his "Poetic Justice" punishments: Ordering released sex offenders to post warning signs on their homes and convicted murderers to post photos of their victims in their cells. "Our government has no business building this tropical Caribbean recreation facility for terrorists," Poe said. "What's next at this terrorist playground? A Tiki hut and bar on the beach?" Bilirakis visited the camps in January 2010 as part of a 14-member delegation, Guantanamo records show. In October 2010, he and Poe voted for legislation that prevented the Obama administration from using federal funds to transfer detainees from Guantanamo Bay to U.S. soil or to their home nations. Last year, Ross was co-sponsor of a bill to prohibit the use of funds to transfer Guantanamo and certain other enemy belligerents to the United States. That one never reached the Senate. [Source: Stars & Stripes Carol Rosenberg McClatchy Newspapers article 5 Mar 2012 ++]

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**DoD 2013 Budget Update 13:** On 28 FEB, House Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel Chairman Joe Wilson (R-SC) called a hearing for DoD senior personnel to explain the proposed personnel cuts in the fiscal year 2013 defense budget. He made it clear that he does not support the proposed cuts in defense funding or personnel programs as they "break faith with the military, military families and veterans." During the hearing:

- Ranking Member Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) tried to rationalize the cuts as tough decisions aimed at a "balanced" approach. DoD proposed increases to TRICARE fees for military retirees dominated much of the discussion. When asked how much the federal government proposes to raise its civilian employees' premiums over the next five years as compared to working-age military retirees, Acting Under Secretary for Personnel Dr. Jo Ann Rooney could not answer.
- Rep. Allen West described the proposed TRICARE increases as ill-advised, "escalating cost of the program to a small percentage of the population who've already given so much." These are the Americans, West said, who gave their entire lives to defend our freedoms and protect this democracy.
- Contrasting the Pentagon plan to sharply increase TRICARE fees, Chairman Wilson indicated that DoD may have forgotten "that there has been a commitment made to retirees and we need to stand by that commitment."
- "We shouldn't ask our military to pay our bills when we aren't willing to impose a similar hardship on the rest of the population," said Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA), chairman of the Armed Services Committee. "We can't keep asking those who have given so much to give that much more."

With the election year at hand, the military community needs to become involved. Your elected officials need to hear from you to reject the Pentagon plan to force DoD reductions on the backs of the retired force. Contact your elected representatives and let them know you're outraged by the Pentagon plan to shift the cost of your. One quick and easy way to do this is to use the NAUS CapWiz system at

<http://capwiz.com/naus/issues/alert/?alertid=61015216> to send a message to your elected officials. Another way is

to call your legislator using the Washington switchboard number (202) 224-3121. You can also call 1-866-338-1015 or 1-866-220-0044 after 8am to 4 PM Eastern Time. When You get the operator, ask to be connected to your Congressional member or Senator's office. Here is what you say to the staffer .....

My name is.....I live at.....City and zip code. I am your constituent and a military retiree calling about raising Tricare fees and I urge you to vote "NO" against any such proposals because:

1. It is an outrage to see the President and Pentagon leaders seeking steep increases in TRICARE fees and recommending an annual fee for participation in TRICARE for Life and TRICARE Standard.
2. I ask you to fight against this Presidentially instigated DoD budget and protect the benefits of those who served in uniform to keep our country free.
3. TRICARE is an earned benefit. It is an integral part of a moral contract, a practical fulfillment of a nation's promise to those who honorably served a career in the Uniformed Services.
4. Generations of recruits may have joined the military for the pay and experience, but they stay in service on the promise by their own government that if they serve 20-years or more in uniform, they and their family will receive health care upon retirement.
5. I am asking you, as the right thing to do, to protect those earned benefits of the men and women who kept their end of the bargain protecting and preserving freedom for you and the rest of the citizens of the United States. They paid a personal price to do so.

Ask your family, friends and neighbors to get involved too. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**DoD 2013 Budget Update 14:** On 29 MAR, the House Committee on the Budget held a hearing on the proposed defense budget for fiscal year 2013. During the hearing:

- Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta told committee members, "We must meet the challenges and responsibilities ahead with fiscal discipline but avoid creating the hollow force...and keep faith with the troops and families."
- Budget Committee Chairman Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) in his opening remarks, asked if this was a strategy driven budget or a budget driven strategy. "The timing of these cuts raises serious concerns that decisions are being driven by budgetary concerns as opposed to strategic priorities," said Ryan.
- Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) asked if Panetta could guarantee that veterans and military retirees would not see a reduction or disruption in services and benefits. Panetta said, "[the proposed TRICARE] fee increases avoid a disruption of services and no change in benefits." He went on to say that even with these proposed TRICARE fee increase on military retirees, "It's still the best deal in town."

Responding to Military acceptance of Pentagon plan to hike TRICARE fees, Defense Secretary Panetta added, "They go when they are told to go and do what they are supposed to do." NAUS is outraged by the callousness of leaderships' view on heaping higher costs for provision of promised and earned benefits. It's hardly a substantial reason — "we can run over them 'cause they won't squeak" — or any rationale at all to break faith with those who honorably served and relied on the promises made in exchange for career service. Since the Secretary had combed the Pentagon budget for reductions and decided on steep TRICARE increases for retirees, one committee member

asked Panetta if he was aware that \$750,000 was spent to build a soccer field for detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Panetta said, "No." Another question about Pentagon priorities brought out in this week's hearings was the plan to reduce active duty endstrength. With nearly equal numbers of DoD civilian employees (1 million) and active duty service personnel (1.2 million), the reduction in active duty warrior endstrength (more than 110,000) is significantly more dramatic than civilians (approximately 7,000). As a cost savings measure, one is left to wonder how national security and risk assessment fits into the Pentagon calculation. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Vietnam Hmong Veterans:** When the few remaining Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War die, these secret warriors of a secret American war want to be buried in veterans cemeteries alongside their American comrades. But even though they now are commonly acknowledged as having fought for the United States in northern Laos, they are prohibited by law from being buried in national or state veterans cemeteries, which are reserved for American service members and honorably discharged U.S. military veterans and their families. A bill in the Minnesota House asks Congress and the president to change the prohibition. But the state Department of Veterans Affairs warns that doing so could open the door for others who have helped Americans in their conflicts overseas, escalating costs and crowding the cemeteries. In late FEB, the veterans made their plea at a hearing of the House Veterans Services Division. "We were American soldiers fighting alongside American soldiers," testified Chue Chou Tchong, the national chairman of the Special Guerrilla Unit, an association of Hmong fighters in the United States, speaking through an interpreter. "We fought like brothers. We died together. Coming to this country, we'd like to rest with the American soldiers that fought with us."

Forbidden by a United Nations agreement from committing American troops in Laos in the early 1960s, the CIA launched a covert operation of training and funding Hmong soldiers, first to retrieve the bodies of pilots whose planes had crashed and then to block supplies and attack North Vietnamese and communist troops. An estimated 30,000 people, more than 10 percent of the Hmong population in Laos, were killed in the war and about 100,000 Hmong became refugees inside Laos, settling into already-existing towns or in resettlement centers. Beginning in the late 1970s, the United States and other nations began resettling Hmong; more than 60,000 Hmong live in Minnesota. Now in their 60s and many in failing health, about 3,500 Hmong veterans are believed to remain in the United States, with about 400 in Minnesota, believed to be the largest contingent in any state.



**Chue Chou Tchong, who represents the national association of Hmong fighters**

Hmong Vietnam veterans receive no veterans benefits, such as medical care or pensions. Tchong, who still commands the respect of his dwindling troops, works full time trying to gain legitimacy for the soldiers who survive, pushing for them to get the paperwork necessary to secure the rights to the final resting place of their choice. There are 35 similar chapters in 35 different states. At the House Veterans Services Division, Michael Yang testified that his father's dying wish was to be buried in a veterans cemetery. John Yang changed his name so that he could return to Laos without facing detention and become a naturalized American citizen. He had almost lost his left arm fighting against the North Vietnamese and communists. When he died in 2005, the family received a flag from

U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum's office, but they couldn't get a military color guard to come to the cemetery. They had to get the Reserve Officers Training Corps from a nephew's school to do the presentation. He is buried in Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, but not by choice "He wanted to be buried in a national cemetery so bad," Michael Yang said. "That was the last honor he could have." A nephew is now deployed to Afghanistan with the Minnesota National Guard and another soon will be joining the Navy. "That's the spirit my father had," he said. "We have to be protective of this country."

In a letter made available to committee members, Minnesota Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito, himself a Vietnam veteran, acknowledged the role Hmong fighters had in the secret war in Laos, and pointed out that the state has proclaimed a special Royal Lao Armed Forces Day each year. But, Shellito said, granting special rights for Hmong fighters would represent a precedent, and any honor bestowed on Hmong veterans would have to be provided equally to others, such as Vietnamese, Iraqis, Afghans, and Somalis. "As you know, the Laotians are not unique in having served alongside U.S. Forces in the past," he wrote. Although the CIA kept records of who it worked with, it could prove difficult to validate a Hmong veteran's claims of service, given the covert nature of the service, said Mike McElhiney, legislative director of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

The federal restrictions apply to state veterans cemeteries as well. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Bob Dettmer, R-Forest Lake, is a resolution asking Congress and the President to expand the eligibility. U.S. Rep. Jim Costa (A) has twice introduced legislation to change the burial eligibility to include Hmong veterans. The bi-partisan legislation has collected 14 co-sponsors since it was re-introduced in October, but there are no hearings scheduled for the bill. No members of the Minnesota congressional delegation have signed on. The effort has the support of many Americans who fought beside the Hmong soldiers. "We abandoned them in 1975," said Jerry Kyser, a leader among Minnesota veterans groups and a Vietnam veteran who supports expanding the eligibility. "We owe it to them. They earned it." [Source: Star Tribune Mark Brunswick article 1 Mar 2012 ++]

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**USS Pueblo:** A long-standing annual tradition in the Colorado Legislature to urge North Korea's return of the USS Pueblo elicited a feisty response on 2 MAR. Rep. Keith Swerdfeger, R-Pueblo West, received a postcard that emphatically announced the Asian nation has no intention of giving the ship back to the United States. Swerdfeger said instigating a fierce reaction was not the intent of the resolution. "The intent of the resolution is remembrance of the ship and the captivity of the sailors and the two we lost," he said. "The purpose is not to start another confrontation. Maybe we can have a conversation with North Korea about better relations and resolution of getting the ship." The postcard referred to the USS Pueblo as a "spy ship" and said, "No, Never, Not in a million years!" in response to the General Assembly's plea for its return. The author of the postcard dared Swerdfeger, one of several Pueblo lawmakers who sponsored the resolution, to "Come and get it! The Korean People's Army is ready to offer you full hospitality!" It bears an illustration of two Korean soldiers battering a man with the butts of their rifles. Rep. Sal Pace, D-Pueblo, also sponsored the resolution and took issue with the response. "The North Koreans might think schoolyard taunts are funny, but they should know that the people of Pueblo and Colorado never forget," Pace said.

This year's resolution, adopted on 23 JAN, marked the 44th anniversary of the capture of the USS Pueblo, named after the city in Colorado. The naval vessel was on an intelligence mission in international waters in 1968 when the North Korean military attacked it. One crew member died and 10 were injured. Eighty crewmen were held captive along with two civilian oceanographers for 11 months. Although the ship is still in commission with the U.S. Navy, North Korea's government continues to hold it. It is on display as a museum in Pyongyang, North Korea. "Unfortunately, it has been used as a propaganda tool for the North Koreans for 44 years," Swerdfeger said in support of the resolution. "Let us continue to always remember the sacrifice of the crew and continue our efforts to

return the USS Pueblo to its rightful home -- the United States." Swerdfeger was startled to receive the correspondence bearing North Korean postage with a return address in Pyongyang. He does not believe it was sanctioned by the North Korean government and does not intend to pursue further investigation of its origin through the U.S. Department of State. "I don't think it's a hoax. I think it's sincere," he said. "I think it's just an individual. The point is people do pay attention to our resolutions." [Source: Pueblo Chieftain Patrick Malone article 3 Mar 2012 ++]



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**Tricare User Fees Update 77:** MOAA has put together the below charts to illustrate how the DoD-proposed TRICARE fees proposal would affect families of different ages and retirement incomes. One shows expected annual expense changes for families of members in grades E-7 to O-4. The other shows changes for families of members in grades W-4, W-5, O-5 and above.

**Impact of DoD-Proposed FY2013 TRICARE Fees on Military Families  
(Recommended by DoD in the President's Budget)**

**E-7 / O-4 Retiree\*  
Under Age 65, Family of Three**

<b>TRICARE</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>FY 2013 Proposed</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
<b>Prime**</b>			
Enrollment Fee	\$520	\$720	\$1,523
Doctor Visit Copays	\$60	\$60	\$60
Rx Cost Shares***	\$408	\$744	\$1,032
<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>\$988</b>	<b>\$ 1,524</b>	<b>\$2,615</b>

\* Enrolled in 2<sup>nd</sup> Retirement Income Tier

\*\*Enrolled to the network and assumes 5 doctor visits per year.

\*\*\*Assumes 2 generic and 2 brand name prescriptions per month in retail pharmacy

<b>TRICARE</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>FY 2013 Proposed</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
<b>Standard</b>			
Enrollment Fee	\$0	\$140	\$250

Deductible	\$300	\$320	\$580
Rx Cost Shares***	\$408	\$744	\$1,032
<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>\$708</b>	<b>\$1,204</b>	<b>\$1,862</b>

\* Enrolled in 2<sup>nd</sup> Retirement Income Tier

\*\*Enrolled to the network and assumes 5 doctor visits per year.

\*\*\*Assumes 2 generic and 2 brand name prescriptions per month in retail pharmacy

**E-7 / O-4 Retiree\***  
**Over Age 65 and Spouse**

<b>TRICARE For Life**</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>FY 13 Proposed</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
Medicare Part B	\$2,398	\$2,494****	\$2,917****
Enrollment Fee*	\$0	\$150	\$634
Rx Cost Shares***	\$756	\$1,428	\$1,956
<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>\$3,154</b>	<b>\$4,072</b>	<b>\$5,507</b>

\*Enrolled in 2<sup>nd</sup> Retirement Income Tier

\*\*Assumes lowest tier Medicare Part B premium for new enrollee in 2012.

\*\*\*3 generic and 4 brand name prescriptions per month purchased at retail pharmacy

\*\*\*\*Assumes Part B increases of 4% per year

**W-4 and O-5 Retirees and Above\***  
**Under Age 65, Family of Three**

<b>TRICARE Prime**</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>FY 2013 Proposed</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
Enrollment Fee	\$520	\$820	\$2,048
Doctor Visit Copays	\$60	\$60	\$60
Rx Cost Shares**	\$408	\$744	\$1,032
<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>\$988</b>	<b>\$1,624</b>	<b>\$3,140</b>

<b>TRICARE Standard</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>FY 2013 Proposed</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
Enrollment Fee	\$0	\$140	\$250
Deductible	\$300	\$320	\$580
Rx Cost Shares***	\$408	\$744	\$1,032
<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>\$708</b>	<b>\$1,204</b>	<b>\$1,862</b>

\* Enrolled in 3<sup>rd</sup> Retirement Income Tier

\*\*Enrolled to the network and assumes 5 doctor visits per year.

\*\*\*Assumes 2 generic and 2 brand name prescriptions per month in retail pharmacy

\*\*\*\* Enrolled in 3<sup>rd</sup> Retirement Income Tier

**W-4 and O-5 Retirees and Above\*  
Over Age 65 and Spouse**

<b>TRICARE For Life**</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>FY13 Proposed</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
Medicare Part B	\$2,398	\$2,494****	\$2,917****
Enrollment Fee*	\$0	\$230	\$950
Rx Cost Shares***	\$756	\$1,428	\$1,956
<b>Yearly Cost</b>	<b>\$3,154</b>	<b>\$4,152</b>	<b>\$5,823</b>

\*Enrolled in 3rd Retirement Income Tier

\*\*Assumes lowest tier Medicare Part B premium for new enrollee in 2012.

\*\*\*3 generic and 4 brand name prescriptions per month purchased at retail pharmacy

\*\*\*\*assumes Part B increases of 4% per year

**DoD-Proposed Rx Fees in FY 2013 Budget and Comparisons for all Personnel**

	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Brand Name</b>	<b>Non-Formulary Drugs</b>
FY -13 DoD Budget Proposal (retail)	\$5	\$26*	N/A
MOAA-Blue Cross	\$10	\$25	\$45
Basic BC/BS (Fed civs)	\$10	\$40	\$50

\*2011 HayGroup survey of civilian employer plans indicates 56% have retail Rx copay of \$25 or less

[Source: MOAA Leg Up 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Tricare User Fees Update 78:**

- Retirees who received medical (Chapter 61) retirements from their parent service are exempt from the proposed increases. But those who received length of service-based retirements and then are awarded disability ratings by the VA would be subject to the new fee hikes. The fee based on the retiree's gross retired pay as shown on his or her DFAS statement, before any offsets, deductions, or withholdings.
- Survivors of servicemembers who died on active duty will be exempt from the proposed fee increases. Survivors of servicemembers who died after leaving active duty would be subject to the new fee increases. The survivor's tier placement would be determined by the gross pay listed on their DFAS statement. MOAA interprets this to mean such survivors would be charged fees based on the pre-tax amount of their Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity, before any deduction of VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. A survivor in this category who is not eligible for SBP would pay fees associated with the lowest income category.
- Retirees who are dividing retired pay with a former spouse tier placement will be based on the gross pay as listed on the retiree's DFAS statement. That is, their fees would be assessed as if they were receiving their full retired pay rather than dividing it with a former spouse.

- TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) and TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR) premiums, deductibles and copays will not be affected. Premiums for those plans already are based on actual program costs and the new proposals wouldn't change that. Beneficiaries in TRS or TRR are subject to the new pharmacy copayments.
- The proposed enrollment fee and deductible increases do not apply to active duty family members who use TRICARE Standard. However, active duty family members will be subject to the new pharmacy copayments for any medications obtained outside military pharmacies. Tricare Standard changes will only apply to retired beneficiaries, survivors, and their families.
- The proposal will increase the \$3,000 cap each year by an index of health care inflation (previously estimated by DoD at about 6.5% per year). Enrollment fees will not count toward the catastrophic cap.

On 8 MAR at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, said that the American people need to understand what the proposed TRICARE changes look like from the experiences of someone who has spent a career in the military. "All of this boils down to what a soldier or Marine or sailor or someone in the Air Force can see about what happened to the people who went before them — how they were treated after they left the uniform," said Senator Webb. "I grew up in the Marine Corps tradition and no Marine is ever left behind, and I feel just as strongly about the commitment that we have made to lifetime medical care for the people who have served. "We know we have a problem with medical care. It is a national problem.... It is not simply a DoD problem," said Senator Webb. "I do not believe that we should allow ourselves to characterize the commitment that we have made as a throw-away matter as we try to balance out other issues. How we take care of these people is one of the great litmus tests that people who are serving right now are going to be looking at."

This week during a NAUS meeting with Rep. J. Randy Forbes (R-VA), Chairman of the Readiness subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, he agreed with the position on opposing the proposed TRICARE additional and increased fees and co-pays. He also noted that the Armed Service Committee is making plans on getting the opinions of those, all around the country, who may be affected by the cuts in Defense, TRICARE increases, cuts in contractors and contracts and the disastrous effects that the proposed two new rounds of BRAC closures may have. [Source: MOAA Leg Up & NAUS Weekly Update 2 & 9 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Tricare User Fees Update 79:** President Obama's plan to boost health-care premiums for active-duty and retired military personnel continues to take heavy fire, with Ron Paul and a third Florida congressman wading into the fight. To push more people into the private "insurance exchanges" designated under Obamacare, the administration wants to begin doubling or tripling charges for coverage in the military's Tricare program. The price hikes, which would kick in after the 2012 elections, would affect 1.5 million active-duty personnel and up to 21.8 million veterans. The plan has drawn flak from legions of critics, including veterans' groups, who note that unionized workers at the Defense Department are not subject to the rate increases. Obama's move was even criticized by Texas Rep. Ron Paul, the libertarian-leaning Republican presidential candidate who typically applauds privatization and the dismantling of government programs. "We have put our troops in harm's way, and we must honor our promises," said Paul, a former Air Force physician and the only military veteran in the presidential race. "Our troops have paid a heavy price these past 10 years," Paul said. "Over 5,000 have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, 40,000 have seen crushing injuries, and hundreds of thousands more suffer from brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder."

To block any assault on Tricare, Paul introduced H.R.1092, the Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act, which prohibits the Department of Defense from increasing Tricare fees without congressional approval. "Instead of cutting our veterans' benefits, President Obama should truly support our troops by bringing them home to protect our borders and defend our country. Reunite them with their families and make sure they no longer play policeman in dangerous foreign civil wars," Paul said in a statement. "Cutting the benefits of our veterans while we subsidize the security of other wealthy nations like Germany and Japan and play 'world policeman' makes no sense," he concluded. Other GOP presidential hopefuls have been quiet on the Tricare issue. Mitt Romney last year broached the idea of issuing private health-care vouchers to veterans. "Sometimes you wonder if there would be some way to introduce some private-sector competition, somebody else that could come in and say, you know, 'Each soldier gets X thousand dollars attributed to them,'" the former Massachusetts governor said. "Then they can choose whether they want to go into the government system or the private system with the money that follows them."

Shortly after Obama took office in 2009, the new president contemplated changing treatment of veterans' service-related injuries to their private insurance. That switch was quickly shot down by angry vet groups. But now, three years later, Obama is back with a variation on the theme -- steep price increases for Tricare coverage. Citing one example, a congressional report estimates that a retired Army colonel with a family currently paying \$460 a year for health coverage would pay \$2,048 under the new price schedule. U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, shared Paul's critique of Obama's latest gambit. "While promising free contraceptives and blowing out the federal deficit with Obamacare, the president is increasing the cost of medical care for the men and women who earned it serving our nation," said Stearns, R-Ocala. "We have an obligation to fulfill the promises made to those who served in the military," Stearns said. Reps. Allen West, R-Plantation, and Tom Rooney, R-Tequesta, blasted the Obama plan in a Sunshine State News story earlier this week. Speaking for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Commander Richard Eubank has repeatedly warned that any cuts to benefits would be "strongly protested" by his organization. Congressional hearings on the Obamacare military restructuring are scheduled to begin in March. [Source: Sunshine State News Kenric Ward | Posted: 3 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Vet License Plates NY:** The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles has released an updated veterans' license plate. The plate features the U.S. flag in the background and the word "Veteran" to the left of the plate number.



The DMV says the veterans plate is available for both passenger and commercial vehicles to U.S. veterans who have vehicles registered in New York State. For veterans who have an older version of the plate and wish to upgrade, the cost to do so, including plate manufacture and document fees, is \$28.75. To obtain a veteran plate for the first time will cost, an additional \$10 is charged. Applicants are required to provide a copy of their DD-214 or discharge papers or other proof that he or she is a veteran. In addition the state of New York offers 38 other military related plates to eligible veterans. Refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled "**Vet License Plates NY**" for sample plate images, fees, and DMV order forms. [Source: <http://dmv.ny.gov/military.htm> 10 Mar 2012 ++]

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**MUPS/SSID:** Veterans know that being in the military can be hazardous to their health. The risk of facing the enemy and putting their life on the line is something soldiers face regularly. It's the nature of "going to war." Yet, there are numerous other unknown risks that are not apparent until later in life. Many veterans have symptoms which do not fit into a well-defined taxonomy of a specific disorder. Such ill-defined symptoms include headaches, memory loss, concentration difficulties, chronic fatigue, unexpected weight changes, sleep problems, joint and back pain, skin rash, diarrhea, respiration problems, dizziness, blackouts, and digestive problems. These symptoms have been commonly represented among veterans as far back as the Civil War. In fact, after every war a number of veterans experience what is known as medically unexplained physical symptoms (MUPS). These days the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), follows The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9) manual placing them in the category of Symptoms, Signs and Ill-defined Conditions (SSID). From a treatment perspective the symptoms are the body's manifestations of the veteran's experiences. The body is in a sense speaking for them.

Today, MUPS/SSID is one of the three most common health issues treated in the VA medical system (along with musculoskeletal and mental health problems). Since they are medically unexplained, treatment is focused on the symptom; the cause is unknown and therefore remains untreated. The vagueness of any cause does not mean there is not a cause, it just means the cause remains unknown. In the past a pattern of symptoms was used as a means of classifying the disorder. Studies reviewing these symptoms have noted one element which has remained a common factor: Veterans have been exposed to an exceptional set of life-threatening experiences. The unprocessed memories of those experiences that are stored in the brain contain images, beliefs, emotions, and body sensations. All aspects contribute to the body's expression of those events. Comorbid expressions can include:

- **Depression and anxiety.**
- **Gastrointestinal problems.** The number of nerve cells in the visceral area -- the gut -- is second only to the brain itself. The body's ability to monitor neurological activity in the gut is significant. When we feel threatened our gut tightens. Anxiety can contribute to a sensation of nausea or upset stomach. Veterans who are emotionally numb due to their combat trauma have difficulty sensing what the visceral part of their body is feeling, but the neurological activity produces numerous unexplained symptoms. After effective therapy that reprocesses the memories of the war experiences, those various symptoms generally disappear.
- **Chronic physical and emotional pain.** Many veterans report chronic pain after a combat deployment. Chronic physical and emotional pain can be one of the most overwhelming problems a person faces. This pain often fails to respond to normally effective treatments such as counseling or medication. Neuroscience has discovered that aspects of physical and emotional pain are stored in the brain. The brain scans of chronic pain sufferers reveal specific patterns of neurological firing in areas of the brain associated with perception, emotion and motivation. These areas of the brain are associated with emotional stress, including PTSD. The physical aspects of pain activate feelings which become a part of the pain experience. The brain's ability to change (neuroplasticity) and compensate for dysfunctional areas offers hope.

Due to the multi-dimensional aspects of pain, a number of treatment approaches have been used. They take into account the cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and physical aspects of pain. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), hypnosis, acupuncture, and biofeedback training have all been used. While Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy was originally utilized in the treatment of PTSD the neurobiological similarities with PTSD patients and chronic pain disorders has led therapists to use EMDR in the treatment of a broad range of disorders including chronic pain, anger, anxiety, and depression. Studies have found EMDR effective in the treatment of chronic pain. The use of EMDR in the treatment of phantom limb pain (PLP) has been researched in the U.S. and Europe with significant results. While EMDR will not resolve a physical deficit, it does address the unprocessed memory that is very often the cause of the phantom pain. The phantom pain is pain that existed prior to the amputation. The memory of the pain before amputation remained locked in the nervous system. These patients deal with troubling pain that theoretically should not be there. Phantom limb pain is a clear example of a pain memory. The limb or organ is removed but the memory of the pain continues to exist. EMDR is effective approach in treating pain memories thus eliminating phantom limb pain in the patient. Dr. Francine Shapiro's book Getting Past Your Past contains detailed accounts of the EMDR treatment of chronic pain, as well as self-help techniques that many people have found successful.

At Dr. Hurley's office at Soldier Center in Clarksville, TN (10 minutes from Ft. Campbell) they treat veterans with various presenting issues, PTSD, conversion disorder, traumatic brain injury (mild to moderate), dystonia (trauma related), pain (including PLP), and those ill-defined symptoms previously mentioned. First, and foremost, they provide a secure place where veterans are accepted, their presenting issues identified, and treatment coordinated with other resources the veteran has available. There are no simple answers to complicated issues, but there is effective treatment available. Make sure you and those you care about are receiving treatment that is making a difference and offering hope. Up to 12 EMDR sessions and five family therapy sessions (as needed) are offered to veterans and their families at various locations in the U.S. at no cost due to a corporate grant in support of veterans. For information contact Soldier Center at (931) 553-6981 or email: <mailto:ec.hurley@soldier-center.com> or refer to: <http://www.Soldier-Center.com>. [Source: Huffington Post E.C. Hurley, Ph.D..Retired Colonel in U.S. Army article 28 Feb 2012 ++]

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**Stolen Valor Update 61:** House representatives admonished the U.S. military at a congressional hearing 29 FEB for its inability to build a searchable online database of service members who have received medals or decorations. This lack of available public information has come under increased scrutiny in recent days because of a growing number of people who have lied about obtaining military honors for personal gain. The Stolen Valor Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2006, makes it a federal crime to lie about having received a U.S. military decoration or medal, subject to fines or imprisonment of up to six months, or both. The law's constitutionality currently is being challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court on the basis that it violates citizens' First Amendment rights. The Supreme Court heard arguments on Feb. 22 from lawyers representing Xavier Alvarez, a California public official who was sentenced to three years' probation, a \$5,000 fine and community service for telling an audience that he had received the Congressional Medal of Honor. Alvarez has never served in the military.

The congressional hearing, put on by the House Oversight Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations, primarily concerned the flip side of the Stolen Valor Act: how to ensure that recipients of valid military decorations are being properly documented. The military currently does not provide a single online database containing searchable records of award recipients, though Military Times, an independent media source not connected to the government, has a partial database. Chairman Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) said false valor extends beyond "some guy trying to impress a girl in a bar" to the issue of veteran employment, adding companies seeking to hire decorated former service members have no efficient, trustworthy means to verify that

applicants are telling the truth. “There is absolutely no excuse, in the year 2012, that the entire military personnel system cannot immediately find and correct errors and omissions in military service records,” Joseph Davis, director of public affairs for Veterans of Foreign Wars, said in his opening remarks. Chaffetz blamed a “lack of leadership within the Pentagon” for the military’s inability to properly organize a database of award recipients. “Collectively, the Department of Defense is failing,” he said. “They are failing to recognize the problem. They are failing to recognize the need.”

Part of the problem, according to Congress, is what ranking member Rep. John Tierney (D-MA) called the “decentralizing” of the military. As Chaffetz explained, the subcommittee had requested one witness from the Defense Department and wound up with four, including one representative each from the Army, Air Force and Navy and one from Defense’s personnel office. Each branch of the military has an independent data entry operation. Though the witnesses from Defense agreed that preventing false valor should be an important goal of the military, they emphasized that trying to incorporate all available information about every service member who has received a decoration into a single virtual database would stretch the department’s resources too thin. “Any system as massive as the Department of Defense’s personnel system requires constant and vigilant improvement,” said Lernes Hebert, director of officer and enlisted personnel management for Defense. Hebert added that while online personnel record access is relatively easy for former members of the military, a flaw with the system is “we don’t display in a layman’s simple format how to access these records if you’re not a veteran.” “A database of awards is an achievable goal, and a worthy one,” Military Times Hall of Valor curator Doug Sterner said during the opening statements of his testimony. “It’s data entry. It’s not rocket science,” he added during questioning. [Source: GovtExec.com Andrew Lapin 29 Feb 2012 ++]



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**Dover Air Base Mortuary Update 02:** Retired Army Gen. John Abizaid said 28 FEB that the mishandling of remains at Dover Port Mortuary — which included dumping in a landfill the incinerated remains of some 9/11 victims — are not shocking given the lack of command authority and structure at the facility. Abizaid headed a subcommittee of the Defense Health Board charged with examining the mortuary’s policies and procedures. The subcommittee, which released its report on 28 FEB, was formed after an Air Force Inspector General report last fall, responding to whistleblowers’ complaints, found several incidents in which servicemembers’ remains were being handled improperly at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Among the initial findings: body parts packaged in plastic bags were mislabeled and lost; cremated remains were thrown in a Virginia landfill; and one fallen Marine’s mangled arm was sawed off, without family notification, so the body would fit in the casket. Background information provided with the subcommittee’s report indicated that unidentifiable remains from the 9/11 Pentagon attack and the crash site in Shanksville, Pa., were cremated, sealed in containers and given

to a biomedical waste disposal contractor. The contractor incinerated those containers and dumped the residual material in a landfill, according to the report.

The subcommittee made 20 recommendations to address problems with command, oversight, policy, operations and workflow. It did not look at any of the disciplinary actions related to the complaints. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said in a statement that he has appointed Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey to work with service leaders to implement the recommendations. "My continuing promise to all the families of our fallen heroes is that every step will be taken to protect the honor and respect that their loved ones richly deserve," Panetta said. "Having been to Dover, I consider this a sacred place with a sacred responsibility." While the Air Force and the Department of Defense have made strides to fix many of the underlying issues since the first allegations, Abizaid said, problems remain. "These problems need to be corrected right away," Abizaid said. Abizaid focused mainly on the command structure and lack of oversight as the source of the problems, but the report also zeroed in on training, which the subcommittee called "insufficient across mortuary affairs." The report noted:

- No special training is required for the commander of Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations, and training for the servicemembers and others who work with families and the mortuary varies by service. Additionally, there are no policies on who is qualified to perform certain embalming and restoration functions.
- The subcommittee recommends increasing and standardizing training for service liaisons, case managers and casualty assistance officers across the services, and giving special training to the commander.
- The command should create a plan for receiving large numbers of casualties in a short period of time, because the mortuary is not prepared to handle large numbers of remains arriving at once — whether from natural disaster or a large-scale military event.
- To address communications failures, the subcommittee recommends creating standardized forms for use by all services and giving all available information to the person working with the family of the deceased during the initial notification.
- And while the mortuary has a crematory it can use for some remains, the subcommittee recommended the mortuary not perform full-body cremations. "We think that it's a bad idea for the Department of Defense to be in the cremation business," Abizaid said.

Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley lauded the whistleblowers who brought the wrongdoing to light in this case. "The individuals who reported the allegations in this matter performed an important service to the Air Force and the nation," and they continue their work at Dover, Donley said. A report on reprisals and disciplinary action taken against the whistleblowers, brought to the Air Force's attention by an Office of Special Counsel report, is expected in March. Donley also said he was not previously aware that some remains of 9/11 victims had been thrown in a landfill, but did not directly address the incident. "We certainly expressed our regret for the additional grief caused to families of loved ones whose remains were handled in perhaps a less-than-ideal or by some measures even an inappropriate standard prior to 2008," he said.

On 2 MAR a former mortuary supervisor Quinton Keel who in November was cited for "gross mismanagement" at Dover Air Force Base, Del., has resigned as an employee for the Air Force. Air Force officials at Dover confirmed that the base mortuary's former division director, no longer works for the Air Force, according to the Washington Post. After an 18-month investigation, Keel was accused of ordering a deceased Marine's body to be mutilated. He was also accused of lying to investigators as well as retaliating against subordinates who complained of practices at the mortuary. Keel was subsequently stripped of his position at the mortuary only to be reassigned to another post at the base. His reassignment fueled outrage among investigators and veterans. According to officials referenced in the Washington Post, Keel cleared his desk Monday after handing in his resignation.



**Pentagon on Sept. 11.**

Officials at an Air Force mortuary pushed to have some cremated remains from victims of the Sept. 11 attacks buried at sea, but they were overruled by higher-ups in the military who insisted on a plan that resulted in the ashes being dumped in a landfill, The Washington Post reported, based on accounts from a mortuary official. William D. Zwicharowski, a civilian who served as interim director of the mortuary at Dover Air Force Base in 2002, told the Post that he was still pained by the outcome and wished he had resisted the order more strenuously. “We fought the fight, but I had zero clout back then,” he said. “The decision was made at a higher level. Had I had the experience I have now, 10 years later, I would have stood up and probably just not done it. Zwicharowski, who still works at Dover, is one of four whistleblowers there who have reported other problems at the mortuary to investigators, including accounts of missing body parts and lax management. He is the first one directly involved in the handling of the Sept. 11 victims’ remains to speak out publicly about what transpired. [Source: Stars & Stripes Jennifer Hlad article 28 Feb 2012 ++]

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**MCAS Futenma Okinawa Update 03:** The U.S. and Japan might be moving forward with plans to relocate thousands of Marines off of Okinawa, but it will be years before those troops could be stationed on Guam, according to the Navy and the territorial government there. At a minimum, the U.S. military will take about two years to decide where on Guam to build needed training ranges for the Marines, and construction work would take longer, the Navy’s Joint Guam Program Office said. Meanwhile, big questions remain on how and when the territory’s sewage treatment facilities will be upgraded to support about 4,700 more servicemembers and a possible increase in military families. The U.S. and Japan began hashing out a new agreement on the military realignment earlier this month in an attempt to jump start the redeployment of Okinawa Marines to Guam. The effort was held up for years because of Okinawan opposition to building a new Marine Corps air station on the island as a replacement for the Futenma air station. Now, both countries say they will not wait for a solution before relocating Marine forces to the U.S. territory, which sits about 1,400 miles to the southeast Okinawa.

Capt. Dan Cuff, director of the Guam office, said training ranges are needed before Marines can be moved to the island — and are necessary no matter how many servicemembers the U.S. and Japan eventually decide to station there. The Navy has just started a new environmental study to determine where to build the live-fire ranges, where the incoming Marines could practice with pistols, machine guns and grenades. The military’s first choice to build ranges on ancestral land caused public outcry and triggered a lawsuit by citizens groups. Last year, the Navy announced it would study the project and consider other potential properties. That study should be completed in early 2014, when the Navy will announce a final location. It is now considering land along the eastern Guam coast near the ancestral land known as Pagat or in the south where the U.S. military already has an 8,000-acre naval magazine, according to Cuff. Once a location is chosen, the timeframe for completing the ranges will depend on what construction site preparation is needed and also the overall Marine redeployment plans being worked out now

by the U.S. and Japan, Cuff said. "At this point, I would not want to speculate how long it would be," he said. "We do not want to build anything before it is needed."

Senior defense officials and diplomats from the United States and Japan continued negotiations in Tokyo this week on the new agreement to reduce the U.S. forces on Okinawa and build up Marine forces on Guam. Details of the new arrangement will likely be released in the coming months, Japan Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said during a visit to Okinawa on Monday. Meanwhile, most of the preparatory construction work planned for Guam is on hold, including about \$700 million in funding from Japan for upgrading wastewater treatment and other utilities in advance of the Marines arriving, according to Cuff. Congress froze funding for military build-up projects on the island until the U.S. military's realignment plans can be further studied, the Department of Defense provides a master realignment plan and the Marine Corps weighs in on its ideal force structure in the region. The Senate has said it plans to order an independent review this year of the plans to shift Marines off Okinawa, but it remains unclear when the other congressional requirements may be met.

With congressional requirements and bilateral negotiations looming, the length of time needed for Guam to get prepared to host Marines remains undecided, Cuff said. "Putting any type of timeline or an expected date would just be inappropriate at this point," he said. Guam Sen. Judi Guthertz, chairwoman of the island legislature's military build-up committee, said she believes the island could build the training facilities and upgrade the utilities within three years. "I don't think that would be very difficult to achieve," Guthertz said. In the past, the training ranges had caused controversy on the territory, but the decision to consider land on or around the existing naval magazine could avoid widespread public opposition and delays for the project, she said. However, the Navy is also considering parcels of land on the eastern coast that are earmarked for return to Chamorro residents, who are the original inhabitants of Guam, Guthertz said. "They are still going to have problems with respect to that part of it," she said. [Source: Stars & Stripes Travis J. Tritten article 28 Feb 2012 ++]

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## **VA Fraud Waste & Abuse Update 44:**

- **Bradford ME** - Angus Brasslett Jr. has been sentenced on 27 FEB to two years of probation for lying about other sources of income while collecting benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. He also was ordered to pay a \$500 fine and nearly \$7,000 in restitution. Prosecutors say the 64-year-old Brasslett earned extra money selling scrap metal to at least five different recycling businesses but did not report it to VA officials. He waived indictment and pleaded guilty to theft of government property on 22 NOV. Prosecutors say Brasslett received a 40 percent disability rating and received VA pension benefits. He had faced up to 10 years in prison.
- **Amarillo TX** - A federal magistrate sentenced a man 1 MAR to five years' probation for bilking the Department of Veterans Affairs out of more than \$40,000 in benefits over six years, court records show. U.S. Magistrate Clinton E. Averitte also ordered Richard Lowery to pay \$40,972 in restitution to the VA after the defendant pleaded guilty to one count of theft from the government in November, court records show. In April 2005, Lowery applied for disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs because he was homeless and unemployed, the agreement said. The agency, which approved his application, told Lowery from 2005 to 2007 that he had to inform the VA if he obtained a job, the agreement said. VA officials were informed in June that Lowery had been employed full time since November 2007 and never notified the department, according to the document.
- **Columbia SC** - Eleven military veterans have been indicted for filing fraudulent travel claims against the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The men claimed they lived outside of Columbia so they could file

reimbursements for their travel to visit the Dorn VA Medical Center in Columbia, U.S. Attorney Bill Nettles said. The men claimed to have traveled from towns such as Greenville, Enoree, Spartanburg and Mullins. The 11 have been charged with making false claims against the United States and fraudulently obtaining money through a program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The maximum penalty is six years in prison and \$350,000 fine. Those charged and the amount of money they claimed are: Kirby Anderson, 55, \$9,337 · James Baker, 55, \$5,356 · Ricky Byrd, 50, \$7,637 · Craig Colvin, 39, \$7,880 · John Dowdle, 53, \$3,170 · Larry Ford, 53, \$1,631 · Quentin Gunter, 39, \$6,539 · Sam Harris, 56, \$5,579 · Dennis Moore, 62, \$11,851 · Alfonza Parker, 39, \$5,961 · Gerald Randolph, 57, \$14,907.

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**VA Caregiver Program Update 15:** Caring for a Veteran with an illness, injury or disability can take up a lot of time and energy. At times, your caregiving responsibilities may leave you feeling like you have no time left to charge your own batteries. Below are some tips to help you stay strong and attend to your own needs, which will keep you feeling healthier and in control.

**1. Ask for help.**

- Ask a friend to make dinner or a relative to help out for a little bit each week.
- Make a list of ways others can help. When a friend asks, “What can I do?” have them choose from the list.
- Don’t wait until you can’t handle it any more. Ask for and accept help on a regular basis.
- Even if asking for help is hard, find at least one person or resource you can go to for help right away.

**2. Express your feelings** – Feeling frustrated, sad, angry or depressed is normal. You have a stressful job as a Family Caregiver. When you’re feeling this way:

- Write your feelings down in a journal, or send an e-mail to a friend.
- Talk about your feelings – with the Veteran you care for, a friend, relative, or counselor. You can also call VA’s Caregiver Support Line, 1-855-260-3274, to talk to a caring professional.
- If there’s a song that expresses how you feel, give yourself a chance to sing it out loud.
- Find other creative ways to express what you feel so you don’t keep it bottled up inside.

**3. Stay focused on your health.**

- It can be hard to eat a healthy diet, and to get regular physical activity and plenty of rest. To help stay on track, give yourself a goal: “This week I’ll take a 15-minute walk on three separate days.”
- Learn about stress reduction techniques and make a point of applying them.
- Don’t put off your own medical care. Talk with your doctor about getting regular vaccinations and make sure you receive your annual checkups.

**4. Learn about the Veteran’s condition.**

- Find out about the illness, injury or disability affecting the Veteran you care for so that you are not surprised when something new happens.
- If you can, provide information to family and friends so they will know how best to support you.

**5. Avoid isolation.**

- Pursue a hobby or take a class.
- Join a reading or discussion group.
- Become part of a community – whether in-person or online.

**6. Talk with professionals.**

- Contact a VA social worker or your local social services agency to help you find out about Caregiver resources.
- Call VA's Family Caregiver Support Line (1-855-260-3274).
- Contact your local Caregiver Support Coordinator, who you can find by calling the Caregiver Support Line or visiting [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov).
- Talk with an attorney or legal aid service about legal issues. Many areas have free or low-cost legal aid available.
- Talk with an accountant about finances.
- Find a counselor or therapist to help you deal with feelings.

**7. Look for signs of burnout.**

- Not taking care of your own health, feeling lonely, crying or losing your temper more than usual are all signs that you may need to seek help.
- Take an honest look at your use of sedatives and alcohol. Have a doctor or counselor help you evaluate your use.
- Find someone to talk to if you feel discouraged, frustrated, trapped or over-burdened.
- Seek professional help if you are depressed or thinking about suicide.
- Reach out to VA's Caregiver Support Line for help (1-855-260-3274).

**8. Take time for yourself.**

- Consider placing the Veteran you care for in respite care, home care or adult day health care so you can take a needed break.
- Schedule regular time for yourself. Start small – plan to spend half an hour three times a week away from caregiving.
- Even if you only have a few minutes free – give yourself a much-needed break. Check out our resource on Making the Most of Your Limited Time for ideas.
- Consider taking a vacation.
- Be creative! Ask for help from friends or relatives and use community services to give yourself some time away.

**9. Give yourself a treat.**

- Buy yourself a present, such as a favorite magazine or a new shirt.
- Put your feet up and read a book in your favorite chair.
- Order dinner from your favorite restaurant and have it delivered.
- Buy yourself flowers.
- Go to your local library or bookstore.
- Go to the movies and order your favorite snack.

**10. Investigate local services.**

- Find out if meals are delivered to home-bound individuals or seniors in your area.
- Contact the Veteran's primary care provider or social worker, your Caregiver Support Coordinator or the local senior center, to help you find resources.
- Find out about home health care, adult day health care or assisted living facilities. Even if you do not want to use one now, you may need to in the future.

Staying focused and fully charged is one of the most important things you can do for you and for the Veteran you care for. Caregiving can take a lot out of you. Remember to put some of that back in. [Source: [http://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/Caring\\_for\\_Yourself.pdf](http://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/Caring_for_Yourself.pdf) Feb 2012 ++]

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**Vietnam Vets Update 03:** On 26 FEB Vietnam War veteran Ernest "Ernie" Steele Jr, 64, described his Vietnam experience to Salisbury Maryland Daily Times reporter Susan Canfora. Here is what he had to say when interviewed: In basic training in the 1960s, new, raw Marines were sometimes roughed up by drill sergeants who beat them or kicked them. "They shouldn't be allowed to do that," Alice Faye Steele said, shaking her head as she listened to her husband talk about his days training at Parris Island, S.C. "But it isn't all bad. They have a reason for it," Steele said. He has thought about this. "They do it so that, if you're going to break, you do it there, at the base, not over there in battle," he said. Steele, a Salisbury native who enlisted as a teenager, went to Vietnam and then volunteered for two more tours during his four years in the U.S. Marine Corps. Over there, he almost broke a few times.



**Ernest "Ernie" Steele Jr.**

At 5 feet, 6 inches tall, he only weighed 111 pounds when he joined. Usually, the Marines only accepted men at least 6 feet tall, big men, but troops were so badly needed he wasn't denied. Some of the guys made fun of him, saying he would never make it, and sometimes it nagged at him, but he persevered. "I had to," he said, sitting at the kitchen table in the home he shares with his wife of one year and their dog. "I had a lot of will. I didn't want to be rejected. I didn't want to go home as a failure." Following eight weeks at Parris Island, he was sent to Camp Lejeune, N.C., for three months at Infantry Training Camp, then attended school at Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he learned the trade of mechanic for 155 Howitzer cannons, which he worked on and fired. In September 1966, Steele landed in Vietnam and was there until Dec. 31, 1968, for 13 months the first time, then two more six-month tours following leaves. He wanted to volunteer for a fourth tour but was denied. "I volunteered to go back because I had a little vendetta, I guess you would call it. I wasn't very happy with the North Vietnamese," he said. His cousin, Jackie Smith, a year his junior and close to him, was killed shortly after going into the Army. He joined the military about six months after Steele. Smith's birthday was March 1. He was killed March 7, angering Steele.

In Vietnam, Steele loaded, shot and worked on Howitzers, but was never injured. He was, though, frightened, especially on duty at a listening post in Dong Ha, Vietnam, about 100 yards from camp, carefully trying to pick up sounds of enemy activity. He had only a pistol and radio, and no light, when he received a radio message that a Bengal tiger was approaching him. "That was one of the scariest times. He could see me and he could smell me,"

Steele said, recalling he put his ammunition on a pile of sand bags and trembled. "Finally he went away. He just walked away. I sat there shaking for about 20 minutes," he said. Leaving his post wasn't an option, wasn't allowed. "I have been shot at, mortared. I've had grenades thrown at me but I think that tiger was one of the scariest times," he said. He was 18, a young man who had barely been out of Salisbury, when he first arrived in Vietnam. At times he was homesick. He waded through deep rice patties in water chest high, holding his rifle high over his head, but he never regretted joining the Marines. Every day, his mother wrote to him, and followed his travels using a full-page color map of Vietnam published in The Daily Times in 1968. "In her letters, she said how much she missed me," he said, recalling she slid sticks of Wrigley's Spearmint Gum in the envelopes. Because he had mentioned the water tasted bad, she mailed packages of cherry and grape Kool-Aid. "I mixed it with rice whiskey," he said, laughing.

When he came back to the United States, he arrived in Baltimore and encountered Vietnamese War protesters. "There were hippies, and when they saw you in uniform they would cuss at you at the airport, on buses," he said. Some returning soldiers during the Vietnam War era were spit on, but not Steele. "I would be locked up if they did that," he said. Following the military, his career was varied and included jobs as a carpenter and as a route salesman for UniFirst Corps and Mrs. Ihrie's Potato Chips and at Custom Decorative Mouldings. In 2009, when he was 62, he was hired as a correctional officer at Eastern Correctional Institute in Westover and was the oldest student at the training academy. He worked there for two years, and left in 2011. Now he and his wife are retired and enjoy shuffleboard and board games at home. "With everything I went through, I didn't have it as bad as the infantrymen," he said. He was exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange and thinks it might be responsible for frequent congestion. He recently was fitted for hearing aids and believes the damage is the result of the sound of huge guns being fired -- guns that could shoot more than nine miles. Steele was awarded a Naval Achievement medal for "consistently having a high level of efficiency," a National Defense Service medal, a Vietnamese Service Medal, a Vietnamese Campaign Medal, a Good Conduct Medal and a Combat Action Ribbon. Still, he doesn't consider himself a hero. "No, I'm not," he said, shaking his head. "Yes, I served my country, but the men who died, who lost limbs, who lost their minds, they are heroes. Not me." [Source: Daily Times Susan Canfora article 26 Feb 2012 ++]

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**WWII Vets Update 15:** Van Thomas Barfoot, a retired Army colonel and World War II Medal of Honor recipient who gained national attention in his fight to keep the U.S. flag flying in his front yard, died 2 MAR in a Henrico County hospital as a result of a fall at his home in suburban Richmond, VA. He was 92. In 2009, Col. Barfoot made headlines after he erected a 21-foot flagpole at his Sussex Square residence without the permission of his homeowners association. The association, which allowed flags to be flown on angled poles attached to houses, ordered it removed and threatened legal action when he refused. The ensuing furor drew the support of two senators, a former Virginia governor, other leaders and veterans before the association backed down. "Col. Barfoot was a remarkable man who demonstrated tremendous bravery in military service to his country during three wars," said Sen. Mark R. Warner, D-Va.



Col. Van Thomas Barfoot

"He was a very selfless man, a fiercely independent man," said his daughter, Margaret Nicholls of Henrico. Although the military was a large part of his life, "that wasn't him," she said. "He was all about family and faith and honor. He believed in serving in the community. He was always out in the community." The Edinburg, Miss., native enlisted in the Army in 1940. By late 1941, he was a sergeant serving in Quantico. When his unit was deactivated in 1943, he shipped to Europe as part of the 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division. Col. Barfoot earned the Bronze Star for valor for his part in the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. He earned the Silver Star for his role in the invasion of mainland Italy in December 1943. He was a 24-year-old technical sergeant when his unit, which landed at Anzio in late January 1944, reached Carano in May. He led patrols that familiarized him with the mined area in front of the German positions

During an action that left his squad isolated and communications cut off, he advanced alone on 23 MAY 1944 through a minefield, crawling to a German machine gun nest, which he destroyed with a hand grenade. He took out another machine gun nest with his machine gun and received the surrender of a third German machine gun crew. Later that day, he borrowed a bazooka and "took up an exposed position directly in front of three advancing Mark VI tanks," his Medal of Honor citation says. "From a distance of 75 yards his first shot destroyed the track of the leading tank, effectively disabling it, while the other two changed direction toward the flank. "He continued onward into enemy terrain and destroyed a recently abandoned German fieldpiece with a demolition charge placed in the breach. "While returning to his platoon position, Sgt. Barfoot, though greatly fatigued by his Herculean efforts, assisted two of his seriously wounded men 1,700 yards to a position of safety." During his efforts, he had killed eight and captured 17 German soldiers.

He later served in the Korean War and in Vietnam, where he served as deputy chief of Army aviation and earned 11 Air Medals in less than two years. He also received the Purple Heart with clusters. He retired as a colonel and senior Army adviser to the Virginia Army National Guard in 1974. The Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Health Care Center at the Richmond Virginia McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center was named in his honor, and he was active there. [Source: Richmond-Times Dispatch article 8 Mar 2012 ++]

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## World War II Posters (01)





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**POW/MIA Update 15:** The following MIA/POW's have been identified. For additional information on identifications since 1997 and the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1420 :

#### OEF/OIF

**Staff Sgt. Ahmed K. al-Taie**, U.S. Army, was lost on Oct. 23, 2006 while serving in Iraq as a translator for the U.S. military. On Feb. 25, the armed forces medical examiner at the Dover Port Mortuary in Dover, Del., positively identified the remains of Altaie, of Ann Arbor, Mich. He was assigned to the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Divisional Training Center, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. On Dec. 11, 2006, a casualty review board declared Altaie "missing – captured" after his disappearance in Baghdad, Iraq on Oct. 23, 2006. Altaie was the final missing soldier and casualty to be recovered from the Operation Iraqi

#### Korea

- **Master Sgt. Elwood Green**, U.S. Army, E Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division was captured on Nov. 28, 1950 and died in 1951 in a POW Camp in North Korea. He was accounted for on Mar. 1, 2012.

- **Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Richard L. Harris**, U.S. Army, L Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was captured on Nov. 30, 1950 and died in Jan. 1951 in a POW Camp in North Korea. He was accounted for on Feb. 29, 2012.
- **Cpl. Robert I. Wax**, U.S. Army, of Battery A, 555<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, was lost on Aug. 11, 1950 near Pongam-ni, South Korea. He was accounted for on Feb. 23, 2012 .
- **Cpl. James N. Larkin**, U.S. Army, C Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, was captured on Feb. 11, 1951, and died in captivity in April 1951. He was accounted for on Feb. 21, 2012.
- **Cpl. Henry F. Johnson**, U.S. Army, L Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was captured on Nov. 25 1950, and died in captivity in 1951. He was accounted for on Feb. 15, 2012.
- **Pvt. Arthur W. Leiviska**, U.S. Army, L Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, who was captured in 1951 and died in captivity on April 20, 1951 He was accounted for on Feb. 3, 2012.
- **Cpl. Dick E. Osborne**, U.S. Army, L Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, was lost on Nov. 2, 1950, near Unsan, North Korea. He was accounted for on Jan. 27, 2012.
- **Pfc. Frank P. Jennings**, U.S. Army, E Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was lost near Jeon-Gog, South Korea on April 25, 1951. He was accounted for on Jan. 18, 2012.
- **Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Edris A. Viers**, U.S. Army, Battery A, 555<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, was lost near Pongam-ni, South Korea on Aug. 12, 1950. He was accounted for on Jan. 17, 2012.

#### World War II

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Charles R. Moritz**, U.S. Army Air Forces, of the 496<sup>th</sup> Fighter Training Group was lost on June 7, 1944 when his P-51 C Mustang crashed near Goxhill airfield, England. He was accounted for on Feb. 26, 2012.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Emil T. Wasilewski**, U.S. Army Air Forces, was lost when his B-17G was shot down on Sept. 13, 1944 during a bombing mission over Merseburg, Germany. He was accounted for on Feb. 11, 2012.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Charles R. Moritz**, U.S. Army Air Forces, of the 496<sup>th</sup> Fighter Training Group was lost on June 7, 1944 when his P-51 C Mustang crashed near Goxhill airfield, England. He was accounted for on Feb. 26, 2012.

[Source: [http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted\\_for/](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for/) 9 Mar 2012 ++]

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**DoD Defense Health Agency:** (Note: Military Times Copyrighted material - Not authorized for reproduction on any publicly accessible website or website accessed newsletter . Forwarding via email in personal communications is authorized.)

A proposal to combine the administration and management of the military health system (MHS) into a Defense Health Agency would trim just \$50 to \$100 million from the Defense Department’s budget, but bigger savings would be realized as operations become more efficient, the department’s assistant secretary for health affairs said Friday. The Pentagon delivered its plan for overhauling the military health system to Congress on 2 MAR. It aims to save money by eliminating duplication of processes and streamlining administration. Under the plan, the Pentagon would:

- Create a Defense Health Agency led by a three-star officer who would have oversight of Tricare, military pharmacy programs, health care support, information technology, logistics, acquisitions, training and education, and research and development.

- Appoint managers in areas with multiple military treatment facilities who would create more cost-efficient and organized care across the board in those markets.
- Transfer the joint command responsible for military treatment facilities in the Washington, D.C., area to the Defense Health Agency and make it into a directorate.

According to Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs and director of the TRICARE Management Activity, the Defense Department spends nearly \$16.4 billion each year on care provided to beneficiaries through private providers. Health services provided at military treatment facilities cost the government much less — \$8.2 billion annually — and beneficiaries need to be encouraged to return to these facilities, 25 percent of which are “underutilized,” Woodson said. Part of the new Defense Health Agency mission would be to encourage beneficiaries to return to military treatment facilities and use military pharmacies and the mail order pharmacy program, he said. Market managers and the Defense Health Agency would work hand-in-hand to ensure that appointments are available at military treatment facilities and that they are fully staffed, he said. “If their [physician] is gone and we send those individuals to the private sector, we know, based on data, that once we send them out they don’t come back,” Woodson said. The military services will retain their individual surgeons general and medical commands, and be responsible for operational medicine, treatment, personnel and military facilities. The new oversight agency would administer services that are common to the three medical commands.

The proposal comes as the Defense Department opens a new Defense Health Headquarters in Falls Church, Va., a 68,000-square-foot building that will contain offices of the assistant secretary, the three surgeons general and Tricare. Woodson said the Government Accountability Office and Congress have a combined 300 days to review the proposal. He said the changes will enhance patient care and save tax dollars. “The Defense Health Agency is not just [Tricare Management Activity] on steroids,” Woodson said. “It really is a functional, thoughtful redesign focusing on the activities that are common to services and bring in line the administrative structure.” Woodson is scheduled to testify on military health care issues before the House Appropriations defense subcommittee on March 8. [Source: AirForceTimes Patricia Kime | Posted 2 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Vet Jobs Update 54:** (Note: Military Times Copyrighted material - Not authorized for reproduction on any publicly accessible website or website accessed newsletter. Forwarding via email in personal communications is authorized.)

Programs aimed at helping Iraq and Afghanistan veterans find jobs may be paying off, as the federal government reported a dramatic drop in the February unemployment rate for people who separated from the service since 2001. While the nation’s overall unemployment rate remained static at 8.3 percent, the jobless rate for Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans fell in February to 7.6 percent, down from 9.1 percent in January and 12.5 percent in February 2011. The drop is so fast and so dramatic that it could be a statistical anomaly because veterans make up such a small part of the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ monthly employment survey. One reason to suspect a statistical blip is that the unemployment rate for female veterans separated from the service since 2011 has been in the double digits for several months, more than twice the jobless rate for men of the same generation. In the February report, the jobless rate for recent female veterans fell from 17.3 percent in January to 7.4 percent in February, putting the women’s rate slightly below the rate for men. For veterans of all generations, the February unemployment rate was 7 percent, down from 7.5 percent in January.

Federal, state and local governments, and private industry have undertaken broCA), an Air Force veteran who served during the 1991 Gulf War, introduced a bill aimed at using federal authority over licensing to help more veterans get jobs. His Veterans Skills to Jobs Act, H.R.4155, would require federal agencies to treat relevant military training as the equivalent of federal licensing and certification requirement, which he believes would put more veterans to work faster. Denham’s bill would help in fields that require federally issued occupational licenses, including aerospace, communications and maritime jobs. In a statement, Denham said the federal government

“should be an example to the states that are looking for ways to improve veteran transitions.” “America is blessed with the strongest, most capable and professional military in the world,” he said. “Unfortunately, even though many of our veterans have the training to perform a wide variety of occupations, the private sector and even other departments of the federal government do not recognize this training.” [Source: NavyTimes Rick Maze article 9 Mar 2012++]

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**GI Bill Update 111:** (Note: Military Times Copyrighted material - Not authorized for reproduction on any publicly accessible website or website accessed newsletter . Forwarding via email in personal communications is authorized.)

A Connecticut Democrat proposes dramatically expanding veterans’ GI Bill eligibility by eliminating a time limit on using some education benefits. The Restore the Promise of the GI Bill Act, introduced by Rep. Christopher Murphy on 5 MAR, would remove from law the requirement that Montgomery GI Bill benefits must be used within 10 years after leaving the service. It would not change Post-9/11 GI Bill time limits, which require a veteran to use benefits within 15 years of leaving the military. The Montgomery GI Bill, which for active-duty members requires a \$1,200 contribution to receive benefits, is still available today for service members who enroll during their initial military training. Benefits that never expire could make the Montgomery GI Bill, with flat-rate payments, more attractive to some people than the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which is free and generally pays more money. Murphy’s bill, H.R.4140, was referred to the House veterans’ affairs and armed services committees. Murphy, a three-term lawmaker, does not serve on either panel, but he is hoping to get other lawmakers interested in supporting the idea, said his spokesman, Ben Marter.

The basic idea would be to allow anyone who has not used their full 36 months of Montgomery GI Bill entitlement another chance to use those benefits regardless of how long they have been out of the service. This is not a new idea. A provision of the Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, enacted last year and in the process of being limited, would provide one year of Montgomery GI Bill benefits to about 100,000 veterans to help them get learn a skill that could lead to immediate employment. Eligibility for this benefit would be limited to unemployed veterans 35 or older. In a statement, Murphy said the unemployment rate for veterans in Connecticut is about 9 percent, “and that is just unacceptable. By eliminating the deadline for veterans to access their GI Bill education benefits, we can open the door for older veterans to go back to school to gain new skills to help them succeed in the 21st century workforce.” Murphy’s office credits a Vietnam veteran, George Beebe of Cheshire, Conn., for the idea. Beebe, who spent 11 years in the Marine Corps and 10 in the Army National Guard, decided at the age of 56 to become a locksmith, and wanted to use his GI Bill benefits to pay for classes only to learn his eligibility had expired. “I was shocked when I was told I wasn’t eligible for any assistance with school costs because of the 10-year limit,” Beebe said in a statement. “After 20 years of service in the Marine Corps and Army, that just didn’t seem right.” [Source: ArmyTimes Rick Maze article 6 Mar 2012 ++]

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**GI Bill Update 112:** Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and 13 other senators are urging the Department of Veterans Affairs to get trademark protection for the term, GI Bill. By trademarking the term, they hope to reduce the chance the phrase could be used in deceptive marketing by some colleges and universities. In a press release, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) a proponent of the measure, said, "Recent investigations by the Government Accountability Office and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions found that many for-profit colleges and universities use predatory recruiting practices and false advertising to encourage prospective students to enroll, despite having low student success rates and high costs. Many of these ads specifically target veterans. Trademarking the phrase 'GI Bill' would help bring this to an end by allowing the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the phrase is only being used to provide impartial and comprehensive information about these benefits." The senators wrote a letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki expressing their concern with the way the phrase is being

used. The government currently has trademarks for the terms Social Security and Medicare, according to the Federal Times. But, how common are government trademarks? Deborah Cohn, commissioner for trademarks at the Patent and Trademark Office, discussed the issue of government trademarks on the Federal Drive with Tom Temin. [Source: Federal News Radio 1500 AM article 9 Mar 2012 ++]

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**Veteran Support Organizations (06):** The Veterans of foreign Wars (VFW) offers many of the same services as The American Legion, but membership is limited to those who served in conflicts overseas. The criterion creates a bond among members because they share similar experiences, explains Jerry Newberry, director of communications at the VFW. This is becoming increasingly important as more troops are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and feel alone. He explains that when battle veterans meet others who can relate to their experiences, they often find it easier to transition out of the military. “They don’t feel as though there’s no one who understands what they’ve been through,” he says. It also can provide encouragement as veterans see others who have switched successfully into civilian life. Though membership is limited, the VFW will help any veteran who comes to them, regardless of when or where they served. Veterans can reach out through the website or find a local post to ask for assistance. “There are thousands of veterans out there who have entitlements due them, and they are not taking advantage of them simply because they haven’t asked,” Newberry explains. The VFW reaches out to former military members to encourage them to talk to a service officer who could help them receive their VA benefits. The organization also offers its own help programs such as one-time financial grants for emergent needs.

Veterans who require financial assistance can contact the national office to apply for aid. Newberry encourages veterans who need anything to reach out: The VFW will find the right program and the right fit for them. If, for whatever reason, veterans fail to receive the help they need at one level of the VFW, they should try the next one, he states. Newberry adds that it can be difficult to engage people who have no trust in the system, but he hopes to educate them about available resources and how they can access assistance. The VFW’s legislative work also is important. During the past decades it has pushed major pieces of veterans legislation through Congress. It began working on a new GI Bill even before 9/11. Newberry says that the last few years have been good with administrations mindful of passing legislation that benefits troops and veterans. But as the wars wind down, that support already is changing. Currently, the VFW actively is fighting what it calls “10 for 10” because elected officials are looking to cut 10 specific military/veterans benefits to pay for 10 years of war, meaning that those who bore the physical and mental burdens now also will pay the financial costs.

Newberry says veterans and their organizations should not be alone in this fight, and all Americans who believe veterans should receive what they have earned need to speak up. “Everyone says ‘I support the troops. I love our veterans,’” he states. “Lip service is cheap.” Instead, people can take five minutes out of a month—or even a year—to take a tangible step toward supporting these groups. One of the biggest problems facing veterans today is unemployment. Even those who have jobs often are underemployed. The VFW sponsors a job bank called **VetJobs** where users can search for jobs and find other employment tools. Another organization exists to address this issue along with educational concerns. For additional information on the VFW refer to <http://www.vfw.org> and <http://www.vetjobs.com> or call (816) 756-3390. [Source: AFCRA Veterans Focus Rita Boland article Nov 2011 ++]

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**Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule:** Following is the current schedule of Congressional hearings and markups pertaining to the veteran community. Congressional hearings are the principal formal method by which committees collect and analyze information in the early stages of legislative policymaking. Hearings

usually include oral testimony from witnesses, and questioning of the witnesses by members of Congress. When a U.S. congressional committee meets to put a legislative bill into final form it is referred to as a mark-up. Veterans are encouraged to contact members of these committees prior to the event listed and provide input on what they want their legislator to do at the event. Membership of each committee and their contact info can be found at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/committees.tt?commid=svete>:

**March 15, 2012.** The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies will hold a FY13 VA Budget hearing. 10 A.M.; 124 Dirksen

**March 21, 2012. (formerly February 29, 2012).** The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies will now hold the FY 2013 Budget hearing on March 21, 2012. 2:00 P.M.; Location: TBD

**March 21, 2012.** Joint Hearing: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will hold a joint hearing to receive the Legislative Presentations of the Military Order of the Purple Heart; Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America; Non Commissioned Officers Association; American Ex-Prisoners of War; Vietnam Veterans of America; Wounded Warrior Project; National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs and Retired Enlisted Association. 10:00 A.M.; G-50 Dirksen

**March 22, 2012.** House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will hold a series of joint hearings to receive the legislative presentations of Veterans' Organizations. 10:00 A.M.; 345 Cannon

**March 28, 2012.** HVAC, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, will conduct a hearing to review the status of implementation of the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) program. Time and Location TBD

**March 28, 2012 (Formerly December 14<sup>th</sup>).** SVAC will hold a hearing on the nomination of Margaret Bartley, and Coral Wong Pietsch to be Judges of United States Court of Veterans Appeals for Veterans Claims. 10:00 A.M.; 418 Russell

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**Saving Money:** Groupon and Daily Deal sites are keeping Americans broke. Are daily deal sites really all that great? Not if you don't think before you click. According to analysis by BIA/Kelsey, annual U.S. consumer spending on daily deal offers is expected to increase from an estimated \$873 million in 2010 to \$3.9 billion by 2015. That's a compound annual growth rate of 35.1 percent. At the same time, however, 64 percent of Americans don't even have \$1,000 in emergency savings, a relatively small amount of money for a financial safety net. It's becoming apparent that consumers think they're saving money, yet are failing to do so.

The primary characteristic of daily deal and coupon sites that sets them apart from other money-saving resources is a deadline: These deals are only available for that particular day, or a few days at most. That means it's nearly impossible to use these sites for planned-out purchases that fit within a predetermined budget. Rather, you're enticed by a steep discount on a non-essential purchase – then urged to buy, buy, buy before the deal is gone forever. Here's one result of that impulsiveness: 21.7 percent of daily deal participants never even redeem their coupons, according research by Utpal Dholakia, a management professor at Rice University. Whether they never have the time or they simply forget, obtaining the deal and “saving money” is more important to the buyer than actually using the product or service.

These online coupons and daily deals are positioned as tools for budget-conscious shoppers, but the money spent would almost always be better used for something else – like building up an emergency savings account or paying

down high-interest debt. Spending \$20 here and \$50 dollars there may only feel like an occasional splurge, the financial impact of which is easy to discount by the savings associated with the purchase. Unfortunately, these small purchases add up to big spending each month or year – money that is often spent at the expense of a high credit card balance or severely underfunded 401(k). In a time when high unemployment and rocky financial markets make it more important than ever to scrutinize every dollar spent, consumers will likely find their finances benefit most from avoiding these deals sites altogether. [Source: <http://www.gobankingrates.com> Casey Bond article 19 Oct 2011 ++]

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## Notes of Interest:

- **Old Time Radio.** If you're a fan of old time radio (OTR) programs, links to OTR streaming audio and download sites are now available on the "Links for Mil\Ret\Vets" web site at <http://www.hostmtb.org> (click on link at upper right-hand corner).
- **Diet.** The 39 grams of high fructose corn syrup in regular Coca Cola is equal to about 9.2 teaspoons of granulated sugar per can. A teaspoon of sugar weighs about 4.2 grams.
- **VHA.** The number of women Veterans attending VHA for healthcare has doubled between 2000 and 2010.
- **Mortgages.** According to Corelogic's Negative Equity report, the mortgages on more than 11.1 million homes, or 22.8% of the nation's 48.7 million mortgaged homes, were underwater in the 4th quarter of 2011.
- **Lemon law,** Every state has a lemon law, which makes automakers responsible for vehicles that fail to meet performance and safety standards, regardless of the warranty. You can get details on state laws here, but make sure you keep all documentation on your vehicle, its history, repair orders, etc., take notes when you talk to your dealer or repair shop, and keep track of how many days your vehicle is out of commission. Find out more about the lemon laws in your state at [http://www.bbb.org/us/auto-line/state-lemon-laws/?utm\\_source=NCPW+++AUTO+LINE&utm\\_campaign=NCPW-AUTO+LINE&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.bbb.org/us/auto-line/state-lemon-laws/?utm_source=NCPW+++AUTO+LINE&utm_campaign=NCPW-AUTO+LINE&utm_medium=email).
- **Band of Brothers.** Lynn D. "Buck" Compton died 3 MAR at age 90. His World War II exploits as first lieutenant in Easy Company after the unit parachuted into France on D-Day in 1944 were depicted in the HBO miniseries 'Band of Brothers'. During his subsequent legal career he led the team that prosecuted Sirhan B. Sirhan for the slaying of Robert F. Kennedy and was appointed to the 2nd District Court of Appeal in 1970 by Gov. Ronald Reagan.
- **Trenton NJ.** If you're planning on traveling to Trenton N.J. in the near future, you might want to pack your own toilet paper. As a result of budget disputes City Hall has enough toilet paper to last through March 16 but other public buildings may run out soon.



- **Vet Jobs.** The Oregon House introduced new legislation which would allow applicants for certain, licensed occupations to substitute their military training or experience for what is normally required by an agency for licensure. H.B.4063 applies to several dozen occupational fields and licenses, including teachers, engineers, land surveyors, occupational therapists, athletic trainers, private security professionals and investigators.

- **DVA Cemeteries.** The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs says it has discovered 102 more headstones or markers on the wrong graves and 21 graves in need of markers in the cemeteries under its management. The update raised the total number of problems discovered so far to 249. The VA so far has audited nearly 1.5 million graves, or about half of the graves under its management.
- **Military Headstones.** Made in U.S.A. To see where go to <http://www.imdb.com/video/cbs/vi826318105/>.

[Source: Various 1-14 Mar 2012 ++]

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## Medicare Fraud Update 89:



- **Rockwell TX** - A Texas doctor and five owners of home health-care agencies were arrested 28 FEB on charges that they fraudulently billed Medicare and Medicaid nearly \$375 million in what authorities described as the largest case of its kind. Jacques Roy, 54, was charged with masterminding a Medicare fraud conspiracy over the past six years. The alleged fraud involved classifying as homebound 11,000 patients recruited by a network of more than 500 agencies, then billing Medicare for services and home visits that were either not medically necessary or were not provided, according to the indictment, filed in the Northern District of Texas. Roy's alleged scheme resulted in more than \$350 million being fraudulently billed to Medicare and more than \$24 million to Medicaid. The indictment called it the largest home health-care fraud ever committed and the biggest health-care fraud case brought against a single doctor. Between JAN 06 and NOV 2011, Roy and his company, Medistat Group Associates, created a fraudulent "cottage industry" in the Dallas-Fort Worth area that brought in millions of dollars. Roy certified more Medicare beneficiaries for home health services and had more purported patients than any other medical practice in the country. As part of his business, Roy allegedly maintained a "485 Department," named after the number on the Medicare form on which the care plans were documented. He instructed his employees to complete the 485s by signing his name by hand or using his electronic signature. In what prosecutors called a "boiler room," employees worked all day placing his signature on approvals for home health services, according to the indictment. When investigators searched Roy's home, they found evidence of overseas bank accounts and fake identification cards. Also in his house were the books "Hide Your Assets and Disappear: A Step-by-Step Guide to Vanishing Without a Trace," and "The Offshore Money Manual," suggesting 23 worldwide locations favorable to offshore banking, according to court records. The documents also show that Roy owns a sailboat named "One Trick Pony." Along with the indictment, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced the suspension of payments to an additional 78 home health agencies associated with Roy, based on credible allegations of fraud against them. Roy's office manager was also charged. Owners of the agencies working with Roy would recruit people so

Medistat could bill unnecessary home visits and medical services, the indictment said. They would go door to door in neighborhoods to recruit patients. The home health agencies not only allegedly took advantage of the elderly, they preyed on the disadvantaged, authorities say. One of the agency owners who was charged, Charity Eleda, 51, of Rowlett, Tex., allegedly sent recruiters to the Bridge homeless shelter in Dallas, paying them \$50 for each person they signed up.

- **Fort Lauderdale FL** - Already charged with running one of Florida's biggest investment scams, Fort Lauderdale brothers Joel Steinger and Steven Steiner were arrested again FEB in connection with a new fraud conspiracy. A federal prosecutor called Steinger a "serial" criminal for allegedly conspiring with his brother to create dummy companies that bilked \$3 million from health insurance companies. The coverage paid for Steinger's back surgery and other medical bills. The alleged scheme unfolded both before and after the brothers were indicted in late 2008 on the initial conspiracy charges, and continued after they were released on bond in that case, prosecutors said. U.S. Magistrate Judge Edwin Torres ordered that Steinger, who headed a brokerage business that sold life insurance policies held by people dying of AIDS, be held at the Federal Detention Center in Miami. Torres rejected his request for bond after Assistant U.S. Attorney Jerrob Duffy said Steinger, the top former executive at Mutual Benefits Corp., was a danger to the community and a flight risk.
- **Brunswick GA** - A 49-year-old Armenian national and previous resident of California was sentenced 2 MAR to 12 years in prison for his role in a conspiracy to defraud Medicare of about \$7.5 million through phony medical businesses in Brunswick and Savannah, as well as in Los Angeles and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Arthur Manasarian, who immigrated to the U.S. from Armenia and who lived in Los Angeles until the time of his arrest, previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit health care fraud and aggravated identity theft. According to the evidence presented at the guilty plea and sentencing hearings, from 2007 to 2008, Manasarian and others opened a medical equipment company in Brunswick known as Brunswick Medical Supply. Once opened, he and others stole the identities of hundreds of Medicare beneficiaries; stole the identities of dozens of doctors; and used the stolen information to submit millions of dollars in phony claims to Medicare for health care services that were never provided. Manasarian used the stolen identities of doctors and patients from multiple different states, including Alaska, California, New York and Ohio, and even submitted claims for people who were dead at the time they were alleged to have been provided medical equipment. Manasarian was also involved with at least seven other phony health care businesses located in Georgia, California and New Mexico. He was responsible for between \$7 million and \$20 million worth of fraudulent claims submitted to Medicare. He and others were paid by Medicare about \$1.5 million for the fraudulent claims.
- **United States** - Major U.S. drug makers -- including Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and Merck -- have paid out at least \$8 billion in fines for repeatedly defrauding Medicare and Medicaid over the past decade, according to a report in USA Today. These companies are fighting attempts by Congress to exclude them from federal government business because of their history of fraud, the newspaper said. However, they remain in business with the government because they are often the sole suppliers of critical products, the report noted, citing Medicare and Justice Department records. Pfizer has paid almost \$3 billion in fines since 2002 and entered into three corporate integrity agreements with the Department of Health and Human Services aimed at preventing future fraud, the article said. It makes anti-inflammatory drugs and medication used to lower blood cholesterol. Another pharmaceutical giant, Merck, has paid \$1.6 billion in fines since 2008 in order to settle claims it was not paying proper rebates to the government, according to the report. Pfizer settled with the government in 2009 for improperly promoting the use of drugs for purposes other than those for which they were approved by the government, while a 2008 settlement with Merck was over claims the company paid illegal kickbacks to health care providers in exchange for prescribing its drugs, USA Today said. The report says government investigators feel their hands are tied

when it comes to dealing with drug makers. They can exclude Pfizer and other pharmaceutical companies from providing medications to Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries as punishment for bad behavior, but that would leave beneficiaries without drugs patented through a particular company, the article said.

[Source: Fraud News Daily 1-14 Mar 2012++]

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## Medicaid Fraud Update 59:

- **Canton OH** - The former chairman of the Watertown City Planning Board accused of bilking the Medicaid program for more than \$100,000 was charged 6 MAR with second-degree insurance fraud and 372 counts of falsifying business records. Norman J. Wayte II, Watertown, is accused of improperly charging Medicaid \$100,109 for time when he was employed by United Cerebral Palsy of the North Country from 2006 to 2010. But according to court documents, Mr. Wayte did not actually work the times he reported. In a statement to village police, Doris Chenier, director of the Canton-based health-care provider, said Mr. Wayte was a home service director from March 1997 to October 2010, and she knew Mr. Wayte was working part-time at Dick's Sporting Goods. She said his position with her organization was a full time, 37.5 hours per week position, but could take on flexible hours. His duties included providing home visits and Medicaid service coordination for Jefferson County patients, Ms. Chenier told police. Mr. Wayte's arrest comes five months after an October report from the state's Office of the Medicaid Inspector General and Commission on Quality of Care said that during the time Mr. Wayte said he was meeting with clients and billing Medicaid for it, he actually was working at the sports store. According to court documents, investigators compared time sheets for when Mr. Wayte was at Dick's Sporting Goods to when he was allegedly working as a home service director and found discrepancies. He resigned from his position on the city's Planning Board in October after the report was published.
  
- **Houston TX** - Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas officials filed thousands of false Medicaid claims worth more than \$5 million, according to a federal whistleblower lawsuit first made public yesterday. The suit - filed by the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) - alleges that Planned Parenthood of Houston submitted at least 87,075 "false, fraudulent, or ineligible claims" for Medicaid reimbursement under Title XIX of the program with the Texas Women's Health Program. The claims were filed between 2007 and 2009 and were valued at more than \$5.7 million, according to the suit. The suit was filed by ADF in 2009 on behalf of former Planned Parenthood clinic director Abby Johnson. Under the federal whistleblower law, such suits cannot be made public until federal and state officials decide whether to join them. "Americans deserve to know if their hard-earned tax money is being funneled to groups that are misusing it," said ADF Senior Counsel Michael J. Norton. "No matter where a person stands on abortion, everyone should agree that Planned Parenthood has to play by the same rules as everyone else. It certainly isn't entitled to a penny of public funds, especially if it is committing Medicaid fraud," Norton said. Nationally, Planned Parenthood is being investigated by Congress in a probe led by Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL). The ADF released a report earlier this year that claimed Planned Parenthood officials were responsible for more than \$100 million in waste, fraud and abuse in the spending of federal tax dollars. For more on the ADF suit, including a link to its full text, refer to [http://www.adfmedia.org/\(X\(1\)S\(gcvswlnebjcnoq45uj35nq45\)\)/News/PRDetail/5395?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](http://www.adfmedia.org/(X(1)S(gcvswlnebjcnoq45uj35nq45))/News/PRDetail/5395?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1).

[Source: Fraud News Daily 1-14 Mar 2012 ++]

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**State Veteran's Benefits:** The state of Virginia provides several benefits to veterans. To obtain information on these refer to the "**Veteran State Benefits VA**" attachment to this Bulletin for an overview of those benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state in the following areas:

- Veteran Long Term Care Benefits
- Veteran Employment Benefits
- Veteran Education Benefits
- Other State Sponsored Veteran Benefits

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veteran-state-benefits/virginia-state-veterans-benefits.html> Feb 2012 ++]

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**Military History:** The War of 1812 was a watershed moment in the nation’s development of a strong national defense system, a military historian said this week, as it provided justification for building up the Navy and changed the nation’s attitude toward strengthening the central government. Michael Crawford, a senior historian at the Naval History and Heritage Command, made that observation 7 FEB during a “DOD Live” bloggers roundtable. At the roundtable discussion Crawford provided the following overview of the war and its impact on National Defense:

“ The United States declared war against the United Kingdom because it wanted to end impressments of its citizens into the Royal Navy. The new nation wanted to obtain recognition of the maritime rights of its merchantmen against illegal blockades, searches and seizures, and it wanted to stop British support of hostile Native Americans against the United States. At the time, President James Madison and his war planners developed a strategy to achieve these goals. That strategy largely focused on a land-troop invasion of British-owned Canada, ignoring a naval strategy. It was expected to be a quick and decisive victory for the Americans, Crawford said, as British attention was focused on engagements with Napoleon. But as the Canadian campaign began, it became clear that it wouldn’t go as Madison and his war planners had hoped it would.



**Attack on Fort Oswego, NY 1814**

By 1815, two and a half years after the initial engagement, all attempts to invade and occupy Canada had failed. During that time the United States adopted a largely defensive posture against the British. The U.S. military had repulsed major invasions at Plattsburgh, N.Y, and in New Orleans. But the United States suffered a ravaging of the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, a major agricultural region, and the capture and burning of our capital. A tight British blockade of the American coast had brought the U.S. government to the brink of financial collapse.” The war eventually ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which restored America to its prewar conditions with no loss or gain.

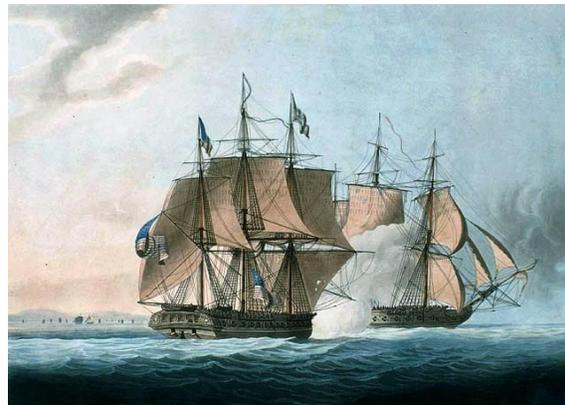
The War of 1812 played a major role in strengthening the Navy. At the onset of the war the Navy had a small fleet and focused largely on harbor defense. However it became increasingly apparent that the United States needed to develop naval power to avoid defeat. Early in the war, we lost an army. And so the people in Washington — the war planners — quickly came to understand that the conquest of Canada depended on control of the waterways, especially Lake Ontario. The result was a build-up of Navy vessels on the Great Lakes. By late 1814, the Navy had 400 men on ships at sea and 10,000 men on ships on the Great Lakes. This buildup allowed for some important victories during the war but those victories also drew attention to losses that resulted from insufficient naval power. The conflicts at Lake Champlain and along the Chesapeake Bay were examples. The British had an army of 10,000 invading upstate New York. An American naval victory in Lake Champlain threw that army back into Canada because without control of Lake Champlain, British supply lines were vulnerable. But a lack of U.S. naval power allowed the British to wreak destruction up and down the Chesapeake Bay, he added.

All of these events convinced the nation’s leaders, as well as the nation’s people, that we needed both an adequate navy and an adequate army if we wanted to be an adequate nation. But before the end of the war, congressional Republicans didn’t support building a strong Navy believing that an ocean-going Navy would draw the United States into war unnecessarily and require high taxes that would corrupt the political system, benefit mainly financiers, and hurt the common people. But by the end of the war people of all political stripes witnessed the importance of having a strong, centrally controlled military. Many Republicans and all Federalists were committed to a strong Navy, an adequate, professional Army, and the financial reforms necessary to support them.

After the war, Congress ... approved an ambitious naval expansion program and a regular Army of 10,000 men. They raised taxes to pay for these, and they created the Second National Bank as a tool for government financing. The War of 1812 also changed the U.S. position on the global stage, Crawford said. Before the war the United Kingdom considered the United States to be a commercial rival and potential enemy, to be thwarted through confrontation wherever possible. After the war, the United Kingdom sought accommodation with the United States, considering the friendship of the United States as something to be carried as an asset. This change in thinking, was a direct result of the British recognizing that the United States had newfound political unity, a strong Army and Navy, and sound fiscal underpinnings.” [Source: DoD Live Bradley Cantor article 9 Feb 2012 ++]



**Re-enactors at the battle of Tippecanoe**



**Shannon and the Chesapeake**

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**Military History Anniversaries:** Significant March events in U.S. Military History are:

- Mar 16 1802 - The Army Corps of Engineers is established to found and operate West Point Academy.
- Mar 16 1935 - Adolf Hitler orders Germany to rearm herself in violation of the Versailles Treaty.

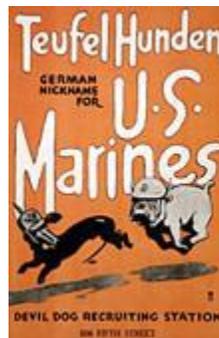
- Mar 16 1942 - WWII: The first V-2 rocket test launch. It explodes at liftoff.
- Mar 16 1945 - WWII: The Battle of Iwo Jima ends but small pockets of Japanese resistance persist.
- Mar 16 1968 - Vietnam: In the My Lai massacre, between 350 and 500 Vietnamese villagers: men, women, and children are killed by American troops.
- Mar 17 1776 - American Revolution: British forces evacuate Boston, Massachusetts.
- Mar 17 1942 - WWII: Holocaust: The first Jews from the Lviv Ghetto (western Ukraine) are gassed at the Belzec death camp (eastern Poland).
- Mar 17 1945 - WWII: The Ludendorff Bridge in Remagen, Germany collapses, ten days after its capture.
- Mar 17 1973 - Vietnam: First POWs are released from the "Hanoi Hilton" in Hanoi, North Vietnam.
- Mar 18 1945 - WWII: 1,250 U.S. bombers attack Berlin.
- Mar 19 1944 - WWII: The German 352nd Infantry Division deploys along the coast of France.
- Mar 19 1945 - WWII: Adolf Hitler issues his "Nero Decree" ordering all industries, military installations, shops, transportation facilities and communications facilities in Germany to be destroyed.
- Mar 19 1945 - WWII: Off the coast of Japan, a dive bomber hits the aircraft carrier USS Franklin, killing 724 of her crew. Badly damaged, the ship is able to return to the U.S. under her own power.
- Mar 19 2002 - Afghanistan: Operation Anaconda ends (started on March 2) after killing 500 Taliban and al Qaeda fighters with 11 allied troop fatalities.
- Mar 20 1942 - Holocaust: in Rohatyn, western Ukraine, the German SS murder 3,000 Jews, including 600 children, annihilating 70% of Rohatyn's Jewish ghetto.
- Mar 20 1942 - WW II: General Douglas MacArthur, at Terowie, South Australia, makes his famous speech regarding the fall of the Philippines, in which he says: "I came out of Bataan and I shall return".
- Mar 20 1969 - Vietnam: U.S president Nixon proclaims he will end Vietnam war in 1970.
- Mar 20 2003 - Iraq: Invasion of Iraq by American and British led coalition begins without United Nations support and in defiance of world opinion.
- Mar 21 1918 - WWI: The Germans launch the 'Michael' offensive [First Battle of the Somme].
- Mar 21 1943 - WWII: Assassination attempt on Hitler fails.
- Mar 21 1945 - WWII: 1st Japanese flying bombs (ochas) attack Okinawa.
- Mar 21 1971 - Vietnam: Two U.S. platoons in Vietnam refuse their orders to advance.
- Mar 22 1942 - WWII: Heavy German assault on Malta.
- Mar 22 1945 - WWII: U.S. 3rd Army crosses Rhine at Nierstein.
- Mar 22 1965 - Vietnam: U.S. confirms its troops used chemical warfare against the Vietcong.
- Mar 23 1862 - Civil War: Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson faces his only defeat at the Battle of Kernstown, Va
- Mar 23 1942 - WWII: Japanese forces occupy Andaman Islands in Indian Ocean.
- Mar 23 1942 - WWII: U.S. move native-born of Japanese ancestry into detention centers.
- Mar 23 1945 - WWII: Largest operation in Pacific war, 1,500 US Navy ships bomb Okinawa.
- Mar 23 1951 - Korea: U.S. paratroopers descend from flying boxcars in a surprise attack in Korea.
- Mar 24 1944 – WWII: In an event later dramatized in the movie The Great Escape, 76 prisoners begin breaking out of Stalag Luft I.
- Mar 25 1915 - 1st submarine disaster; a US F-4 sinks off Hawaii, killing 21.
- Mar 25 1953 - Korean War: The USS Missouri fires on targets at Kojo, North Korea, the last time her guns fire until the Persian Gulf War of 1992.
- Mar 25 1975 - Vietnam: The former imperial capital of Hue fell to North Vietnamese troops along with the entire Thua Thien Province.
- Mar 26 1945 - WWII: Kamikazes attack U.S. battle fleet near Kerama Retto.
- Mar 26 1945 - WWII: U.S. 7th Army crosses Rhine at Worms Germany.
- Mar 26 1970 - 500th nuclear explosion announced by the U.S. since 1945.

- Mar 27 1794 - The U.S. establishes a permanent navy and authorizes the building of 6 frigates.
- Mar 27 1945 - WWII: Gen Eisenhower declares German defenses on Western Front broken.
- Mar 27 1945 - WWII: Iwo Jima occupied, after 22,000 Japanese & 6,000 US killed.
- Mar 27 1945 - WWII: Operation Starvation, the aerial mining of Japan's ports and waterways begins.
- Mar 27 1952 Korea: Elements of the U.S. Eighth Army reach the 38th parallel.
- Mar 28 1945 WWII: Germany launches the last of its V-2 rockets against England.
- Mar 29 1943 - WWII: Meat rationed in US (784 gram/week, 2 kilogram for GI's.
- Mar 29 1951 Korea: The Chinese reject Gen. Douglas MacArthur's offer for a truce in Korea.
- Mar 29 1973 - Vietnam: US troops leave, 9 yrs after Tonkin Resolution.
- Mar 30 1944 WWII: The U.S. fleet attacks Palau, near the Philippines.
- Mar 30 1972 Vietnam: Hanoi launches its heaviest attack in four years, crossing the DMZ.
- Mar 31 1941 - WWII: Germany begins a counter offensive in Africa.
- Mar 31 1965 – Vietnam: U.S. ordered the 1st combat troops to Vietnam.
- Mar 20 1945 - WWII: USS Kete (SS-369) missing. Most likely sunk by a mine or a Japanese submarine (perhaps RO 41) east of Okinawa. 87 killed
- Mar 25 1915 - USS F-4 (SS-23) sunk after a battery explosion off Honolulu, Hawaii. 21 died
- Mar 26 1944 - USS Tullibee (SS-284) accidentally sunk by circular run of own torpedo off Palau Islands. 79 died
- Mar 28 1945 - WWII: USS Trigger (SS-237) sunk by Japanese patrol vessel Mikura, Coast Defense Vessel No.33,and Coast Defense Vessel No. 59 in the Nansei Soto. 89 killed.

[Source: Various Mar 2012 ++]

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**Military Trivia 47:** Every Leatherneck is indoctrinated with the tale of how Marines came to be called "Devil Dogs." If you visit Marine recruiting sites on the Web you'll find this World War I legend also used as a tool to encourage young people to join the Marine Corps today. There's even an old recruiting poster that was created by artist Charles B. Falls around 1918. Emblazoned with the words "Teufel Hunden, German Nickname for U.S. Marines - Devil Dog Recruiting Station," the poster is one of the earliest known references to the legend, said to have come about as the result of fierce fighting in 1918 by the Marines in France's Belleau Wood (Bois Belleau in French, "woods of beautiful water"). But the poster commits the same error that almost all versions of the legend do: it gets the German wrong.



**U.S. Marine "Dog Devils" Poster - 1918**

The first thing any good student of German should notice about the poster is that the German word for "Devil Dogs" is misspelled. In German the term would not be two words, but one. The plural of Hund is Hunde, not

"Hunden." So the poster and any Marine references to the German nickname should read Teufelshunde—one word with a connecting s. Even the Marine Corps' own Parris Island Museum has it wrong. Since the museum's founding in 1975, the sign on display there has read "Teuelhunden" rather than the correct "Teufelshunde." Like many things on the Web and in history, this legend gets repeated over and over by many different people but that doesn't mean it's true. One thing that can be stated with certainty is that very few accounts of this German "Devil Dogs" legend get the German right. But the Devil Dogs legend is very specific in some ways. It is related to a particular battle, a particular regiment, and a particular place. Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood

Here is a version of the legend's creation found at a Marine recruiting Web site: "...in World War I during the 1918 Château-Thierry campaign near the French village of Bouresches, Marines assaulted a line of German machine-gun nests on an old hunting preserve known as Belleau Wood. The fighting was terrible. Those Marines who weren't cut down by the enemy guns captured the nests in a grisly close-quarters battle. The shocked Germans nicknamed their foes, teufelhunden [sic] (devil dogs)." Another site mentions the regiments: "...the Fifth and Sixth Regiments of Marines earned the nickname of Teufel Hund [sic], or Devil Dog, by the Germans who respected them for their bulldog tenacity and fighting spirit..." The Marine.com site adds this: "The tradition was believed to have its roots during World War I when German soldiers referred to the Marines as "devil dogs," comparing their fierce fighting ability to that of wild mountain dogs of Bavarian folklore."

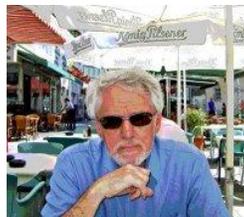
The American writer H.L. Mencken didn't think so. In *The American Language* (1921) Mencken comments on the Teufelshunde term in a footnote: "This is army slang, but promises to survive. The Germans, during the war, had no opprobrious nicknames for their foes. The French were usually simply die Franzosen, the English were die Engländer, and so on, even when most violently abused. Even der Yankee was rare. Teufelshunde (devil-dogs), for the American marines, was invented by an American correspondent; the Germans never used it. The correspondent that Mencken referred to was journalist Floyd Phillips Gibbons (1887-1939) of the Chicago Tribune. Gibbons, a war correspondent imbedded with the Marines had his eye shot out while covering the battle at Belleau Wood and lived to tell the tale. He also wrote several books about World War I, including *And They Thought We Wouldn't Fight* and a biography of the flying Red Baron. Not all the American versions of who first used the German word agree with each other. One account claims that the term "originated from a statement attributed to the German High Command, in remarking on the determinedness of the Marines, to the effect of 'Wer sind diese Teufelshunde?', which means 'Who are these Devil Dogs?'" Another version claims that it was a German pilot who cursed the Marines with the word "Teufelshunde."

Another factor that could cast doubt on the origin of the Devil Dogs legend is that the Marines were not the only troops involved in combat in France's Belleau Wood in 1918. In fact there was an intense rivalry between the regular U.S. Army troops and the Marines stationed in France. From the interesting "Belleau Fountain Legend" page at the equally fascinating Scuttlebutt & Small Chow site comes this information: "Though the Marines took Belleau Wood in late June 1918, Belleau itself was captured not by the Marine Brigade, but by the [Army's] 26th Division some three weeks later, by which time the Marines were fighting and dying at Soissons. How and when the 'bulldog fountain' [in Belleau] actually entered into the mythology of the Corps remains something of a mystery." And how would the Germans have known it was the Marines in particular who deserved the "Devil Dogs" nickname rather than the many other Army troops who were fighting in the same area?

Another account at <http://firstworldwar.com/> adds this: "Fiercely defended by the Germans, the wood was first taken by the Marines (and Third Infantry Brigade), then ceded back to the Germans—and again taken by the U.S. forces a total of six times before the Germans were finally expelled." Another source mentions this key fact: "After Belleau Wood... there were even more vicious battles between the Army and the Marine Corps over the sometime outlandish media coverage the Marines received concerning the great victories in Europe." General John ("Black Jack") Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, was known to be upset about the Marines getting all the publicity—mostly from Gibbons' dispatches—during the battle of Belleau Wood. Pershing had a strict

policy that no specific units were to be mentioned in reporting on the war. But Gibbons' dispatches glorifying the Marines had been released without any of the usual Army censorship. This may have happened because of sympathy for the reporter who was thought to be fatally wounded at the time his reports were to be sent off. Gibbons "had handed his earlier dispatches to a friend prior to his jumping off in the attack."

The Marines certainly did play a vital role in this battle—part of the offensive known as the Kaiserschlacht or "Kaiser's Battle" in German—but not the only one. The fighting in the Bois Belleau lasted from 6-26 June 1918. The Marines' role was essential enough that the woods were later renamed Bois de la Brigade de Marine, in honor of the Marine Corps' tenacity in its re-taking. The campaign at Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood is considered a key turning point that ended the German effort to take Paris, but the war would drag on until November 1918. There is no doubt about how valiantly the Marines fought at Belleau Wood or anywhere else during WWI. The question is only about the authenticity of how the Devil Dog legend arose. It may be that the Germans actually did label the Marines Teufelshunde. But until some German reference to it in some primary sources is found the legend remains in limbo for now, neither proved to be true nor untrue.



Comments should be directed to Hyde Flippo via Facebook

[Source: <http://german.about.com/od/culture/a/germyth13.htm> Hyde Flippo article Mar 2012 ++]

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**State Taxes Update 01:** All states except Alaska, Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire and Oregon, collect sales taxes. Delaware collects a Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) which is a business and gross receipts tax that can total 2.07%. Some have a single rate throughout the state though most permit local city and county additions to the base tax rate. Those states with a single rate include Connecticut, District of Columbia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Rhode Island, and West Virginia. States with the highest sales tax are: California (7.25%), Indiana (7%), Mississippi (7%), New Jersey (7%), Rhode Island (7%), Tennessee (7%), Minnesota (6.875%), Nevada (6.85%), Arizona (6.6%), Washington (6.5%), Kansas (6.3%), Texas and Illinois (6.25). Most states exempt prescription drugs from sales taxes. Some also exempt grocery store (unprepared) food and clothing purchases and a few also exempt non-prescription drugs. [Source: MOAA General State Tax Overview Mar 2012 ++]

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

### **Sales Taxes**

**State Sales Tax:** 6.25% (food; prescription drugs; fuel costs; gas, oil, electricity; clothing costing up to \$175, are exempt).

**Gasoline Tax:** 23.5 cents/gallon

**Diesel Fuel Tax:** 23.5 cents/gallon

**Cigarette Tax:** \$2.51/pack of 20

### **Personal Income Taxes**

**Tax Rate Range:** Flat rate of 5.3% of federal adjusted gross income

**Personal Exemptions:** Single – \$4,400; Married – \$8,800;

Dependents – \$1,000

**Standard Deduction:** None

**Medical/Dental Deduction:** Federal amount

**Federal Income Tax Deduction:** None

**Retirement Income Taxes:** Social Security, civil service, state/local government pensions are exempt. Pension income from other state or local governments that do not tax pension income from Massachusetts public employees is exempt from Massachusetts taxable income. For tax tips for seniors and retirees refer to

<http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dor/taxtips/seniors11.pdf>

**Retired Military Pay:** Not taxed.

**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**

Massachusetts does not provide for a general homestead exemption but does have a Homestead Act. The Homestead Act permits a homeowner who occupies a house as his/her principal residence to shield up to \$500,000 in equity in that house from creditors. By simply filing a Declaration of Homestead with the appropriate Registry of Deeds, a homeowner may be able to protect his/her residence from the claim of a future creditor. The Homestead Act permits only one spouse to file for the equity protection if each has an ownership interest in the home. The protection offered to the disabled and the elderly is even more comprehensive because it allows a husband and wife who own their own home to each file for the \$500,000 equity protection. For details refer to

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/rod/rodhom/homidx.htm>

Massachusetts also has a circuit breaker program that offers a real estate tax credit for persons age 65 and older. Certain taxpayers may be eligible to claim a refundable credit on their state income taxes for the real estate taxes paid during the tax year on the residential property they own or rent in Massachusetts that is used as their principal residence. If the credit due the taxpayer exceeds the amount of the total income tax payable for the year by the taxpayer, the excess amount of the credit will be refunded to the taxpayer without interest. For tax year 2011, the maximum credit allowed for both renters and homeowners is \$980. To be eligible for the credit for the 2011 tax year; the taxpayer or spouse, if married filing jointly, must be 65 years of age or older at the close of the 2011 tax year; the taxpayer must own or rent residential property in Massachusetts and occupy the property as his or her principal residence; the taxpayer's "total income" cannot exceed \$52,000 for a single filer who is not the head of a household, \$65,000 for a head of house hold, or \$78,000 for taxpayers filing jointly; and for homeowners, the assessed valuation as of January 1, 2011, before residential exemptions but after abatements, of the homeowner's

personal residence cannot exceed \$729,000. For details refer to <http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dor/taxtips/seniors11.pdf>.

**Inheritance and Estate Taxes**

There is no inheritance tax and a limited estate tax on estates valued at \$1,000,000 or more.

Information for new residents can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/dor/individuals/taxpayer-help-and-resources/tax-guides/guide-for-new-residents/>. For further information, visit the Massachusetts Department of Revenue site <http://www.mass.gov/dor/>. [Source: [www.retirementliving.com](http://www.retirementliving.com) Mar 2012 ++]

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**Aviation Art:**



**WWII Combat over the Pas de Calais by Simon Smith.**

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**Veteran Legislation Status 12 MAR 2012:** For a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the veteran community introduced in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress refer to the Bulletin’s “**House & Senate Veteran Legislation**”

attachment. Support of these bills through cosponsorship by other legislators is critical if they are ever going to move through the legislative process for a floor vote to become law. A good indication on that likelihood is the number of cosponsors who have signed onto the bill. Any number of members may cosponsor a bill in the House or Senate. At <http://thomas.loc.gov> you can review a copy of each bill's content, determine its current status, the committee it has been assigned to, and if your legislator is a sponsor or cosponsor of it. To determine what bills, amendments your representative has sponsored, cosponsored, or dropped sponsorship on refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d111/sponlst.html>.

Grassroots lobbying is perhaps the most effective way to let your Representative and Senators know your opinion. Whether you are calling into a local or Washington, D.C. office; sending a letter or e-mail; signing a petition; or making a personal visit, Members of Congress are the most receptive and open to suggestions from their constituents. The key to increasing cosponsorship on veteran related bills and subsequent passage into law is letting legislators know of veteran's feelings on issues. You can reach their Washington office via the Capital Operator direct at (866) 272-6622, (800) 828-0498, or (866) 340-9281 to express your views. Otherwise, you can locate on <http://thomas.loc.gov> your legislator's phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making. Refer to [http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong\\_schedule.html](http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong_schedule.html) for dates that you can access your legislators on their home turf.

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## Have You Heard? Observations On Growing Older

- Your Kids are becoming you...and you don't like them...but your grandchildren are Perfect!
- Going Out is good.. Coming Home is better!
- You Forget names ... But it's OK because other people forgot they Even knew you!!!
- You realize you're never going to be really good at anything .... Especially Golf.
- The things you used to care to do, you no longer care to do, but you really do care that you don't care to do them anymore.
- You sleep better on a lounge chair with the TV blaring than in bed. It's Called "pre-sleep".
- You miss the days when everything worked with just an "ON" and "OFF" Switch..
- You tend to use more 4 letter words ..... "what?"..."when?"... ???
- Now that you can afford expensive jewelry, it's not safe to wear it anywhere.
- You notice everything they sell in stores is "sleeveless"?!!!
- What used to be freckles are now liver spots.
- Everybody Whispers.
- You have 3 sizes of clothes in your closet .... 2 of which you will never wear.

But Old is good in some things: Old songs, Old movies, and best of all, OLD FRIENDS!!

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"In my many years I have come a conclusion that one useless man is a shame, two is a law firm and three or more is congress."

--- **John Adams** (US diplomat & politician |1735 - 1826)

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The GOP fight



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