

RAO BULLETIN

1 August 2012

PDF Edition

Note: Anyone receiving this who does not want it should click on the automatic “Change address / Leave mailing list” tab at the bottom of this message.

THIS BULLETIN CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

- == Vet Cremains [15] ----- (Boulder City NV)
- == VA Disputed Claims [08] ----- (Arthur Fusco Sr. Eviction)
- == Senior Discounts [01] ----- (Jul 2012)
- == Transition Assistance Program ----- (New and Improved)
- == RP/China Dispute [01] ----- (Paracel islands)
- == VA Sexual Assaults [05] ----- (HVAC Hearing 18 JUL)
- == Agent Orange Cagtown NB ----- (CDC to Investigate)
- == GI Bill [123] ----- (Educational Quality Monitoring LA)
- == GI Bill [124] ----- (Temple College \$100K Mix-up)
- == Don't Ask, Don't Tell [08] ----- (DOD Parade Policy)
- == Lawsuit ~ Disability Payments ----- (Combat Related)
- == TRICARE Funding [02] ----- (DoD Questioned on Surplus)
- == VA Sequestration [01] ----- (Impact Still Not Clear)
- == DoD/VA Collaboration [01] ----- (Slow Progress)
- == Filipino Vet Inequities [24] ----- (\$192 million Allocated)
- == BRAC [27] ----- (Likely 2014/1015 Candidates)
- == Olympic Games Trivia ----- (Facts)
- == Tricare Prime [13] ----- (New Enrollment Fees 1 OCT 2012)
- == USS Miami (SSN-775) ----- (Arsonist Charged)
- == Flag Laws & Regulations [01] ----- (Highways)
- == Obit ~ Ernest Borgnine ----- (8 Jul 2012)
- == VA Clothing Allowance [03] ----- (Deadline 1 AUG)
- == Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument ----- (Bronze Sculpture)
- == VA Medical Foster Home [01] ----- (Nursing Home Alternative)
- == Military Health Care Reform [01] ----- (CBO Report)
- == Airport Security [02] ----- (Protect Your Electronics)
- == Vet Toxic Exposure~Lejeune [31] ---- (Senate Clears H.R.1627)
- == Vet Toxic Exposure~Lejeune [32] ----- (Documents Released)

== Military Funeral Disorderly Conduct [21] ----- (S.815 | H.R.1591)
 == Military Sponsorships ----- (No Cutbacks)
 == NDAA 2013 [08] ----- (H.R.5856 Passes House)
 == Tricare Pharmacy Policy [11] ----- (Walgreens Returns 15 SEP)
 == Tricare Pharmacy Policy [12] ----- (Express Rx Mobile App)
 == Military Pharmacy ----- (Prescriptions)
 == VA Sexual Trauma Program [04] ----- (AL HVAC Testimony)
 == VA Rural Access [13] ----- (SCAN-ECHO Program)
 == VA Clinic Openings [13] ----- (13 More)
 == VA eBenefits Portal ----- (Online Access to Benefits Info)
 == Traumatic Brain Injury [22] ----- (TBI/BH tool)
 == Traumatic Brain Injury [23] ----- (OU Symptoms Study)
 == Pets to Vets [01] ----- (WPHS Fees Waived)
 == Deceptive Recruiting ----- (ACF Bait and Switch)
 == Gift Card Scam ----- (Text Messages)
 == IRS Statutes of Limitations [01] ----- (Know the Rules)
 == Tricare Regional Contracts [08] ----- (TriWest to shut Down)
 == Vet License Plates KY ----- (I-Support Veterans Plate)
 == VA Claim Processing [06] ----- (New Claim Process)
 == Vet Housing [06] ----- (Center for Housing Policy Report)
 == VA Health Care Access [03] ----- (OTH Discharges)
 == VA Health Care Access [04] ----- (H.R.6107)
 == Stolen Valor [76] ----- (Richard David McClanahan)
 == Stolen Valor [77] ----- (Award Website Launched)
 == Vet Jobs [75] ----- (Sears' Heroes at Home Program)
 == Vet Jobs Update [76] ----- (Rail Industry Positions)
 == Burn Pit Toxic Emissions [22] **----- (2nd Motion to Dismiss)
 == Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule ----- (As of 30 Jul 2012)
 == WWII Vets [24] ----- (Masaji Inoshita)
 == WWII Posters ----- (10)
 == POW/MIA [24] ----- (15-31 Jul 2012)
 == VSO - Operation Homefront ----- (Vet Support Org)
 == Saving Money ----- (Scratch and Dent Sales)
 == VA Fraud, Waste, & Abuse [54] ----- (15-31 Jul 2012)
 == Notes of Interest ----- (15-31 Jul 2012)
 == Medicare Fraud [97] ----- (15-31 Jul 2012)
 == Medicaid Fraud [67] ----- (15-31 Jul 2012)
 == Military History ----- (USS San Francisco Grounding)
 == Military History Anniversaries ----- (1-15 Aug Summary)
 == Military Trivia 55 ----- (Toilet Paper Letter)
 == Tax Burden for New Hampshire Retirees ----- (As of Jul 2012)
 == Aviation Art ----- (Coastal Conflict)
 == State Veteran's Benefits ----- (California)

== Veteran Legislation Status 29 Jul 2012 ----- (Where we stand)

== Have You Heard? ----- (Chiefs)

Attachment - Veteran Legislation as of 29 Jul 2012

Attachment - California State Veteran's Benefits 2012

Attachment - Vet License Plates Kentucky

Attachment - USS San Francisco Grounding

Attachment - HASC Tricare Fund Reprogramming ltr

Attachment - Senior Discounts 2012

** Denotes Military Times Copyrighted Material

THE ABOVE ARTICLES CAN BE VIEWED BY OPENING THE BULLETIN ATTACHMENT or going to <http://sjcvets.zymichost.com/index.html>. If you are unable to view or open this PDF attachment format satisfactorily let me know and I will temporarily relocate your email addree to a separate directory that will accommodate non-PDF attachment transmission.

Note:

1. Unless otherwise requested all subscribers are sent their Bulletin in this format which consist of a cover page index of articles with a PDF attachment containing the actual Bulletin. Since the Bulletin normally runs over 50 pages (about 1 MByte) this eliminates rejection by some servers because of size. However, not all subscribers can deal with attachments that contain PDF documents. Those who cannot can request receipt in "TEXT" format which is a straight email message (without photos or highlighting) with Word file attachments that contain photos and highlighting until they obtain the capability to open PDF files.

2. New subscribers and those who submit a change of address should receive a "Test" message in PDF format of the last Bulletin sent to ensure they are able to receive the Bulletin at the email addree they provided. If you do not receive the "Test" message within 3 days it indicates that either I never received you request or your server will not allow me to send the PDF Bulletin to the email addree you provided. Anyone who cannot reach me by email can call (951) 238-1246 to ask questions or confirm info needed to add them to the directory.

3. Anyone with interest in the Philippines who would like to be added to the RAO's Philippine directory for receipt of Clark Field Space 'A', U.S. Embassy Manila, and Tricare in the RP notices should request to do so.

4. To aid in continued receipt of Bulletins recommend enter the email addree raoemo@sbcglobal.net into your address book to reduce the possibility of future Bulletins being blocked by your computer's or server's spam filters. If you should not receive a future Bulletin check <http://sjcvets.zymichost.com/index.html> for the PDF Edition or <http://www.veteransresources.org/rao-bulletin> for the Website Edition before sending me an email asking if one was published. At the

Veterans Resources site, after 2 to 5 days of the date I send out the latest Bulletin, you can access a Website Edition with Word attachments . The Bulletin is normally published in the 1st and 15th of each month. If you can access the Bulletin at either site it indicates that something is preventing you from receiving the Bulletin email message I sent to you. Most likely as a result of its size. In that case you need to call your server and ask what you have to do to receive the Bulletin through their service. If unsuccessful, let me know for further guidance. Bear in mind that the articles listed at these sites were valid at the time they were written and may have since been updated or become outdated.

== To subscribe first add the RAO email addree raoemo@sbcglobal.net to your address book and/or white list. Then send to this addree your full name plus either the post/branch/chapter number of the fraternal military/government organization you are currently affiliated with (if any) “AND/OR” the city and state/country you reside in so your addree can be properly positioned in the directory for future recovery. Subscription is open to all veterans, dependents, and military/veteran support organizations. AOL users will have to provide a non-AOL email addree to receive the Bulletin due to their spam filters and policies. This Bulletin was sent to 92,069 subscribers.

== To automatically change your email addree or Unsubscribe from Bulletin distribution click the below highlighted “Change address / Leave mailing list” tab.

== To manually submit a change of email addree provide your old and new email addree plus full name.

Lt. James “EMO” Tichacek, USN (Ret)

Associate Director, Retiree Assistance Office, U.S. Embassy Warden & IRS VITA Baguio City RP
PSC 517 Box RCB, FPO AP 96517

Tel: (951) 238-1246 in U.S. or Cell: 0915-361-3503 in the Philippines.

Email: raoemo@sbcglobal.net | Bulletin Web Access: <http://sjcvets.zymichost.com/index.html> [PDF format] or <http://www.veteransresources.org/rao-bulletin> [Word format]

RAO Office: Red Lion, 92 Glen Luna, cnr Leonard Rd & Brent Rd. Baguio City 2400 RP TUE & THUR
09-1100

AL/AMVETS/DAV/NAUS/NCOA/MOAA/USDR/VFW/VVA/CG33/DD890/AD37/TSCL member

Warning: If you Forward this Bulletin to Someone Else:

Delete the end-paragraph of the Bulletin before you forward it to others. The end-paragraph following this Note is required by law and offers the recipient an opportunity to “unsubscribe,” if they choose to. However, the “unsubscribe” portion contains your email address and whoever receives your re-distribution has the opportunity, whether purposely or inadvertently, to end your vice their future receipt of the RAO Bulletin newsletter.

Vet Cremains Update 15: At the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery, as many as eight veterans are cremated each week with no family or friends attending their funerals. To ensure no service member is buried alone, a local veterans' group has adopted a mission. Every Thursday morning, two members of the local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America group hold a service at the cemetery for service members without families. On 26 JUL, it was different. Instead of a near empty room, it was a full house. "In the blueness of the skies and the warmth of the summer, we remember them," said George Haussmann before a crowd of about 100 people. At this service, veterans Steve Duran, Theresa Dawkins and Russell Shriver were being laid to rest. No one in attendance at the funerals knew the three deceased people. "We're their family today," funeral attendee Debbie Logue said. She was among the more than 100 strangers who gathered to say farewell to the veterans. "Floored," said Philip Pearlman with the Nevada Patriot Guard. "I expected 15 to 20 people, not a building full. Respect, that's what it's all about."

What brought everyone together was an email. Within days of it circulating around the community, people responded. Gerald Connors with Vietnam Veterans of America typically leads one of the services. He knows little about the people he honors. The only information he has is a name, date of death and their time of service. He said many of the veterans he bids farewell to have similar stories. "A bachelor who didn't have any relatives. Also, I'm thinking some of these folks are people from the street," he said. Pearlman said the least he could do was spend an hour bidding the veterans farewell. "Show your respect to these people who have given you your freedom, given you this wonderful nation," he said. "The least you can do is spend an hour saying goodbye." A simple thought, prayer -- perhaps even a tear -- on this final, forever roll call. The Vietnam Veterans of America share the responsibility of holding services for interred veterans with the Women Veterans of Nevada. They hold services at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery twice every Thursday. For a Channel 8 News video of the event go to <http://www.8newsnow.com/story/19124832/crowd-gathers-to-bid-farewell-to-veterans>. [Source: KLAS-TV Las Vegas Zahid Arab report 26 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Disputed Claims Update 08: World War II veteran Arthur Fusco Sr., 92, is waiting for the Veteran's Affairs Administration to pay his nursing home in Daytona Beach Florida, but the VA said the process could take months. He is now in danger of being evicted. Fusco's family members said they don't have that much time. He has until Aug. 25 to leave Grace Manor. Fusco survived the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the war that followed. When he retired in 1946, he had served eight years in the United States Army Air Corps as a bombardier, but he says he's no hero. "I don't think I did it, but I did my best and that's it. I'm proud of it," said Fusco. Since March, Fusco has been living in the Grace Manor assisted living facility in Port Orange. But recently, he was given an eviction notice. He and his family told WFTV, the ABC affiliated television station for Central Florida, it's because an application for assistance from the Department Of Veterans Affairs has taken too long. "They're hurting me and that's all I can say. It seems unfair," Fusco said.

Fusco's son said Fusco applied for assistance from the VA back in NOV 2011, but he claims since then the VA has mishandled paperwork and that he was told getting assistance can take up to a year. Now, he said the possibility that his father could be evicted is heart-wrenching. "To see me my dad in a situation

where he's happy, content, everybody cares for him there and to be in a position where I might have to move him out of that situation for monetary reason that shouldn't, shouldn't be happening," he said. On 26 JUL, WFTV contacted the VA in Daytona Beach and in Washington, D.C., and officials said that they would take a closer look at Fusco's file. Although officials with the VA have responded, there is no indication yet what the status is of Fusco's application is and if there is anything that can be done to expedite the process.



Jerry Pease wore his World War II uniform as he joined the last remaining survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor as they were honored in the annual ceremony and lunch by the Fleet Reserve Association Branch/Unit 186 on Monday, December 7, 2009

In a 2009 interview of the survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor at the 19th annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Fusco recounted his memories of that infamous day -- It was shortly before 8 a.m. on Dec. 7, 1941 when Fusco, then a 21-year-old Army private, watched the first bombs drop on ships, planes and buildings at the airfield, an attack that catapulted the United States into World War II. "Boom," Fusco, then 89, recalled, "and then it was over." Fusco said he ran for cover, ending up inside a building under a metal staircase. That's when he stood up and banged his head. Bleeding from the head, Fusco knew they needed more weapons. He then ran to a nearby building and pried the lock off a weapons depot. "That's when I grabbed a machine gun," he said. After draping two ammunition bandoliers around his neck, he ran back to the front of a hangar. With tears in his eyes, he began realizing what was happening. The United States was under attack. He could see smoke billowing up from the harbor. "I began crying," said Fusco, an obviously tough statement to admit. He wept only briefly, he said, and then ordered a passing soldier to help him. He carefully readied the machine gun on a tripod. He looked through the thick smoke and spotted a Japanese Zero closing in about 50 feet off the ground. Fusco pulled the trigger and the gun wouldn't fire. At first he thought it had jammed. As it turned out, the soldier he had flagged to his side had leaned against the machine gun, implementing the safety. To this day, Fusco ponders that day. "If that son-of-gun had fired, I know I would of have hit that plane," he said. Fusco, who was serving with the U.S. Army Air Corps, would later be shot down twice behind enemy lines -- in

north Africa and the former Yugoslavia -- and would earn numerous medals for his service. [Source: WFTV News & Ocala Star-Banner Joe Callahan articles 26 Jul 2012 and 7 Dec 2009 ++]

Senior Discounts Update 01: Discounts reportedly offered to seniors are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Senior Discounts 2012**”. They are not automatic meaning you must ask for them when you make a purchase. Nor can they normally be combined with Military discounts. Some are applicable only in certain geographic areas or by participating retailers so it is always prudent to ASK! If you know of any chain company or retailer offering senior discounts not listed, request advise raoemo@sbcglobal.net and I will add it to the next update. [Source: Various 27 Jul 2012 ++]

Transition Assistance Program: DoD has launched its newly redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP) now called Transition GPS for military members planning to enter civilian life. The TAP has not had a major overhaul in almost 20 years. The new program was developed not only by DoD but also through the work of the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, and Homeland Security, and the Office of Personnel and Management and the Small Business Administration. The White House put out the following description of the new program.

- **Pre-Separation Assessment and Individual Counseling:** Through the new transition program, separating service members will have individual counseling to discuss their career goals and start their transition process. Subsequently, members will have a needs and goals assessment coupled with a counseling session about benefits, resources, and available assistance across a wide scope of military separation topics. Each service member will develop an Individual Transition Plan that documents his or her personal transition, as well as the deliverables he or she must attain to meet the new transition program’s Career Readiness Standards.
- **5-Day Core Curriculum:** The five-day Transition GPS Core Curriculum will include a financial planning seminar, a workshop offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on available veterans’ benefits and services, and a re-designed employment workshop offered by the Department of Labor. Transitioning service members will also undertake a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations, credentials, and employment. An Individual Transition Plan session will allow Members to seek guidance from subject matter experts, identify career goals, and develop a roadmap for their transition.
- **Career-Specific Additional Curriculum:** In addition to completing the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, transitioning service members will also have the option of participating in a series of two day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing a higher education degree; (2) a Technical and Skills Training track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.

• **CAPSTONE Event:** Before their separation from military service, service members will participate in a CAPSTONE event, which will verify that transitioning service members completed the Transition GPS curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Service members who require additional assistance will be referred to supplemental training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all service members will be offered a ‘warm handover’ to appropriate government agencies and organizations that will be able to provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.

• **Military Life Cycle Transition Model:** The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a service member’s career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a service member’s time in the military – near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages of a service member’s career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a service member’s time in the military – near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages of a service member’s military tenure.

[Source: TREA News for the Enlisted 27 Jul 2012 ++]

RP/China Dispute Update 01: China announced 22 JUL it will establish a military garrison on a disputed island in the South China Sea, in what appeared a significant escalation of tensions in the area. The planned troops will be stationed at the city of Sansha on one of the Paracel islands that China says will administer three archipelagos -- the Spratlys, Paracels and Macclesfield Bank -- and their surrounding waters. The announcement -- via a low-key statement on its defense ministry website -- came two days after fractious Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) members committed to exercise restraint over the hotly contested area, widely considered a potential global flashpoint. China only last month announced it was upgrading Sansha to prefectural level while at the same time declared nine oilfields in the sea open to bids from foreign investors in areas overlapping with fields claimed by Vietnam. China already controls the Paracels and reefs and shoals within the Spratlys, according to the research organization International Crisis Group. Chinese forces seized the then South Vietnam-occupied islands in January 1974. Beijing claims nearly all of the sea, which holds key shipping lanes and is believed to be rich in oil and gas deposits. ASEAN members Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei have vying claims to different areas, as does Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army will create a division-level command, "responsible for managing the (Sansha) city's national defense mobilization, military reserves and carrying out military operations", state media said. [Source: Military.com Deutsche Presse-Agentur article 23 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Sexual Assaults Update 05: Ruth Moore described herself as a "vivacious" 18-year-old serving in the Navy when, she says, a superior raped her outside a club in Europe. After that, she attempted suicide and was discharged, diagnosed with borderline personality disorder — an ailment she

says she did not have. Moore applied for disability benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs but was denied multiple times — despite submitting witness testimony that she had been raped and subsequently treated for chlamydia. Finally, after decades, Moore won 70% compensation for the post-traumatic stress disorder, known as PTSD, and depression that had made her unemployable. "This process took me 23 years to resolve, and I am one of the fortunate ones," Moore told a House Veterans Affairs subcommittee 18 JUL. "It should not be this way."

The Defense Department estimates that more than 19,000 sex crimes were committed in the U.S. military last year, and just 14% were reported. At the 18 JUL hearing, Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA-12) said that when victims reported sexual abuse they were often diagnosed with personality disorders and phased out of the military. From 2008 to 2010, 32% of PTSD claims from veterans who were sexual assault victims were approved, compared with 53% of all other PTSD claims, according to the advocacy group Service Women's Action Network. To receive disability benefits for PTSD, victims of military sexual assault must prove they have a current condition, provide a medical opinion from a doctor and prove that the attack occurred during their service. Requiring victims of military sexual trauma to provide evidence of the attack is often difficult because they often don't report the assault when it happens and may not have records to verify their claims, testified Joy Ilem, a legislative director at the Disabled American Veterans advocacy group. Fear of retribution discourages them from coming forward, she said.

Thomas Murphy, director of compensation and pension service at the Department of Veterans Affairs said military sexual assault victims now could provide outside evidence to demonstrate their right to compensation. And Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta announced in April that sexual assault complaints would be handled higher in the chain of command, so victims would not have to report the crime to a direct superior who may know — or even be — the perpetrator. But military decisions remain inconsistent and many victims are denied benefits, experts said. "It's rape mythology," testified Anu Bhagwati, executive director of the Service Women's Action Network. "It's this sort of unspoken feeling that women would make up that they were raped, assaulted or harassed." Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) is sponsoring a bill that would allow victims of military sexual trauma seeking disability benefits to provide only a diagnosis of PTSD and an opinion from a doctor that an assault could have caused the disorder. "It's outrageous that men and women who sign up to defend our country end up being victims of sexual assault in the first place," Pingree said. "Then to deny them the help they need to recover is simply unacceptable." [Source: Los Angeles Times Jamie Goldberg article 19 Jul 2012 ++]

Agent Orange Cagetown NB: Federal health officials have agreed to investigate whether Maine soldiers were exposed to potentially toxic chemicals -- including Agent Orange -- while training at a Canadian military base from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s. In a letter to U.S. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pledged to "conduct a thorough investigation of the situation" at the Canadian Forces Base Cagetown in New Brunswick, where herbicides and defoliants have been used for decades. Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the CDC, said staff have requested documents and reports to look into the possibility that Maine veterans were exposed to harmful chemicals at the site. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for

Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) share your concerns about the health of our military veterans and this situation in particular," Frieden wrote.

The CDC's involvement comes several years after some Maine veterans began asking for a wider inquiry into whether some former service members' health problems could be linked to time spent in Gagetown. It also follows a years-long battle in Canada between veterans and the Canadian government about whether herbicides and defoliants used at the site posed a threat to veterans and nearby residents and, if so, whether to compensate affected individuals. Located southeast of Fredericton, the Gagetown training base was used by thousands of Maine National Guard members between 1971 and 2006, with some units making frequent trips to the facility. In some years, the entire Maine National Guard spent time at the base. "Just about every unit in the state of Maine has been there," Peter Ogden, director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans Services, said Wednesday.

More than 100 former service members from Maine have filed claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, seeking disability benefits because of health problems they believe could be tied to Gagetown. However, all of the applications have been rejected because the disability compensation is tied specifically to Agent Orange and the Maine service members spent time in Gagetown years after the toxic defoliant was applied to the land. Still, there is concern in Canada, Maine and other New England states that sent troops to Gagetown that types of herbicide and defoliants other than Agent Orange that were used for decades at the base could be causing health problems in veterans. In 2007, Canadian officials agreed to \$20,000 payments to veterans who served at Gagetown during the Agent Orange spraying period and could show possible health effects; but neither the Canadian nor the U.S. government have extended those benefits to soldiers who served later.

In a June 2012 letter to the head of the ATSDR, Collins urged the agency to conduct a detailed analysis of the potential health risks from the other chemicals used at the site to Mainers who trained in Gagetown. The CDC's Frieden made the agency's pledge to investigate the issue in a response letter to Collins. The possible connection between illnesses and other chemicals used at Gagetown is an issue that veterans in Maine and Canada as well as the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management have been raising for years. In fact, some of those veterans have complained that members of Congress from New England have not been vocal enough in pushing for a wider inquiry. In an August 2006 "information paper" on the issue, officials at the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management laid out some of the unique concerns about the "bigger issue" beyond Agent Orange.

Although the other chemicals were approved for use as herbicides by Canadian government, that fact does not negate the reality that the nature of military training could increase the risk of exposure, the paper's authors wrote. "Maine National Guard soldiers dug foxholes, low crawled, slept in pup tents, and lived in some of these areas for up to 12 days at a time," the paper stated. "Guard engineers graded roads where herbicides were used to keep brush growth down on the edge of the road; cleared brush out of and constructed bivouac sites; and conducted demolition and engineer missions all over CFB Gagetown. Artillerymen fired thousands of rounds into the impact areas and the detonation of those rounds put those chemicals back into the air to be dispersed wherever the wind took them."

Collins and U.S. Rep. Mike Michaud (D-ME-02), said they were pleased with the CDC's decision to look into the matter. "Protecting the health of those who were training to protect us is a solemn responsibility from which we must not walk away," Collins said in a statement. "I'm pleased that the CDC is now involved. We need an all hands on deck response to the concerns of Maine veterans who trained on this base," Michaud said in a statement. [Source: Morning Sentinel Kevin Miller article 27 Jul 2012 ++]

GI Bill Update 123: The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission could not intervene on behalf of veteran students at Mountain State University when problems surfaced because a federal law eliminated its authority to monitor the educational quality of the school's programs, a commission official said. If not for the 2010 law, the commission could have addressed Mountain State's approval for Veterans Affairs education benefits a year ago, said Skip Gebhart, who coordinates veterans education and training programs with the commission. The federal law was designed to help veterans receive education benefits. It contains a provision that took away state officials' authority to monitor the quality of educational programs at accredited nonprofit colleges and universities receiving VA funds for veterans' education. State approval is no longer required for these schools to receive the VA funds. According to the commission, veterans attending Mountain State received between \$3 million and \$5 million in benefits last year. The school had about 350 veteran students last year.

"Mountain State was accredited and not for profit, so it was not under our jurisdiction except for a compliance survey," Gebhart told the Charleston Gazette. "We can now only look at finances. And things are practically perfect at Mountain State as far as paperwork goes. But the paperwork can be perfect and the education can be lousy." In June, the Higher Learning Commission revoked Mountain State's accreditation, effective Aug. 27, because of leadership, organizational and integrity issues. The commission this week extended the accreditation until Dec. 31 while the private Beckley university appeals. Gebhart said state higher education officials believe states should have the authority to approve and monitor all private schools, both nonprofit and for-profit. The state commission has proposed a policy, prompted in part by Mountain State's accreditation issues, that would give it the authority to demand annual data on student retention rates, transfer information, licensure pass rates and loan default rates from every private college in West Virginia. If the Legislature approves the proposal, it would go into effect by November 2013. [Source: AP article 26 Jul 2012 ++]

GI Bill Update 124: A mix-up involving \$100,000 intended for 50 veterans attending Temple College under the GI bill has been corrected, but it took a call to the chairman of a U.S. House committee to unsnarl the red tape. The \$100,000 from the Department of Veterans Affairs was supposed to have gone into the college accounts of the 50 veterans. Instead, it ended up in the account of a student, who had tried to change his bank account information with the VA system. The routing number for the student's account was mistakenly assigned to Temple College, which meant that when the money was transferred, it went to the student instead of the college, Temple College Vice President Van Miller said. The mix-up was discovered in March after student Danyel Alexander dropped several classes from her schedule.

Because of the change, she had to return more than \$3,000 to the VA, but when she tried to do that, she discovered the college had no record of the funds in her account."The VA sent me letters confirming they sent the money successfully to Temple College and began to bill me. They took money out of my monthly stipend, so I went to the college and I was like guys I need this money," Alexander said. Meanwhile the student to whose account the \$100,000 was transferred was trying unsuccessfully to give the money back to the VA. After learning of the problem earlier this month, News 10 contacted Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), the chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, about the mix-up. The school was notified in late JUL that the \$100,000 had been transferred to the school's account, clearing the way for the 50 students affected by the mix-up to settle their accounts. Miller sent News 10 a statement in which he said, said, "I still have questions about how all this happened in the first place, why the VA didn't immediately address the issue and what they plan to do to put safeguards in the system for the future." [Source: Our Town Texas Matt Howerton article 23 Jul 2012 ++]

Don't Ask, Don't Tell Update 08: A top congressional Republican wants to know why the Defense Department allowed servicemembers to wear uniforms while marching 21 JUL in a San Diego gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pride parade, an action he says bypassed the department's policies against political activity by servicemembers. In a letter this week to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe wrote that the Pentagon had created a "one time waiver" to allow uniform wear in the parade on July 21, quoting DOD policy that servicemembers "shall not march or ride in a partisan political parade. So how did the Pentagon make its decision, and is Inhofe right when he says the Pentagon, under pressure from the Obama administration to advance its social agenda, made a special exception for the LGBT cause. Some of the questions surrounding the DOD's decision were:



LGBT Pride parade on July 21, 2012

- **Was there a waiver?** No. DOD's decision to approve uniform wear in the parade wasn't based on an exception to policy and it didn't use the term "waiver." In a July 19 policy memo explaining the DOD's decision, Rene Bardorf, deputy assistant secretary of defense for community and public outreach, summarized policies that prohibit wearing the uniform while participating in political or commercial activities, or activities that discredit the military. Essentially, the Pentagon decided the San Diego parade fell under none of those categories — a

conclusion hotly disputed by Inhofe — and declared that existing policy allowed servicemembers to march in uniform.

- **Was the parade a partisan political activity?** Depends on how you look at it. The parade had no political affiliation, organizers say, and politicians of various stripes participated, including Republicans, Democrats and Green Party members. Additionally, military members stayed in a parade section where no signs or displays that could be interpreted as political were carried, just American flags. “This is about supporting a community, not supporting one party or another,” said Fernando Lopez, public relations director for the San Diego parade. But a parade focused on military service by homosexuals — an intensively divisive topic for decades — is inherently political and partisan, said Inhofe, who has made opposition to expanded rights for gays, particularly in the context of military service, a cornerstone of his service in the Senate. “The term political doesn’t necessarily have to be about Democrat or Republican,” Inhofe told Stars and Stripes. “It can be about a philosophy or a social agenda.” Inhofe said he doubted the Pentagon, under pressure from the Obama administration, would allow servicemembers to march in support of nonpartisan causes dear to conservatives, such as ending abortion.
- **What was the basis of the DOD decision?** The Pentagon took the organizers at their word that the theme of the parade was simply a celebration of patriotism and local community — gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered though it may be — concluding it was not about partisan political activity. “It’s a celebration and a patriotic one in the San Diego community,” said Col. David Lapan, spokesman for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.
- **Is there precedent?** Sort of. Though not a parade, high-ranking DOD officials and uniformed servicemembers last month hosted a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Pride Month event that drew hundreds of attendees to an auditorium at the Pentagon. In a speech, Pentagon General Counsel Jeh Johnson hailed the end of ‘don’t ask don’t tell,’ which prevented open military service by gay troops. “As recently as three years ago, it would have been hard for many of us, including me, to believe that in the year 2012 a gay man or woman in the Armed Forces could be honest about their sexual orientation,” he said.
- **Is any gay pride parade open to uniform wear now?** Not necessarily. As laid out in Bardorf’s July 19, policy memo, local commanders have to make the call whether an event — gay pride parade or otherwise — meets policy standards for uniform wear. And the Pentagon will still make the call in high-profile cases. “As for future events of this kind, or other kinds of parades that take place around the country, I’m not going to speculate, because this was ... a one-time decision,” Pentagon press secretary George Little said 26 JUL. DOD is continuing to refine its policies that govern servicemember participation in parades, and the San Diego decision doesn’t set a sweeping precedent, Little said. In all likelihood, however, the Pentagon’s announcement will make it easier to win approval in the future for troops to march in uniform in patriotic-themed LGBT parades.

[Source: Stars & Stripes Chris Carroll article 26 Jul 2012 ++]

Lawsuit ~ Disability Payments: Some combat injured sailors and Marines may have been cheated out of millions in veterans disability payments because of paperwork mistakes made by the services, according to a class-action complaint brought against the military. Officials from the National Veterans Legal Services Program filed the lawsuit 25 JUL on behalf of three combat veterans, but said they believe more than 1,000 may have been affected. Bart Stichman, joint executive director of NVLSP, said the men lost about \$20,000 in disability benefits each because service officials failed to note their injuries were combat related. Without that designation, Department of Veterans Affairs officials were forced to withhold disability payouts from the men for several years. Navy and Marine Corps officials directed requests for comment to the Department of Justice, which would defend the services in the suit. Department of Justice officials said they are reviewing the case, but did not offer any rebuttal to or explanation for the alleged errors.

Stichman estimates the mistakes cost veterans a combined \$20 million in lost disability payments. “Someone was asleep at the wheel on this,” he said. “We’re not seeing this problem with the Army or the Air Force. But the Navy and Marine Corps didn’t do what they were supposed to.” The problem stems from a 2008 change in how veterans disability benefits were awarded. Marine Corps veteran Randy Howard, one of the plaintiffs named in the lawsuit, received more than \$24,000 in a payout from the service in 2008 after officials determined his traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder — the result of two combat tours in Iraq — made him unable to stay on active duty. Under the old rules, any servicemember separated for serious injuries would receive a lump-sum payout from the military, but their veterans disability checks would be delayed until the VA “recouped” that same amount. But Congress passed new legislation starting in 2008 updating that rule, allowing combat-injured veterans to immediately receive their veterans benefits payments. Stichman said that should have meant several hundred dollars more in Howard’s pocket every month, to help deal with the costs of his debilitating wounds.

But Marine Corps officials never included the combat-injury distinction on Howard’s personnel paperwork, leaving the VA no way to determine whether he should be eligible for immediate disability payments. Instead, they delayed checks until the \$24,000 reserve was recouped, then resumed normal payouts. Stichman said the paperwork problem appears to have been fixed sometime in 2009, but not before potentially hundreds of wounded veterans were denied their money. A 2008 Defense Department directive ordered all service to make the personnel file changes immediately, to ensure those VA paperwork problems did not occur. Stichman said the Army and Air Force appear to have made the fix right away, but NVLSP’s review of Navy and Marine Corps veterans’ files have shown those services did not. Veterans medically separated from the Navy or Marine Corps after January 2008 who believe they might have lost out on disability payments because of similar problems can inquire about joining the lawsuit by calling NVLSP at 1-877-345-8387. [Source: Stars and Stripes Leo Shane article 26 Jul 2012 ++]

TRICARE Funding Update 02: On 25 JUL the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA) received a copy of a congressional letter written in response to a DoD request that would reprogram

millions away from the Defense Health Program (DHP) and TRICARE. The bi-partisan letter to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta asks many valid questions stemming from the \$708M surplus. First of all, why is there a surplus to begin with? It indicates that in the first six months of FY12, DoD saw a downward spike in private sector costs through historically low rates of 0.6 percent for active duty and negative 2.7 percent for all other beneficiaries. Therefore, retiree costs decreased 2.7 percent! So if retiree care costs decreasing, why does DoD still maintain the need to raise fees, the letter asks. "We do not understand how DoD can justify a request to raise fees on a class of people whose cost to the department are actually decreasing. At a minimum, the reprogramming rationale raises serious questions about the department's ability to forecast future health care costs." Put simply, retirees are costing the department less but DoD wants to charge them more! Led by House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Joe Wilson (R-SC) and Ranking Member Susan Davis (D-CA), the letter contains the signatures from 24 members of Congress. It notes there was a similar \$500 million surplus in FY 2011 and that the Subcommittee has requested a hearing on the budget estimation process that DoD and the DHP uses. A copy of the letter can be viewed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**HASC Tricare Fund Reprogramming ltr**". Panetta's response, if disclosed, should help explain to the military retiree community why DOD continues to push for an increase in TRICARE fees. [Source: AFSA On Call 26 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Sequestration Update 01: Mitt Romney in an afternoon speech at the VFW warned veterans that the looming sequester would mean bad things for the health care military veterans get through the Department of Veterans Affairs. "That devastation would start here at home. Mark my words, those cuts would only weaken an already stretched VA system and our solemn commitment that every veteran receives care second to none. "This is no time for the president's radical cuts in our military." There's one problem: The Obama administration has already said the VA is exempt from the sequester. In April, President Barack Obama's budget office declared the VA, including all its health programs, would be spared if the sequester goes into effect in JAN 2013. "The conclusion that we have reached is that all programs administered by the VA, including Veterans' Medical Care, are exempt from the sequestration," the Office of Management and Budget wrote to the Government Accountability Office.

Obama repeated that promise 23 JUL when he addressed the Veterans of Foreign Wars. "My administration has made it clear: Your veterans benefits are exempt from sequestration," he said. "They are exempt." Asked to clarify Romney's remarks, campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul said troop reductions forced by the sequester would put a strain on the VA. "The sequester will force 200,000 troops out of the service and into the already stretched-thin VA system," Saul said. "That will affect every veteran." Not all veterans go into the VA. There are congressionally mandated eligibility rules about service-connected disabilities, income and other criteria. The VFW is naturally watching the sequestration process closely, but a spokesman said the group is pretty confident health care won't get touched. "Are we concerned? Of course, we're concerned, but we've had a lot of assurances from the White House and Congress that the sequester is not going to affect VA medical care," said VFW Director of Public Affairs Joe Davis. "We don't think that's going to be touched, anything on health care. There's the possibility that infrastructure, minor construction accounts [would be affected]. Yes, there's a concern for that."

Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs in his 26 JUL Chairman's Corner newsletter said the Committee finally received a small, but long overdue, clarification on sequestration and VA. According to Secretary Shinseki, VA will be subject to administrative cuts under a sequester. His statement at the Committee's joint hearing with the House Armed Services Committee raises a lot more questions for our veterans and how VA will be affected. It is the Committee's understanding that these cuts will be administrative, but they have yet to receive any details as to what this means nor does Secretary Shinseki at this time. The time has long passed for the Administration to declare VA exempt from all cuts under sequestration. Rep. Miller is continuing to work toward that goal. [Source: Politico Pro Jason Millman article 24 Jul 2012 ++]

DoD/VA Collaboration Update 01: Lawmakers frustrated at years of limited collaboration between defense and Veterans Affairs officials pressed the secretaries of those departments 25 JUL to ensure that servicemembers' lives aren't lost to paperwork mistakes and red tape. "We've been talking for decades about this. ... We have to break down the bureaucracy," said Rep. Bob Filner-CA). "People are dying because these systems aren't integrated." Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta made a rare joint appearance on Capitol Hill to reiterate their promise to deliver lifelong care for troops, calling it a moral and national security imperative. But lawmakers said that despite years of promise, the two agencies haven't found solutions to some of the most basic problems facing troops. In the first ever combined hearing of the House Armed Services and House Veterans Affairs committees, representatives pressed the secretaries to explain why lifelong digital military medical records are still five years away, why suicide numbers continue to mount, why troops continue to be confused by their veterans benefits, and why the departments' work together hasn't produced better results. "Collaboration and cooperation between VA and DOD have never been more important, and I think for the next two decades ... this will be the work of the nation," Shinseki said.

The agencies represent the two largest bureaucracies in the country, in terms of personnel and funding. Panetta said the VA health care system is already "overwhelmed" with claims from troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and he expects problems to get worse as the Afghan war winds down and the military starts reducing its personnel numbers. Shinseki said he and Panetta have met regularly, sorting out ways to ease transition out of the military. The departments have set up a plan for a joint medical records system, and though it's been in the works since 2009, it won't be fully operational until 2017. They've overhauled an integrated disability evaluation program, but the VA still has a massive backlog of disability claims. Both are working on new combined mental health access and suicide prevention programs, but have yet to see positive results. "It's not going to be easy," Panetta said. "There is no doubt we're working more closely than ever before. But we have more work to do."

Lawmakers said they remain concerned by veterans unemployment rates and homeless veterans numbers, although both have declined in recent months. Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH) said he is worried that lingering territorial disputes between the agency will undermine cooperation. House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL) said despite the optimism from the departments, "what we've not seen are clear, bottom-line results." Panetta said he too is concerned with the slow progress, especially in curbing suicides. He said caring for troops after combat is part of the larger cost and responsibility of

war, and he assured lawmakers that officials take seriously that sacred responsibility. “We are in the process of building an integrated military and veterans support system,” he said. “Something that should have been done a long time ago.” To read testimony from the hearing or for the recorded webcast refer to <http://veterans.house.gov/hearing/back-from-the-battlefield-dod-and-va-collaboration-to-assist-servicemembers-returning-to>. [Source: Stars & Stripes Leo Shane article 25 Jul 2012 ++]

Filipino Vet Inequities Update 24: This year, the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has allocated \$192 million (more than P8 billion)—or about \$16 million per month—in disability compensation for approximately 15,000 beneficiaries, more than half of them Filipino war veterans or members of their families, the US Embassy in Manila has said. In a report posted on its website, the embassy said the funds were “in addition to the one-time lump-sum payments made to Filipino World War II veterans and their survivors as part of the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation (FVEC) Program.” Since 2009, 18,350 Filipino war veterans or their survivors “have received a total of \$221 million in one-time FVEC payments. This exceeds the 18,000 veterans estimated prior to the FVEC benefits becoming law,” it said. Last year, benefits and services provided by the VA office in Manila included the following: Compensation and pension payments, \$186.56 million; FVEC, \$15.07 million; medical services, \$10.7 million, and education and vocational programs, \$2.12 million.

The VA noted its “sizeable economic impact on the Philippines and a significant positive impact on the thousands of veterans and beneficiaries it serves in the Philippines.” The agency’s Manila regional office is the only VA office located outside the United States or its territories. “The VA has had a presence in the Philippines since 1922, marking its 90th anniversary in the country this year,” it said. In 2011, VA Manila “relocated to a new state-of-the-art facility on the US Embassy grounds, providing a modern, more accessible VA for veterans needing services,” it added. Last year, VA Manila’s outpatient clinic “accomplished over 30,000 patient visits and provided world-class health care to thousands of veterans.”



US Ambassador to the Philippines Harry Thomas Jr.

Since 2003, the agency has provided \$6.3 million in equipment grants to the country’s only veterans hospital, the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City. The equipment included ventilators,

dialysis machines, CT scans, gamma X-rays, 2D echocardiogram and MRI machines, as well as an eye center. US Ambassador to the Philippines Harry Thomas Jr. has said VA Manila is a “testament to the strong ties and still growing partnership between the US and the Philippines.” Earlier, the envoy cited the “unparalleled service and sacrifice” of both American and Philippine war veterans. Speaking at Veterans Day rites at the American Cemetery in Taguig City, Thomas said, “We owe our service members and veterans a debt of gratitude.” [Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer Jerry E. Esplanada article 25 Jul 2012 ++]

BRAC Update 27: Another round of military base closings and realignments is on tap in 2014 or 2015 -- the sixth since the Pentagon began axing installations built during the Cold War. More than 130 major facilities were shuttered in the first five rounds, the last of which occurred in 2005. The next round will likely slash several dozen facilities around the country. The Pentagon says more closings are necessary to cut excess capacity and save money. But bases are an important piece of local economies, providing many direct and indirect jobs. The prospect of more base closings unnerves members of Congress, who are often cheerleaders for home-state military bases and the federal money that comes with them. They're not eager to appoint a base closing commission just yet, but in a year or so, pressure from the Pentagon will force them to do so. Base closings have a mixed impact on communities. Some facilities are successfully converted to thriving civilian uses. In Alameda, Calif., for example, where aircraft were once overhauled at the Alameda Naval Air Station, Hollywood movie studios are shooting films and start-up companies are working to bring electric cars and other new technologies to market. Other closed bases are not so successful. After consulting with sources on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, The Kiplinger Letter identified bases that are sure to be eyed for closing or realignments once the base commission gets rolling. They are:

Ft. Irwin

- San Bernardino County, Calif. | Population: 5,523 active-duty; 6,632 family members; 1,105 civilians } | Founded: 1961 | Size: 7 sq. miles | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$600 million
- The base serves as a national Army training center, focusing on the battalion task force and the brigade levels of the service. If it is reduced in size in a base closing round, operations would be transferred to West Coast bases, most likely in California or Oregon.

Ft. Benning

- Near Columbus, Ga. | Population: 33,000 active-duty; 53,808 family members; 6,824 civilians | Founded: 1918 | Size: 182,000 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$6.1 billion
- Ft. Benning is a central training ground for Army soldiers, providing recruits and veteran service personnel with training and support for overseas operations. While an entire closure of this base is unlikely, several parts may be trimmed or transferred.

New London Naval Submarine Base

- Near Groton, Conn. | Population: 6,770 active-duty; 12,140 family members; 1,179 civilians | Founded: 1916 | Size: 680 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$4.5 billion

- Often called the home of the submarine force, the New London Navy base is among the largest of all Navy bases. Officers at this base train nearly every submariner in the Navy. A defense base closing commission will consider options to transfer parts of the base to other bases, including in Norfolk and Newport News, Va.

Ft. Riley

- Northeastern Kansas | Population: 10,369 active-duty; 12,020 family members; 3,972 civilians | Founded: 1853 | Size: 100,671 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$2 billion
- Ft. Riley is home to the Army's 1st Infantry Division and serves as a central stationing ground for active-duty soldiers, training and Army Special Forces. While the base is legendary in Army history for its long service, it may be split up or pared back, with some of its operations transferred to Army bases in the western U.S.

Ft. Sill

- Lawton, Okla. | Population: 10,214 active-duty; 36,513 family members; 7,208 civilians | Founded: 1869 | Size: 94,000 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$1.9 billion
- Ft. Sill is the main Army base charged with field artillery, air defense artillery and electronic warfare training. Some of its operations could be assumed by East Coast bases and facilities that provide similar training.

Barksdale Air Force Base

- Bossier City, La. | Population: 5,372 active-duty; 1,534 reservists; 7,125 family members; 1,288 civilians | Founded: 1932 | Size: 22,000 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$753.8 million
- Barksdale is home to the 2nd Bomb Wing, the largest bomb wing in the Air Force's Global Strike Command. It is on a constant ready signal to send military aircraft overseas. Other bases, including in Montana and Virginia, could take over some of its operations if the base is trimmed or shut.

Ft. Leonard Wood

- Missouri Ozarks | Population: 5,408 active-duty; 12,183 family members; 2,716 civilians | Founded: 1941 | Size: 97.6 sq. miles | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$3 billion
- Ft. Leonard Wood specializes in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapon schooling. It often does joint work with the Department of Homeland Security. An entire closure of this large base is unlikely, but a realignment of several divisions is possible. Services it provides may be picked up by bases on the Gulf Coast that do some of the same work.

Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station

- Havelock, N.C. | Population: 8,069 active-duty; 27,132 family members; 6,040 civilians | Founded: 1941 | Size: 8,000 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$2 billion
- The Cherry Point air base houses Marine Transport Squadron 1, which trains search-and-rescue units used worldwide by the U.S. and allies, including Great Britain, Canada and Australia. It also serves as a training center for operators of military radars and satellites.

Eglin Air Force Base

- Okaloosa County, Fla. | Population: 8,249 active-duty; 1,321 reservists; 21,500 family members; 5,180 civilians | Founded: 1935 | Size: 463,128 acres | Regional economic cost of base closing (first year): \$1.4 billion
- Eglin is home to the Air Force's Air Armament Center, a vital division that tests and distributes air combat weapons for the entire service. The base also works with contractors in developing, testing and evaluating air armament, navigation and guidance systems. Some of the work it does could be transferred to bases in the Northwest, including in Montana and Idaho.

[Source: The Kiplinger Letter Senior Associate Editor Richard Sammon 18 Jul 2012 ++]

Olympic Games Trivia: Ancient Greece was made up of hundreds of city-states that often were at war. Because the Olympic Games were so highly awaited and esteemed, the city-states agreed on a sacred truce, declaring all hostilities had to cease during the Olympic Games. These were the four rules of the sacred truce:

1. All wars must stop for three months during Olympic training and the games.
2. Armies and men with weapons cannot enter the Olympic grounds.
3. There is no death penalty during the Olympics.
4. Athletes can pass safely through any city-state on their way to the games.

Today, the Olympic Games continue to be popular, with nearly 4 billion people tuning in to watch various competitions via television. Here are some other facts about the Olympics:

- **The first Olympics.** The earliest official recorded Olympic Games dates back to 776 B.C. and were held in the city-state of Olympia. However, some historians say the games probably existed several hundred years before that. The Olympic Games were held in honor of the god Zeus. On the third day of the games, a procession of competitors, judges, and important guests made their way to the Altar of Zeus, where 100 oxen were sacrificed. Inside the Temple of Zeus stood a statue of the god, cast in gold and ivory. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. At the end of the fourth century, the statue was taken to a palace in Constantinople, where it later was destroyed in a fire.
- **Athletes competed in the nude.** Athletes — all male — competed in the nude. One explanation says this came about after an one athlete lost his loincloth during a race; the other athletes realized it would be easier to compete with nothing on.
- **Women were not allowed to compete in the games until the second century.** But even then they were not allowed to attend the official Olympic games, even as spectators. They had to compete in a separate festival for women called the Heraean Games, held every four years in honor of the goddess Hera, wife of Zeus.
- **No team events.** The ancient Olympic games did not permit teams. In fact, the earliest games were very basic, with only one event: a short footrace, about 660 feet, called the stadion, from

which we get the modern word stadium. Gradually, longer races were added, along with javelin, discus, long jump, wrestling, horse racing, and boxing.

- **Boxing was extremely popular.** Competitors in that event wrapped leather thongs around their hands over a sheepskin lining. Boxing in ancient times was more brutal than boxing today. There were no rounds to give boxers a break and no time limits. Boxers took a severe beating. A bronze head of boxer Satyros, found at Olympia in 1880, depicts several cuts and scars on Satyros' face, revealing the wounds boxers typically received while competing.
- **Victory Ceremonies.** The Olympic victor received his first awards immediately after the competition. Following the announcement of the winner's name by the herald, a Hellanodikis (Greek judge) would place a palm branch in his hands, while the spectators cheered and threw flowers to him. Red ribbons were tied on his head and hands as a mark of victory.
- **Corruption and cheating in Greece.** In 388 B.C., Eupolus of Thessaly was found guilty of bribing three boxers to throw their fights against him. Even judges were involved in corruption. In A.D. 67, judges accepted large bribes from the Roman emperor Nero, awarding him first prize in the chariot race, in spite of the fact he fell out of his vehicle and failed to complete the course. Over the years, fines levied on cheating athletes were used to pay for statues atop the Olympic stadium.
- **Ancient games end.** The last records of Olympic winners date back to A.D. 261. It is not certain exactly when the ancient games came to end. But after Rome conquered Greece, making it part of the Roman Empire, the games began to decline. In A.D. 393, the Christian emperor Theodosius I decreed all pagan centers be closed down, and Olympia eventually was abandoned. His successor, Theodosius II, ordered the Temple of Zeus and other buildings at Olympia burned down. Scholars speculate this was when the ancient Olympic Games came to an end. After that, a succession of earthquakes, fires, and floods completely covered all remnants of Olympia's buildings. In the 18th century archaeologists began the search for Olympia, with the most important excavations carried out between 1875 and 1891 by members of the German Archeological Institute. Directed by Professor Ernst Curtius, a team unearthed the remains of almost all the buildings. They found 30 statues and more than 6,000 clay, gold, and bronze objects.
- **The Olympics reborn.** Some 1,500 years after the ancient Greek Olympic Games ended, a French citizen — Baron Pierre de Coubertin — had a vision to bring the games back to life. At an international sports conference in Paris in 1894, Coubertin offered a resolution to revive the games. Everyone was on board, leading to the formation of the International Olympic Committee. Two years later, in Athens, the king of Greece declared open the first Olympic Games of modern times. Excepting two world wars they have been held every 4 years since 1896. Without Coubertin's vision, it is unlikely the modern Olympic Games would exist. Coubertin held a deep conviction that sports were vital for the mental as well as the physical development of young people. He also fervently believed there could be greater world harmony through an international

sporting competition. According to Coubertin, “The important thing in life is not victory but combat; it is not to have vanquished but to have fought well.”

- **Creation of the Olympic rings.** On a visit to Delphi, site of ancient Pythian games, Coubertin saw an emblem of five linked rings on the altar at Delphi. That inspired him to design the Olympic flag bearing five intertwined rings which symbolized the five continents that participated in the games: Africa, America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe.
- **The first modern Olympic Games in 1896.** The modern Olympic Games got off to a slow start because the first competitors were not the world’s best athletes, as they are today. In fact, anybody who showed up could take part. Most competitors were Greek, and some were tourists who entered at the last minute. Unlike today, the games had no official sponsors. Consequently, Greece ran into financial difficulties as it prepared for the Games. The Hungarians eagerly offered Budapest as an alternative because Hungary was getting ready for its millennium celebration. However, Crown Prince Constantine of Greece gave his support and presided over an organizing committee. Soon donations began to accrue, including one gift of more than 900,000 gold drachmas by Greek businessperson Georgios Averoff. His gift was used toward the rebuilding of the city’s stadium. In addition, special postage stamps and a lottery helped fund the first games. More than 60,000 spectators turned up on opening day. The top three winners at Athens in 1896 were presented with a silver medal, an olive branch, and a certificate. Runners-up received a copper medal and a laurel wreath.
- **Competitions and competitors at the first modern Olympic Games.** In 1896, only nine sports were available for competition: cycling, fencing, gymnastics, shooting, swimming, tennis, track and field, weight-lifting, and wrestling. Only eight nations participated: Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Switzerland, and the U.S. The 13 Americans who competed did not even constitute an official team. They simply showed up and presented themselves. Ten were track-and-field athletes, most from the Boston Athletic Association. Two were pistol shooters. One was a swimmer.
- **Swim competitions in the cold sea.** Competitive swimmers at the 1896 Olympics did not have indoor pools available. Rather, the swim contests took place in the open sea around the Bay of Zea. Conditions were less than ideal; swimmers had to contend with temperatures at 55 degrees Fahrenheit and had to battle 12-foot waves. Winner Alfred Hajos of Hungary declared, “My will to live completely overcame my desire to win.”
- **Controversy surrounding an Army lieutenant.** In 1912, the summer Olympics took place in Stockholm. During the modern pentathlon competitions a controversy erupted involving an American competitor. The modern pentathlon involves contests in five demanding disciplines all completed in one day: cross-country running, equestrian riding, fencing, pistol shooting, and swimming. A U.S. competitor lost out on a gold medal because he missed the target completely on one shot during the pistol-shooting segment. The American, a young Army lieutenant named George S. Patton Jr., claimed he didn’t miss the target and that it had, in fact, gone directly through a previously made hole. Judges did not accept his argument.

- **A wrong-way marathon runner.** One of the most dramatic moments in modern Olympic history took place at the 1908 London games. Dorando Pietri of Italy was the leader in the marathon race and was the first to enter the stadium to complete the race when he fell several times and ran in the wrong direction. Distraught officials came to his aid, helping him cross the finish line. Pietri was disqualified because of the assistance he received. The gold medal went to American Johnny Hayes, who was second over the line. Because there was a widespread feeling that Pietri was not responsible for his disqualification, Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, the following day awarded him a silver cup in recognition of his achievement.
- **Ancient roots of the modern marathon.** A signature event in modern Olympics is the marathon, a demanding road race of 26.2 miles. This event was not a part of ancient Olympics but rather evolved from Greek history. Legend has it that when the Greek army defeated the invading Persians on the plain of Marathon in 490 B.C., a Greek soldier, Pheidippides — a highly regarded Athenian runner — was ordered to shed his armor and run with the news to Athens, about 25 miles away. Already worn out from days of battle, he ran along dusty roads. With feet cut and bleeding, he staggered onto Athens streets proudly announcing, “Rejoice, we conquer!” Those were his final words. With a last gasp, Pheidippides dropped to the ground and died.
- **The first modern Olympic celebrity.** A marathon race at the 1896 Olympic Games began on the plains near Marathon, where a Greek army colonel fired a pistol into the air to start the 25 competitors. The entire marathon route was guided and patrolled by Greek troops. A squad of Greek cavalry rode with horse-drawn carts behind the runners, serving as first aid stations. The lead competitor, Albin Lermusiaux of France, at one point suffered exhaustion and soon was sprawled on one of the carts. Eventually a 25-year-old Greek shepherd named Spiridon Louis took the lead. As he neared the finish line, Greece’s Prince Constantine and Prince George ran alongside, accompanying him across the finish line as some 70,000 spectators cheered him on. Nearly 2,700 years after the ancient Olympics began, Greece had a new Olympic hero and celebrity. An Athens restaurateur offered to feed him, and a barber offered to cut his hair for long as the barber lived.

Though the Olympic Games have a long, honorable, and ancient history, today’s competitors, like those who came before them, continue to be inspired by the Olympic motto of “citius, altus, fortius,” Latin for “faster, higher, stronger.” [Source: <http://www.olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games> & MOAA News Exchange 13 Jun 2012 ++]

Tricare Prime Update 13: The fiscal year 2013 TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for uniformed service retirees and their families go into effect Oct. 1, 2012. The Prime enrollment fees for 2013 are \$269.28 for retirees, and \$538.56 for retirees and their family members. Survivors of active duty deceased sponsors and uniformed services medically retired service members and their dependents are exempt from annual fee increases. Their enrollment fee is frozen at the rate in effect when they were classified and enrolled in TRICARE Prime. Their fee remains frozen as long as there is no break in their

TRICARE Prime enrollment. As always, active duty service members and their families have access to TRICARE Prime with no enrollment fee.

The 2013 fees are based on the cost of living adjustment retirees received in 2012. The adjustment was applied to the \$260 (individual) and \$520 (family) 2012 Prime enrollment fees. Because of this, most retirees who were enrolled in Prime prior to Oct. 1, 2011, will see a more significant increase since their enrollment fee remained at the 2011-levels of \$230 and \$460 per year. Beneficiaries can opt to pay their enrollment fee monthly, quarterly or annually. Before deciding to pay annually, beneficiaries should keep in mind that in most cases enrollment fees are non-refundable, and Congressional changes to fees in the 2013 budget could occur. For this reason, it's recommended that beneficiaries pay their enrollment fee monthly or quarterly. To learn more about TRICARE Prime enrollment fees, refer to <http://www.tricare.mil/costs> . [Source: TRICARE News Release 23 Jul 2012 ++]

USS Miami (SSN-775): Navy investigators have determined that a civilian laborer set a fire that caused \$400 million in damage to a nuclear-powered submarine because he had anxiety and wanted to get out of work early. Casey James Fury of Portsmouth, N.H., faces up to life in prison if convicted of two counts of arson in the fire aboard the USS Miami attack submarine while it was in dry dock May 23 and a second blaze outside the sub on June 16. The 24-year-old was taking medications for anxiety and depression and told investigators he set the fires so he could get out of work, according a seven-page affidavit filed 23 JUL in U.S. District Court in Portland. Fury made his first court appearance that afternoon but did not enter a plea. Magistrate Judge John Rich III scheduled a combined detention and probable cause hearing for next month. The U.S. attorney's office has filed a motion asking that he be held without bail. Fury's federal public defender, David Beneman, did not speak in court and earlier in the day declined to comment to The Associated Press. People who appeared to be family members attended the hearing but also declined to comment.

The Miami was in dry dock at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, for an overhaul when the fire damaged the torpedo room and command area inside the forward compartment. It took more than 12 hours to extinguish during which six fire crew members were injured while trying to quell the blaze. A second fire was reported June 16 on the dry dock cradle on which the Miami rests, but there was no damage and no injuries. Fury, who was working on the sub as a painter and sandblaster, initially denied starting the fires but eventually acknowledged his involvement, the affidavit states. He admitted setting the May 23 fire, which caused an estimated \$400 million in damage, while taking a lie-detector test and being told by the examiner he wasn't being truthful. Fury told Timothy Bailey, an agent for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, that "his anxiety started getting really bad," so he grabbed his cigarettes and a lighter, walked up to a bunk room and set fire to some rags on the top bunk. The Navy originally said the fire started when an industrial vacuum cleaner sucked up a heat source that ignited debris inside.

Fury said he set the second fire after getting anxious over a text-message exchange with an ex-girlfriend about a man she had started seeing, according to the affidavit. He wanted to leave work early, so he took some alcohol wipes and set them on fire outside the submarine. He said he initially lied about setting the fires "because he was scared and because everything was blurry to him and his memory was

impacted due to his anxiety and the medication he was taking at the time". Fury told NCIS agent Jeremy Gauthier that he was taking three medications for anxiety, depression and sleep, and a fourth for allergies. He checked himself into an in-patient mental health facility on June 21 and checked himself out two days later. If convicted of either charge, in addition to life imprisonment he could face he could receive a fine of up to \$250,000 and be ordered to pay restitution, officials said.

..



USS Miami 23 May 2012

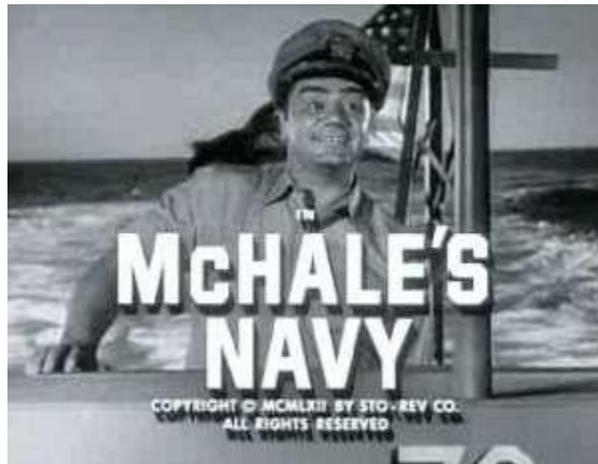
USS Miami (SSN-755) is a United States Navy attack submarine of the Los Angeles class. She is the third vessel of the U.S. Navy to be named after Miami, Florida. The contract to build her was awarded to the Electric Boat division of General Dynamics Corporation in Groton, Connecticut, on 28 November 1983 and her keel was laid down on 24 October 1986. She was launched on 12 November 1988 sponsored by Mrs. Jane P. Wilkinson, and commissioned on 30 June 1990 with Commander Thomas W. Mader in command. On March 1, 2012, Miami and her crew of 13 officers and 120 enlisted personnel arrived at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Kittery, Maine. While at the shipyard, Miami was to have received a major overhaul and system upgrades. [Source: Associated Press article 24 Jul 2012 ++]

Flag Laws & Regulations Update 01: The Palmer Lake VFW in Brooklyn Park Minn. is angered by a directive from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Post has been flying American flags over five highway overpasses for eight years. But now, the they has been told to take them down. The veterans complied, but think the law needs to be changed. Minnesota Department of Transportation says the issue is about distracted driving. It's against state law to place or affix any advertisement or object within the limits of a highway. Former post commander Lee Ulferts says the flags haven't been a distraction in eight years. WCCO-TV says Gulf War veteran Andrew Reinhardt has organized a rally for 22 JUL on the Regent Ave. bridge to oppose the directive. [Source: AP Devils Lake Journal article 20 Jul 2012 ++]

Obit ~ Ernest Borgnine: U.S. Navy Veteran and longtime movie icon Ernest Borgnine died at the age of 95 on July 8. Raised during the Great Depression, Borgnine enlisted in the Navy in 1935, mainly to help his family through the difficult times. He was discharged in 1941, but quickly re-enlisted after the attack on Pearl Harbor. During his 10 year naval career reaching the rank of gunner's mate 1st class, he served on the U.S.S. Lamberton and on the U.S.S. Sylph from 1941 until his discharge in 1945. His military decorations included the Navy Good Conduct Medal , American Defense Service Medal with Fleet Clasp, American Campaign Medal , Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal , and the World War II Victory Medal . Also, Borgnine received the honorary rating of chief petty officer in October 2004, from Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry D. Scott for Borgnine's support of the Navy and naval families worldwide.

After the war, he used his G.I. Bill to attend the Randall School of Drama in Hartford, Conn. In 1949, his acting career was launched on Broadway and led to roles in feature films such as "The Dirty Dozen," and "The Poseidon Adventure." While Borgnine was best known for his role as Cmdr. Quinton McHale in the popular television show, "McHale's Navy," he was also an avid supporter of Veterans. In 1987, he was co-chair, along with Army Nurse Corps Veteran and fellow actress Martha Ray, for VA's National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. Working with VA's Voluntary Service staff, Borgnine and Ray visited Veterans at numerous VA facilities, uplifting the spirits of all Veterans that they met. He also served in various capacities at many Veterans' events and celebrations over the years.

Borgnine thought so highly of the Navy that he asked in his will that attendants to his funeral donate to the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society in lieu of bringing flowers. One attendant from the press donated a thousand dollars that day. For more information on Ernest Borgnine, visit the Wikipedia website http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_borgnine , the Turner Classic Movies website <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/19440%7C48516/Ernest-Borgnine/biography.html> , and view the video at the Archive of American Television website <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/ernest-borgnine>. [Source: Various Jul 2012 ++]



VA Clothing Allowance Update 03: The 1 AUG deadline to file an application for an annual clothing allowance from the Department of Veterans Affairs is fast approaching. Veterans who wear or use a qualifying prescribed prosthetic or orthopedic appliance and/or prescription medication for a service-connected disability may be eligible for an annual clothing allowance. To be eligible, the appliance must wear or tear clothing, or the topical medication must irreparably damage or stain the veteran's outer garments. The clothing allowance is paid once a year, and the current payment is \$741 per year. The clothing allowance application, VA Form 10-8678, can be downloaded from <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-8678-fill.pdf>.

Effective 16 DEC 2011, veterans who wear or use more than one qualifying prescribed prosthetic or orthopedic appliance and/or prescription medication for more than one service-connected disability may be eligible for more than one clothing allowance. To be eligible for more than one, the qualifying appliances must wear or tear more than one type of article of the veteran's clothing and/or medications must irreparably damage more than one type of the veteran's clothing or outer garment. For example, a veteran who has a service-connected disability for an arm condition and a leg condition, both of which require the use of an artificial limb, would qualify for two separate clothing allowances. But a veteran who has a service-connected disability for each leg would only qualify for one clothing allowance. The reason for this is because the artificial arm and leg affect two different articles of clothing (shirt and pants) whereas both legs impact the same article of clothing (pants).

- Qualifying appliances would be an artificial limb, rigid extremity brace, rigid spinal or cervical brace, wheelchair, crutches or other appliance prescribed for the veteran's service-connected disability. Non-rigid appliances, such as soft knee, ankle, or elbow sleeves are not included. Multiple appliances providing similar compensation for the same disability cause damage to similar clothing items and therefore are considered as one appliance relative to clothing allowance eligibility. For example, a running limb and everyday walking limb used by an amputee would affect the same article of clothing and would not qualify for two allowances.
- Qualifying topical medication prescribed for a service-connected skin condition must cause permanent stains or otherwise irreparably damage the veteran's outer garments.

Clothing such as shirts, blouses, pants, skirts, shorts and similar garments permanently damaged by qualifying appliances and/or medications are considered in clothing allowance decisions. Shoes, hats, scarves, underwear, socks, and similar garments are not included. The application must be returned to the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (121), VAMC, 1310 24th Avenue South, Nashville, TN, 37212 no later than Aug. 1 to qualify for the 2012 payment. Payments are issued between Sept. 1 and Oct. 31. If you have not received your payment by Oct. 31, contact the local Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service. [Source: The Leaf Chronicle article 16 Jul 2012 ++]

Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument: The long effort to build a monument at the Texas Capitol honoring hundreds of thousands of Texans who served in the Vietnam War is finally on the way to reality. Work on the 14-foot bronze sculpture has begun at the Deep in the Heart Art Foundry in Bastrop, Texas. The Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument project was approved by the Texas

Legislature in 2005 by legislation co-sponsored by Vietnam veterans Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa and Representative Wayne Smith. Since then, a committee chaired by veteran Robert Floyd has worked tirelessly to raise the necessary funds to build the monument. "Thanks to the support of Texas individuals, veteran organizations, foundations, and corporations, and with a \$500,000 matching grant from the Texas Historical Commission, we have now reached 80% of our fundraising goal," said Floyd. "We are absolutely delighted to announce that production of the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument has begun."



The 14-foot bronze sculpture by artist Duke Sundt features five infantry figures poised in patrol positions. On the base surrounding the fighting unit are bas relief panels depicting naval, artillery, medical and aviation services that supported the combat patrol. The 3,415 Texans killed in Vietnam will be remembered by "dog tags" personalized with each man's name, military service, hometown and date of loss. The 3,415 tags will be entombed inside the monument. The Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument will be installed on the northeast side of the Capitol grounds. Dedication is tentatively scheduled to occur in the fall of 2013. The monument is accompanied by an online "Living Monument" featuring profiles of Texans who served in the Vietnam War to extend the monument's educational reach. For more information and to stay updated on the Monument's progress , visit <http://buildthemonument.org>. [Source: <http://buildthemonument.org> Jul 2012 ++]

VA Medical Foster Home Update 01: Paulia and Bienne Bastia set two dinner tables in their house in Mount Airy, Pa., each night, one for their three children, and another for themselves and the two older men the children call "Grampa." The Army veterans Booker Lovett, 79, and Wesley Ottis Furr, 95, are not related to the Bastias or to each other, but this has been their home since late winter. They're participants in the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Foster Home(MFH) program, which places veterans who need round-the-clock care in private homes. Mr. Lovett, who previously lived with his sister in Philadelphia, had a stroke — he still has trouble speaking — and has glaucoma. Mr. Furr, who maintained his own Philadelphia home, remains talkative and agile despite his age. The Bastia children, ages 5, 6, and 7, consider the veterans family. Mr. Bastia thinks of them as father figures — he calls each 'my king'. "I felt at home as soon as I come here," Mr. Furr said.



Alyson Martin Wesley Ottis Furr, 95, left, and Booker Lovett, 79

Mrs. Bastia, 36, a certified nursing assistant, and Mr. Bastia, 45, owner of a tax preparation business, drive the men to appointments, serve meals tailored to their dietary needs and administer medications. The Bastias can communicate with a nurse through a VA provided telehealth monitor equipped with a video camera, blood pressure cuff and other equipment. On a recent afternoon, Mrs. Bastia fastened the cuff on Mr. Furr's thin arm while a nurse at the Philadelphia V.A. Medical Center 13 miles away observed. "Thank you, your blood pressure reading has been accepted," said an automated voice from the monitor. Medical foster homes provide an alternative to nursing homes for veterans who are unable to live safely and independently at home or lack a strong family caregiver. Conceived in 2000 by V.A. social workers in Little Rock, Ark., the program currently serves 535 veterans; it has cared for 1,468 since it began. Though the veterans range in age from 23 to 101, their average age is 70. About half have some form of dementia. They often stay until they die, an average of 459 days. "I know a lot of people suffering," Mrs. Bastia said, explaining why she decided to participate. "I used to work in nursing homes. I know how it's like when you get 14, 16 people to take care of. You don't have time to do what you're supposed to do. I figure out, if I take them to my house they can get more care."

Now operating through 73 V.A. sites in 36 states, the MFH program is scheduled to expand to 10 more states within two years. Eventually, the VA. hopes to introduce the program to all 153 of the agency's medical centers, said Dan Goedken, national program analyst. It costs a site about \$260,000 a year to introduce the program; each site can serve up to 30 vets. The VA. finances each place for two years, after which the program is expected to be self-sustaining, said Dr. Thomas Edes, national director of geriatrics and extended care operations at the V.A. Though MFHs are intended to provide better care, not to reduce costs, they operate for half the cost of nursing homes. "It is quite likely that it will save VA. money and taxpayer money and veterans' money," Dr. Edes said.

The Bastias, who met in Florida after emigrating from Haiti, went through months of interviews and background checks to qualify as caregivers. A social worker, a nurse, a dietitian and a fire-safety expert inspected their two-story home on a quiet suburban street, and it will be reinspected annually. Given the vulnerability of the older veteran population, the VA approval process is rigorous. Only one in 10 to 15 applicants are selected. People with no formal training can apply, however, and many with family caregiving experience do. Once a veteran is placed in a home, the VA. provides training for tasks like

cleaning wounds, managing incontinence and safely transporting the new residents. And it provides periodic respite for caregivers. “It really is 24/7 care,” Mr. Goedken said. “This is a fairly intensive expectation on our part on what they’re going to do. Some willingly back away.” Veterans pay \$1,800 to \$3,000 a month for care, depending on their medical needs, often using their combined VA. and Social Security benefits. Mr. Furr and Mr. Lovett each pay the Bastias \$2,000 a month for their shared bedroom and their care. The couple has another room available and is awaiting a third veteran, the maximum allowed.

A national VA study measuring veterans’ satisfaction and costs won’t be completed until 2013 and 2015. But 30 percent of veterans who would qualify for VA paid nursing homes choose instead to pay out of pocket for medical foster homes — evidence, Dr. Edes said, that they prefer a home setting. Even with dementia or mental illness, “they recognize this as their home. It’s very familiar,” he said. “They’re given a lot of autonomy. And it’s very one-on-one attention.” Mr. Furr and Mr. Lovett get along well in their dorm-style room, with its twin beds and flat screen television. They take turns — Mr. Furr watches the news, while Mr. Lovett prefers football. One is a Democrat and the other a Republican, so they keep political talk to a minimum. Members of Mr. Furr’s congregation drive him to and from his Methodist church twice a week, and he often takes walks. He recently surprised his roommate, who prefers napping and relaxing at home, with a box of Lorna Doone cookies. “I don’t expect him to be like me, and I can’t be like him,” Mr. Furr said. “So, I accept him as he is and he accepts me as I am. It’s a good deal. to ” For more information on VA's MFH program refer to http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/Medical_Foster_Homes.asp. [Source: New York Times | Health Alyson Martin and Nushin Rashidian article 18 Jul 2012 ++]

Military Health Care Reform Update 01: The following was published in the Washington Post Opinions ‘Letter to the Editor’ column on 21 Jul 2012 :

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report that Walter Pincus cited in his Washington Post 17 JUL Fine Print column, “CBO says military health-care costs could soar,” tells only half the story and ignores the obvious: Those who pursued a career in uniform have every right to use the benefits they were told that their decades of service would earn for them. Those who choose to use any other available civilian care are doing the government a favor, not the other way around. Second, let’s not forget that in this economy many retired service members have lost their civilian jobs or their civilian health benefits have been curtailed. They have every right to turn to their hard-earned military health coverage. Finally, a big reason for the Defense Department’s rising health costs is Pentagon leaders’ failure to fulfill their obligation to be responsible stewards of public funds. According to CBO and Pentagon statistics, care is 25 percent less costly in military facilities — but those facilities are 27 percent underutilized. Many have proposed reforming the current counterproductive and duplicative setup under which three separate service health-care programs and multiple contractors fight for shares of the health-care budget. Yet defense leaders adamantly oppose legislation passed by the House to consolidate all military medical authority under a unified medical command. Instead, they seek to shift more costs to beneficiaries. Rather than blithely endorse further penalties for those who have sacrificed more for their country than any other segment of America, the CBO and Mr. Pincus should highlight the abject failures of those who are

supposed to be responsible for managing the program efficiently.

[Source: Norbert R. Ryan Jr., President of the Military Officers Association of America ++]

Airport Security Update 02: Waiting in those long airport security lines gives you plenty of time to think—and worry about turning your valuable electronics over to the TSA. Could you lose all of your vacation photos? Will your working vacation be foiled by a smashed laptop? Read on for our top five tips on how to keep electronics safe while traveling ... plus one piece of advice in case it all goes wrong.



Request a Hand Inspection - John Christopher, Senior Data Recovery Engineer with DriveSavers, tells us, "According to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA)'s website, neither airport X-ray machines nor other screening equipment create a magnetic pulse that could harm digital equipment. However, the TSA does state that the X-ray screening equipment may damage film with an ASA/ISO of 800 or higher. So in order to keep your film safe, remember to never place undeveloped film in your checked baggage. Be sure to secure your film in your carry-on bag and request a hand inspection prior to the screening." Christopher also points out that smaller airports may use older scanners (or international airports may have different equipment). If you're unsure that you can safely send electronics through an X-ray, be sure to ask airport security for a hand search. The TSA also recommends that you put your film in clear canisters or clear plastic bags in order for easier inspection.

Choose the Right Case (and Know the Unknown Rules) - Don't risk dropping your laptop as you struggle to take it out of the case for inspection. Invest in a checkpoint-friendly laptop bag (click here for TSA-approved styles), and your laptop should sail through security smoothly. Also be aware that you do not have to take certain electronics out to be screened separately; you can leave your iPad, MP3 player, cell phone, and Kindle in your carry-on, keeping them hidden from thieving eyes. And never remove any electronics from your carry-on (except for laptops in nonapproved cases) without being asked by security. Every item you take out is one that you'll have to remember to retrieve as you're rushing to put your shoes, belts, and jewelry back on.

Carry-On Only - The TSA will not reimburse you for electronics or other fragile items that were damaged in checked baggage. Never check your electronics in your luggage: They are highly likely to be broken during loading and offloading—or even stolen. The good news is, the TSA says that on most flights, you're allowed one extra carry-on item of photographic equipment in addition to your carry-on suitcase and personal item. (Double-check with your airline before flying.)

Tag-Team Security - Flying with a partner? Team up to make sure your electronics join you on the other side of the X-ray. Send one person through the body scanner and metal detector while the second person waits a few places behind you in line with all of your valuables. Then the first person can watch the electronics come through in case the second person is selected for additional screening, keeping laptops, cameras, and other valuables safe from sticky fingers at the checkpoint.

Careful on the Conveyor Belt - Always put your laptop and any other electronics you have in their own bins. The person behind you in line may hate you for hogging all the bins, but it makes it easier for the TSA to screen your items. Plus, piling bags, jackets, or even keys atop delicate electronics is a surefire way to damage them.

If All Else Fails - Know that you have rights if your electronics have been damaged by the TSA. Take pictures of broken equipment, save repair receipts, and keep your tickets. Then head to the TSA's website to download a claims package form to get financial compensation.

[Source: Today in Travel Caroline Morse article 20 Jul 2012 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure~Lejeune Update 31: For months there has been a hold-up in the passage of an omnibus veterans benefits bill in Congress. Primarily because Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), the ranking member in the Senate's Veterans Affairs Committee, insisted that before approval it include programs to provide health care for people who are suffering from illnesses due to drinking the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune N.C. Only then would he release any of the bills for a vote. It is believed that up to 750,000 people who lived and/or worked at Camp Lejeune between January 1, 1957 through December 31, 1987 were exposed to contaminated water containing carcinogens.

Recently an agreement was reached and the House and Senate VA Committees conference on 20 JUL passed the omnibus "Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act (H.R.1627)." But not before one last hold was placed on the bill. Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) wanted an additional provision included stating that the VA would be allowed to deny health care if "conclusive evidence" exists showing that the individual's disability or disease had a different cause than exposure to the contaminated drinking water at Lejeune. The provision is very similar to provisions in numerous other programs covering presumptive illnesses including Agent Orange and Gulf War illnesses. Chairman of the Senate VA Committee Patty Murray (D-WA) agreed to the addition and the bill sailed through. It will now go back to the House for an additional vote before it can be sent to President Obama for his signature. The bill includes more than 50 provisions to better serve veterans. Some of the highlights of the bill include:

- Authorizing VA to waive co-payments for telehealth and enhancing VA's teleconsultation and telemedicine capabilities.
- Extending hospital care and medical services coverage for certain illnesses and conditions to eligible veterans and family members who served on active duty or lived at Camp Lejeune.
- Protecting veterans from sexual assault at VA facilities.
- Expanding services for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury, or TBI.
- Allowing veterans with service dogs access to all VA facilities.
- Reauthorizing certain homeless veterans programs.
- Improving the process of filing jointly for both Social Security and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.
- Provisions designed to streamline disability claims processing by clarifying VA's duty to assist veterans in obtaining private medical records and allowing VA to contact veterans electronically to adjudicate claims

[Source: NAUS Weekly Update 20 Jul 2012 ++]



Camp Lejeune new water treatment plant

Vet Toxic Exposure~Lejeune Update 32: Thousands of newly released documents about water contamination at Camp Lejeune add to the evidence that the military long knew about tainted tap water blamed for deaths and illnesses of Marines and their families, and that officials covered up the information for years, a North Carolina congressman said Friday. "For the last 30 years, instead of saying there could be health effects and or even we don't know what the health effects are, they've minimized it," said Democratic Rep. Brad Miller. On 19 JUL, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) released more than 8,500 Department of Defense documents relating to the water contamination that continued at the base for decades. The release came the same week the Senate approved a bill to provide health care for Marines and their relatives who suffered due to the contamination. The bill covers Marines who lived or worked at the base from Jan. 1, 1957, to Dec. 31, 1987.

Water supplied to Camp Lejeune's main family housing areas was contaminated by dry cleaning solvents and other sources from the 1950s until 1987. Health officials believe as many as 1 million people may have been exposed to tainted water. Among them was Janey Ensminger, who was 9 when she died of leukemia in 1985. The bill providing health care for the victims is named after her. Since her death, her father has pushed to find information about the contamination. Jerry Ensminger, a retired Marine who lives in Elizabethtown, N.C., has started combing through the documents and said he has already found one from 1985 that describes trichloroethylene — or TCE — as toxic. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency didn't classify TCE as a known cause of cancer in humans until September. The Marines have said for years they didn't know at the time that TCE was harmful because it wasn't included in the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, Ensminger said. "Yet they had it classified as toxic in their own documents and they're still lying about it," he said. He added, "The facts are, they have all these documents, and they knowingly poisoned their own people." [Source: AP article 21 Jul 2012 ++]

Military Funeral Disorderly Conduct Update 21: In the omnibus veterans affairs bill passed by the Senate 18 JUL are additional restrictions on protests near military funerals and tougher penalties on groups that violate the law. Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) sponsored the original "Sanctity of Eternal Rest for Veterans" or SERVE Act (S.815) following a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a case centered on an anti-gay church group that was protesting at military funerals around the country. The Supreme Court ruled in March 2011 that the Westboro Baptist Church's protests were protected free speech. But Snowe and other lawmakers wanted to place additional restrictions on when, where and how groups could protest near funerals for military personnel. Members of the Kansas-based church protested at a funeral in Maine for a soldier killed in Iraq. A student at Searsport High School, Zach Parker, campaigned for a ban on protests at military funerals. Snowe's SERVE Act was incorporated into the veterans bill passed by the Senate on Wednesday night. The act would: double the "quiet time" before and after military funeral services to 120 minutes; increase the buffer zone around the funeral service from 300 to 500 feet and around the access point to funerals from 150 to 300 feet; and impose stiffer penalties on violators."Our nation has a vested interest in honoring those who serve in our armed forces and this bill achieves that while respecting the intent of the First Amendment to our Constitution," Snowe said in a statement. The omnibus bill now heads to the House for consideration. [Source: Portland (Maine) Press-Herald Kevin Miller article 19 Jul 2012 ++]



Military Sponsorships: NASCAR and bass fishing can count on the military to keep the sponsorship money coming. The House voted to continue spending millions for the military to back sports to attract recruits for the all-volunteer force. On a vote of 216-202, the House rejected an amendment by Reps. Jack Kingston (R-GA) and Betty McCollum (D-MN) that would have trimmed \$72.3 million for sports sponsorships from a \$608 billion defense bill for fiscal 2013. The measure had targeted the money the National Guard spends to sponsor Dale Earnhardt Jr., NASCAR's most popular driver, as well as IndyCar Series driver J.R. Hildebrand. It also would have cut money the Army spends on the National Hot Rod Association drag racing, funds the Marine Corps uses for the Ultimate Fighting Championship and money spent on bass fishing. Kingston and McCollum had challenged their colleagues' resolve to cut federal spending as the nation grapples with the trillion-plus deficit. House Republicans, their majority larger thanks to the 2010 class of tea party freshmen, have insisted on fiscal discipline and backed deep budget cuts in numerous domestic programs.

The House spent most of the day and night debating the far-reaching defense legislation that provides money for war, troops and weapons next year. Yet talk of Earnhardt's No. 88, bass fishing and NASCAR dominated the discussion. Kingston, a Georgian who says he hails from NASCAR and military country, insisted that the sponsorship money was ineffective, attracting few recruits, and made no sense as the Army shrinks from a peak of 570,000 to 490,000 and the Marine Corps drops by 20,000, to 182,000. The end of the Iraq war, the drawdown in Afghanistan and the nation's fiscal woes have reshaped the defense budget, which has nearly doubled in the last 10 years. "If someone is going to sign away five or six years of their life, it's going to take more than an ad on an automobile," Kingston told reporters at a Capitol Hill news conference prior to the floor debate. He said the money should be spent on hiring more recruiters, not military sponsorships. "We're in a fiscal crisis here," said Minnesota's McCollum. "Bass fishing is not national security."

But the two faced strong opposition from members of North Carolina's congressional delegation as well as lawmakers from Mississippi and Florida. North Carolina is home to Charlotte Motor Speedway, and the base for most NASCAR teams. The NASCAR Hall of Fame is located in Charlotte adjacent to one of NASCAR's main offices. Its headquarters are in Daytona Beach, Fla. Republican Rep. Sue Myrick dismissed the amendment as micromanaging the military's recruiting. Democratic Rep. Larry Kissell said the relationship between the military and NASCAR was critical. Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Miss., said there was "no reason Congress should be telling the Department of Defense where and how to spend money." In fact, Congress repeatedly instructs the Pentagon on how to spend the money it appropriates. The effort by Kingston and McCollum suffered an early blow when a separate provision of the bill barring funds for sponsoring professional and semiprofessional motorsports and other sports was ruled out of order by the presiding officer in the House.

Various sports leagues weighed in this week on the military sponsorships, sending a letter to Republican and Democratic leaders urging them to oppose the amendment. "Sports marketing has long been an important element in the U.S. Armed Forces' efforts to reach young adults and active duty personnel regarding the military's missions and objectives that serve our country," said the letter to House Republican and Democratic leaders from NASCAR, IZOD IndyCar series, Major League Baseball, the National Football League and the National Basketball Association. "The benefits from these types of sponsorships offset the minimal costs to taxpayers," the letter said. In recent days, the Army ended its

sponsorship with Stewart-Haas Racing, with the service saying the money was not a great investment. The Obama administration has threatened a veto of the overall 2013 defense bill after lawmakers abandoned the budget levels they agreed to last year and added \$3 billion to preserve some programs and add money to others. [Source: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Daniel Malloy article 19 Jul 2012 ++]



NDAA 2013 Update 08: The second half of the Defense bill, the Defense Appropriations bill (H.R.5856) for 2013 (starting on October 1, 2012) was passed by the House of Representatives on 19 JUL. The bill now goes to the Senate for its action. The House version appropriated \$606 billion for defense spending. This followed 2 days of floor debate and proposed amendments before the final bill was passed by a lopsided vote of 326-90. Near the end of the debate an Amendment was passed freezing the Pentagon's funding at 2012 levels. This cut the final bill by \$1 billion. However, it is still \$2 billion more than the Administration's proposals. President Obama has threatened to veto the bill if it was above his budget proposal. (Part of the increase is caused the House's refusal to accept DoD's proposals to increase the medical fees for military retirees and their families.) So this is far from over. The Senate has not taken up its version of the Appropriations Bill and after the Senate's bill is passed the bills will need to be reconciled in a House/Senate conference. The Senate is saying that they will take up the bill in August but most in D.C. doubt if it will be taken up before September or even more likely not until after the November elections.

While numerous Amendments were brought up for consideration very few were ultimately passed and included. Below is a list of all the members who successfully included their Amendments in the final bill. As you can see many of them included additional funding for war injuries (eyes, spinal cord, Gulf War illnesses, TBI, PTSD), additional funding for National Guard equipment, and cuts in Overseas Operation Accounts. The Gulf War Illness Amendment sponsored by Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) basically reversed a 2/3 cut in funding that had been quietly included in the VA's funding request, not noticed originally, and passed. The proposed cut had infuriated numerous Gulf War veterans. Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL) successfully sponsored an Amendment that "prohibits funds from being used to implement an enrollment fee for the TRICARE for Life program." Of course this is one of the Administration's proposed fees that the House has already refused to include in the NDAA. This Amendment further bars DoD from spending any money to try to implement such a fee. It passed by an overwhelming vote of 399-17. Again, remember this is the first large step in defense appropriations. There are many more to come.

Floor adopted amendments to the Fiscal Year 2013 Defense Appropriations Bill that could have some impact on the veteran community included:

- **Kucinich #1 (D-OH)** – The amendment cuts \$10 million from the Navy Operations and Maintenance account, and transfers the funds to Defense Health Programs for Gulf War illness research. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **Langevin (D-RI)** – The amendment cuts \$15 million from the Defense-wide Operations and Maintenance accounts, and transfers the funds to Defense Health Programs for spinal cord research. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **Sessions (R-TX)** – The amendment cuts \$10 million from the Defense-wide Operations and Maintenance accounts, and transfers the funds to Defense Health Programs for traumatic brain injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder research and treatment. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **Walz (D-MN)** – The amendment cuts \$5 million from the Defense-wide Operations and Maintenance accounts, and transfers the funds to Defense Health Programs for eye injury research. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **Boswell (D-IA)** – The amendment reduces Afghan security forces funds by \$22 million, and adds \$10 million to Defense Health Programs to increase suicide prevention outreach. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **Wittman (R-VA)** – The amendment prohibits funds from being used to plan or implement an additional base realignment and closure (BRAC) round. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **Bilbray (R-CA)** – The amendment prohibits funds from being used to remove the War Memorial at Mount Soledad in San Diego, Calif. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.
- **King #2 (R-IA)** – The amendment prohibits funds from being used in contravention of the Defense of Marriage Act. The amendment was adopted on a vote of 247-166.
- **Mulvaney (R-SC) / Frank (D-MA)** – The amendment makes a \$1.1 billion across-the-board cut to the bill. The amendment was adopted on a vote of 247-167.
- **Stearns (R-FL)** – The amendment prohibits funds from being used to implement an enrollment fee for the TRICARE for Life program. This fee does not currently exist. The amendment was adopted on a vote of 399-17.
- **Kucinich #4 (D-OH)** – The amendment prohibits funds from being used to enter into a contract with any person or entity that has been convicted of fraud against the federal government. The amendment was adopted on a voice vote.

[Source: TREA News for the Enlisted 20 Jul 2012 ++]

Tricare Pharmacy Policy Update 11: After a year-long dispute, Express Scripts and Walgreens announced 19 JUL that they have struck a new pharmacy network deal. Beginning 15 SEP, Walgreens drug stores will once again fill prescriptions at "in-network" rates for customers of north St. Louis-based Express Scripts Holding Co., which manages the pharmacy benefit for employers' health insurance plans. Wall Street analysts said that the new contract -- to start 8 1/2 months after the companies terminated their last contract -- will enable Express Scripts to focus on winning new business

and integrating its recent acquisition of Medco Health Solutions, a larger rival, into the company. Express Scripts, now the nation's largest pharmacy benefit manager, and Walgreens, the nation's largest drug store chain, had publicly bickered since June 2011 when the Deerfield, Ill.-based Walgreen Co. announced that it was breaking off contract talks. At that time, Walgreens complained that Express Scripts was trying to force below-average reimbursements for prescriptions. In Missouri, more than 110,000 consumers were estimated to be affected by the failed contract talks, according to the drug store chain.

Express Scripts executives said earlier this year that, despite the contract dispute, they were able to retain almost all of their existing business. Jeff Jonas, an analyst at Gabelli & Co., an investment management firm in Rye, N.Y., agreed that Express Scripts probably got the upper hand in the contract negotiations. "All signs were that they were handling this very well, retaining existing business and winning new business," Jonas said. "I'm sure (the new contract) was closer to what Express Scripts wanted than what Walgreens was holding out for. I suspect that Walgreens had to give some concessions." When the companies parted ways on 31 DEC, that forced Express Scripts customers to get their prescriptions filled at Walgreens' rivals, including CVS and Walmart stores. Indeed, many Walgreens competitors openly advertised their readiness to fill Express Scripts prescriptions. Neither of the two corporate titans would specify the terms of the new multi-year deal or comment on why negotiations took so long. "We're pleased to get an agreement," said Express Scripts spokesman Brian Henry. "Walgreens' rates and terms are competitive within the Express Scripts network ... They're coming back to our broadest network possible." Michael Polzin, a Walgreens vice president, also said "the rates and terms are consistent with our principles and our contracts with other PBMs."

Stock analysts said the long-awaited deal would benefit both companies. "This was clearly the logical outcome for these two companies to get back together," said Judson Clark, an analyst at Edward Jones & Co., in Des Peres. "It's important for these guys to work together." "For Express Scripts, this removes the possibility that they could be hurt by not being involved with Walgreens," Clark said. "For Walgreens, they had to get this done -- or face the possibility of losing the Medco clients that Express Scripts now controls." Earlier this year, Express Scripts consummated its \$29 billion purchase of Franklin Lakes, N.J.-based Medco. Express Scripts now handles about one-third of the nation's prescriptions, and has a network of pharmacies, including Walgreens, that totals about 64,000. Walgreens has about 7,800 drug stores nationwide. But the extended rift with Express Scripts may cause longer-term damage to Walgreen Co. because Express Scripts customers were shut out of Walgreens for many months, Clark said. "We think most of them will stay gone," he said.

Express Scripts has built its business on cutting health costs. Employers contract with pharmacy benefit managers to cover their workers' drug benefits. PBMs then deliver drugs through the mail or reimburse pharmacies for filling prescriptions. But some critics contend that post-merger Express Scripts has too much market clout, which gives it the ability to force unfair contracts on retail pharmacies, while pushing consumers into getting their drugs by direct mail. "There's always going to be tension between them," Jonas said, "because the job of the PBM is to drive down cost, and of course the pharmacy doesn't want to see a reimbursement cut." He said that Walgreens has typically received an average of about \$10 per prescription as a dispensing fee, plus reimbursement for the cost of the drug. "Walgreens lost about \$4 billion in (annualized) revenue. They are not going to get all of it back," Jonas said. "CVS has gone on record saying that they hope to keep half of it. Walgreens will do some advertising and discounting and

try to win the consumer back, but they'll be fighting for it. [Source: St. Louis Post Dispatch Jim Doyle article 20 Jul 2012 ++]



Tricare Pharmacy Policy Update 12: Express Scripts announced 24 JUL that TRICARE beneficiaries with smart phones have a new way to access pharmacy benefit information from ESI, the TRICARE Pharmacy contractor. Beneficiaries can create an online account, called Express Rx, through the Express Scripts mobile app and set up daily medication alerts that remind them to stay adherent to their treatment regimen. The alerts can include pictures of the medication to assist beneficiaries who take multiple medications. Express Rx is available for download, free, at:

- Smartphone users by going to <http://www.express-scripts.com/mobile> or by using services like the Apple App Store or the Android Market.
- Other users, including those on Blackberry devices, can access the mobile-optimized website at <http://m.esrx.com>.
- TRICARE beneficiaries in the South Region can also make use of the mobile Humana Military website, <https://m.humana-military.com/>.

To ensure security and data protection, beneficiaries must register through the member portal at <http://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE> before logging in to the Express Rx app or mobile-optimized site. Once registered, the same username and password allow access to the Express Rx app and mobile-optimized website. The Express Rx app and mobile-optimized website already allow beneficiaries to register for, and convert medications to TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery, order home delivery refills, check order status, and look up drug information. On GPS-enabled smart phones, the Express Rx app also can direct beneficiaries to the closest retail pharmacy in their network. The Express Rx app supplements the 24-hour phone and e-mail communication channels beneficiaries currently have available to interact with pharmacists and patient care advocates. For more information about TRICARE pharmacy, refer to <http://www.tricare.mil/pharmacy>. To learn about the TRICARE pharmacy home delivery, refer to <http://www.tricare.mil/homedelivery>. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 27 Jul 2012 ++]

Military Pharmacy: Tricare eligible personnel have the option to have their prescriptions filled (up to a 90-day supply for most medications) at a military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacy free of charge. Note that not all medications are available at MTF pharmacies. Each full-service facility is required to make available those medications listed on the Basic Core Formulary (BCF) <http://pec.ha.osd.mil/bcf.php?submenuheader=1>. The BCF is a list of medications required to be on formulary at all full-service MTFs. BCF medications are intended to meet the majority of the primary care needs of DoD beneficiaries. The Formulary Search Tool at

http://pec.ha.osd.mil/formulary_search.phpnotes notes "BCF Items" for specific medications listed on the Department of Defense BCF. MTFs may add other medications to their local formularies based on the scope of care at each MTF. If your prescription was not given to you by an MTF provider at the MTF where you are getting it filled, and the medication is not listed on the Formulary Search Tool as a BCF medication, it's a good idea to call the MTF pharmacy before trying to get it filled to make sure the MTF carries the medication you need. [Source: http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/Prescriptions/FillingPrescriptions/MilitaryPharmacy_Jul_2012 ++]

VA Sexual Trauma Program Update 04: Lack of documentation is a frequent obstacle faced by military sexual trauma (MST) victims who have post-traumatic stress disorder. Without it, veterans cannot establish a service connection to their conditions and therefore cannot receive disability benefits. The American Legion (AL) wants the Department of Veterans Affairs to change the way it adjudicates PTSD claims for victims of MST, so they are handled in the same manner as those of combat veterans. In its 18 JUL testimony before a House subcommittee, the Legion noted that VA had voluntarily changed its claims regulations in 2010, making it easier for veterans who served in combat zones to obtain service connection for PTSD. That same relaxation of evidentiary requirements, said the Legion, should also be applied to MST victims. Lori Perkió, assistant director of the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division, testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs subcommittee on disability assistance and memorial affairs. Highlights of her testimony were:



Lori Perkió

- For victims of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) the most difficult point to prove is usually the occurrence of the event in service. There are a variety of reasons for this difficulty. Some of these reasons are institutional or even societal. Some of these reasons revolve around the circumstances and culture often associated with the triggering incidences.
- Perkió referenced the various difficulties and sensitive subjects that MST victims often face in going through the process of earning service-connection status for PTSD. These are issues that VA was made aware of, she said, in a 2004 document on MST produced by the Veterans Health Initiative to VA health providers. The guide recognizes some of the 'downsides' veterans might face filing a claim. Veterans will be forced to undergo detailed descriptions of the horrifying events which have resulted in their present PTSD symptoms. Many veterans attach symbolic value to receiving service connection and could be further traumatized by repeated rejections and denials.

- Further complicating the process is that in many cases there may be no records which could verify a veteran’s claim of assault or sexual trauma in service Even new military programs developed to help victims deal with sexual trauma in the military are often based on anonymity, to assuage concerns of victims who feel their reporting of the incident may adversely impact their career.”
- The anonymity is positive in that it might be increasing the number of victims who report trauma and receive help, but it could be having a disastrous longterm effect in that it’s concealing assault incidents that would help earn service-connection status, Perkio said. Perkio testified that the key is looking at an MST claimant’s record of behavior to determine if such a status declaration is merited.
- Recognizing the importance of types of evidence such as behavior changes, deterioration in work performance, substance abuse, episodes of depression, unexplained economic or social behavior changes and the like, the regulations show the difficulty inherent in proving the existence of the event in question. Despite the (VA) regulatory requirement to pay special attention to these types of information, American Legion service officers frequently report that this is not how these claims are actually adjudicated in the field.”
- Ultimately, the MST situation draws parallels to earning PTSD service-connection for combat veterans. Perkio said the VA should give PTSD claims from MST victims the same kind of lax evidentiary burden. There are clear parallels to the struggles of veterans fighting to be recognized with service connection for PTSD in combat situations and in situations of sexual trauma. In both cases, the trauma contributes to lasting effects which can reach into every aspect of the veteran’s life. In both cases, the reliving of the event as a necessary part of the process of service connection can be devastating and contribute to further trauma. In both cases, there is a long established understanding of the lack of available records to help validate the claim. With a doctor’s detailed evaluation, and relating the PTSD to an event in service, the evidentiary requirement for MST victims could be treated in the same manner in which we treat combat veterans. If the described incident is consistent with the nature of sexual trauma and conforms to the diagnosis, the existence of the in service stressor should be conceded by VA.

The victims of military sexual trauma deserve better than to have to relive their experiences while going through the claims process. “The veterans in question have already been terribly victimized,” Perkio said. “Unlike combat veterans, they are unlikely to be hailed as heroes, although the courage to come forward and seek treatment is no less admirable. As a nation we must be reaching out to these veterans and telling them it is not only okay to come forward, but we have to reestablish trust with them. “The system needs fixing, but it is not a complicated fix. The lessons of combat PTSD have shown us VA can make these changes on their own initiative, and The American Legion urges them to act now to do so for victims of MST.” [Source: American Legion Online Update 19 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Rural Access Update 13: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced it is launching a nationwide specialty health-care program for veterans in rural areas, based on the Project Echo pilot program currently operating at 11 VA medical centers. The new program, Specialty Care Access Network-Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (SCAN-ECHO), will give training,

advice and support to primary care providers (PCPs) so they can deliver specialty care to VA patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hepatitis C and congestive heart failure. “The SCAN-ECHO model allows the VA medical community to treat a greater number of patients than the current structure,” said Jacob Gadd, deputy director of health for The American Legion. “In a sense, it takes a primary care provider from saying to the patient, ‘Let me refer you to a specialist,’ to saying ‘I can diagnose and treat your condition.’ It is going to help increase the confidence and competence of PCPs by teaching them best practices for specialty care.” The effectiveness of the Project Echo/SCAN-ECHO model has been supported by multiple research trials, Gadd said, as well as articles published in “Health Affairs” and “The New England Journal of Medicine.” Not only will the expanded program improve the continuity of care, it will also:

- Reduce wait times at specialty clinics,
- Mitigate difficulties in recruiting specialists for rural areas,
- Increase certifications for the delivery of specialized medicines,
- Enhance the professional development and satisfaction of PCPs, and
- Build local, sustainable centers of medical excellence.

Brian Bertges, the American Legion’s assistant director of policy research, said that SCAN-ECHO may also produce some indirect savings. “Since the program targets access for rural veterans, VA may see a decrease in mileage reimbursements because veterans’ travel time will be reduced. “VA may also see more savings in the area of fee-based services. Instead of referring veterans to specialists in their local communities, more PCPs in the VA system will be able to provide that kind of care,” Bertges said. Project Echo has been supported by a three-year, \$5 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. [Source: American Legion Online Update 19 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Clinic Openings Update 13: As part of the continuing effort to provide world-class health care closer to where more Veterans live, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs today announced plans to open 13 new community-based outpatient clinics in nine states. “Community-based clinics are key to providing Veterans better access to high-quality care closer to home,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “By reducing the distance Veterans have to travel, we hope more Veterans will benefit from the health care services they have earned through their service to our Nation.” With 152 medical centers and more than 812 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), the department operates the largest integrated health care system in the country. VA will provide health care to about 6.1 million patients in fiscal year 2012 and 80 million outpatient visits. The Obama Administration is committed to increasing access to VA care and services for Veterans wherever they live. The first of the new CBOCs will become operational during the latter part of 2012, with openings continuing through 2015. Local VA officials will keep their Veterans, communities, congressional offices and other stakeholders informed of the progress of the new CBOCs. A list of the new community clinics and planned activation follows:

- Arizona – Northeast Phoenix/Maricopa (2012/2013)
- Georgia – Tifton/Tift (2012/2013)
- Kansas – Lenexa/Johnson County (2013)
- Maryland – St. Mary’s (2013)

- Missouri – Marshfield/Webster (2013), Platte City/Platte (2012/2013), Springfield/Greene (2015)
- North Carolina – Sanford/Lee (2012/2013)
- Ohio – Georgetown/Brown (2012/2013)
- Oregon – Portland Metro South/Clackamas (2012/2013), Grants Pass/Josephine (2012/2013)
- Pennsylvania – Huntingdon (2013), Indiana (2013)

For more information about VA’s health care services, please visit: <http://www.va.gov/health/>. [Source: VA News Release 19 Jul 2012 ++]

VA eBenefits Portal: The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors (Dole/Shalala) was established by Executive Order 13426 in March 2007. The Commission recommended the creation of a “My eBenefits” (aka eBenefits) web portal that would provide Service Members, Veterans, their families and authorized caregivers with a single sign-on, central access point to clinical and benefit data. That recommendation was acted upon and the eBenefits portal <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal> was created. It is a central location for Veterans, Service Members, and their families to research, find, access, and, in time, manage their benefits and personal information. It offers a personalized workspace called My Dashboard that provides quick access to eBenefits tools. Using eBenefits tools, you can complete various tasks. You can apply for benefits, download your DD 214, view your benefits status, in addition to other actions as needed. This workspace is available to you once you have created an eBenefits account. It also offers a catalog of links to other sites that provide information about military and Veteran benefits

A VA news release issued 18 JUL says about 1.67 million users have signed up for the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense web portal, eBenefits, which provides online information and access to a wide variety of military and veteran benefits resources. This strong pace of registrations for the site since its launch in October 2009 has allowed VA to exceed its fiscal year 2012 agency priority goal of 1.65 million user. That puts it on track to meet the 2013 goal of 2.5 million."We know that three out of four veterans who use VA services want to connect online, so we must be there for them with the information they need," Allison Hickey, the VA's undersecretary for benefits, stated in the release. Hickey added that eBenefits "is clearly becoming the platform of choice for veterans seeking access."

Veterans and service members new to the eBenefits website are guided through the registration process to get a full-access account, called a premier account which allows maximum ability to update personal information and learn about benefits without having to visit a VA facility. With the premier account, veterans can access multiple applications on the secure portion of the website. A premier account also allows veterans to check the status of compensation and pension claims filed with VA. This feature, the most popular within the eBenefits application, had over 700,000 visits in June alone, according to the news release. Overall, visits to the site have increased 60 percent over the previous year, approaching 2 million each month. On July 1, VA introduced its 11th consecutive quarterly release of improvements to the eBenefits application, including benefits eligibility email messages to service members as they reach career milestones and a new Career Center page.

Another key function is a single sign-on capability for veterans to transition securely between benefits information on eBenefits and health information on VA's myHealthVet website without an additional log-on. VA says it has completed a record-breaking 1 million claims per year during the last two fiscal years and is on target to complete another 1 million claims in fiscal year 2012. Even so, the agency acknowledged too many veterans have to wait too long to get the benefits they have earned, and that is why VA is aggressively building a strong foundation for a paperless, digital disability claims system that it says will transform operations and eliminate the backlog. The VA says the plan will help achieve Secretary Eric K. Shinseki's goal of completing veterans' claims in less than 125 days with 98 percent accuracy in 2015. [Source: AFPS article 18 Jul 2012 ++]



Traumatic Brain Injury Update 22: For at least two years the Military Health System (MHS) has touted a software tool under development at a cost of more than \$18 million as a way to help gather information about troops impaired by the signature wound of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq -- traumatic brain injury, which results from exposure to roadside bombs. But a six-week probe by Nextgov shows this tool has nothing to do with the management or assessment of TBI cases. MHS reported that 244,719 troops have been diagnosed with TBI from 2000 through the first quarter of fiscal 2012, up 72,579 from 2009, when it awarded the contract to Vangent Inc., now owned by General Dynamics. The Defense Health Information Management System, which manages information technology projects for MHS, said in a fact sheet posted on its website in October 2010 that the Traumatic Brain Injury/Behavioral Health software tool would include capabilities to fulfill a Defense Department "mandate requiring neurocognitive readiness assessments for all service members within six months of deployment." Defense uses these assessments, including the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metrics and the Military Acute Concussion Evaluation, to determine the impact of blast injuries on soldiers' brains when there are no visible head wounds.

Vangent won the original contract for the TBI/BH tool, valued at \$14.1 million, in February 2009; a follow-on contract for \$4.2 million was awarded in November 2010. In a press release about the follow-on contract, Vangent said its tool "provides the capability for creating and securely storing psychological assessments, behavioral health encounters, as well as sensitive information." Army Col. Dacosta Barrow, program manager for DHIMS in early 2011, said in a presentation at the Health Care Information and Management Systems Society conference in Orlando, Fla., on Feb. 23, 2011, that once deployed, "TBI/BH will improve behavioral health-related workflow and capabilities to meet the mandate requiring neurocognitive readiness assessments for all service members within six months of deployment." The Air Force evaluated the TBI/BH tool at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia in the fall of 2011 and determined the software did not live up to the hype. Lt. Col. Robert Vanecek, Air Force chief of behavioral health

optimization, told Nextgov in an interview last week that “we scratched our heads over the name . . . this project has nothing to do with TBI. It is a standard clinical documentation tool.”

He added the TBI/BH software does not pull in or use data from traumatic brain injury assessments such as ANAM. Instead, Vanecek said, it recorded information on symptoms such as depression, anger, suicidal ideation and post-traumatic stress disorder. Another limitation was the software tool did not interface with the Defense electronic health record, requiring clinicians to input data into two systems, Vanecek said. Clinicians reported the system was slow to load and sometimes they aborted the sessions as a result, he said. Patients found the self-assessment portion of the tool complex and off-putting, he added. Vanecek said the military electronic health record system, known as AHLTA, now can handle the functions of TBI/BH software at a lower cost; the Air Force recommended canceling the program.

Nextgov first submitted a query to the Military Health System on 8 JUN asking about the status of TBI/BH. Cynthia Smith, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said in a statement 17 JUL that officials at the Defense Health Information Management System realized in early 2010 the TBI/BH tool had nothing to do with traumatic brain injury; DHIMS received the Air Force evaluation in mid-2011, she said. Smith also said the DHIMS fact sheet for TBI/BH was “was originally inaccurate but later updated.” An extensive Web search showed that DHIMS did update the fact sheet in April, when the reference to TBI was removed and the tool was described simply as “a Web-based application used to document behavioral health care across the services.” Mark Meudt, a spokesman for General Dynamics, which acquired Vangent in October 2011, said Vangent was tasked by DHIMS to develop only a behavioral health module, not a TBI tool, a task contracted to another company. Smith said TBI/BH was “**not developed to accurately diagnose traumatic brain injuries**” but ended up with the moniker because it was lumped in with other programs focused on TBI. Barrow’s slides describing the TBI/BH tool at the Orlando conference also were inaccurate, Smith said, and should have been used to describe another tool. The TBI/BH contract ended in June, Smith said.

Lt. Col. Millard Brown, an Army psychiatrist and program manager for the Office of the Surgeon General/Army Medical Command Behavioral Health Data Platform, said the service tested the TBI/BH tool at West Point in the fall of 2011. In a statement he said it had “severe limitations,” which he did not specify. He added the ability to create separate, confidential behavioral health notes in the tool “is not currently required nor desired.” Generating patient notes in a system separate from the military electronic health record “causes increased documentation complexity and a decreased capability to appropriately communicate with other medical team members to optimize care.” Brown said the Army has developed its own behavioral health data platform, which it plans to install in all behavioral health clinics. Dr. Chrisanne Gordon, chairwoman of Resurrecting Lives, a TBI research, treatment and advocacy group based in Columbus, Ohio, said the amount of money the Pentagon spent on the TBI/BH tool could have paid for a year of cognitive training and rehabilitation for more than 700 troops. [Source: NextGov Bob Brewin article 18 Jul 2012 ++]

Traumatic Brain Injury Update 23: Doctors have long thought that if you ding your head playing sports or in an automobile accident, the concussive effects — headaches, dizziness, memory

problems — would fade away with a little rest. But a new study out of the University of Oklahoma suggests that the symptoms of combat-related traumatic brain injury can last for years without decreasing in intensity. The study, which was presented at the annual meeting of the American Headache Society last month, looked at 500 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who, between June 2008 and April 2011, had screened positive for traumatic brain injury during deployment. The veterans were being treated at a special traumatic brain injury clinic at the Oklahoma City Veterans Affairs Medical Center. A second level of screening administered to those 500 veterans tried to gauge the persistence and severity of head injury symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, poor coordination, depression, and problems with judgment or memory. Grouped together, those symptoms are known as post-concussion syndrome.

The researchers organized the data based on whether the veterans had experienced a traumatic brain injury within the previous four years, or five to eight years before the screening. What they found was dispiriting: none of the symptoms of post-concussion syndrome seemed to improve over the eight years. Nearly half of the veterans who had traumatic brain injury within the previous four years reported that they were still having mild-to-moderate headaches. Nearly as many, about 46 percent, said they were experiencing severe headaches. Those numbers were almost the same for veterans who had experienced traumatic brain injuries five to eight years before, with about 45 percent reporting mild headaches and 51 percent saying they had severe headaches. The same pattern occurred in the data for five other symptoms of post-concussion syndrome: dizziness, balance, coordination, decision making and depression. The majority of veterans in the study screened positive for all of those symptoms except depression. “What this says is we’re not seeing recovery in veterans with these head injuries,” said Dr. James R. Couch, a professor of neurology at the University of Oklahoma medical school and the lead author. “In fact, there is a tendency that things are getting just a little worse.”

Dr. Couch said the closed-head injuries could be particularly insidious because the veterans look normal but are experiencing pain or cognitive problems that can completely disrupt their lives. He said that the symptoms worsened more for veterans who had had more than one traumatic brain injury, suggesting a cumulative impact of head injuries. Previous research has also pointed in that direction. Most of the 500 veterans had received their brain injuries from explosions. But Dr. Couch said the data did not seem to vary significantly with veterans who had brain injuries from other sources, like vehicle accidents. The persistence of a range of symptoms underscores the complexity of treating traumatic brain injuries, he said, since some are psychiatric and others physical, with different medications and therapies prescribed for each. Veterans with post-concussion syndrome might also need services to find employment or salvage marriages, he noted. “We have to recognize that people who may have head injuries may look the same, but they often are not going to act the same,” Dr. Couch said. “You’ve got to stabilize the patient’s interaction with family and try to create the best milieu for the patient to be able to return to employment, stay with the family and return to self-respect.”

Dr. Couch said that the researchers considered the possibility that some veterans reported persistent symptoms so that they could continue receiving disability compensation. He called that hypothetical phenomenon “compensation neurosis,” and said its existence has been debated since at least the 1880s when a German researcher found that the number of people who reported being injured in railway accidents skyrocketed after the government started paying compensation for such injuries. But Dr. Couch said that there is also ample evidence that people generally do not report physical ailments based on

whether compensation is involved. One of the shortcomings of the study, which was partly financed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is that it was retrospective and did not include follow-up with the veterans, Dr. Couch said. Consequently, events after a deployment, including problems with alcohol or drug abuse, or new injuries, were not considered.

Future research should focus on following a group of veterans with post-concussion syndrome over many years, not only to determine which symptoms persist but also which therapies are most effective. That research should also look at whether veterans with head injuries tend to develop chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a serious brain disease that was once mainly associated with contact sports but has recently been discovered in young combat veterans. “Early recognition, early treatment, is a big issue here,” he said. “If we treat these people early, we get a much better result.” [Source: New York Times | At War James Dao article 18 Jul 2011 ++]

Pets to Vets Update 01: The Western Pennsylvania Humane Society is giving away pets to military veterans, officials announced 16 JUL. “We know animals make a difference in people’s lives,” said Humane Society spokeswoman Gretchen Fieser at the North Side animal shelter. “If there’s a way to find good homes for the pets and help our heroes, it’s a win-win for everybody.” Under the Pets for Vets program, the Humane Society will waive adoption fees (\$30 to \$150, depending on the animal); provide free obedience training classes (\$70 to \$90), personalized ID tag (\$7) and a one-year membership to the rescue group (\$35); and give adopters vouchers of \$50 to \$100 for goods from the Humane Society store. To qualify, honorably discharged veterans must show they own a home or live somewhere where pets are allowed. Active military personnel qualify, but they must have family or friends who can care for the pets if they are deployed overseas. “We are very excited about this new adoption initiative,” Executive Director David Janusek said. “We have been building this program for a long time and looking at different organizations that have done this sort of matchmaking in their cities. We are looking forward to bringing this special adoption plan to Pittsburgh and its large population of military veterans.” The Humane Society’s Western Avenue location has more animals than it can handle, Fieser said, including 400 cats and kittens, 90 dogs and 40 rabbits. The new program will not only help veterans, but hopefully drive up adoptions so more animals can find homes, she said. “Pets do such amazing things for us. We want to create new best friends for people that really need them in their lives, and for pets who really need a home.” For more information and an application, go to. <http://www.wpahumane.com/veterans.html>. [Source: KDKA2 Pittsburgh article 17 Jul 2012 ++]



Deceptive Recruiting: Eric Hickam, a student veteran at Columbia University and four-time Iraq War veteran, recently discovered that he was deceived by U.S. Army recruiters with a contract bonus of \$50,000 in addition to his GI Bill benefits. The Army College Fund (ACF), a program offered to soldiers that fulfill enlistment contracts in high-demand career fields, was offered to Hickam in 2003, a full 10 months prior to joining the U.S. Army. The day Eric left for Army Basic Training he was deceived into signing a similar contract. The new contract stated that the Army College Fund and the Montgomery GI Bill were not separate benefits. In 2009, the U.S. Army temporarily reviewed the cases of soldiers deceived by Army recruiters thanks to Congressional pressure. An amendment to the Duncan Hunter Defense Authorization Act of 2009 by Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) allowed student veterans to petition the U.S. Army for the full ACF benefit promised upon enlistment. The law, however, provided a temporary window of opportunity lasting less than nine months.

Regarding his window of opportunity Hickam said, "I was serving in Iraq when the Defense Act passed. When I returned from Iraq I was still serving on active duty and preparing for my fourth and final combat deployment. I had no idea I was the victim of deceptive recruiting practices. I wish I had the opportunity to recoup the educational benefits I was originally promised." Michael Dakduk, Executive Director of Student Veterans of America said, "Eric served his country honorably. He should not be penalized for missing the window of opportunity to file a claim because of his service in Iraq." Last month, Hickam received an official ruling from the Army Board for Corrections of Military Records (ABCMR) denying his ACF benefit. Student Veterans of America recently worked with Congresswoman Matsui to introduce H.R.6123: Fulfilling Our Promise to Student Veterans Act of 2012 . This bill is similar to her 2008 amendment and will allow veterans like Eric to recover their rightfully earned ACF benefits. [Source: SVA Newsletter 17 Jul 2012++]

Gift Card Scam: Cell phone users nationwide are receiving suspicious text messages that claim to be from Target. The texts tell consumers they won a drawing for free gift card... and all they have to do is click a link and enter their address and phone number. Unfortunately, the gift card drawing is fake. And the texts are just a way to collect personal info for shady advertisers. The text messages vary, but all contain an offer of a gift card, a URL to visit and PIN to enter on the website. A typical text would read: "Your entry in our drawing WON you a free \$1000 Target giftcard! Enter "917" at <http://www.target.com.tgrz.biz> to claim it and we can ship it to you immediately" The text's URL leads to a website that is branded with Target's colors and its mascot dog Bullseye. You are asked to enter the PIN and an email address. Then, you are taken to a form and instructed to fill out your name, cell number and mailing address. One recipient reported completing the form and receiving a second PIN in return. The confirmation message instructed her to wait for a follow-up text and enter that new PIN at the website address she received. The text turned out to be promoting a horoscope website, and no mention was made of the Target gift card. Refer to the BBB organizations' complete scam directory at http://www.bbb.org/us/scam-source/top-scams/?utm_source=Scam+Alert+--+Target+Gift+Card+Texts+are+Fakes&utm_campaign=Target+text+gift+card&utm_medium=email for more information about breaking scams in your area. [Source: BBB Scam Alert 17 Jul 2012 ++]

Get a \$1,000 Target Gift Card!

15 of 1000 left



Please enter your code below

[Unsubscribe](#)

IRS Statutes of Limitations Update 01: Nothing is forever except death and taxes.

However, there are limitations imposed on the IRS known as Statutes of Limitations. Here are a few:

- If you have never filed a tax return, the IRS wants you to file the most recent six years. This means 2011 - 2006. When taxes are owed for late filed returns, the Service applies a 5% penalty per month up to 25% against the amount due. A failure to pay penalty of 1/2% per month may also be assessed unless the failure can be justified. This penalty cannot exceed 25%. But if no taxes are due, no penalties are assessed.
- The IRS has 3 years to audit your tax return. This is measured from the actual filing date. For instance, if the return was filed before the deadline, the time is measured from the 15 June deadline (for overseas' filers). After the 3 year period has expired, the IRS cannot initiate an audit unless there is a suspicion of tax fraud. So the IRS would have until June 15, 2012 to audit a 2008 tax return that was filed on time. But this 3 year statute can only begin once a tax return is filed.
- The IRS has 10 years to collect outstanding tax liabilities. This period is measured from the day a tax liability has been finalized. The liability could have resulted from a balance due on a tax return, an audit assessment, or a finalized proposed assessment.
- You have 3 years to collect a tax refund. This period is measured from the original deadline of the tax return. So you would have until June 15, 2013 to file a 2009 tax return for a refund. But filing an extension may extend the period for claiming refunds

[Source: The TaxBarron Report Jul 2012 ++]

Tricare Regional Contracts Update 08: The company that provides health care to millions of service members and their families in the western region of the country dropped its challenge to the government’s decision not to renew its contract. “It is with mixed emotions that we make this decision; however, continuing to challenge the government’s decision will not bring an end to the uncertainty that has plagued this program for the last three years and will only drive up the costs for all involved,” said David McIntyre Jr., president and chief executive officer of TriWest Healthcare Alliance, in a July 13 letter to customers posted on the company’s website. TriWest’s current TRICARE contract runs through March 31, 2013. UnitedHealth Military and Veterans Services, which is part of UnitedHealth Group, is set to begin managing the program in April 2013. According to a report in Bloomberg News, TriWest has 1,700 employees, and McIntyre has said the company probably will shut down as a result of losing the lucrative government contract.



TriWest Health Alliance President and Chief Executive Officer David McIntyre, Jr.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance lost its bid protest over the Defense Department’s March decision to award a \$20.4 billion contract to UnitedHealth Group to manage TRICARE, the military’s vast health care system. The Government Accountability Office, which rendered the decision, said Defense’s evaluation of the contract award to UnitedHealth was reasonable and rejected TriWest’s protest on all counts. TRICARE covers 2.9 million active-duty and retired service members and their families, and Phoenix-based TriWest has managed the program in the West for more than a decade. Defense in 2009 re-awarded the TRICARE contract to TriWest, but UnitedHealth Group protested that decision, which led the department to reissue its solicitation for bids. TriWest expressed concerns with the contract award to UnitedHealth, arguing that UnitedHealth did not have experience in military health care management and the company would not offer the best value to enrollees. TriWest’s contract bid was lower than UnitedHealth’s.

“UnitedHealth Military and Veterans Services is honored to be able to put our expertise and experience to work on behalf of TRICARE West beneficiaries, and we look forward to working with the Defense Department and the incumbent contractor to ensure a smooth transition for service members, retirees and their families,” Lori C. McDougal, chief executive officer of UnitedHealth Military and Veterans Services, said in a statement. “We are committed to working with the Department of Defense to ensure beneficiaries have access to cost-effective, quality and innovative care.” [Source: GovExec.com Kellie Lunney article 16 Jul 2012 ++]

Vet License Plates KY: Governor Steve Beshear announced 12 JUL that Kentuckians can show their support for veterans with newly available vehicle license plates. “Kentuckians are proud of our veterans, and many will want to display that message of support in a visible way,” Gov. Beshear said. The new plates – available even to those who are not veterans themselves – show support for veterans and also raise funds for veterans programs. “The ‘I Support Veterans’ license plate will give an opportunity for all Kentuckians who wish to support veterans' services to do so, and to show that support by putting this license plate on their vehicle,” said Rep. Tanya Pullin, who chairs the House Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Safety. “I was pleased to have sponsored the bill in the 2011 Session of the Kentucky General Assembly that created this special plate. It will create additional revenue to be used by the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs to serve veterans in Kentucky.” Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Ken Lucas said the new license plates were designed in response to citizens’ interest in supporting veterans. “Many people over the years have asked us for a license plate that expresses their support for veterans even though they themselves do not qualify for veterans’ license plates. The KDVA will receive a portion of the fee of each Support Veterans license plate purchased. Those funds will enable us to keep programs that help veterans directly, including filing benefit claims, getting help finding jobs, maintaining their homes, and accessing other services.”



In addition, Kentucky offers the military community a choice of 19 special license plates which can be viewed along with the prerequisites required to obtain them in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet License Plates - KY**”. The state also offers 15 motorcycle plates for all the categories offered for cars/trucks except Civil Air Patrol, Congressional Medal of Honor, Pearl Harbor Veteran, and POW. Information on these is available at <http://mvl.ky.gov/MVLWeb/PIServlet#ABC4>. If desired, all plates can be personalized under the following guidelines:

- Letters A through Z, numbers 1 through 9, spaces and dashes are the only valid characters.
- Select "Exact Match" option to see if your selection is available.
- Select "Partial Match List" option to return a list of all issued personalized plates that start with the requested character(s).
- Personalized Plates are not allowed if they match an existing license plate format, such as 3 numbers followed by 3 letters. For a complete list of formats click here.
- Can only be ordered in person, at your County Clerk's office. Cannot be ordered online.
- In addition to the initial and renewal cost, there is a \$25.00 application fee due.
- Fees are subject to change; please contact your county clerk.

[Source: <http://www.examiner.com/article/kentucky-i-support-veterans-license-plate-now-available> 12 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Claim Processing Update 06: Any of you who have benefited from the VA claim process know how hard this Administration has worked over the past 10 years to update and improve the system of delivery. Retired General Eric Shinseki has done a stellar job in implementing programs, from the expediting of the lingering Agent Orange claims to taking care of our rural veterans. In the climate of political polarity, pugnacity and pugilistic radio show hosts, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. There are people who wake every day with the intention of making the world a better place. The Veterans Administration, with all their foibles, is one of them. Their 11 JUL announcement that they are deploying a new model for processing compensation benefits claims at 16 of its regional offices is another step forward. The new model is part of a comprehensive transformation plan designed to yield an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 additional compensation claim decisions annually, while ensuring that veterans who are most in need get high priority. “This new model is a part of our comprehensive plan to eliminate the compensation claims backlog,” said Allison Hickey, VA’s undersecretary for benefits. “Our redesigned model follows comprehensive planning and testing to ensure we have the right recipe for success.”

As of 11 JUL, VA reported a total number of 883,914 pending disability claims in its system; 588,447 of those are in backlog (pending more than 125 days). For the past two fiscal years, VA has completed more than 1 million claims; Hickey said the department is on target to hit the same benchmark for fiscal 2012. In the past four months, the accuracy rate for VA claims processors has risen from 83 to 87 percent. Recently, VA has been focusing on completing the disability claims for Vietnam War-era veterans. Last year, 260,000 claims for Agent Orange-related illnesses were completed. “We are done with that, and redirecting more than 2,300 claims experts to handle the remaining backlog,” Hickey said, adding that 83 percent of veterans from the global war on terrorism who filed disability claims are already receiving benefits.

The new organizational model involves the special handling of claims from veterans with the most serious injuries or illnesses, experiencing financial hardships, or are homeless, and need immediate attention. Through a new “intake processing center,” claims are routed to one of three segmented lanes:

- **Express:** claims that have only one or two medical conditions, or have all the supporting documentation, medical evidence and service records needed for an expeditious rating decision (referred to as fully developed claims).
- **Special Operations:** claims requiring special handling because of the unique circumstances of the veterans. These include financial hardship, homelessness, serious wounds, injuries or illnesses, post-traumatic stress disorder associated with military sexual trauma, and former prisoner-of-war status.
- **Core:** claims with more than two medical conditions, or those that will need additional evidence to make a compensation decision.

The segmented-lanes approach helps to increase speed and accuracy because the claims specialists are processing claims with similar levels of complexity. Hickey said that VA expects 20 percent of claims to

be handled in the express lane, 20 percent in special operations, and 60 percent in the core lane. Veterans and their veterans service organization representatives are encouraged to provide all the needed evidence along with their application in a “fully developed claim” in order to expedite the process. Hickey said that any veteran who wants to file a claim should work with their VSOs, who know how to thoroughly develop claims and, secondly, be sure to use VA’s disability benefits questionnaires. Sixteen regional offices have received the new segmented-lanes model, including Huntington, W.Va.; Hartford, Conn.; Portland, Ore.; Houston, Cleveland, Des Moines, Iowa; Boise, Idaho; Phoenix, New Orleans, San Juan, Puerto Rico; Atlanta, Indianapolis, Wichita, Kan.; Milwaukee, Newark, N.J.; and Fort Harrison, Mont. These offices will also receive new technology systems and software upgrades over the next three months. All of the people, processes, and technology initiatives in VA’s transformation plan should be fully implemented at all 56 VA regional offices by the end of 2013. [Source: CWV NSO Josie Garcia article 14 Jul 2012 ++]

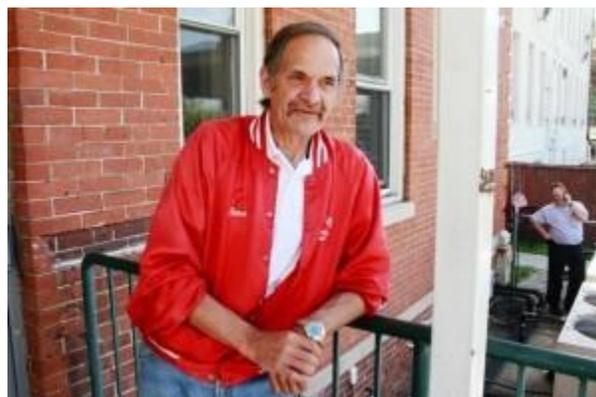
Vet Housing Update 06: Young returning veterans claim one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, but even those who do find work are having a hard time affording housing, a recent study finds. Even though the government offers training programs and other assistance to returning veterans to help them re-enter the workplace, many of the jobs they're landing don't pay enough to cover the cost of buying a median-priced home, or in some instances, the average rent on a one-bedroom apartment, according to a report from the Center for Housing Policy. "Despite record affordability, a lot of occupations you find veterans working in don't pay enough to afford a home," said Jeffrey Lubell, the organization's executive director. The report focused on the first-quarter incomes of five occupations that returning veterans are commonly trained for after they return from deployment, including carpenters, dental assistants, electricians, firefighters and truck drivers. It then assessed the gap between wages for these jobs and housing costs for both rental and owned properties in more than 200 metro areas to determine whether an area was affordable for that particular profession.

The report found that even though falling home prices and historically-low mortgage rates have made home buying easier for many people, only electricians earned enough to afford a median-priced home in a majority of the markets. More troubling was that the wages used to judge affordability were for the average worker in a field who had a few years of experience under their belts. For newcomers, as returning veterans often are, incomes are usually less than average until they gain experience. "If they can't afford to buy now, what will they do two or three years from now, when home prices recover?," said Lubell. Veterans may also have some issues that can make finding or retaining employment difficult, like medical disabilities or post-traumatic stress disorder, said Laura Williams, a research associate who co-authored the report. In addition, many enlisted while they were still in high school or immediately after graduation. "Many vets have no experience looking for jobs," said Williams. All of these factors have helped lead to a sky-high unemployment rate of 30% among 18-24 year old veterans.

When they do find a job, the wages they receive can be very modest. Long-haul truckers, for example, can earn anywhere from \$31,000 to \$47,000, according to the report. With those wages, truckers can only afford to buy a home in 38% of the 200 markets the group studied. While renting is a better option, it's still out of reach in about 12% of the markets. Dental assistants fared even worse. With incomes ranging

between \$27,000 to \$40,000, they could only afford to buy the median-priced home in 22% of markets and couldn't afford the rent on a one-bedroom apartment in a quarter of the markets. Electricians, on the other hand, could afford median homes in 72% of the markets on their salaries, which ranged from \$40,000 to \$60,000, and rents in more than 90% of the markets. For firefighters, 51% of markets were affordable to buy a home in and for carpenters, 58% of them were. Rents were affordable in almost all of the markets for both professions. Even in areas where homes are affordable, vets may still face hurdles to homeownership, the report said. The report assumed a 10% down payment, but many lenders require 20% down nowadays. And saving up for that down payment can be difficult on such modest salaries. In addition, tightened lending standards can make it difficult to qualify for a mortgage. "If vets can't afford decent housing, we've really missed the boat," said Lubell. [Source: CNN Money Les Christie article 12 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Health Care Access Update 03: At 55, Stephen Norko says he was at "the lowest point" of his life. Homeless, unemployed, and feeling sick, the 17-year Navy veteran couldn't get medical care at a VA hospital because he had an "other than honorable" discharge. "They wanted nothing to do with me," Norko said. A VA health care worker, who met Norko at a homeless shelter, encouraged him to do what few veterans have done—fight the decision that denied him VA medical care. He became one of a handful of veterans nationwide to appeal a health eligibility decision in the last two years. "It's a big myth out there that an OTH is automatically ineligible," said Michael Taub, who works with veterans in the Homeless Advocacy Project in Philadelphia and has been spreading the word that vets with dishonorable discharges may often be eligible for VA medical care. Statistics show that appeals such as Norko's are rare. Official figures from the Veterans Health Administration's Health Eligibility Center in Atlanta show only six appeals were filed nationally through the central office in the last two years, including one in New England. Of the six, two were successful, three are still pending, and one was withdrawn by the veteran, according to the Eligibility Center. Norko's appeal, which did not go through the central office, is not included in those numbers.



Steve Norko

In Norko's case, which includes commendations and honorable discharges prior to re-enlistments, a failed drug test led to his OTH discharge in April 1992. He had other sporadic violations while in the Navy, but less than a year before he was discharged, he received a Letter of Commendation and a Good

Conduct Award. Norko told his story last year to a VA health care outreach worker while staying at Spooner House, a Shelton homeless shelter. The worker referred him to the nonprofit Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, which took his case and represented him for free. Last summer, the center appealed the initial decision denying Norko's benefits to the VBA regional office in Newington. The appeal cited Norko's extensive Navy record and contended that his drug violation didn't "rise to the level of dishonorable conduct or willful and persistent misconduct," according to the Center's brief. In December 2011, the VBA notified the legal center that Norko's appeal had been successful. For unknown reasons, his name didn't appear in the VA computer system until March 2012, which meant he couldn't receive medical care until then. During the gap, U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro's staff got involved, contacting the VA on Norko's behalf, so that he could get care.

Veterans' advocates say there are countless other "Stephen Norkos" who should be getting VA medical care but either don't bother to apply because they incorrectly assume their discharge status makes them ineligible, or don't know that they can appeal VA rejections. Advocates say negotiating the VA system alone is extremely difficult. "I'm not sure how we can reach these folks other than camp outside of an eligibility office," said Margaret Middleton, executive director of the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center. "There's a lot of misinformation out there about how you're eligible for VA services." In Connecticut last year, of 2,383 people who applied for VA health care, 59 percent were ruled eligible, 25 percent were deemed ineligible, and 16 percent are pending, according to figures from the Eligibility Center. The most common reasons for rejections were exceeding income limits, serving less than 24 months of active duty, not having qualifying active duty, or the nature of the discharge.

Taub, the Philadelphia advocate, said many veterans with OTH discharges never try to seek VA health care. "I think they've been told somewhere along the line they are not eligible, whether when filing a claim or hearing from other vets," he said. He pointed out that there are circumstances when a vet with an OTH is automatically ineligible for VA medical care, such as being absent without leave (AWOL) for 180 consecutive days. "But in most of the cases I've seen, there is flexibility," said Taub, director of the Homeless Advocacy Project's veterans' program. Patrick Bellon, executive director of the advocacy group Veterans for Common Sense, said he has concerns that the military is using OTH status inappropriately in some cases, to punish veterans who break rules because of underlying mental health problems. "The real problem is whether or not they deserve the 'other than honorable' discharge, or if it's the result of extenuating circumstances," he said. "How many are deserved, and how many are the result of an attempt to deny rightful benefits?"

Veterans are not automatically entitled to VA medical care. Determining eligibility is a complex process in which factors including length of service, income, disabilities, commendations and type of discharge are weighed, said Pamela Redmond, spokeswoman for the West Haven VA. Middleton said Norko's case highlights that the OTH discharge issue is "a place where lawyers getting involved are going to make a difference." On a larger scale, she said, VA's eligibility process needs to become "clearer, more transparent and quicker." Linda Schwartz, commissioner of the state Department of Veterans Affairs, said her department and several veterans' organizations have service officers trained by the VA to represent veterans making claims to the VA. She agreed that many veterans need help navigating VA rules, citing her own experience after serving as a flight nurse in Vietnam. "I can tell you, I have a doctorate from Yale, and I had a service officer person who handled my claim," she said. For his part, Norko, who now

lives at Homes for the Brave in Bridgeport, a residence for homeless veterans, said he was he have thought to do so."It takes the right people, sometimes, to put you in the right direction," said Norko, who at one point lived in his car after he lost a maintenance job in Norwalk. "Honestly, I thought I was done for," he said. [Source: The Denver Post Peggy McCarthy article 13 Jul 2012 ++]

VA Health Care Access Update 04: U.S. Reps. Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson (R-PA) and Charles B. Rangel (D-NY) have introduced H.R.6107, the Veterans E-Health & Telemedicine Support (VETS) Act of 2012, a bill aimed at increasing veteran health care access at no additional cost to the taxpayer. H.R.6107 expands the current Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) state licensure exemption to allow credentialed health care professionals to work across state borders performing telemedicine without having to obtain a new state license. “The Veterans E-Health & Telemedicine Support Act will help veterans struggling with mental health conditions, especially those in geographically remote areas, access the care they need wherever they are located,” said Thompson. “This bill enables the VA to expand key treatment services, including behavioral health, which is critical considering the department is facing increasing care demand and mounting provider shortages.”

Under current law, VA health care professionals must be licensed in the state where the patient is treated in order to offer services. The state licensure requirement has limited the department’s ability to utilize telemedicine capabilities, which have been known as an effective medium for delivering a wide range of care services. The VETS Act removes these barriers and allows the VA to provide treatment free of this restriction. “In 2011, Congress passed the Servicemembers Telemedicine & E-Health Portability Act, through which the Department of Defense is now working to expand access to our servicemembers through various existing programs,” Thompson added. “The VETS Act will enable the VA to implement the same reforms and provide greater access to care that our veterans need, have earned, and rightfully deserve.”

Thompson’s Servicemembers Telemedicine & E-Health Portability (STEP) Act, now Public Law 112-81, Section 713, removed the state licensure requirement for qualified and credentialed Department of Defense health care professionals. Since its passage, Gen. Peter Chiarelli, former Army vice chief of staff, has praised the law as the “biggest step forward we’ve seen in two years,” in terms of expanding servicemember access to mental health services. H.R.6107 was introduced with the support of twelve additional bipartisan members of Congress and numerous veteran support groups, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and American Telemedicine Association. [Source: GantDaily.com article 16 Jul 2012 ++]

Stolen Valor Update 76: Federal prosecutors in North Texas used the Stolen Valor Act, a law recently declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, to prosecute exactly one person for lying about his military record. The man, perhaps surprisingly, was a veteran, a sailor-turned-soldier who concocted a breathtaking series of tall tales of heroism and claimed a rack of medals supposedly earned in Iraq and Afghanistan, all to impress people in Amarillo. He became a frequent speaker at colleges,

nursing homes and veterans events. Richard David McClanahan served 30 months in federal prison for his lies, a lengthy penalty imposed because he also lied about his income to buy a pickup from a dealership. Now living in Fort Worth, the 34-year-old ex-convict has a chance to have at least part of his conviction overturned after the Supreme Court's decision. But McClanahan said he has no interest in clearing his record.

"I have no desire to have my record expunged," he said. "I'm not the victim here. The law was put into place for a very good reason. I understand the legal reasons why it was overturned and have no doubt that it was the legitimate decision for the Supreme Court. But I respectfully disagree with the court's decision. I wish the law had remained to prevent people like me from making absurd statements." McClanahan did not fight his prosecution. He pleaded guilty, and in two recent conversations with the Star-Telegram, he said that he hopes a new law can be crafted to satisfy the court's objections. A new bill has been introduced in Congress that would tailor the definition of the crime to those who benefit financially from lying. "I wish more people could be brought down and exposed," he said. "I still have friends in the military. I disrespected them. I don't believe that people should be able to get away with that, and this coming from the guy who was convicted and did time for it." Whether McClanahan is being totally honest remains to be seen. He told the Star-Telegram that he earned a Bachelor of Science in biology from West Texas A&M University. The university says he is a former student but never earned a degree. He also significantly minimized the circumstances of his discharge from the Army, which booted him under "other than honorable" circumstances in lieu of a court-martial, according to the Justice Department.

The Stolen Valor Act, passed overwhelmingly by Congress in 2005 and signed by President George W. Bush in 2006, never resulted in large numbers of convictions. But according to two defense attorneys in Fort Worth, anyone convicted under the law would be eligible to have the conviction overturned. People still in the appeals process will likely have the matter handled quickly by a judge, they said. Those finished with appeals will have to file a writ of habeas corpus, requesting that a judge overturn the conviction and restore their civil liberties. "I would think they will all get reversed and those in prison will be set free," said Richard Henderson, a trial lawyer in Fort Worth who does extensive appellate work. "Their records would be completely clear, as if it never happened." Even if McClanahan changes his mind and wants the Stolen Valor Act conviction overturned, he cannot have the felony conviction for lying on the loan application wiped out. (None of this affects current members of the military, for whom falsely representing qualifications and decorations has always been a crime.)

Records show that he earned an Army Commendation and two Achievement Medals, a perfectly commendable record for a sergeant who had not yet deployed to a war zone. But beginning in about 2005, his lying must have started, or at least a record of it accumulated. While in the Army, he began claiming the Navy SEAL Trident, Special Forces and airborne tabs, Marine reconnaissance qualification, three Silver Stars and the Legion of Merit. The Army busted him down in rank, sent him to the brig for 100 days and discharged him for his transgressions. He returned to his hometown, enrolled at West Texas A&M and became involved in a veterans support group, America Supports You. The organization included city and county officials and retired military personnel, he said. That's when McClanahan laid down the biggest lie: that he had been nominated for the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest medal for bravery in combat. McClanahan said that he was surrounded by people who had better military stories

and that his lies grew as he realized that the status gained him more opportunities. "Who wants to meet a guy who was a medic and deployed to Korea and then goes to college?" he asked. "Those guys are a dime a dozen. My stories weren't worth anything. I just thought, 'What is going to set David apart?'"

Alerted by suspicious veterans, the FBI investigated McClanahan. Within months, he was indicted by a federal grand jury. He pleaded guilty to one felony count of falsely representing his income to buy the pickup and one misdemeanor count of making false claims about military medals. U.S. District Judge Mary Lou Robinson hammered him with 34 months in prison, going outside the sentencing guidelines for what she called his "consistent pattern of lying." McClanahan said he can't disagree with her reasoning. He said he is ashamed and "feels awful" about his lies. He is working to rebuild his life in Fort Worth, having landed a job as a salesman. His ex-wife and two children still live in Amarillo. Not a day goes by, McClanahan said, that he doesn't regret his actions. He said he rarely speaks to anyone about the military and doesn't want anyone to know he's a veteran because it raises too many uncomfortable subjects. "I still have a large amount of pride at having served, which only compounds the sorrow of having made the mistake I did," he said. "I don't go to Veterans Day parades. I don't go to Memorial Day events. I don't stand up when they recognize veterans somewhere. I'm not in the family anymore." [Source: Fort Worth Star-Telegram Chris Vaughn article 13 Jul 2012 ++]

Stolen Valor Update 77: President Obama announced 23 JUL that the federal government will launch a website to try to reduce the number of Americans fraudulently claiming to have been awarded medals by the military, a response to the June ruling by the Supreme Court that the "Stolen Valor" law was unconstitutional. "It may no longer be a crime for con artists to pass themselves off as heroes, but one thing is certain — it is contemptible," the president told the annual convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, in Reno, Nevada. "So this week, we will launch a new website, a living memorial, so the American people can see who's been awarded our nation's highest honors. Because no American hero should ever have their valor stolen." White House officials have worked with the military to compile and publish information about those who have received the military's two highest awards for valor — Medals of Honor and Service Crosses — since Sept. 11, 2001. The website, <http://valor.defense.gov> was launched 25 JUL. Officials say that the effort does not replace the efforts of members of Congress to draft legislation that will pass Constitutional muster and allow for the prosecution of those who lie about awards. By launching a web site that lists those who have received awards, the White House hopes members of the public will be able to check to see if someone is lying.



Those in charge of the project hope to also gather information on the recipients of Silver Stars, and they're reviewing the feasibility of including those who received awards before Sept. 11, 2001; some of

the older awards don't have the same backup records, making it difficult for the Pentagon to accurately assess whether an award was approved. Moreover, many of those who received awards prior to 2001 have since left the military, so their records may not be as current. President George W. Bush signed the Stolen Valor Act into law in 2006. The bill amended the federal criminal code "to expand the prohibition against wearing, manufacturing, or selling military decorations or medals without legal authorization"; it also prohibits "purchasing, soliciting, mailing, shipping, importing, exporting, producing blank certificates of receipt for, advertising, trading, bartering, or exchanging such decorations or medals without authorization." The law prohibited "falsely representing oneself as having been awarded any decoration or medal authorized by Congress for the Armed Forces or any of the service medals or badges" and it increases "penalties for violations if the offense involves a distinguished service cross, an Air Force Cross, a Navy Cross, a silver star, or a Purple Heart." Those convicted faced prison sentences of up to a year. [Source: ABC News JakeTapper Article 23 Jul 2012 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 75: As the war in Afghanistan sets to wind down in 2014, the U.S. will be welcoming home 85,000 troops to a slow growing economy, high unemployment rates, and tough competition for jobs. With 160,000 troops discharging from active duty each year, the rate for veteran unemployment could rise due to the influx of troops leaving the service. Despite the conditions being frightening for veterans especially those of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, companies such as Sears are stepping up to the plate to help support veterans through employment and housing services. "Sears' Heroes at Home Program is a bigger focus on military families and veterans" says Tom Aiello, Division Vice President at Sears Holdings Management Corporation and former Army officer. He says the program was created in partnership with Rebuilding Together in response to an urgent need to assist military families facing hardship. Heroes at Home is one of the many programs through which Sears acknowledges the sacrifice of the American military and remains committed to supporting America's heroes. Sears celebrates 5 years of the Heroes at Home program.

From the programs inauguration in 2007, Sears has raised \$16 million dollars to rebuild veterans' homes and completed 1100 homes to date with 40% of the homes benefit veterans wounded in combat. The program currently has 150 veteran home rebuilding projects currently underway. Sears intends to double the current numbers in the next 5 years and put more emphasis on the military family. When asked about the increasing unemployment rate among veterans, Aiello mentioned that despite the rise in veteran unemployment, Sears will even be more committed to hiring veterans and continue to set the example for other companies to follow. "It will take companies like Sears to tell the stories of hiring veterans and the reward of it. We've committed to hiring 3500 veterans by the end of 2012 and have already hired 3000 veterans as of today. That goal was an estimate and we are on track to exceed it. The business opportunity for companies to hire veterans is not good will but good business. We hope to see that what Sears has done for veterans will turn into a virtuous cycle for companies to follow the model of employing veterans. Businesses need veterans at every skill level possible." Aiello says that Sears' emphasis on hiring veterans and programs like Heroes at Home are what motivates him daily. "To know that I am directly helping veterans here at Sears brings a joy and smile to my face. I am one of them and the best part about all this is seeing how humble veterans are, especially when they smile." [Source: Examiner.com Mike Liguori article 17 Jul 2012++]

Vet Jobs Update 76: Facing an aging rail industry workforce and an influx of returning military veterans, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced 10 JUL an initiative in which the growing rail sector will hire more than 5,000 veterans this year, matching the same number hired in 2011. "Our veterans have skills and real life experiences that we need to help rebuild America," said DOT Secretary Ray LaHood during a conference call with reporters. LaHood said veterans are valuable potential employees because of their prior training in the military. He pointed out military personnel have leadership and teamwork training and experience working with heavy machinery in demanding work conditions. Potential industry jobs include operating locomotives, signal maintenance and telecommunications in both freight and passenger rail. "Today, roughly 23 percent of the railroad workforce is eligible to retire by 2015," said Ed Hamberger, president of the Association of American Railroads, an industry trade group. The railroad industry is offering veterans jobs because its business is growing and new jobs will soon open up as more people start to retire, he added.

The railroad association is working with the Department of Veteran Affairs to make sure that 500 railroad companies -- including freight, inter-city passenger and commuter railroads -- are committed to offering military servicemen and women jobs. "The railway industry clearly recognizes that hiring veterans is good for their companies, bottom line, and we are appreciative of their efforts to serve veterans as well as they have served the country," said Brad Cooper, executive director of Joining Forces, a White House initiative to provide opportunities and support to service members and their families. Some 1,600 companies have hired more than 90,000 veterans and military spouses in the past year. These same companies have committed to hiring 170,000 in the coming years. The rail industry initiative was launched last year by first lady Michelle Obama and Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden. Last month, LaHood and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki announced a new portal on the VA website that will help veterans find jobs in the transportation industry. Currently, more 15,000 veterans work for the Department of Transportation, including 3,000 with disabilities. [Source: CNN Alicia Tarancon article 11 Jul 2012 ++

Burn Pit Toxic Emissions Update 22: **(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 federal judge in Maryland will hear a motion 16 JUL to dismiss a group of lawsuits filed against Kellogg, Brown and Root and Halliburton for operating open-air burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. The motion — the defendants' second seeking dismissal — calls for tossing out the consolidated lawsuits based on "derivative-sovereign immunity and preemption," meaning the companies believe they are exempt from litigation because they were providing services to the government and thus enjoyed the same immunity afforded actual government entities and personnel. Halliburton and KBR previously sought dismissal based on lack-of-subject-matter jurisdiction. Judge Roger Titus denied that request. The case involves 43 lawsuits from 42 states charging that the plaintiffs were harmed by toxic emissions and contaminated water resulting from burning waste in open pits Iraq and Afghanistan.

Plaintiffs say the companies failed to provide safe and environmentally sound waste disposal as was required by their contracts, resulting in service members developing an array of illnesses. A 2011 Institute of Medicine report said that current literature and research lacks conclusive evidence linking burn pits to poor health. But several military documents, including an April 2011 Army memo, have expressed concern that levels of particulate matter in the air samples taken near burn pits posed an “increased risk of long-term adverse health conditions.” While the risk of exposure has not been determined and the number of troops with illnesses possibly related to burn-pit exposure is unknown, nearly 200 service members have contacted Military Times in the past five years about health problems ranging from skin rashes, respiratory illnesses, cancer and fatigue they say are related to living and working near the pits.

A House panel voted 13 JUL to require the Veterans Affairs Department to establish a registry of those exposed to toxic fumes and chemicals from burn pits. The House version of the 2013 defense authorization bill passed earlier this year also includes a provision requiring the Defense Department to monitor personnel who may have been exposed to environmental toxins, including burn pits. According to DoD, all U.S.-operated burn pits in Iraq were closed in 2010. In Afghanistan, the military still runs burn pits in some remote locations. NATO allies also run a large around-the-clock burn pit at Camp Bastion in Helmand province near Camp Leatherneck, where U.S. troops are stationed. A ruling on the motion to dismiss is expected in a few weeks. [Source: ArmyTimes Patricia Kime article 13 Jul 2012 ++]

Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule: Following is the current schedule of recent and future 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>. Missed House Veteran Affairs committee (HVAC) hearings can viewed at <http://veterans.house.gov/in-case-you-missed-it>. Text of completed Senate Veteran Affairs Committee (SVAC) hearings are available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/committee.action?chamber=senate&committee=va&collection=CHRG&plus=CHRG>:

- **June 6, 2012 (formerly May 23).** The Senate Select Committee on Aging held a hearing on VA’s Aid and Attendance Program.
- **June 13, 2012 (Formerly May 23rd).** SVAC conducted a legislative hearing. The agenda included 26 pieces of legislation.
- **June 19, 2012:** The House Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing on VA’s Veterans Benefits Management System.

- **June 21, 2012:** HVAC, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing on pending legislation.
- **June 27, 2012:** SVAC conducted a legislative hearing. The agenda was comprised mainly of bills regarding health care, disability compensation, and NCA matters.
- **July 18, 2012.** Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations, held a hearing on the backlog of pending disability claims.
- **July 18, 2012.** HVAC, Disability and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, held a hearing entitled: “Invisible Wounds: Examining the Disability Compensation Benefits Process for Victims of Military Sexual Trauma.”
- **July 25, 2012.** The House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the House Armed Services Committee held a joint hearing titled “Back from the Battlefield: DOD and VA Collaboration to Assist Service Members Returning to Civilian Life.”
- **July 31, 2012.** Subcommittee on Health – Optimizing Care for Veterans Prosthetics: An Update, at 4:30 p.m. in Room 334 of the Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C.
- **August 2, 2012.** HVAC, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold a joint hearing entitled “Odyssey of the CVE (Center for Veterans Enterprise).” 10:00 A.M.; Room 334 of the Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C.

[Source: Veterans Corner w/Michael Isam 12 Jul 2012 ++]

WWII Vets Update 24: On 22 AUG 1942 under a blazing hot Arizona sun with a little dust kicking up, thousands scrambled to find a spot to call home. For Mas Inoshita's family of five brothers, four sisters and their mom, it was Block 54, Row 6, Barracks 3 and 4 in the brand-new camp built in the unforgiving desert. Just three months prior, the 22-year-old American citizen was a hardworking California farmer in some ways grateful for the war. He couldn't hold on to any of the cabbage and carrots he grew on leased farmland. It all went to the Allies in Europe. Inoshita made money "hand over fist." But halfway through World War II, the battle for people of Japanese descent in the country had only just begun. Pearl Harbor had been attacked. Shortly thereafter, some 110,000 Japanese-Americans, including many citizens like Inoshita, were rounded up into 10 internment camps. Inoshita's new home: Gila River Relocation Camp, 30 miles southeast of Phoenix. It housed 13,348 Japanese-Americans at its peak. Enemy aliens, they were called. But none of it made sense to Inoshita, who thought himself as American as the next blue-eyed blond.

Three months into a tedious existence, the U.S Army came looking for Japanese translators. Inoshita, who had wanted to join the Army even before internment, volunteered immediately. He and 28 other internees left in the dead of the night, for fear of being physically harmed as they left behind a camp of Japanese-Americans divided over how to deal with their prisonerlike status. The young man didn't even tell his family. His father, held in a separate internment camp without any contact with his family, wouldn't have approved. Inoshita didn't question going to fight for the same country that was treating his family as the enemy. "I felt if we paid our price, the country would have no excuse to question our loyalty; then we'd have a legitimate shot at fighting back after the war," Inoshita said.



Masaji Inoshita, 92

He now is 92 and spends his days tending snow peas, bok choy and strawberries in his daughter's sprawling Phoenix backyard. The loyalty is no longer in question. In November, veterans from the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and Military Intelligence Service, segregated Japanese-American Army units, were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal. This includes Inoshita. The Arizona chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League on 22 APR honored 25 local veterans. The medal, the nation's highest civilian honor, also has been bestowed upon Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and the Tuskegee Airmen. Inoshita said he is grateful. "I see it as the culmination of my belief as a 22-year-old that my country is what's most important; I'm glad that others also recognize that we were on their side," Inoshita said.

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese-Americans were barred from joining military service. But as the need for trained linguists to translate Japanese documents and interrogate prisoners of war rose, the Army started recruiting, such as from Inoshita's internment camp. Thousands of Japanese-Americans served the nation, attached to numerous Allied combat units. The existence of the Military Intelligence Service, which is what Inoshita joined, was kept secret during the war and for nearly three decades after. In 2000, the intelligence service was honored with the Presidential Unit Citation. The 100th Infantry Battalion, mainly comprised of Japanese-Americans from Hawaii, was already participating in the war in Europe. It was later drawn into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The battalion remains the most decorated unit of its size and length of service in U.S military history. The Nisei (second generation) soldiers, known for their motto "Go For Broke," earned 21 Medals of Honor, the nation's highest military honor, more than 18,000 individual decorations for bravery and about 9,500 Purple Hearts.

After joining the Army, Inoshita traveled to Australia, Sri Lanka and then India, where the ration of liquor he got each month came in handy. India's tight regulations in those days about sale of hard liquor heightened demand. Inoshita would walk up to a room of soldiers and ask, "What's this Scotch worth?" The anti-malaria pills and Lucky Strike and Camel cigarettes he got in return came in handy for interrogating sickly, war-beaten Japanese prisoners. "They thought I was the Buddha and gave me all kinds of information just for being treated like a human," Inoshita said. Inoshita still has a worn, brown leather satchel that belonged to a Japanese soldier. The satchels were valuable as they often contained documents and maps. Stationed in Burma, Inoshita had to search bodies for bags like these to ferret out information. Time hasn't entirely erased the smell of rotting flesh and the sight of untreated wounds.

After he returned, Inoshita wouldn't eat certain meats that reminded him of those smells. Seventy years later, at times he still screams as he sleeps. The most haunting memories were formed shortly after Aug. 6, 1945. The atomic bomb had flattened Hiroshima, instantly killing an estimated 75,000 people. A lieutenant curious to know what defenses the city had, if troops had landed, sent Inoshita and another partner to survey the decimated city. They found only men, women and children, flesh hanging from their bodies. "You knew he or she wasn't going to live long," Inoshita said with a quiver in his voice. He still questions the need for using "Little Boy," the code name for the atomic bomb dropped on the Japanese city. "It was an overkill," he continued. "You begin to doubt the mind of a president that says, 'I had to do it. I had to show Russia what a terrible thing we have. I had to do it to end the war.'" "To end the war? They could have walked in any place in the whole of Japan because the war was over as far as they (Japanese) were concerned."

Inoshita, a staff sergeant by then, took early release after that visit. He returned only to be reminded of the battle he had left behind in Arizona. The internment camp was closed. His family took shelter in barracks set up by a local Buddhist temple for families in transition. "When I saw my own people still struggling for justice, I felt, 'What a stinking situation to be in.'" Still, he moved on with regular life, married and had children. He remains proud to have served his country, but his relationship with his father, who was upset that he left his family and fought against Japan, was never the same. It is a lesson he wants to leave behind for future generations: "Sometimes tough choices have to be made." [Source: The Republic Sonu Munshi 22 Apr 2012 ++]

World War II Posters (10)





POW/MIA Update 24: "Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. More than 83,000 Americans are missing from World War II (73,000+), the Korean War (7,900+), the Cold War (126), the Vietnam War (1,666), 1991 Gulf War (0), and OEF/OIF (6). Hundreds of Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for . For additional information on 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. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

- DPMO announced 29 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, were identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Korea

- DPMO announced 6 JUL that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, were identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Cpl. **Pryor Gobble**, 18, of Jonesville, Va., was scheduled for burial July 11, in Concord, Ohio. In late November 1950, units of the 31st Infantry Regiment were advancing along the eastern banks of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when enemy forces overran their position. After the battle, Gobble was reported missing in action on approximately Dec. 6, 1950. His remains were not recovered by American forces at that time, nor were they repatriated by the Chinese or North Koreans in “Operation Big Switch,” in 1954. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea gave the United States 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain the remains of 200-400 U.S. servicemen. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from the area where Gobble was believed to have died in 1950, near the Chosin Reservoir. To identify the remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used circumstantial evidence, and forensic identification tools such as dental comparisons, mitochondrial DNA and autosomal DNA – which matched Gobble’s living sister and brother.

World War II

- DPMO announced 10 JUL that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Marine Corps Tech. Sgt. **James A. Sisney**, 19, of Redwood City, Calif., was scheduled for burial July 14, in Palo Alto, Calif. On April 22, 1944, Sisney was aboard a PBJ-1 aircraft that failed to return from a night training mission over the island of Espiritu Santo, in what is known today as Vanuatu. None of the seven Marines on the aircraft were recovered at that time, and in 1945 they were officially presumed deceased. In 1994, a group of private citizens notified the U.S. that aircraft wreckage had been found on the island of Espiritu Santo. Human remains were recovered from the site at that time and turned over to the Department of Defense. In 1999, a survey team traveled to the site, which was located at an elevation of 2,600 ft. in extremely rugged terrain, and determined that recovery teams would need specialized mountain training to safely complete a recovery mission. In 2000, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) team visited the site and recovered human remains. From 2009 to 2011, multiple JPAC recovery teams excavated the site and recovered additional remains, aircraft parts and military equipment. Scientists and analysts from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of Sisney’s brother – in the identification of his remains.
- The Department of Defense announced 10 JUL that the United States and India have agreed to resume remains recovery activities in parts of Northeastern India. The Department assesses that

there are approximately 400 unaccounted-for service members from some 90 aircraft crashes in India during World War II. The United States possesses information on eighteen known crash sites and continues to develop information on others. Some of the information was reported to the Department of Defense by private parties or through Indian press. In June 2012, the U.S. and India agreed to resume remains recovery operation in Fall 2012. During visit to India, Secretary Panetta said, "This is a critical step toward bringing home our service members lost during World War II. The United States and India, working together, can help provide comfort to the families of Americans who were lost during the war." The Department deeply appreciates the close cooperation of the Government of India in helping our teams resume their critical work.

Returning our fallen heroes is a top priority of the Department of Defense.

[Source: http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases Jul 2012 ++]

Operation Homefront: Operation Homefront (OH) provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of service members and wounded warriors. Through generous, widespread public support and a collaborative team of staff and volunteers, they aspire to become the provider of choice for emergency financial and other assistance to the families of America's service members and wounded warriors. The organization provides direct services to alleviate a military family's or individual's actual/complete emergency financial burden, as well as counseling and/or recovery support. Emergency financial assistance is in the form of checks paid directly to mortgage lenders, auto mechanics, contractors, hospitals, doctors, dentists and other providers. Other emergency funding assistance, which an applicant receives within 24 to 72 hours, includes the following: Financial assistance; Emergency food ; Emergency home repairs ; Critical baby items: formula, food and diapers; Home and appliance repair; Furniture and household items; Local moving assistance; Community events; and Wounded Warrior Transitional Family Housing.

The organization was formed in February 2002 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It was developed to support the families of deployed service members immediately following 9/11. They are headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, and have evolved into a major nonprofit. The organization currently provides services to military families across the nation with 25 chapters serving 30 states [<http://www.operationhomefront.net/map.aspx>]. The national office handles cases in states that do not have their own chapters. The majority of their clients are the lowest-paid service members, the E-1 through E-6 enlisted ranks. Their target population is American military personnel and/or their families who have unmet needs due to financial hardship, death, injury, or physical or mental detriment as a result of service in Iraq or Afghanistan. These may include active duty, Reserve, National Guard and veteran service members. Roughly 75 percent of those they assist live at an income level 80 percent below the median income for the communities in which they reside. Operation Homefront has held a four stars (highest) rating for five straight years from Charity Navigator, the nation's top independent evaluator of nonprofit organizations. Nationally, \$.94 of every dollar donated to this veteran support organization goes to programs. In 2011, they met 155,984 needs for military families, including active duty, Guard and Reserve members from all branches of service. Since its inception, Operation Homefront has provided more than \$92 million dollars of funding to programs to benefit military families. [Source:

<http://www.operationhomefront.net> May 2012 ++]

Saving Money: Often, you can find great deals on brand-new appliances at scratch-and-dent sales. The trick is first finding a store that sells them, then finding an appliance with flaws that won't affect your use. Here's how to do that... Finding scratch-and-dent appliance stores isn't that difficult, although it will take a little digging.

- If you're still using the Yellow Pages, you can look under "appliances." You may find a "scratch-and-dent" subsection. Also check under "outlet stores" and "warehouse stores."
- Call the new-appliance outlets listed and ask if they sell scratch-and-dent items, or if they have a clearance center that does. If they do sell them, specify what you're looking for. Within a minute or two, they'll tell you if they have anything that matches.
- Search online. Use the same terms but add the name of your town or the nearest big city. Again, make some calls to see what's available.
- Talk with the salespeople in the stores you visit. Inventory changes all the time. If you let them know what you're looking for and leave your phone number, you might be surprised what they'll find for you.

Expect to save 25 to 40 percent, depending on the damage. Here are some tips on how to proceed once you have located where these appliance can be purchased:

- Many times, the problem will be a tiny dent in a side panel or a scratch in the paint. Look over any prospective purchase carefully. Check to make sure that all knobs, racks, shelves, etc., are with the appliance. Often, parts are scavenged from a scratch-and-dent unit to put on a pristine-looking one that might be missing a piece and will fetch a higher price. And remember, just because you found one problem doesn't mean there aren't others.
- The time to find the scratches and dents is while you're in the store. Ideally, you'll find something that will be hidden by a wall or cabinet in your kitchen. Many times, these items are sold "as is." Make sure the appliance works. Find out what, if any, warranty you get with it.
- Don't hesitate to bargain with the salesperson – especially if the item is last year's model. The worst that can happen is that they refuse your offer.
- Not all scratch-and-dent appliance stores offer delivery. Make sure that you know whether delivery is available, and whether you'll be charged for it.
- Don't forget to consider other alternatives. Stores that rent or lease furniture and appliances often have used units available for sale. One advantage is that often these appliances still have the balance of their factory warranty available. Call ahead to ask what they have. Also, many people report good experiences buying from used-appliance centers. Some even offer a six-month or one-year warranty on their appliances.

Naturally, you'll have a better chance if you don't need to buy the appliance today for delivery tomorrow. But even if you need it now, it can't hurt to spend an hour or two looking for a scratch-and-dent appliance bargain. That little bit of effort could save you hundreds or allow you to buy the upgraded appliance you've always wanted. [Source: MoneyTalksNews Gary foreman article 18 Jun 2012 ++]



VA Fraud Waste & Abuse Update 54:

- **Port St. Lucie FL** - A counselor for St. Lucie County Veteran Services stepped down 16 JUL and the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office is investigating an accusation she stole \$5,000 from a local veterans benefit account, county officials said. Eileen Hagerhorst, who had worked for the county for 17 years, admitted to taking the money from a United Veterans Council account set up to help veterans during emergencies, county officials. The council serves as an advisory group to the St. Lucie County Commission, county spokesman Erick Gill said. After the confession about the stolen money, county officials asked for her resignation in lieu of termination, they said. They turned the case over to the Sheriff's Office. The council set up the account and authorized Hagerhorst to give it to veterans in need, county officials said. Hagerhorst told officials she repaid the money but the county could not confirm the repayment.

St. Lucie County Administrator Faye Outlaw said in a statement that the county will develop a policy to prevent an employee from being able to sign onto private accounts related to their county duties. Because the account did not involve tax dollars, it was not subject to other county policies and was not reviewed annually by independent auditors, county officials said. The county's Veteran Services office falls under the Housing and Community Services Department. It gives counseling, hospital transportation and other forms of assistance provided to veterans through Veterans Affairs, according to the county website. A few months ago, the United Veterans of St. Lucie County — a nonprofit group separate from the United United Veterans Council — presented Hagerhorst with its Legion of Honor Award, which acknowledges selfless volunteer work. For 20 years, Hagerhorst organized a golf tournament that raised thousands of dollars for veterans, the group said. [Source: TCPalm Lamaur Stancil article 16 Jul 2012 ++]

- **Union Grove WI** - The Wisconsin Department of Justice has been asked to bring charges against a former maintenance supervisor at a veterans cemetery for allegedly using the grounds as his private dump, burying everything from lawnmower blades to refrigerators. The Department of Natural Resources on 25 JUL referred the case to the DOJ for alleged violations at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery outside of Union Grove. The cemetery has been designed as a national shrine. The unnamed worker resigned in November, three months after loads of garbage were removed from the cemetery. Investigators with DOJ's environmental unit will review the case and determine whether to bring charges, agency spokeswoman Dana Brueck said 26 JUL. "This individual desecrated hallowed ground," said state Veterans Affairs Secretary John Scocos. "We fully support bringing charges against him. Veterans and their families deserve

to know that this person has paid the price for the deep disrespect he showed to our nation's heroes." The DNR last year notified the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is in charge of maintaining the cemetery, that it also was in violation. Information related to the department's role in the case has also been forwarded to the DOJ, said Steven Sisbach, chief of the DNR's environmental enforcement section.

Sisbach said that the former worker faces a fine of up to \$5,000 for each day the garbage was in the cemetery. He did not have a firm estimate as to how many days that could be. While there was little hazardous waste, the volume of the trash buried at the cemetery warrants more than just a littering citation, Sisbach said. The amount of trash that was removed is in a final report from Veterans Affairs that had yet to be provided to the DNR, he said. "It's stuff that should have been disposed of at a licensed landfill," Sisbach said. The cleanup contract with Veolia Environmental Services called for a front-end loader, trucks and backhoes, suggesting the amount of garbage removed in August was considerable. The garbage included cans of paint thinner, television sets, mattresses, furniture, rebar, tools, insulation, pipes, carpeting, shingles and chemicals. Documents show a whistleblower approached the DNR with a tip that the supervisor was ordering his employees to dig holes and bury the trash. The agency launched an investigation in September. It cost \$42,148 to clean up the mess, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. [Source: Associated Press Scott Bauer article 27 Jul 2012 ++]

Notes of Interest:

- **U.S. Army.** U.S. Army Garrison Schinnen, the only U.S. Army garrison in the Netherlands, cased its colors 11 JUL, marking its end as a military command.
- **Congress.** Congress's approval rating fell one point in July to 16 percent in the latest Gallup poll, while 78 percent of Americans surveyed by Gallup disapprove of the job Congress is doing. The rating is low, historically speaking, but still six points higher than the record-low 10 percent approval rating seen in February
- **Congress.** At the annual National Governor's Association meeting in July, collective griping over the gridlock in D.C. was a rare point of bipartisan consensus. The paralysis in the nation's capital, after all, has tangible ramifications for the state's executives, the governors said.
- **100% DAV.** All Veterans that are determined to be unemployable by the VA shall be enrolled as 100% DAV even if the letter shows a lower disability rating. Terminology used by the VA that your VO's may see in the field are 100-percent disabled from a service-connected injury or disease | 100% disabled | unemployable | individually unemployable.
- **TRICARE Wallet Card.** Before you start your vacation, make sure to download, print and take the TRICARE Contacts Wallet Card (<http://go.usa.gov/f2q>) with you! This way you can contact TRICARE if needed, during an emergency.
- **Federal Employee Retirement.** On 6 JUL, President Obama signed the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act" into law. It includes a phased retirement option for federal employees that will allow them to continue working while they sample retirement.
- **TRICARE SAIC Lawsuits.** Eight civil lawsuits stemming from a security breach that occurred after computer tapes were stolen from a Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) employees vehicle will be consolidated to the US District Court for DC.

- **Vet Hearing Aids.** If you are a veteran enrolled in Priority Groups 1 - 5 for VA medical care, you are eligible to receive hearing aids, if needed. You do not need to establish service connection for hearing loss. If you are a veteran enrolled in Priority Groups 6 – 8, you MAY be eligible. To find out if you qualify, you must first have a hearing aid evaluation.
- **Military Musicians.** The House rejected an effort by Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) to reduce the budget for the military's 140 bands and 5,000 full-time musicians from \$388 million to \$200 million. The congresswoman had questioned the need to spend nearly \$4 billion over the next decade on military bands and musical performances.
- **Vet Stats.** Refer to <http://www.census.gov/how/infographics/veterans.html> to see the U.S. Census report on who veterans are by sex, race/ethnicity, where they now live and work, education levels, where they served, and current incomes.
- **LGBT Parade.** The Defense Department has authorized service members participating in San Diego's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Pride Festival to wear their uniforms during the parade.
- **Vet Employer Incentive.** Illinois Governor Pat Quinn recently signed a new law that gives Illinois employers more incentive in hiring veterans by doubling the state's income tax credit. The new law increases the tax credit from 10% to 20% of annual wages. It also increases the annual cap from \$1,200 to \$5,000. Employers for veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001, and who work at least 185 days a year are eligible. The law went into effect immediately.
- **COLA.** For the month of June, the CPI is 226.036 – down 0.2 percent from May, and 1.3 percent above the COLA baseline figure of 223.233.
- **The 730.** On July 30, 1978, Okinawa Prefecture of Japan switched back from driving on the right-hand side of the road to the left. Originally, Okinawa drove on the left-hand side of the road, the same as the rest of Japan. However, after the defeat of Japan during World War II, the prefecture went under control of the United States and was made to drive on the right in 1945. It is one of very few places to have changed from right- to left- traffic in the late twentieth century. The day symbolized Okinawa's return to Japan.

[Source: Various 15-31 Jul 2012 ++]

Medicare Fraud Update 97:



- **Atlantic GA** -- Altus Healthcare & Hospice Inc., now called AHH Historic Inc., of Atlanta, will pay a \$555,572 settlement to the federal government to resolve allegations it submitted fraudulent claims to Medicare and Medicaid for inpatient hospice services. Altus was acquired by Halcyon

Healthcare in December 2011. U.S. Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said the federal government alleged Altus submitted false claims to the Medicare and Medicaid programs for general inpatient hospice care for patients who did not qualify to receive certain levels of hospice care from March 1, 2008, through Oct. 29, 2010, for the Medicare program and from March 1, 2008, through Oct. 23, 2011, for the Medicaid program. The civil settlement resolves a lawsuit filed by David C. Boal under whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act, which allow private citizens to bring civil actions on behalf of the United States and share in any recovery. Boal will receive a share of the settlement payment that resolves the suit.

- **Zachary LA** - Chikenna Jones was sentenced to seven years in federal prison 24 JUL and ordered to pay restitution of \$10.9 million for frauds committed against Medicare. A paralyzed Greensburg man whose Medicare number was stolen and used in the frauds told the judge and a Baton Rouge court audience of problems those crimes caused him last year. Both Jones, 36, and her attorney, Michael A. Fiser, told U.S. District Judge James J. Brady that the woman's role in the fraudulent schemes was secondary to that of her former husband, 37-year-old Henry Lamont Jones. Fiser and Chikenna Jones also noted that she is the primary caregiver for the divorced couple's three children. Justice Department prosecutor David M. Maria countered, however, that Chikenna Jones was an active participant in the fraudulent schemes. Maria also said parents cannot be absolved of criminal behavior because they have children.

Trial testimony by federal investigators and scheme participants showed that patient recruiters were hired by the Joneses to locate Medicare patients, obtain their Medicare numbers and persuade physicians to prescribe expensive equipment. That equipment included \$6,000 power wheelchairs, often for people who neither needed them nor had homes that could accommodate them. The equipment was sold by the Joneses or other participants in the frauds, according to prosecution witnesses. Kickbacks were paid to the recruiters and some physicians, several of whom have been convicted and sentenced. Such crimes proved frustrating for paralyzed Medicare patient Kendal Hall, 37, of Greensburg, in St. Helena Parish. Hall told the court he knew nothing of those frauds, but added that someone obtained his Medicare number without his permission and used it to buy a power wheelchair in his name. Last year, when his hand-powered wheelchair broke, leaving him largely confined to his residence for four months, Hall said he could not obtain a replacement wheelchair through Medicare. That was because Medicare's records falsely indicated Hall already had received a power wheelchair.

- **Houston TX** - A superseding indictment was unsealed 26 JUL charging two owners of a Houston mental health care company, Spectrum Care P.A., some of its employees and the owners of Houston group care homes for their alleged participation in a \$97 million Medicare fraud scheme. Mansour Sanjar, 79, Cyrus Sajadi, 64, and Chandra Nunn, 34, were originally charged in DEC 2011, and are expected to make their initial appearances on the superseding indictment in the coming days. Adam Main, 31, Shokoufeh Hakimi, 65, Sharonda Holmes, 38, and Shawn Manney, 50, all from the Houston area, were arrested and are expected to make their initial appearances in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas in Houston in a few days. The superseding indictment charges Sanjar, Sajadi, Main, Terry Wade Moore, 51, Hakimi and Nunn each with one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud; Sanjar, Sajadi, Main and Moore are charged with various counts of health care fraud; Sanjar, Sajadi, Hakimi, Nunn,

Holmes and Manney each are charged with one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and to pay health care kickbacks; and Sanjar, Sajadi, Hakimi, Nunn, Holmes and Manney are charged with various counts of payment and receipt of healthcare kickbacks. The superseding indictment also seeks forfeiture.

According to the indictment, Sanjar and Sajadi orchestrated and executed a scheme to defraud Medicare beginning in 2006 and continuing until their arrest in DEC 2011. Sanjar and Sajadi owned Spectrum, which purportedly provided partial hospitalization program (PHP) services. A PHP is a form of intensive outpatient treatment for severe mental illness. The Medicare beneficiaries for whom Spectrum billed Medicare for PHP services did not qualify for or need PHP services. Sanjar, Sajadi, Main and Moore signed admission documents and progress notes certifying that patients qualified for PHP services, when in fact, the patients did not qualify for or need PHP services. Sanjar and Sajadi also billed Medicare for PHP services when the beneficiaries were actually watching movies, coloring and playing games – activities that are not covered by Medicare. Sanjar, Sajadi and Hakimi paid kickbacks to Nunn, Holmes, Manney and other group care home operators and patient recruiters in exchange for delivering ineligible Medicare beneficiaries to Spectrum, according to the indictment. In some cases, the patients received a portion of those kickbacks. The indictment alleges that Spectrum billed Medicare for approximately \$97 million in services that were not medically necessary and, in some cases, not provided. An indictment is merely a formal accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

- Yuba City CA - Doctor Irving Schwartz is facing charges in connection with an alleged \$1.3 million Medicare scam. Schwartz was arrested and arraigned in federal court on 24 JUL. Federal prosecutors accuse him of writing dozens of prescriptions for power wheelchairs in Southern California between July 2007 and September 2008 to patients who didn't need them. They say Schwartz sold the bogus prescriptions for \$300 kickbacks. Prosecutors allege that other suspects in the case then used Schwartz's prescriptions to claim more than \$1.3 million in Medicare reimbursements. A woman from Schwartz's medical office told the Appeal-Democrat that he had no comment. At least three other people have also been charged. Schwartz has been ordered to return to federal court in San Diego on 31 JUL.

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

15-31 Jul 2012

Medicaid Fraud Update 67:

- **Sequin WA** - A father and daughter from Sequim will serve 30 days in jail after pleading guilty to stealing \$111,705 from state and federal health care programs. The Washington State Attorney General's Office announced Crystal Edgington and her father Jeffrey Edgington pleaded guilty 12 JUL to four counts of theft each and multiple counts of submitting false statements/claims to Medicaid. According to a news release, state prosecutors filed a series of Medicaid fraud-related charges March 19 against the Edgingtons. State investigators said from May 2008 to January 2012, the Edgingtons illegally billed Medicaid, receiving payments for services that Crystal Edgington didn't actually provide to her mother, a client of the Department of Social and Health

Service's Community Options Program Entry System. The program funds in-home care for the poor. Under state and federal law, spouses can't be paid care providers for each other. Investigators said to circumvent the law, Jeff and Crystal Edgington devised a plot in which Crystal Edgington would be the paid provider of record and pass the money along to her father. Jeff Edgington used the funds to pay for his home on a Sequim golf course, season tickets to the Seahawks games and other expenses, according to the news release. The DSHS discovered in October 2008 that Crystal Edgington was working another job while allegedly taking care of her mother. They notified the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, which then discovered Crystal Edgington billed DSHS for allegedly providing in-home care to her mother in 2011 when her mother was actually in the hospital. As part of the plea, both Edgingtons, who are first-time offenders, will serve 30 days in jail followed by six months of community custody, and will be ordered to repay the Medicaid program \$111,705 plus \$800 in fines and court fees, according to the news release.

[Source: Fraud News Daily 15-31 Jul 2012 ++]

Mil History: The investigation into the grounding of the USS San Francisco (SSN-711) was released to the public on 5 JAN 2005 by the US Pacific Fleet, based in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The nuclear-powered submarine ran into a seamount on 8 JAN 2005, killing Machinist Mate 2nd class Joseph Allen Ashley and injuring more than 90 other sailors. According to the investigation findings, the submarine collision could have been avoided. A 147-page report into the fatal grounding of the San Francisco at the beginning of the year points to the submarine's top leaders and watch team's failing to develop and execute a safe voyage plan for its mission and its crew. The Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine was submerged at a depth of 525 feet and transiting at maximum speed when it hit a seamount near the Caroline Islands. The 24-year-old Ashley, of Akron Ohio, died from the collision and another 97 of the 137 crewmembers reported injuries ranging from minor bruising and muscle strains to two who suffered dislocated shoulders. According to the report; Ashley's head injury was inevitably critical. His death and the injury of the other crewmembers were in the line of duty and not due to misconduct.

The findings however did find misconduct with the leadership of the submarine. The report stated about the commanding officer of the San Francisco, "He [Commander Kevin Mooney] chose to operate the USS San Francisco at maximum speed with no navigation risk mitigation measures in effect, despite several islands, atolls and rapidly shoaling areas in the vicinity of the ship's intended track. Further, he chose not to take precautions such as stationing additional navigation watch standards, establishing limits on speed and depth, and reducing the navigational sounding interval. Had the commanding officer instituted specified operational procedures and exercised prudent navigation practices, the grounding, even if not avoid altogether, would have been significantly less severe." The report stated neither the commanding officer nor his navigation team exercised due care. As for why the seamount did not appear on the chart the navigation team was using, according to the report, they failed to examine all charts that were available and on board the submarine. Said the report, "Charts and supporting documentation products aboard the USS San Francisco were sufficient to identify navigation hazards along, and adjacent to the ship's intended track. Continuous and complete reliance on the accuracy and fidelity of a single navigation chart, when other charts with critical information were readily available, led to this grounding."

It was a month after the collision that Commander Mooney was relieved of his command of the San Francisco, and in March six crewmembers were punished. None were identified for privacy reasons, but they included enlisted, senior enlisted and an officer. The punishments included reduction in rate and punitive letters of reprimand. The damage to the San Francisco was estimated at \$88 million, and the submarine remained in dry dock in Apra Harbor under repair. A more detailed account of what the San Francisco was doing, what happened to the crew when it collided, and why the ship took the route it did that resulted in the collision is covered in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**USS San Francisco Grounding**”. [Source: KUAM News Sabrina Salas Matanane and New York Times Christopher Drew articles 5 & 18 May 2005 ++]

Military History Anniversaries: Significant August events in U.S. Military History are:

- Aug 00 1943 - WWII: USS Pompano (SS-181). Date of sinking unknown. Most likely sunk by a Japanese mine or combined air and surface attack off northeastern Honshu, Japan. 77 killed
- Aug 01 1801 - Tripolitan War: The schooner USS Enterprise defeated the 14-gun Tripolitan corsair Tripoli after a fierce but one-sided battle.
- Aug 01 1942 - WWII: Ensign Henry C. White, while flying a J4F Widgeon plane, sinks U-166 as it approaches the Mississippi River, the first U-boat sunk by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Aug 01 1950 - Korea: Lead elements of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division arrive in country from the U.S, in defense of Pusan/Naktong Perimeter
- Aug 02 1990 - Iraq: Iraq invades Kuwait initiating Operation Desert Shield which became Desert Storm on 17 JAN 91 when it became clear he would not leave.
- Aug 03 1958 - Cold War: The first nuclear submarine USS Nautilus passes under the North Pole.
- Aug 04 1790 - The Revenue Cutter Service, forerunner of the COAST GUARD was established by Alexander Hamilton.
- Aug 04 1952 - Korea: Battle for Old Baldy (Hill 266) which commenced on 26 JUN ends.
- Aug 04 1964 - Vietnam: The U.S.S. Maddox and Turner Joy exchange fire with North Vietnamese patrol boats.
- Aug 05 1861 - Civil War: Congress adopts the nation’s first income tax to finance the Civil War.
- Aug 05 1864 - Civil War: Admiral David Farragut, USN, exclaiming "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead," ran through a Confederate minefield at Mobile Bay, Alabama, and captured a defending group of Confederate ships.
- Aug 05 1951 - Korea: The United Nations Command suspends armistice talks with the North Koreans when armed troops are spotted in neutral areas.
- Aug 05 1995 - Operation Storm begins in Croatia.
- Aug 06 1945 - WWII: Paul Tibbets, the commander of Enola Gay, drops the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.
- Aug 06 1945 - WWII: USS Bullhead (SS-332) missing. Most likely sunk by Japanese Army aircraft (73rd Chutai) off Bali in the Java Sea. 84 killed.
- Aug 07 1782 - Revolutionary War: Purple Heart day. General George Washington authorizes the award of the Purple Heart for soldiers as an award for military merit. Only 3 were given. As we

know it today it was reestablished in 1932 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington.

- Aug 07 1942 - WWII: The U.S. 1st Marine Division lands on the islands of Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomon islands. This is the first American amphibious landing of the war.
- Aug 07 1964 - Vietnam: Congress overwhelmingly passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, allowing the president to use unlimited military force to prevent attacks on U.S. forces.
- Aug 08 1942 - WWII: U.S. Marines capture the Japanese airstrip on Guadalcanal.
- Aug 08 1944 - WWII: U.S. forces complete the capture of the Marianas Islands.
- Aug 08 1950 - Korea: U.S. troops repel the first North Korean attempt to overrun them at the battle of Naktong Bulge, which continued for 10 days.
- Aug 09 1945 - WWII: The B-29 bomber Bock's Car drops a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan. It was the second atomic bomb that induced the Japanese to surrender.
- Aug 10 1950 - Korea: President Harry S. Truman calls the National Guard to active duty to fight in the Korean War.
- Aug 11 1972 - Vietnam: The last U.S. ground forces withdraw from Vietnam.
- Aug 12 1898 - Spanish American War: Conflict officially ends after three months and 22 days of hostilities.
- Aug 12 1952 - Korea: The Battle of Bunker Hill (Hill 122) began which continues for 4 days
- Aug 12 1969 - Vietnam: American installations at Quan-Loi come under Viet Cong attack.
- Aug 13 1898 - Philippine-American War: Manila, the capital of the Philippines, falls to the U.S. Army.
- Aug 13 1944 - WWII: USS Flier (SS-250) sunk by a Japanese mine south of Palawan in Balabac Strait. 78 killed, 8 survived and were rescued.
- Aug 14 1945 - WWII: The Empire of Japan surrendered to the Allied forces, ending World War II.
- Aug 14 1973 - Vietnam: The United States ends the "secret" bombing of Cambodia.
- Aug 15 1942 - WWII: The Japanese submarine I-25 departs Japan with a floatplane in its hold which will be assembled upon arriving off the West Coast and used to bomb U.S. forests.
- Aug 15 1950 - Korea: Two U.S. divisions are badly mauled by the North Korean Army at the Battle of the Bowling Alley in South Korea, which rages on for five more days.

[Source: Various Jul 2012 ++]

Military Trivia 55: The following letter is a prime example of bureaucracy at its best. It was written and sent in 1942 by the CO of the USS Skipjack in an effort to get re-supply of a most important commodity. It did, however, ultimately result in the desired delivery. Lt. Cmdr Coe was CO of the USS Skipjack when he wrote his famous "toilet paper" letter to the Mare Island Supply Office. On June 22, 1942 J.W. Coe was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions on the S-39.



USS Skipjack (SS-184) near Mare Island in 1942

USS SKIPJACK

June 11, 1942

From: Commanding Officer

To: Supply Officer, Navy Yard, Mare Island, California

Via: Commander Submarines, Southwest Pacific

Subject: Toilet Paper

Reference: (a) USS HOLLAND (5148) USS SKIPJACK req. 70-42 of 30 July 1941.

(b) SO NYMI Canceled invoice No. 272836

Enclosure: (1) Copy of cancelled Invoice

(2) Sample of material requested.

1. This vessel submitted a requisition for 150 rolls of toilet paper on July 30, 1941, to USS HOLLAND. The material was ordered by HOLLAND from the Supply Officer, Navy Yard, Mare Island, for delivery to USS SKIPJACK.
2. The Supply Officer, Navy Yard, Mare Island, on November 26, 1941, cancelled Mare Island Invoice No. 272836 with the stamped notation "Cancelled---cannot identify." This cancelled invoice was received by SKIPJACK on June 10, 1942.
3. During the 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ months elapsing from the time of ordering the toilet paper and the present date, the SKIPJACK personnel, despite their best efforts to await delivery of subject material, have been unable to wait on numerous occasions, and the situation is now quite acute, especially during depth charge attack by the "back-stabbers."
4. Enclosure (2) is a sample of the desired material provided for the information of the Supply Officer, Navy Yard, Mare Island. The Commanding Officer, USS SKIPJACK cannot help but wonder what is being used in Mare Island in place of this unidentifiable material, once well known to this command.
5. SKIPJACK personnel during this period have become accustomed to use of "ersatz," i.e., the vast amount of incoming non-essential paper work, and in so doing feel that the wish of the Bureau of Ships for the reduction of paper work is being complied with, thus effectively killing two birds with one stone.
6. It is believed by this command that the stamped notation "cannot identify" was possible error, and that this is simply a case of shortage of strategic war material, the SKIPJACK probably being low on the priority list.

7. In order to cooperate in our war effort at a small local sacrifice, the SKIPJACK desires no further action be taken until the end of the current war, which has created a situation aptly described as "war is hell."

J.W. Coe

Here is the rest of the story:

The letter was given to the Yeoman, telling him to type it up. Once typed and upon reflection, the Yeoman went looking for help in the form of the XO. The XO shared it with the OD and they proceeded to the CO's cabin and asked if he really wanted it sent. His reply, "I wrote it, didn't I?" The "toilet paper" letter reached Mare Island Supply Depot. A member of that office remembers that all officers in the Supply Department "had to stand at attention for three days because of that letter." By then, the letter had been copied and was spreading throughout the fleet and even to the President's son who was aboard the USS Wasp. As the boat came in from her next patrol, Jim and crew saw toilet-paper streamers blowing from the lights along the pier and pyramids of toilet paper stacked seven feet high on the dock. Two men were carrying a long dowel with toilet paper rolls on it with yards of paper streaming behind them as a band played coming up after the roll holders. Band members wore toilet paper neckties in place of their Navy neckerchiefs. The wind-section had toilet paper pushed up inside their instruments and when they blew, white streamers unfurled from trumpets and horns. As was the custom for returning boats to be greeted at the pier with cases of fresh fruit/veggies and ice cream, the Skipjack was first greeted thereafter with her own distinctive tribute-cartons and cartons of toilet paper.



This letter became famous in submarine history books and found its way to the movie (Operation Petticoat), and eventually coming to rest (copy) at the Navy Supply School at Pensacola, Florida. There, it still hangs on the wall under a banner that reads, "Don't let this happen to you!" Even John Roosevelt insured his father got a copy of the letter. The original is at Bowfin Museum in Hawaii. Three boats were used in the making of the movie: USS BALAO (SS-285), was painted pink and was used for exterior shots in and around Key West, Florida. USS ARCHERFISH (SS-311) wore the standard colors of grey and black, and was used for interior and exterior shots. USS QUEENFISH (SS-393) was used in opening and closing scenes, as well as for at sea shots and was filmed in and around San Diego. [Source: http://www.eugeneleeslover.com/Humor/Infamous_Toilet_Paper_Letter.html Jun 2012 ++]

Tax Burden for New Hampshire 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 as of JUL 2012 if you retire in **New Hampshire:**

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: None. However, there are some specific sales taxes: 9% tax on restaurants, prepared food, hotel rooms and car rentals; 55 cents per megawatt hour on electricity, 7% on telecommunication services, plus additional taxes on real estate transfers and alcohol.

Gasoline Tax: 19.6 cents/gallon

Diesel Fuel Tax: 19.6 cents/gallon

Cigarette Tax: \$1.78 cents/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

New Hampshire depends more upon real property taxes for revenue than most states since there are no general income, sales or use taxes. The state also receives substantial revenue from taxes on motor fuels, tobacco products, alcoholic beverages sold through the state liquor stores, and pari-mutuel betting. The state income tax is limited to a 5% tax on dividends and interest income of more than \$2,400 (\$4,800 for joint filers). A \$1,200 exemption is available for residents who are 65 years of age or older. For an overview of New Hampshire taxes refer to <http://www.revenue.nh.gov/faq/gti-rev.htm>

Retirement Income: Not taxed.

Retired Military Pay: Not taxed.

Military Disability Retired Pay: Disability Portion – Length of Service Pay: Member on September 24, 1975 – No tax; Not Member on September 24, 1975 – Taxed, unless combat incurred. Retired Pay – Based solely on disability. Member on September 24, 1975 – No tax. Not Member on September 24, 1975 – Taxed, unless all pay based on disability, and disability resulted from armed conflict, extra-hazardous service, simulate war, or an instrumentality of war.

VA Disability Dependency and Indemnity Compensation: 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

Local property taxes, based upon assessed valuation, are assessed, levied and collected by municipalities.

A state education property tax rate of \$2.325 (2011) per \$1,000 of total equalized valuation is assessed on all New Hampshire property owners. An elderly exemption for property taxes can be age, net income limits, including Social Security income, and net asset limits. Property taxes can be deferred but accrue interest at the rate of 5% per annum. The deferred property tax may not exceed more than 85% of the equity value of the residence. The deferral is available (if granted) by the assessing officials, to any resident property owner who is at least 65 years old. For single homeowners 65 and older who earn less

than \$5,000 and married couples who earn less than \$6,000, \$5,000 of their property's assessed value is exempt from taxes. In addition, the homeowner's other assets besides the home must be worth less than \$35,000.

There is a Low & Moderate Income Homeowner's Property Tax Relief program in New Hampshire. For more info on this refer to http://www.revenue.nh.gov/forms/low_mod_program.htm . You must own a homestead subject to the state education property tax; reside in such homestead as of April 1 of the year for which the claim for relief is made; have a total household income of (1) \$20,000 or less if a single person or (2) \$40,000 or less if married or head of a New Hampshire household. For more information, refer to <http://www.revenue.nh.gov/publications/pr/documents/pr06212011.pdf>. Call 603-271-2687 for details on property taxes or [click here](#) for municipal tax rates.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

New Hampshire's Legacy & Succession Tax was repealed in 2002 and is effective for deaths occurring on or after January 1, 2003. As a result there is no inheritance or estate tax.

For further information, visit the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration site <http://www.revenue.nh.gov/index.htm> or call 603-271-2318. [Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com> Jul 2012 ++]

Aviation Art:



Coastal Conflict
by Robert Bailey

June 3rd., 1942. Flight Lieutenant F. Perina of 312 Squadron (Czechoslovak) R.A.F., adds two victories to his score by shooting down a pair of Focke Wulf 190's over Cherbourg, France. This large aerial battle occurred as the Czech Spitfires were escorting Boston bombers on a raid to attack the docks, when they were 'jumped' by 25 Luftwaffe fighters attacking out of the sun! [Source: <http://www.brooksart.com/Coastal.html> Jul 2012 ++]

State Veteran's Benefits: The state of California provides several benefits to veterans.. To obtain information on these refer to the “**Veteran State Benefits CA**” 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:

- Housing Benefits
- Financial Assistance Benefits
- Employment Benefits
- Veteran Business Benefits
- Education Benefits
- Other State Veteran Benefits

[Source: www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/california-state-veterans-benefits Jul 2012 ++]

Veteran Legislation Status 29 July 2012: For a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the veteran community introduced in the 112th 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> . Final action is expected in the next few weeks on several bills that would provide services and support to the nation’s veterans.

- **S.3340** (Sen. Murray, D-WA) would extend eligibility for certain VA mental health services to family members of veterans; direct DoD to create a standardized, comprehensive suicide prevention program; and require the VA to establish accurate and reliable measures for mental health services and implement a mental health provider staffing model.
- **S.2320** (Sen. Ayotte, R-NH) would direct the American Battlefields Monument Commission (ABMC) to operate and maintain the veterans cemetery at the former Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. That cemetery is the final resting place of more than 8,300 servicemembers and family members, but was abandoned in 1991 after the Mt Pinatubo eruption. The Army and Air Force had maintained it continuously from 1898 until 1991. ABMC manages all other overseas military cemeteries, including two in the Philippines.

- **S.2259** (Sen. Tester, D-MT), the “COLA Adjustment Act,” would authorize adjustments in veterans compensation, pension and other benefits for 2013, in the same percentage as any Social Security cost-of-living increase.
- **H.R.1627** (Rep. Miller, R-FL) would provide VA health care eligibility for certain dependents stationed at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more from 1957-1987, a period during which the water there was known to be contaminated with carcinogens. VA care would be limited to 14 specific conditions tied to the contamination.
- **H.R.4057** (Rep. Bilirakis, R-FL) would strengthen consumer education and transparency of information for veterans using their GI Bill benefits.
- **H.R.4115** (Rep. Stivers, R-OH) would require that as a condition of receiving grant funds for job counselors for disabled and other veterans, a state must take military training and consideration into account when determining eligibility for certain state licenses or credentials for registered nurses, emergency medical technicians, nursing assistants and commercial drivers’ licenses.

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/bss/d111/sponlst.html> 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 for dates that you can access your legislators on their home turf. [Source: MOAA News Exchange 11 Jul 2012 ++]

Have You Heard:

How to know when you are in the presence of a ‘Real Chief Petty Officer’:

- The CHIEF doesn't sleep with a night light. The CHIEF isn't afraid of the dark. The dark is afraid of the CHIEF.
- The CHIEF’s tears can cure cancer. Too bad he's never cried.
- The CHIEF once visited The Virgin Islands. They are now simply called The Islands.
- The CHIEF has counted to infinity . . . twice!
- The CHIEF frequently donates blood to the Red Cross, just never his own.
- Superman owns a pair of CHIEF pajamas.
- The CHIEF has never paid taxes. He just sends in a blank form and includes a picture of himself.
- If the CHIEF is late, then time had damn well better slow down.
- The CHIEF actually died four years ago, but the Grim Reaper can't get up the courage to tell him.
- The CHIEF refers to himself in the fourth person.
- The CHIEF can divide by zero.

- If the CHIEF ever calls your house, be in!
- The CHIEF doesn't leave messages; he leaves warnings.
- The CHIEF can slam a revolving door.
- The CHIEF was sending an email one day, when he realized that it would be faster to run.
- When the Incredible Hulk gets angry, he transforms into the CHIEF.
- When the CHIEF exercises, the machine gets stronger.
- Bullets dodge the CHIEF.
- The CHIEF once took an entire bottle of sleeping pills. They made him blink. . . once.
- The first lunar eclipse took place after the CHIEF challenged the sun to a staring contest. The sun blinked first.
- The REAL CHIEF never used a question mark in his entire life. He believes that the interrogative tense is a sign of weakness.
- REAL CHIEFS think Ensigns should be seen and not heard, and never, ever be allowed to read books on leadership.
- REAL CHIEFS do not have any civilian clothes.
- REAL CHIEFS have CPO Association Cards from their last 5 commands.
- REAL CHIEFS do not remember any time they weren't Chief's.
- REAL CHIEFS favorite national holiday is CPO Initiation.
- REAL CHIEFS keep four sets of dress khaki uniforms in the closet in hopes they will come back.
- REAL CHIEFS favorite food is shipboard SOS for breakfast.
- REAL CHIEFS don't know how to tell civilian time.
- REAL CHIEFS call each other 'Chief.'
- REAL CHIEFS greatest fear is signing for property book items.
- REAL CHIEFS dream in Navy blue and gold, white, haze Gray and occasionally khaki.
- REAL CHIEFS have served on ships that are now war memorials or tourist attractions.
- REAL CHIEFS get tears in their eyes when the Chief' dies in the movie 'Operation Pacific.'
- REAL CHIEFS Don't like Certified Navy Twill. Wash Khaki is the only thing to make a uniform out of.
- REAL CHIEFS can find their way to the CPO Club blindfolded, on 15 different Navy Bases.
- REAL CHIEFS have pictures of ships in their wallets.
- REAL CHIEFS do not own any pens that do not have 'Property of U.S. Government' on them.
- REAL CHIEFS do not get the mandatory flu shots.
- REAL CHIEFS do not order supplies, they swap for them.
- REAL CHIEFS favorite quote is from the movie Ben Hur, 'We keep you alive to serve this ship.'
- REAL CHIEFS think excessive modesty is their only fault.
- REAL CHIEFS hate to write evaluations, except for their own.
- REAL CHIEFS turn in a 4 page brag sheet for their evaluation.
- REAL CHIEFS last ship was always better.
- REAL CHIEFS know that the black tar in their coffee cup makes the coffee taste better.
- REAL CHIEFS idea of heaven: Three good PO1's and a Division Officer who does what he is told.

- REAL CHIEFS think John Wayne would have made a good Chief, if he had not gone soft and made Marine movies.
- REAL CHIEFS use the term 'Good Training' to describe any unpleasant task such as scraping the sides of the ship or having to sleep on your seabag in the parking lot because there was no room in the barracks.

[Source: A Real Chief 21 Apr 08 ++]

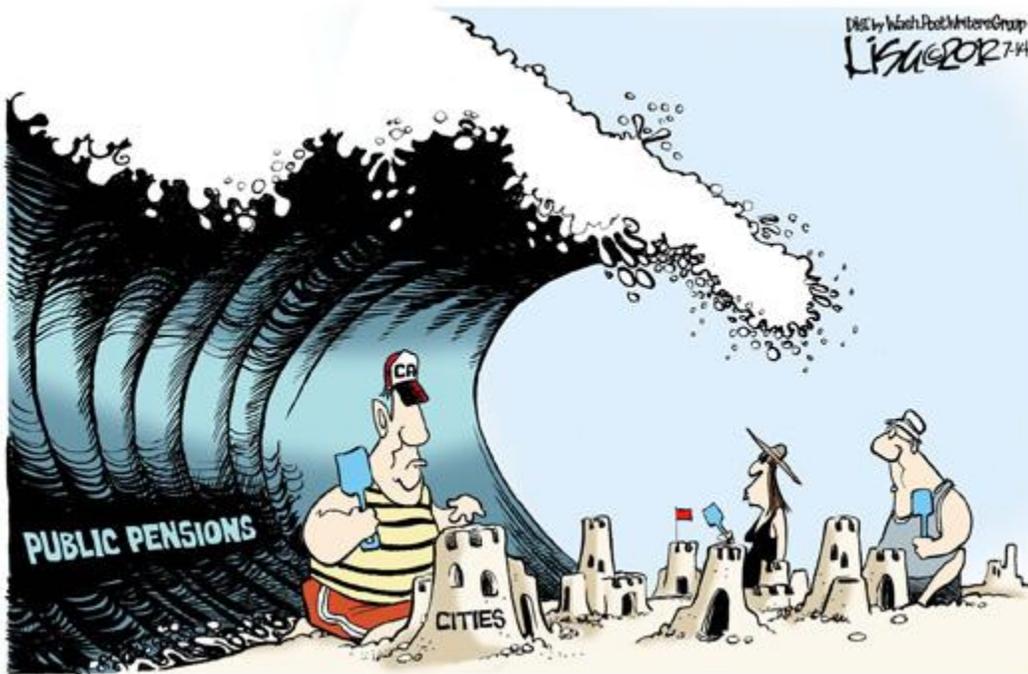
Naval Term of the Day: “**Bamboozle**”. In today's Navy, when you intentionally deceive someone, usually as a joke, you are said to have bamboozled them. The word was used in the days of sail also, but the intent was not hilarity. Bamboozle meant to deceive a passing vessel as to your ship's origin or nationality by flying an ensign other than your own -- a common practice of pirates.

"It is better to understand little than to misunderstand a lot."

— **Anatole Franch** (French novelist | 1844 | 1924)

Only the Air Force







FAIR USE NOTICE: This newsletter contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of veterans' issues. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material in this newsletter is distributed without profit to those who have expressed an interest in receiving the included information for educating themselves on veteran issues so they can better communicate with their legislators on issues affecting them. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this newsletter for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Lt. James "EMO" Tichacek, USN (Ret)

Associate Director, Retiree Assistance Office, U.S. Embassy Warden & IRS VITA Baguio City RP
PSC 517 Box RCB, FPO AP 96517

Tel: (951) 238-1246 in U.S. or Cell: 0915-361-3503 in the Philippines.

Email: raoemo@sbcglobal.net | Bulletin Web Access: <http://sjcvets.zymichost.com/index.html> or
<http://www.veteransresources.org/rao-bulletin> [Word format].

RAO Office: Red Lion, 92 Glen Luna, cnr Leonard Rd & Brent Rd. Baguio City 2400 RP TUE & THUR
09-1100

AL/AMVETS/DAV/NAUS/NCOA/MOAA/USDR/VFW/VVA/CG33/DD890/AD37/TSCL member

BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTION NOTES:

To aid in continued receipt of Bulletins recommend enter the email addree raoemo@sbcglobal.net into your address book to reduce the possibility of future Bulletins being blocked by your computer's or

server's spam filters. In you should not receive a future Bulletin check <http://sjcvets.zymichost.com/index.html> for the PDF Edition or <http://www.veteransresources.org/rao-bulletin> for the Website Edition before sending me an email asking if one was published. At the Veterans Resources site after 2 to 5 days of publication you can open a Website Edition with Word attachments . The Bulletin is published in the 1st and 15th of each month.

If you can access the Bulletin at either site it indicates that something is preventing you from receiving the Bulletin email message I sent to you. Most likely as a result of its size. In that case you need to call your server and ask what you have to do to receive the Bulletin through their service. If unsuccessful, let me know for further guidance. Bear in mind that the articles listed at these sites were valid at the time they were written and may have since been updated or become outdated.

== To subscribe first add the RAO email addee raoemo@sbcglobal.net to your address book and/or white list and then provide to this addee your full name plus either the post/branch/chapter number of the fraternal military/government organization you are currently affiliated with (if any) "AND/OR" the city and state/country you reside in so your addee can be properly positioned in the directory for future recovery. Subscription is open to all veterans, dependents, and military/veteran support organizations. AOL users will have to provide a non-AOL email addee to receive the Bulletin at because of their spam filters and policies. This Bulletin was sent to 92.069 subscribers.

== To automatically change your email addee or Unsubscribe from Bulletin distribution click the below highlighted "Change address / Leave mailing list" tab.

== To manually submit a change of email addee provide your old and new email addee plus full name.

Warning: If you Forward this Bulletin to Someone Else:

Delete the end-paragraph of the Bulletin before you forward it to others. The end-paragraph following this Note is required by law and offers the recipient an opportunity to "unsubscribe," if they choose to. However, the "unsubscribe" portion contains your email address and whoever receives your re-distribution has the opportunity, whether purposely or inadvertently, to end your vice their future receipt of the RAO Bulletin newsletter.