

RAO BULLETIN

1 September 2012

PDF Edition

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Sequestration Update 02: Veterans’ health care funding may be exempt from automatic, across-the-board budget cuts that are due to begin in January, but military health care is not — and a new think-tank report says Congress would have to reprogram \$3 billion from other Defense Department budget accounts to fully pay for military health care should the cuts occur. DoD personnel programs are exempt from the 10 percent cuts under sequestration, including basic pay, allowances for housing and subsistence, retirement pay, and bonuses. And the Budget Control Act of 2011, which set up the mechanism for cutting federal programs if a deficit spending agreement isn’t reached, also exempted veterans’ benefits. In April, the White House announced veterans medical care expenses also are exempt. But health care for military personnel and families, including Tricare, fall under DoD’s operations and maintenance programs and consequently could suffer as a result of the cuts, known as sequestration.

Total personnel costs in the Pentagon’s proposed fiscal 2013 budget are \$168 billion, including funding for the defense health program. In that budget, Defense Department planners included several initiatives aimed at reducing personnel costs, including increased fees for military retirees receiving health care. But Congress has not supported the Tricare fee proposals or the Pentagon’s other personnel-related budget reduction measures in the fiscal 2013 legislative budget process. And that could affect readiness, said the new report from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. DoD “will have little choice but to reduce the number of personnel by more than is already planned or take deeper cuts in modernization or readiness,” wrote CSBA analyst Todd Harrison. “Over time this will limit the range of military options available and if left unchecked would eventually result in military too small or unprepared for even the most basic missions.” DoD Comptroller Robert Hale said Aug. 2 the department has “looked at impact assessments on Tricare ... and they would be seriously hurt.” But he insisted the Pentagon is not making plans for sequestration.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta held a closed-door meeting July 23 to detail four possible scenarios facing the department regarding sequestration. The meeting was one of a series of high-level gatherings on sequestration by DoD officials and industry leaders. According to a source who attended, the scenarios the Pentagon is considering include:

- Congress does not act and sequestration happens.
- During the lame-duck session of Congress, a plan is constructed to thwart sequestration.
- Congress comes up with a \$1.2 trillion plan to avert sequestration between now and the November election.
- Congress inserts language into a continuing resolution to stave off sequestration for a year or two, but the government still implements cuts, sometimes referred to as a “mini-sequester.”

[Source: The Leaf Chronicle Patricia Kime article 28 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Vehicle Fleet: The Department of Veterans Affairs has increased its vehicle fleet by almost 50 percent since 2005 — acquiring more than 5,000 vehicles — due largely to new programs that provide in-home care and transportation for veterans to and from VA medical facilities. This is according to a U.S. Government Accountability study released this month that found the federal non-postal, non-combat vehicle fleet has grown 7 percent since 2005 to 449,444 vehicles. The GAO did not calculate the cost of the 29,062 added vehicles, but noted that 54,964 new and replacement vehicles in 2011 cost \$1.36 billion. The Air Force, meanwhile, is on track to save millions of dollars as it has reduced its non-tactical vehicle fleet by 7 percent. In August 2011, the agency identified more than 6,000 underutilized vehicles that, if eliminated, could save the Air Force an estimated half billion dollars in procurement and leasing costs. Wright-Patterson Air Force Base officials said the size of the local fleet has actually increased by seven vehicles to 708, but that was largely because of base realignments that brought more than 1,000 new positions to the base. Base officials expect the fleet to shrink as a result of defense cuts next year.

President Barack Obama in May 2011 issued a memorandum calling for federal agencies to help reduce oil imports by one-third by 2025 by right-sizing their fleets. “The Federal fleet should operate only as many vehicles as needed to work efficiently, leveraging Federal purchasing dollars to build manufacturing capacity for more alternative fueled vehicles, and reducing petroleum consumption through efficiency and alternative fuels,” the order said. But cutting down on vehicles is at cross purposes with increasing services to veterans. The VA medical centers in Cincinnati and Dayton added 73 new vehicles to their fleets in recent years at a cost of \$365,289. This brought the two hospitals’ vehicle budget to \$859,753. “The addition of vehicles into the fleet can primarily be attributed to the growth of clinical activities that intend to make healthcare more accessible for veterans,” said southwest Ohio VA spokeswoman Denise Kerr. “Primarily, mental health and primary care programs are responsible for the most growth.”

VA officials say the number of veterans is decreasing, but the amount of staff and services needed are increasing for veterans with service-connected disabilities and those using expanded mental health, home-based and rural care services. For example, the Dayton VA has 23 vehicles assigned to clinicians who travel from clinics in Dayton, Middletown, Lima and Springfield to veterans’ homes to treat medical, social and behavioral conditions. This program was started six years ago. To date, there have been 560 veterans assisted by this program. The Cincinnati VA has 33 vehicles in this program, up from five in 2005, which currently serves 460 veterans. Another 33 vehicles in Dayton and 11 in Cincinnati are used to deliver mental health care to hundreds of veterans’ homes. A mobile health unit based out of an RV offers screening and other services to rural areas. The VA leases the vehicles through the U.S. General Services Administration.

The majority of the vehicles driven by local VA employees are Chevrolet Malibus, Chevrolet Impalas, Pontiac G6s and Ford Fusions. “The vehicles purchased for the patient care programs are compact and midsize vehicles,” Kerr said. “We also purchase alternative fuel vehicles for the local dispatch motor pool.” The GAO report found that the percentage of alternative fuel vehicles increased from about 14 percent to 33 percent of the federal fleet since 2005. VA officials say at least 75 percent of the vehicles they acquire use flex fuels. The Wright-Patterson fleet has increased its percentage of vehicles sipping ethanol from 16 percent in 2008 to 47 percent now. “That puts (the base) at pretty much the top Air Force-wide in driving that,” said WPAFB spokesman Daryl Mayer. [Source: Springfield News-Service Josh Sweigart article 29 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Women Vet Programs Update 19: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released a report that shows improvement in gender disparities in 12 out of 14 Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures in VA since 2008. HEDIS measures are used by 90 percent of America's health plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and service, such as screening, prevention and chronic disease management. VA consistently scores higher than private sector health care on both gender-specific and gender-neutral HEDIS measures. "We have a solemn obligation to provide high-quality health care to all Veterans, regardless of gender. Although we are encouraged by the progress we have achieved, we are not going to stop working until all gaps are eliminated," said Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

VA began a national initiative to eliminate gender gaps in preventive care in 2008. In 2011, VA asked each health care region across the country to review gender disparity data and create and implement an improvement plan. The Comparing the Care of Men and Women Veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs report released by VA's Office of Informatics and Analytics (OIA) indicates progress. The report shows that VA improved gender disparities in six performance measures specific to VA, including the screening rate for persistence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Other findings from the report include:

- VA has improved rates of screening women Veterans for depression, PTSD and colorectal cancer.
- VA has improved disease prevention for women Veterans through increased vaccination rates.
- VA has improved chronic disease management for women Veterans in hypertension, diabetes and hyperlipidemia, all significant risk factors for cardiac disease.
- Although the gender gaps have narrowed, care remains better for men than women in cholesterol control, diabetes management and flu vaccination.

The OIA report includes results of Veterans' inpatient and outpatient satisfaction surveys, which show that men and women Veterans reported similar satisfaction except in the Getting Care Quickly and Getting Needed Care outpatient sections. VA has implemented a national initiative to improve care for women Veterans. Some of the components include training VA providers in basic and advanced women's health care, implementation of women's health primary care teams at VA facilities nationwide and ramped-up communications efforts. The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, which leads the initiative, also issued a report looking at gender disparities. That report, Gender Differences in Performance Measures, VHA 2008-2011, identifies best practices for eliminating gender gaps based on success in VA networks. "We're looking at what works and trying to replicate it throughout VA's system," said Patricia Hayes, chief consultant for the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. "We want to sustain this trend toward shrinking gender disparities and become a model for all other health care systems on how to eliminate gender disparities. Most importantly, we want to give every Veteran the best health care." Both reports can be downloaded via <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov>. For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, visit: <http://www.va.gov/womenvet> and <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov>. [Source: VA News Release 18 Aug 2012 ++]

Milconnect Website: The milConnect website is the Defense Manpower Data Center's online portal that gives you access to your information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). The website is located at <http://milconnect.dmdc.mil>. MilConnect allows you to:

- Receive alerts when a change in your benefit occurs.
- Access health care information about TRICARE, other health insurance, premiums, fees and claims (catastrophic cap and deductibles) and immunizations.
- Print proof-of-insurance/eligibility letters.
- Review and update (where applicable) personnel information.

- Review and update your civilian employment information and your most recent active duty information if you are a National Guard or Reserve member.
- Update your display name for the Department of Defense (DoD) Global Address List (GAL).
- Update your duty information for the DoD GAL.
- Transfer your education benefits.
- Update contact information in DEERS instantly.
- Find answers to frequently asked questions.
- Review Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance information.
- View, print and save eCorrespondence regarding benefits.

You can log on to milConnect's secure website by using a Common Access Card (CAC), Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) user name and password or DoD Self-Service Logon (DS Logon). Family members and those without CACs or DFAS pins will need to sign up for a DS Logon to sign in to milConnect. You may request a DS Logon online by clicking the "Sign Up" button on milConnect or by visiting <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement>. You may also visit a TRICARE Service Center or a Veterans Affairs Regional Office to complete an in-person proofing process. Non-CAC holders who need a new uniformed services identification (ID) card can visit an ID card-issuing facility and request a DS Logon at the same time. [Source: TRICARE Standard Health Matters 2012 E-Publication Aug 2012 ++]

Tricare Preventive Health Program Update 04: Preventive care can help you maintain good health through early detection and treatment of disease. TRICARE covers many preventive medical services including preventive health screenings. As a TRICARE Standard beneficiary, you can receive the following preventive medical services for no out-of-pocket costs:

- **Prostate cancer screening:** TRICARE covers annual prostate exams and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests for men age 50 and older. TRICARE also covers these screenings for certain men as young as age 40 who have family histories of prostate cancer.
- **Breast cancer screening:** Annual mammograms for women are covered beginning at age 40. Women younger than age 40 who are at high risk for breast cancer should talk to their health care providers about when and how often they should have mammograms and physical exams, which may also be covered by TRICARE.
- **Cervical cancer screening:** TRICARE covers a Pap smear annually for women starting at age 18 (younger if sexually active) or less often at patient and provider discretion (though not less than every three years). Human papillomavirus (HPV) DNA testing is covered as a cervical cancer screening only when performed in conjunction with a Pap smear, and only for women age 30 and older.
- **Colorectal cancer screening:** TRICARE covers colorectal cancer screening beginning at age 50 for beneficiaries at average risk. Frequency varies according to screening type (i.e., fecal occult blood testing, proctosigmoidoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy). If you have an increased risk for colon cancer due to family medical history or other risk factors, talk to your doctor about starting screenings at an earlier age.
- **Well-child care:** The TRICARE well-child benefit covers children from birth until reaching age 6. The benefit includes comprehensive health promotion and disease-prevention exams, immunizations and developmental and behavioral assessments. Your child can receive preventive-care well-child visits as frequently as the American Academy of Pediatrics® recommends, but no more than nine visits in two years.
- **Immunizations:** TRICARE covers age-appropriate vaccinations, including annual flu shots, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Note: If you are at risk for specific diseases, talk to your doctor about your individual and family medical history to determine when you should begin preventive screenings. For additional information Visit <http://www.tricare.mil/preventivecare>. [Source: TRICARE Standard Health Matters 2012 E-Publication Aug 2012 ++]

VA Tinnitus Care Update 04: Ex-soldiers suffering from tinnitus related to their military service will have access to a nonsurgical, nonpharmacological treatment that uses low-level tones to relieve the often debilitating condition. The Department of Veterans Affairs awarded a contract to SoundCure of San Jose, Calif., to provide its Serenade device to VA centers and clinics, the firm said. The FDA-cleared product is a handheld device that emits so-called S tones along narrow- and broad-band auditory stimuli that react with the auditory cortex to suppress tinnitus generation, according to the company. Patients perceive sounds from the device as softer than the tinnitus, yet they may completely eliminate perception of the tinnitus. The device's sound patterns are customized for each patients based on a clinical evaluation of their normal hearing as well as their tinnitus. [Source: MedPage Today John Gever Clinical Notes 26 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Cancer Treatment Update 01: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs said it would embark on a "phased implementation" of CT lung cancer screening for veterans after taking inspiration from a national trial that found the scans could help save lives among certain high-risk populations. The department said the program would begin at six yet-to-be-named VA hospitals as a clinical demonstration project. A department spokeswoman said she could not give a start date for the project as it's still under development. The program was inspired by the National Lung Screening Trial, a landmark national screening trial that ended last year and found that after three rounds of screening, high-risk patients -- in this case, current or former heavy smokers -- were 20 percent less likely to die if they were screened with lung CT scans rather than simple chest X-rays. "The experience of veterans who undergo screening will be closely monitored to gather information about outcomes from the screening and follow-up," the VA said in its e-mailed statement. "Patients also will be asked about their experience with the process to help VHA understand the potential harms of screening, such as anxiety, fear, inconvenience and pain."

The Lung Cancer Alliance, a nonprofit, first broke the news that the VA would start lung cancer CT screening earlier this month, saying the department told them in a letter after the LCA had pushed for the VA to offer CT screenings to veterans. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, with around 160,000 people succumbing to it every year, according to the American Cancer Society. Veterans are at increased risk for lung cancer, partly because of high rates of smoking and exposure to battlefield hazards, according to the LCA. In May, several major medical groups, including the American College of Chest Physicians and the American Society of Clinical Oncology, endorsed CT lung cancer screening for patients 55 to 74 who have smoked a pack a day for 30 years, or the equivalent, and either still smoke or quit relatively recently. However, the groups stipulated that the screenings should only be offered by facilities that can provide coordinated, comprehensive care for screening and treatment.

The American Lung Association tentatively supports similar screening recommendations, although the group urges patients to discuss the issue with their doctors, according to an April report the ALA prepared on the subject. Still, lung cancer CT screening is not without controversy, amid worries about the risks of ionizing radiation from the scans and patients getting false positives. According to a Journal of the American Medical Association paper written by researchers affiliated with the ACP, ASCO and the NCCN, studies suggest that of the 20 percent of patients who test positive for cancer after a CT lung screening, only 1 percent actually has the disease. This means

screening could lead to many cancer-free patients experiencing anxiety and undergoing surgical biopsies, which carry risks of their own. The ALA also said the scans, which are often not covered by health plans, typically cost between \$300 and \$500. [Source: DotMed News Brendon Nafziger article 27 Aug 2012 ++]

West Nile Disease: This summer's West Nile virus (WNV) outbreak is on track to be the biggest since the disease first reached the United States in 1999. So far this year, 1,118 people have been infected – and 41 of them have died, according to the latest numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The agency has never before seen that many infections in people as of this time of year. WNV is a relatively new infectious disease. It's not considered to be contagious: the virus isn't transmitted from person to person like the common cold – only by the bite of an infected mosquito. Most of this year's cases are in Texas, with Mississippi, Louisiana, South Dakota, and Oklahoma coming in second place. To find out if any of this year's cases or deaths occurred in your state or check its progress as time passes check out the CDC's infection map and table at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/Mapsactivity/surv&control12MapsAnybyState.htm>

The microbe, or micro-organism, that causes this particular infection belongs to a group of disease-causing viruses called flaviviruses, which usually spread by ticks or mosquitoes, say the National Institutes of Health. West Nile virus in particular is usually spread by mosquitoes that feed on the blood of infected people or birds. Other diseases caused by flaviviruses include yellow fever and dengue fever. The good news is that most people who get West Nile virus have no symptoms, although the disease can be serious if it reaches your brain. Certain populations, like people over 50 and those with weakened immune systems, are at a greater risk. According to the Mayo Clinic, most people with West Nile virus have no symptoms, and about 20 percent experience only mild symptoms (like a fever, headache, body ache, and fatigue) that go away on their own. But for about 1 percent of people, the virus crosses the blood-brain barrier, causing a serious neurological infection that affects the brain and spinal cord. Serious symptoms (like severe headaches, a stiff neck, and an altered mental state) merit urgent medical attention. There is no vaccine to prevent WNV, but it's easy to protect yourself...

- **Flush out mosquitoes.** They usually lay their eggs on standing water, so walk around the outside of your entire home looking for any places where water has collected or could collect: planters, saucers, buckets, garbage cans, gutters, tire swings, kiddie pools. Empty them out and, if possible, drill a hole in the bottom of them so they automatically drain before water can accumulate. (For kiddie pools, store them standing up on their side when they're not in use.) Then repeat this process weekly.
- **Screen your home.** Make sure all your windows have a screen and that the screen doesn't have any gaps or holes that a mosquito could fit through.
- **Suit up.** Wear pants and long-sleeve shirts outside when possible.
- **Protect your skin.** Spray exposed skin – and clothing (to stop mosquitoes from biting through clothing) – with a bug repellent that contains an active ingredient that's registered with the EPA, which basically means it's safe and effective when applied according to the directions. Check out the EPA's bug repellent search tool for more help.
- **Avoid twilight.** Mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn, so consider staying indoors during those times or be extra careful if you go outside.
- **Report dead birds to authorities.** Informing your local health department helps the experts who monitor the spread of West Nile virus, which has been seen in more than 130 bird species. Just don't handle the dead birds.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews Karla Bowsher article 28 Aug 2012 ++]

USMC Wounded Warrior Battalion: Marines in the Wounded Warrior Battalion at Camp Pendleton, Calif., spend an average of two years, or 730 days, waiting to transition back to active duty or to discharge, and this lengthy process impedes recovery, according to the Defense Department inspector general. The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments have set a goal of 295 days to process troops through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. At Camp Pendleton it took medical evaluation boards more than two-thirds of that time -- 197 days -- just to complete their assessments. Russell Beland, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for military manpower and personnel, in comments appended to the IG report, flatly declared the goal to move troops through IDES in 295 days “unrealistic,” but said the Navy will work to get as close to it as possible. Beland said the Navy now manages all IDES case file transfers electronically and is developing technology to make it easier to share discharge information with VA. He said the branch also has streamlined medical narrative summaries, which should speed the medical review process.

Administrative and medical staff at the Camp Pendleton Wounded Warrior Battalion told the IG that the more time Marines and corpsmen spent in transition, “the more likely a warrior would abuse alcohol, or take risks that would ultimately get them into trouble.” The traumatic brain injury clinic staff at the Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital said wounded Marines reported feeling “useless” as they spent time dealing with seemingly unending administrative processes. As time stretched out, “the less productive and more frustrated the warriors became,” staff said. Two warrior battalion volunteers with experience working with Vietnam veterans, homeless veterans, and veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan deployments told the IG that the recovery and transition processes “almost enticed the warriors to stay sick.” An unidentified commander of the Camp Pendleton Wounded Warrior Battalion told the IG that “there were too many databases and information technology systems to track and manage warriors’ recovery and transition and many of the programs did not interface with each other.”

The battalion uses two computer programs to manage troops in their care: the Recovery Coordination Program-Support Solution, or RCP-SS, a secure, Web-based access tool to administer all aspects of the recovery program with multiple online forms, and the Marine Corps Wounded, Ill and Injured Tracking System, or MCWIITS, which helps oversee nonmedical transition processes. But battalion staff told the IG that these two programs have a poor interface that requires care coordinators to manually enter information from one into the other. “This made keeping the information accurate and up-to-date in every computer system a challenge,” the IG reported. VA federal recovery coordinators, who work with the battalion, use a more user-friendly Web-based program, staff told the IG, recommending the Marine Corps use it, too. Lt Gen. John Wissler, deputy commandant for programs and resources, said in his comments to the IG that the Marine Corps will work with agencies at the Defense Department and the Navy levels to ensure interfaces allow bidirectional information transfers.

The Wounded Warrior Battalion also serves troops stationed at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif. Staff at that base reported problems with computer interface with the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, which provides treatment for their wounded Marines. Medical personnel at the base and hospital both use the Composite Health Care System, part of the Armed Forces Longitudinal Technology Application -- or AHLTA -- electronic health record, but a Twentynine Palms nurse case manager said medical appointment information had to be retyped or cut and pasted into the San Diego system. Sometimes the Twentynine Palms system “is referred to as ‘the black hole’ in regards to processing referrals,” the nurse said. The IG said incompatibility between systems must be resolved. “Warriors will continue to be at risk of delayed recovery and transition as long as [military treatment facilities] experience difficulty with the electronic interface sharing of CHCS data,” the report said. [Source: NextGov Bob Brewin article 24 Aug 2012 ++]

Vietnam Vets Update 04: On June 8, 1967, Marine Capt. Boyd L. “Bo” Barclay was copilot of a UH-1E helicopter gunship assigned to a visual reconnaissance mission near Khe Sanh. His pilot said he saw something along a tree line and wanted to make a gun run. They made a strafing run on that area and came back around. “As we were pulling up they opened up on us and the first burst got the engine,” Barclay said. “We started going down.” Barclay switched radio channels and started calling Mayday. Mayday. “The next burst came through the cockpit and hit me in the hand, blew my hand up and I didn’t see any hand there,” he recalled. “And I said, ‘I’m hit!’” He reached over to grab a pressure point and the next thing he heard the pilot say is, “I’m dead. I’m dead.” He turned and looked at the pilot who was hanging in his straps.



Boyd L. Barclay

A pilot has procedures to follow if their plane is hit by gunfire and loses an engine, Barclay said. They were pulling up, and normally the action would call for the use of two hands. His hand was gone so he had to use what was left of it to begin the landing procedure. “I knew I couldn’t take it into a clearing so I was looking for some trees,” he said. “We’re in the mountains. I wanted to be as close to a valley as I could.” He used his leg as well and hung on as they descended through the trees to cushion the landing. They hit and rolled over. Barclay laid there for a minute. When he smelled smoke he climbed out of the crippled helicopter. The two crewman were on the ground, in a daze. Barclay asked for a tourniquet to put on his arm. A crew member began working on it. Then the enemy began firing on them from the hills. A second helicopter gunship was shooting at the enemy position. The survivors took cover and talked about getting the pilot out of their downed helicopter. Barclay intended to go get him out by using his survival knife to cut through the canopy of the helicopter, but he took a few steps and fell on his face, thinking his leg was broken (it turned out to be his ankle). “They pulled me back and said, ‘He’s dead sir.’”

Barclay said two young Marines started dragging him up the side of the mountain on their hands. As he was being dragged, he noticed his mangled hand was not bleeding. At the top of the mountain a helicopter landed to pick them up. Barclay was transported to California where he spent about three months in the hospital recovering from his wounds. For his actions that day, Barclay was awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart. “By his courage, exceptional presence of mind, and selfless devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Captain Barclay upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service,” his Silver Star citation reads.

Barclay said there’s a story behind the story. He spoke about the nature of special operations missions, about how he was told during a briefing about what usually happened to crew members if they were shot down. A couple of weeks before he was shot down, he was in bed one night and started thinking, getting scared, not about dying, but about how he didn’t want to let anybody down. “So I started praying,” said Barclay, who became a Christian at age 16. All of a sudden out of nowhere the 23rd Psalm came to him. “Literally, in that hooch, there were about eight of us, a bright light came in. It was like the Lord came down, touched me and said, ‘Never fear. I will be with you.’ And the fear just flowed out of me.” When he was shot down, the valley of the shadow of death, words from the 23rd Psalm, were all around him, Barclay said. “But I was never scared because a few weeks earlier the Lord had assured me that He was gonna take care of me,” he said. Barclay said when he tells people about the story he says

he's alive for three reasons — for some reason God wanted him to be alive, his Marine Corps training and he was rescued by those two young Marines.

During leave back in the states, flying from airport to airport on his way to Oklahoma, Barclay was in uniform wearing a prosthesis on his arm and a walking cast on his leg. "It was more or less like I was a leper," he said. "Nobody talked to me." Today, Americans will go up to troops and thank them for their service, Barclay said. When he travels he wears a Purple Heart shirt and has been upgraded to first class on an airliner as a thank you. He receives thank yous for his service even. "I'm really happy for these young troops today for the recognition that they're getting as far as what they're doing," Barclay said referring to troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. "These young men and women are 100 percent volunteers." Barclay said they are well-trained soldiers who make sacrifices for their country including serving multiple tours in war zones.

About a month ago Barclay learned that he had been nominated for induction into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame. "It's an honor. It really is," he said. "I'm proud of my service to our country and the Marine Corps. That's something special to be recognized in your home state. It makes you feel good." Barclay said having been overseas, seeing the comparison, he tried to teach his children and his grandchildren about what a great country the United States is. He said he remembers the veterans who fought in previous wars to preserve the nation and its freedoms. [Source: Oklahoma Edmond Sun Mark Schlachtenhaufen article 26 Aug 2012 ++]

Vietnam Vets Update 05: You would obviously be fired for money laundering. But for laundry money – from fifty years ago? The Des-Moines Register reports Wells Fargo just fired 68-year-old Vietnam vet Richard Eggers from a customer service job he held for seven years, because as a teenager he used a dime-sized piece of cardboard in a washing machine and was convicted of "operating a coin changing machine by false means." Eggers is quoted as saying, "It was a stupid stunt and I'm not real proud of it, but to fire somebody for something like this after seven good years of employment is a dirty trick when you come right down to it. And they're doing this kind of thing all across the country." The banks claim that's because of new federal banking guidelines issued last year. "The tougher standards are meant to weed out executives and mid-level bank employees guilty of transactional crimes, like identity fraud or mortgage fraud," the article says. "But they are being applied across-the-board thanks to \$1-million-a day fines for noncompliance." Meanwhile, the same day Wells Fargo fired Eggers, the bank "paid \$175 million to the U.S. Justice Department to settle allegations it had targeted black and Hispanic homeowners for sub-prime loans." Such settlements don't require banks to admit any kind of wrongdoing. [Source: MoneyTalksNews Brandon Ballenger article 28 Aug 2012 ++]

USMC Retired Services Offices: Following is the Jun 2012 listing of Marine Corp Retiree Services Offices and their contact info:

MCAS Yuma AZ - POC: Richard Welch | (928) 269-3159; fax: (928) 928-269-3723 |richard.welch@usmc.mil

MCAGCC Twentynine Palms CA - POC: Philip C. Cisneros | (760) 830-7550

MCAS Miramar CA - POC: Marvin Muskat | (858) 577-4806 | marvin.muskat@usmc.mil

MCB Camp Pendleton CA - POC: Jim White | (760) 725-9789; fax: (760) 725-8969 | james.o.white@usmc.mil

MCLB Barstow CA - POC: Patrick Rewerts | (760) 577-6533 | patrick.rewerts@usmc.mil

MCRD San Diego CA - POC: Ray P. Bromley | (619) 524-5301 | ray.bromley@usmc.mil

MCLB Albany GA -POC: Raymond Breaux | (229) 639-5278 | raymond.breaux@usmc.mil

MCB Kaneohe Bay HI - POC: Ricardo Paguio | (808) 257-7795 | ricardo.paguio@usmc.mil

MCAS Iwakuni Japan

POC: Gary K. Saiki | 011-81-827-79-5762 | gks20142000@yahoo.com or saikigk@usmc-mccs.org

POC: Robert Bugawan | rbugawan@yahoo.com or robert.bugawan@usmc.mil

MCB Camp SD Butler Okinawa Japan

POC: Tony Ethridge, USMC (Ret) | DSN: 645-3159; off base:970-3159 | ethridget@okinawa.usmc-mccs.org

POC: Ben Garcia | DSN: 645-3159, 011-81-611-745-3159 | garciab@okinawa.usmc-mccs.org

MCSA Kansas City MO - POC: Paul Farmer | (816) 843-3652 | paul.farmer1@usmc.mil

MCB Camp Lejeune NC - POC: Randy Reichler | (910) 451-0287, ext. 205 | randy.reichler@usmc.mil

MCAS Cherry Point NC - POC: Ernie Buschhaus | (252) 466-5548 | ernest.buschhaus@usmc.mil

MCAS/MCRD SC

POC: Vonda Jones | (843) 228-6222 | vonda.jones@usmc.mil

POC: Dennis Trimmer | (803) 525-2111 | dennis.trimmer@usmc.mil

MCB Henderson Hall VA - POC: Larry Ward | (703) 693-9197 | hnhl_rao.fct@usmc.mil

MCAS Beaufort SC - see MCRD SC Parris Island SC

MCB Quantico VA - Kimberly Bennett | (703) 784-3351 | kimberly.bennett@usmc.mil

[Source: Semper Fidelis Jul-Sep Edition Aug 2012 ++]

Hearing Aids Update 01: The DoD sponsored Retiree-At-Cost Hearing Aid Program is designed to help retirees purchase hearing aids through an Audiology Clinic at a special government negotiated cost. The hearing aids available through this program are the same state-of-the art technologies available to active duty service members. The program is open to all military retirees who have hearing loss or tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Dependents of military retirees are not eligible for this program. Retirees can buy hearing aids at a significant savings by using the program. For example, a set of hearing aids (one of the best available) that retails for about \$5,000 costs a retiree as little as \$755 or about 15% of the retail costs. Services for the hearing evaluation, hearing aid fitting and follow up hearing aid checks are part of retiree benefits and are available at no cost. Not every DoD medical facility is able to provide the RACHAP program. If traveling from out of town, compare travel costs of purchasing hearing aids privately in the local community. Generally, at least two visits are required to get hearing aids, one for the hearing evaluation and one for the hearing aid fitting. Also, retirees may be eligible for hearing aids from the Department of Veterans Affairs and receiving hearing aids from the VA free of charge, in most cases there

is no costs to the patient. The Audiology Department can provide with more information about VA services or contact the VA directly a 1-877-222-8387 or 1-800-827-1000. Dependents of retirees are not eligible for hearing aid services from military treatment facilities (including RACHAP) or from TRICARE. The family member is eligible for TRICARE hearing evaluations and the audiologist can provide them with more information about hearing aids or local providers. [Source: Semper Fidelis Apr-Jun 2012 article Aug 2012 ++]

SECNAV Retiree Council Update 04: Following is email contact info for the members of the 2012 SECNAV Retire council:

Co-Chairs

- VADM John Totushek, USN (Ret), Co-Chair - Washington, DC john.totushek@am.jll.com
- SGTMAJ Gene H. Overstreet, USMC (Ret), Co-Chair - Seguin, TX overstreet@veteransdirect.com

Marine Corps Representatives

- COL Michele Krause, USMC (Ret) - Manassas, VA michele.krause@va.gov
- SGTMAJ Annanias Rose USMC (Ret) - San Diego, CA ru4arose@cox.net
- SGTMAJ Frank E. Pulley, USMC (Ret) - Murrieta, CA fepulley@gmail.com
- 1stSGT Raymond Stephens, Jr., USMC (Ret) - Forney, TX stephensre35@yahoo.com
- SSGT Daniel J. Kachmar, USMC (Ret) - Virginia Beach, VA djkachmar@hotmail.com

Navy Representatives

- AECM Joe Wright, USN (Ret) - Lemoore, CA joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us
- AECS(AW/SW) Thomas E. Guier, USN (Ret) - Spokane, WA tguier@hotmail.com or aecs_tom_guier@hotmail.com
- CDR Charles Hopkins, USN (Ret) - Arlington, VA CHoplll@aol.com or Charles.Hopkins@gss-hq.com
- CDR Ronald J. Ignelzi, USNR (Ret) - LaJolla, CA rignelzi@san.rr.com
- CAPT William Henderson, II, USN (Ret) - FPO AE wilcovhen@gmail.com
- CAPT Michael A. Lilly, USNR (Ret) - Honolulu, HI michael@nljlaw.com
- CAPT Elizabeth Ruschmeier, USN (Ret) - Annapolis, MD elizabeth.ruscheimer@va.gov
- CAPT Charles Martin Menez, USN (Ret) - Alexandria, VA MMenez1981@Kellog.Northwestern.edu
- CWO4 Allen Gibbs, USN (Ret) - Chesterfield, VA allen.gibbs@dla.mil
- HTCS Stanley Kurtz, USN (Ret) - Pflugerville, TX skurtz1211@suddenlink.net
- MCCM Danny Britton, USN (Ret) - Lemoore, CA d.l.britton@comcast.net
- NC1 Gary Ivy, USN (Ret) - Temple, TX gary.ivy@tvc.state.tx.us
- NCCM (SW/AW) Sally F. Burnham, USN (Ret) - Savannah, TN whackywave1@yahoo.com
- HMC Joseph R. Reichler, USN (Ret) - Jacksonville, NC randy.reichler@usmc.mil

[Source: Semper Fidelis Jul-Sep Edition Aug 2012 ++]

Automobility: (Note correction highlighted in yellow). According the U.S. Census, nearly 10 million people age 18 to 64 have an ambulatory difficulty that could affect their ability to drive. After more than a decade of war, enough young Americans in uniform have been combat casualties that it is not only older veterans who are seeking vehicles and vehicle modifications to aid mobility. While the number of troops who have amputations, paralysis and other permanent disabilities is small by comparison with those from “big” wars, media attention has ensured that

today's disabled veterans are not forgotten, as so many of their comrades from the Vietnam War were. Today's veterans have advantages their predecessors did not, both in the immediate care they receive after an injury on the job and in the technologies to aid them in using automobility. They encounter those technologies first in their rehab programs, where physical and occupational therapists determine what assistance they'll need to drive. Driving simulators help ease the transition to assisted-mobility machines.



Modified Chevy van with factory-built wheelchair.

Veterans Affairs driving rehab specialists work with mobility consultants at companies such as MobilityWorks in Santa Clara, Calif., to help disabled vets find the right machines for their requirements. Don Salman of MobilityWorks, who is a veteran, works closely with the VA so that when a disabled veteran calls on him, he knows which technologies the person will need and how much the VA will pay to help the veteran. Salman noted, "If the VA puts you in a wheelchair or scooter, the VA is required to help find you a means of transporting it." The VA has thus become a partner with private industry in developing mobility-aiding technologies to help disabled vets. Martine Kempf, CEO of Kempf USA, made use of the nearby VA facility when she was developing the Kempf digital handcontrol system. The company's Web site, has video segments of veterans driving and commenting on the equipment. Other major manufacturers of modified vehicles and equipment also serve disabled veterans, among them BraunAbility in Indiana, Vehicle Mobility Inc. in Arizona and Rollx in Minnesota. Retail outlets such as MobilityWorks connect the VA, disabled vets and the equipment that can aid veterans with mobility.

Chris Henson, a veterans health administration program specialist, said in the Vanguard VA employee magazine, "For some 100 percent [of] service-connected veterans, [the] VA will purchase and install the technology and offer up to \$11,000 for a new vehicle. However, as noted in a DEC 2011 Bulletin article the grant went up to up to \$18,900, effective 1 OCT 2011. It is paid directly to the seller of the automobile for the total price of the automobile. The veteran or servicemember may only receive the automobile grant once in his/her lifetime even if only the previously authorized \$11,000 was paid. They will not be able to obtain the extra \$7,000. A veteran or servicemember must have one of the following disabilities to qualify for the automobile grant:

- Loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both feet;
- Loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both hands; or
- Permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a certain degree.

VA prefers to install the equipment on new vehicles but will retrofit any vehicle less than three years old and with less than 35,000 miles. The cost for the materials and labor can be as high as \$50,000." Because of the high price of much of the technology, this financial help might not be enough, Salman said. Even so, a cursory review of the help available to disabled veterans shows that today's vets, like all people living with disabilities, have options

never before available. Given what is asked of military men and women, such options are only fitting. [Source: Auto Week Steven L. Thompson article 1 Aug 2012 ++]

Costco Secrets: If you are a fan of warehouse store shopping there are a few things you should know about Costco even if you already a member:

Return Policy - This one hardly counts as a secret but Costco has an incredible return policy. With the exception of electronics, which have a limit of 90 days, you can return any product to Costco for a refund at any time. I've seen some ridiculous returns, like underwear and spoiled food, but anything goes. In fact, if you are simply dissatisfied, you can return the product whenever you'd like. Last month I saw a woman return an opened \$8 can of powdered soup. When asked why she was returning it she said there was nothing wrong with it, she simply she did not like the taste. Once I returned 3 slabs of pork ribs which I had frozen the month before until I was ready bar-b-cue them. I called the store before taking them back and explained they were cooked, sauced, and cut up but had a funny taste and I was reluctant to eat them because they may have been spoiled. They advised to put them in a plastic bag and return them which I did without a receipt. They entered my credit card number and the item number into their computer and saw I had bought them 4 weeks before and credited my credit card for \$33. While you're at it, you can even get a refund on the membership price if you're dissatisfied!

Executive Membership Refunds - You can get a refund on your Executive Membership if you don't earn enough in the 2% rewards to cover the increased price. We signed up for the Executive Membership because it was pitched to us in that exact way – with 2% rewards you get a check each year. If that check doesn't cover the increase, just request a refund of the difference and Costco will do it. We've never had to do it because the check has easily beaten the \$55 difference in price.

Closeout Pricing - Sometimes the tag will say "last one," which usually means it's the last one. But did you know that Costco, like many other retailers, use pricing to indicate what items they're trying to close out? Most items at the store will end in a 99¢. If you see a 97¢, that means Costco is trying to get rid of it and has cut the price on the item. The reduction might be a small reduction or it might be a large one, depending on the item, but know that chances are you won't see it again in a couple weeks.

Asterisks - Sometimes the price label will have an asterisk in the upper right – that means the item was not reordered and what you see is what's left (for seasonal items, it might be back next year but it's on its way out this time around). After they sell it, it won't be coming back. I wish I knew this before they started discontinuing a few items but it's a good tip if you're considering stocking up on something but passed because it takes up so much space.

Coupon Books - Forget your coupon book? Just ask the cashier if they have the codes at the register (they usually do). It turns out every coupon has the same code (check for yourself!) so your coupon book isn't unique to you and it's not unique to the product on the front of it either. I'm not sure why they set it up this way, other than to keep things as simple as possible, but this makes it easier to always get the discount.

30 Day Price Adjustment - Did you buy something and then see that it dropped in price or they added a coupon for it? If it purchased it within the last thirty days, you can get a price adjustment. Just go to the returns counter and ask. Considering Costco has a generous return policy, this just seems like a matter of convenience for them because you could always return the product and then buy it again with the coupon. This also means I keep my receipts just in case a coupon comes out (it also means I won't delay a purchase on the off chance there will be a coupon).

Gas Opens Earlier, Stays Later - If you buy gas at Costco, you know that the lines can get pretty ridiculous. I hate waiting in line and I especially hate waiting in line while idling my car, so I get gas at odd hours. Fortunately, the gas station is open earlier and remains open later than the warehouse store's regular hours. This will vary from location to location but it's typically open for an hour earlier and an hour later. There are almost no lines at these later times, especially at the larger ones with more bays. As a bonus, I have never seen gas prices as low as Costco's, even at the discount gas stations, when I include the automatic 3% reduction when I use their credit card.

Shop with a Gift Card - Another well known secret that works only if you don't abuse it. You can buy things at Costco using a gift card if you don't have a membership but a manager might get involved and stop you if you use it to buy a television. You probably won't get much resistance if you buy a shirt or a bag of string beans but a thousand dollar item will certainly draw attention. The most realistic way to take advantage of this is to buy Costco gas without a membership.

Grandchildren - My grandson always wants to go when I say I have to go to Costco. He loves the food samples that are given and the food court where you can buy a hot dog and soda with unlimited refills for \$1.50. Note: You should go between noon and about 1600 for the samples.

[Source: Bulletin Editor & Bargaineer Jim Wang article 14 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Claims Backlog Update 72: Woke up, I don't know what time it was, with somebody on top of me, sexually assaulting me," says Kelly Smith. Raped at the age of 19, while serving in the United States Army. "They ended up giving me a discharge for PTSD." Kelly Smith's traumatic experience happened at Fort Lewis in 2003 and she filed her first Veteran Affairs claim in April of 2004. She says, "My claim for PTSD was denied. They did give me a small rating for depression, is what they said, and ever since then I've been fighting with the V.A. Trying to get what I'm supposed to be getting for the PTSD." Smith refiled her claim in March of 2012 and says this time she has moved a lot further in the process than she has in the past, however, she says she has yet to see any money from her back-benefits. "I'm being promised that yes, you're going to be paid, that we're expediting your claim. We're six months into it and I still don't have anything. They're not paying me," says Smith. The amount of back benefits Smith is claiming dates back from when she first got discharged to today, which is \$2,924 per month for 112 months, calculating to a grand total of \$327,488. "I just want what the military owes me."

After leaving on medical retirement, Smith was deemed unemployable, leaving her with no where to turn for income. She says, "We are actually homeless. We don't have a home. We don't own anything. We sold off everything we owned." All they way down to the family's iPhones, just so they could pay for prescriptions. After going through this lengthy battle, all Smith wants is her money and to make sure this does not happen to anyone else. "We put our lives on the line for the country. When it comes down to just getting what we're owed, we're not greedy, we're not holding our hands out saying give us something we're not due. We just want what we're due and we can't even get that," says Smith. [Source: Nextstar Broadcasting Marlisa Goldsmith article 23 Aug 2012 ++]

Vet Cremains Update 17: A Fayette County Vietnam veteran's five-year battle to ensure forgotten comrades received military burials ended at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies near Bridgeville on 24 AUG. The unclaimed cremains of 11 veterans were laid to rest there with full military honors. Cremains of four other veterans who had family in attendance were included in the service. Dozens of veterans and civilians stood in a semicircle on a hillside at the Washington County cemetery. They clutched U.S. flags and kept silent watch during

the two-hour ceremony. Below them, uniformed service members placed urns containing the men's cremains onto a stone wall for the ceremony, riflemen fired volleys, a lone bugler played taps and elected officials memorialized the fallen. "So many soldiers have earned this and don't get it," said Golden after the ceremony, which was attended by approximately 400 veterans, military personnel and civilians. Many had accompanied the cremains in a mile-long, police and motorcycle-escorted motorcade from Uniontown to the cemetery.

Coordinated by the Missing in America Project, the service was the first of its kind in Pennsylvania to take advantage of a newly passed law, Act 101 of 2012, that allows funeral homes to relinquish unclaimed veterans' cremains for burial in national cemeteries without fear of liability, said state Rep. Deberah Kula, a Democrat who represents parts of Fayette and Westmoreland counties. Golden started to push for the law after learning from a veterans organization that the cremains of as many as 500,000 unclaimed veterans are sitting in funeral homes and other locations nationwide, awaiting proper burial. John Fabry, a Fairchance funeral director who coordinated the service, said the cremains, some of which had sat unclaimed for up to a decade, were collected from five Fayette funeral homes and the coroner's office.

The daughter of one of those veterans, June Vincent, 72, of Hopwood, said her father, World War II Navy veteran Charles Vincent, had wanted to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Because her mother, Judith, wanted the couple's remains interred close to home, she kept their cremains in urns in her home until learning of the Missing in America Project's efforts. "These were the first cremains to go to MIAP for burial," Vincent said. "They thought if I would give mine up, other people would follow." Although Judith Vincent was not a veteran, her cremains were interred alongside her husband's. Veterans, many in uniform, stood ready at the cemetery for hours in the sun, waiting on the cremains' arrival. Single file, they lined a walkway, standing at attention and saluting as uniformed Marines and Army, Navy and Air Force personnel carried urns containing their fallen comrades from a hearse to the stone wall.

Among the veterans was 91-year-old Battle of the Bulge survivor Albert Cresson of Armbrust and 82-year-old Korean War veteran Tony Fannerella of Greensburg. "It's a great privilege for all of us to be here, to be a small part of this," said Fannerella. "It's time we pay homage to them for what they did." John Kenes of Uniontown, an 88-year-old retired Marine Corps master sergeant who suffered shrapnel wounds in World War II and Korea, said he felt it was his "patriotic duty" to attend. Retired U.S. Marines First Sgt. Bernard Kieta, 80, of Smock, a Korean War veteran, said he "wouldn't have missed this if the world had come to an end." John E. Spisso of Unity, a World War II veteran who fought in the Battle of Bataan in the Pacific Theater, said the ceremony was something that "needed to be done for a long time." "Now we can finally take care of them, to have a final resting place," Spisso said. "Leave no veteran behind." Golden, who on Thursday marked the exact day 44 years ago he was wounded in Vietnam when a bomb exploded as he used a machete to clear bamboo, said he hopes the ceremony and the new law will inspire other veterans groups statewide to seek out unclaimed veterans' cremains and give them proper military burials. "Hopefully, this is just the beginning," said Golden. "There are more out there." [Source: Greensburg PA Tribune-Review Liz Zemba article 24 Aug 2012 ++]

Scam ~ Property Tax Relief: Seniors The state of Washington is warning consumers about a new telephone scam that appears to be targeting senior citizens. The callers have reportedly been posing as state agents who are trying to sell reverse mortgages as part of a property tax relief program or veteran's aid program. The state Department of Revenue received several phone calls this week from seniors contacted by the solicitors, who are claiming to be from an organization called "Seniors First." Residents of Clark, Lewis and Thurston counties have so far reported receiving the calls, and state officials say they have reason to believe the callers are specifically targeting Washington state residents. "As a lead-in to selling their product, the solicitor asks for personal

information such as employment status, income and age, under the guise of attempting to help the senior determine whether they qualify for our state's property tax relief program or for aid and assistance programs for veterans," wrote Peggy Davis, a revenue department program specialist, in an email notice to the state's county assessors. The Daily News obtained a copy of that message this week.

According to a separate consumer alert issued 23 AUG by the Washington State Attorney General's Office, the solicitors have either been implying or overtly stating they are marketing the programs on behalf of the state. Davis said that's especially troubling because some of the information provided by the solicitors is incorrect. "For example, one taxpayer was told he could have a refund on property taxes paid for the five previous years," she said, "and in another case, tenants were told they qualified for a property tax exemption on their rental home." The attorney general's office said the callers are not trained to determine whether seniors qualify for Washington state programs. If a person receives a suspicious phone call, it is recommended he or she hang up and then look up the number of the actual government agency, bank or institution to confirm whether the caller was legitimate. Don't call back the number they gave you. It's best to avoid callers who make offers that sound too good to be true or who ask for personal information over the phone. Other red flags are when callers refuse to identify themselves, refuse to transfer calls to their supervisors or are pushy when requesting information.

The attorney general's office said seniors who are interested in learning about legitimate property tax relief programs should contact their county assessor for accurate information. Information about veteran's benefits offered by the state is available by calling the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs at (800) 562-2308. An attorney general's office overview of common fraud attempts against seniors can be accessed at this shortened link: <http://goo.gl/PhLlc>. [Source: Moscow-Pullman Daily News Holly Bowen article 24 Aug 2012 ++]

Military Toxic Sites: Thirty acres of Horn Island are off limits to the public -- and may be closed for years -- after hazardous materials from a World War II chemical and biological test site were discovered by environmentalists with a BP oil cleanup crew. Asbestos tiles that sided buildings at the site were found June 21, the National Park Service announced 20 AUG during a press conference at the park office in Ocean Springs. Dan Brown, superintendent of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, said test results came back Aug. 15 showing the presence of asbestos along with mustard gas at the site. Brown said one acre of the 2,700-acre island is affected but 30 acres are cordoned off to keep visitors away from the chimney site and lagoon. "The vast majority of the island is safe and open to the public," said Brown. He plans to hike the island with his daughter in October. A boat ride to Horn Island following the press conference showed the remnants of a foundation from the test facility on a stretch of sand on the north central side of the island. Newly-posted signs warn people away from the hazards of asbestos exposure.

Crews have been cleaning Horn Island since the BP oil spill two years ago, but Brown said it wasn't until June when environmentalists inspecting the site recognized the possible hazard from the tiles. "They're broken and scattered throughout the site," he said. The Park Service hired a private environmental consultant to test for asbestos along with botulism, ricin, mustard gas, pesticides, PCBs, dioxins and mercury, lead and other toxins. Ricin and botulism, both used at the site during World War II, were not found during tests but one of the 12 test sites showed the presence of mustard gas in the sand. "It's a blister agent," said Brian Cook with the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. The mustard gas attacks the eyes and respiratory system, he said, and three days after exposure blisters form. "It was supposed to disable troops," he said. Exposure to asbestos can cause cancer or a thinning of the wall of the lung, he said. It often is latent for 10 to 40 years. Cook said they don't know the extent of the hazards on Horn Island but said anyone who visited the site "many, many, many times" and has health problems should contact a doctor. "It probably has been there since 1942," he said.

Cook said the U.S. military has an agency that cleans these hazmat sites, which typically takes several years. "That is not uncommon for hazardous waste sites," he said. No canisters of mustard gas have been found on the island but he said it would have been standard practice in the 1940s to dispose of them in the adjacent lagoon and wetlands since the gas doesn't react with the water. Brian Hardison with the U.S. Department of the Interior, who is a safety officer during the oil spill cleanup, said libraries in the three Coast counties were contacted after the asbestos tiles were discovered to get documentation on the activities on Horn Island during the war. The Army Corps of Engineers confiscated Horn Island during World War II for biological warfare experiments. The Army built a commissary, offices and sleeping quarters. Laboratories on the north side of the island were connected to the administration area by a small gauge railroad built by the Seabees. Accounts in the Sun Herald archives said it was a secret operation where toxins were injected into sheep and rabbits. The animals were incinerated in an oven and the tall furnace chimney was still evident until it was toppled in 1979 during Hurricane Frederic, giving the area the name of "the chimney site."

Brown said the military was looking for an isolated site for testing when they chose Horn Island. "It turned out not to be a good site," he said. Two-thirds of the year the wind blew toward the mainland. A Pentagon report in November 1993 said Horn Island was one of three sites in Mississippi where nerve agents, mustard gas and other chemical weapons might be buried. An Associated Press article said the Army tested biological weapons from 1943 to 1945 on Horn Island and disposed of 133 German mustard gas bombs there in 1946. A 1983 newspaper report in The Sun, a predecessor to the Sun Herald, said The U.S. Department of the Army reported to Mississippi officials that after the close of World War II Horn Island was used for the disposal of leaking mustard gas bombs captured from Germany. The report said 140 mustard agent bombs were incinerated and buried on the island in July 1946 by the Army's Chemical Warfare Service. The biological test site was moved from Horn Island to Dunway Proving Ground in Utah. In the late 1960s gas escaped from that site and reportedly killed several hundred sheep grazing miles away. Many thousands of people have visited the barrier island since it was a test site. The island is designated a Wilderness Area and now is part of the Gulf Island National Seashore, the ninth most visited national park last year, said the superintendent. He said about 1 million people visit the park in Mississippi each year. [Source: Biloxi, Miss. Sun Herald Mary Perez article 21 Aug 2012 ++]

Veteran Driver Licenses Update 02: It can be difficult for military veterans to prove they served in the military. The only federally issued military ID cards are military retiree ID cards, and veterans ID cards issued by the VA for veterans with a service-connected disability. Veterans who served less than the required 20 years to reach retirement or who don't have a service-connected disability are often left without an official ID card that proves they served in the military. Some veterans get around this by carrying around a copy of their DD form 214, but this presents a several issues: it is not a photo ID, so many places won't accept it, it is bulky and difficult to carry in one's wallet, and it has the veteran's Social Security number on it, which presents an identity theft risk if it is stolen. Thankfully, many states are taking notice of this and are including a veterans designation on drivers licenses and state issued ID cards. Some states, such as Virginia, are issuing a separate photo ID that identifies veterans.

Below is a list of states that now offer a military service or veterans designation on drivers licenses and their state issued ID cards. These cards can often be used for military and veterans discounts [<http://themilitarywallet.com/military-discounts>], or to prove you served in the military. However, it's important to note that these ID cards are not official military ID cards in the sense that they will allow you to enter a military post or receive military benefits. You will need to show your DD Form 214 or other official military documents to receive military benefits. There are currently 25 states that feature a veterans designation on drivers licenses or have legislation that permit the issuance of a separate veterans ID card at the state or county level. Legislation to add a

military service designation on state issued ID cards is currently pending in 13 states, and 12 states currently don't have any pending legislation to add a military service or veterans designation to drivers licenses (13 if you count Washington D.C among those without pending legislation).

Status of Veteran Designations on Drivers Licenses:

- Alabama – None
- Alaska – [Pending Legislation \(HB 180\)](#)
- Arizona – [Pending Legislation](#)
- Arkansas – [Drivers License Designation](#)
- California – [Pending Legislation \(SB 1355\)](#)
- Colorado – None
- Connecticut – Drivers License Designation
- Delaware – Drivers License Designation
- Florida – Drivers License Designation
- Georgia – Drivers License Designation
- Hawaii – None
- Idaho – None
- Illinois – [Pending Legislation \(Senate Bill 2837\)](#)
- Indiana – Drivers License Designation
- Iowa – None
- Kansas – None
- Kentucky – None
- Louisiana – Drivers License Designation
- Maine – Drivers License Designation
- Maryland – Drivers License Designation
- Massachusetts – Drivers License Designation
- Michigan – [Pending Legislation \(House Bill 4127\)](#)
- Minnesota – Drivers License Designation
- Mississippi – Drivers License Designation
- Missouri – Drivers License Designation
- Montana – None
- Nebraska – None
- Nevada – [Pending Proposal in 2013](#)
- New Hampshire – [Pending Legislation \(SB 313\)](#)
- New Jersey – [Veterans ID Cards Available at County Level](#)
- New Mexico – None
- New York – [Pending Legislation \(S6453-2011\)](#)
- North Carolina – Drivers License Designation
- North Dakota – [Drivers License Designation](#)
- Ohio – Drivers License Designation
- Oklahoma – Drivers License Designation
- Oregon – Drivers License Designation
- Pennsylvania – [Pending Legislation \(HB 2153\)](#)
- Rhode Island – [Pending Legislation](#)
- South Carolina – Drivers License Designation
- South Dakota – Drivers License Designation

- Tennessee – Drivers License Designation
- Texas – [Drivers License Designation](#)
- Utah – [Drivers License Designation](#)
- Vermont – None
- Virginia – [Separate Veterans ID Card](#)
- Washington – [Pending Legislation \(House Bill 2378\)](#)
- Washington D.C. – None
- West Virginia – [Pending Legislation \(HB 4082\)](#)
- Wisconsin – Pending Legislation
- Wyoming – None

[Source: <http://themilitarywallet.com/veterans-designation-on-drivers-licenses> Aug 2012 ++]

VA Conference Scandal: The Veterans Affairs Department, rocked last week by a scandal concerning excessive conference spending, hopes to skirt the fate that befell the top leadership at the General Services Administration four months ago. VA's Office of Inspector General is investigating allegations of wasted money and improper gifts at two human resources training conferences last summer in Orlando, Fla., that cost a combined \$5 million. Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL) and other sources on Capitol Hill briefed on the IG's preliminary findings said the

- \$84,000 in promotional items distributed to the conferences' 1,829 attendees, including pens and highlighters with VA's logo.
- \$13,000 for about a half-dozen employees' scouting trips to at least three locations under consideration for the conferences.
- At least \$100,000 more in other, unspecified waste, bringing the total amount of questionable spending to roughly \$200,000.

Congressional sources also told Federal Times that VA employees who organized the conferences may have illegally accepted gifts from hotels they were scouting. Those alleged gifts may have included free rides in helicopters and a stretch limo, lodging, food, alcohol, concert tickets, spa treatments and gift baskets. The IG has not yet reached any conclusion on those allegations. It will likely release its report by the end of September, and lawmakers are expected to hold hearings soon after. The setting and details are reminiscent of GSA's infamous 2010 Western Regions Conference in Las Vegas. When details of that conference surfaced in April, GSA's top leaders were ousted and replaced for failing to move fast enough to punish the officials behind that conference and for even rewarding some of them with thousands of dollars in bonuses. In contrast, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki appears to be moving fast to contain the damage. Shinseki spoke to Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) on 10 AUG, after IG staffers briefed Collins and other lawmakers on their preliminary findings. And on 13 AUG, VA issued a statement that called the alleged misconduct unacceptable and said the agency has stripped employees under investigation of their contracting authority.

Shinseki ordered an outside review of all training policies and procedures to be completed within 90 days. And VA ordered employees involved in recertifying, planning and executing training conferences to undergo ethics training. "Secretary Shinseki ... will hold accountable any individuals who are found to have misused taxpayer dollars or violated our standards of conduct," VA said. Shinseki's rapid response shows how definitively the GSA conference scandal has changed government attitudes toward conference spending, said Joe Newman, spokesman for the watchdog group Project on Government Oversight. But Newman said the mere existence of the VA conference scandal, so soon after GSA's scandal, shows this kind of waste likely runs throughout the government. "If the GSA scandal hadn't broken, it would have been business as usual," Newman said. "It's not surprising these

things happen. Maybe we should be [surprised], maybe that's unfortunate that we're not surprised. ... It points to a systemic problem in these agencies."

Newman said the allegations involving improper gifts are most concerning, since those gifts may have undermined the procurement process. Federal contracting officials — whether they're procuring weapons systems, office supplies or a conference venue — are supposed to base their decision solely on what is the best deal for the government, Newman said. They are supposed to avoid even the appearance of being swayed by other factors, including gifts from potential contractors. Newman said it's too soon to tell whether the alleged gifts prompted the VA officials to select Orlando's Marriott World Center over other locations but that the allegations are worrisome — and typical of contracting violations. Government ethics rules prohibit federal employees from accepting most gifts from people or organizations that do business or are seeking to do business with their agency or are otherwise affected by the agency's mission. Federal rules allow employees to accept gifts that are valued at no more than \$20 — which allows them to accept small things such as snacks or pens. But meals are forbidden, as are concert tickets. Stretch limousine rentals and helicopter rides can run more than \$100 an hour — well over the \$20 limit. "People will try to get any advantage they can," Newman said. "That's why the rules are set up to avoid that situation."

VA's IG began investigating allegations of wasteful spending and improper acceptance of gratuities in April after receiving a tip on its hotline. Collins' office said that tip came in the wake of the GSA conference scandal. The \$5 million in VA conference spending is more than GSA's \$823,000 Western Regions Conference both in total dollars and in per-person costs. VA spent almost \$2,734 per person at the two conferences. The Western Regions Conference — attended by 306 people — had a per-person cost of almost \$2,689. According to schedules posted online for the two conferences, attendees were provided complimentary shuttle services to the Walt Disney World resort, entertainment from a comedian, a poolside movie night, game nights, karaoke, and meditation, Pilates and water aerobics classes. Miller said investigators should look into those recreational events. "The key question is whether taxpayers funded what were 'down time' activities," Miller said. "If that turns out to be the case, I see no excuse for it. That is not a function of government." The VA IG's office said the conferences were for legitimate purposes, but would not provide more details on what investigators found. [Source: Federal Times Stephen Losey article 19 Aug 2012 ++]

Military Satire: If you're surfing the Internet and happen to land on The Duffel Blog — it's at <http://www.duffelblog.com> — don't do what the folks at Gizmodo [<http://gizmodo.com>] and Yell! [<http://www.yellmagazine.com>] did and believe anything you read. That's because The Duffel Blog, the 5-month-old creation of University of Tampa senior and former Marine Sgt. Paul Szoldra, is a satire site, full of fake news about the military. The stories — like "Chaos: General James Mattis Announced as Next Commandant of Marine Corps" (complete with an expertly Photoshopped picture of the U.S. Central Command chief with tatted-up arms) — are as outrageously funny as they are outrageously phony. The site is so popular it's now getting a million page views a month, Szoldra said.



General Mattis Can Carry His Own Goddamned Pack, He Doesn't Need Your Help

But every so often, someone is duped by the site, which dubs itself as "The American Military's Most Trusted News Source." Take the case of the "Inverted Multi-Purpose Ballistic Tomahawk Bayonet." Through the wonders of Photoshop, Szoldra fused an M-16 with a tomahawk and invented a replacement for the traditional bayonet stabbing weapon. "It was the worst Photoshop ever done," Szoldra said. But it was good enough to fool Gizmodo, a well-regarded tech journal, which posted a story of its own called "U.S. Army Changing Bayonets For Tomahawks" based on The Duffel Blog piece D'oh! Not to be outdone, Yell! Magazine, created to "dominate the worlds of music, movies, video games, and MMA," posted a piece ripping into "Dr. James Miller, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy." Yell! was mad at Miller for formulating a policy ordering troops not to wear TapouT brand clothing for security reasons. D'oh! There is no Dr. James Miller and no policy. The story Yell! yelled about was more of The Duffel Blog bunkum.



The IMBTB Mounted Under The M16A4

Szoldra, 28, said he didn't start out to create what is now being called The Onion of the military. After leaving the Marines in 2010, Szoldra moved to Lakeland and enrolled at the University of Tampa, eventually deciding to seek a major in entrepreneurship. As part of that, in January he came up with <http://www.collegeveteran.com>, a website dedicated to helping veterans navigate the often tortuous process of enrolling in college and obtaining financing. But Szoldra, long a fan of military humor, what with having served and all, began posting satirical blog items to increase traffic. The most notorious centered on MacDill Air Force Base and efforts by then-base commander Col. Lenny Richoux to get rid of all the chairs on base, ostensibly because he was sick of the "Chair Force" chiding. While there really was a Lenny Richoux, the chair ban was, of course, baloney. But the item became so popular that CollegeVeteran.com was being referred to increasingly as a joke site. So in March, Szoldra created The Duffel Blog, which has more than 12,000 Facebook friends and 1,200 Twitter followers. "The best satire always has a hint of truth to it," Szoldra said. "I understand why people coming to the site for the first time and reading something, they think, 'Oh, boy, that is screwed up.'" [Source: Tampa Tribune Howard Altman article 20 Aug 2012 ++]

Filipino Vet Inequities Update 24: A group of Filipino World War II veterans put on an emotional display turning over their uniforms and service medals in symbolic protest over a longstanding denial of military benefits. The group had been holding out for a hearing on H.R.210 - Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2011, a bill that would expand eligibility for veterans' benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs by officially recognizing WWII-era Filipino service members as active military personnel. The bill was introduced on 6 JAN 2011 and currently has 96 cosponsors. On 15 AUG, however, the deadline they had given Congress passed, with Jeff Miller (R-FL) chairman of House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, denying a request for a hearing on the bill. As Bakitwhy.com reports, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued an order commissioning around 250,000 troops from the Philippines into active service for the United States during World War II. While they had served under the expectation that they would be treated as U.S. military service members, Congress later passed the Rescission Act of 1946, which stated that Filipino forces would not be deemed to have been active military.

The United States has made headway on providing benefits to Filipino veterans through a number measures. Many of them are now eligible to receive some level of disability compensation. In 2009, President Barack Obama established the \$198 million WWII Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The fund allowed Filipino veterans, both citizens and non-citizens, an opportunity to apply for lump-sum payments. Bakitwhy reports that 24,000 veterans were denied this compensation, however. Filipino veterans groups say the existing programs don't provide adequate coverage in a number of areas, an oversight they believe the Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2011 would address. Advocates for enhanced benefits for Filipino veterans said the protest this week stood as something of a breaking point in their mission to have the legislation heard. "We will end the lobbying after 20 years but our fight does not end there. We will still pursue the lawsuit now at the Court of Appeals and support the appeal for Executive Order for the veterans who were denied of lump sum benefit in 2008," said Art Garcia, national coordinator of Justice for Filipino-American Veterans. [Source: The Huffington Post Nick Wing article 17 Aug 2012 ++]

Vet Charity Watch 27: If a charity is unfamiliar to you, it's wise to do some checking first. If you, as a service member, veteran, or family member or veteran, suspect wrongdoing by a charity, you should contact your state attorney general's office. If you believe you haven't been treated fairly by a charity, you can file a online complaint with the BBB Wise Giving Alliance at www.bbb.org/us/charity or write BBB Wise Giving Alliance, 4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 800, Arlington, VA 22203 . Be as specific as possible. If you want to donate money to help your fellow veterans or current servicemembers, a good rule of thumb to go by is to donate to organizations that you know are legitimate and well-established. The VA has published a Directory of Veterans Service Organizations, which you can access by logging onto www1.va.gov/vso. To check on how efficiently a charity is using the money you donate the charity Navigator site at <http://www.charitynavigator.org> provides information on large charitable organizations that take in at least \$500,000 per year and have existed for a minimum of five years.

To date the below charities alleging veteran support have been reported in the RAO Bulletin as being questionable for one or more of the following reasons: Holding massive asset reserves (*); Engaging in fraudulent fundraising (**); Using misleading sales practices (#); Spending an inordinate amount of donations on fund raising and administrative costs vice veteran support (+); Spending donations for non-veteran support purposes (++); Using nonveterans portraying themselves to be veterans in soliciting funds (##); or not providing proper documentation to verify they provide veteran support or how they spend their income.(!).

Action Point, LLC (#)
Aid to Southeast Asia (#)
Air Force Aid Society (*)

American Ex-Prisoners of War Service Foundation (+)
American Veterans Coalition
American Veterans Relief Foundation (+)
AMVETS National Service Foundation and the Freedom Alliance (+)
Army Emergency Relief (*)
Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (+)
Disabled Veterans National Foundation (+)
Foundation for American Veterans (+)
Freedom Alliance (+)
Help Hospitalized Veterans (**)
Military Family Support Foundation (++)
Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation (+)
Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (*)
Oregon War Veterans Association (++)
U.S. Fallen Heroes Foundation (!)
U.S. Navy Veterans Association (+)
Veterans Charitable Foundation (+)
Veterans in Need Foundation (##)
Veteran's Miracle Network (++)
Veterans of Oregon (+)
Veterans Support Organization (##)
Vietnow (+)
[Source: Various Aug 2012 ++]

Massachusetts Vet Website: State and local officials on 17 AUG introduced a new website aimed at making it easier for veterans to connect with benefits and service programs offered in Massachusetts. The site <http://www.massvetsadvisor.org> can quickly tell veterans of all stripes and ages which of the 320 benefit initiatives offered in Massachusetts they qualify for, and likewise, it can connect them with any of the 95 veteran's service programs offered in the state, according to its creators. "[Massachusetts] has the best benefits system in the country ... but it's created so many programs that when veterans try to access that system, it's like putting a fire hose in their mouth and turning it on," Coleman Nee, the state Secretary of Veterans' Services, said to a room full of veterans at Soldier On's Pittsfield campus. The site was developed by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute in collaboration with the state Department of Veterans Services.

Kyle Toto, a recent veteran of the war in Afghanistan, helped design the website. He described coming back to the U.S. and feeling lost in the jumbled system of benefits and programs. "Everyone's out there to help us," he said. "It's a sea of goodwill, but it's confusing. ... I knew [benefits] were out there, but I didn't know where to look for them." John F. Downing, the CEO and president of Soldier On, said MassVetsAdvisor.org would directly benefit the veterans his organization serves and others by preventing people from falling through the service gaps. "Our veterans in this building are going to be able to go online and pop from portal to portal and cloud to cloud to get all the information they need," he said. U.S. Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA) supported the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which provided \$45.5 million in funding to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. Neal said the state's new veterans' portal, made possible by that stimulus funding, will make sure struggling veterans have "the opportunity to bounce back." [Source: Berkshire Eagle Ned Oliver article 17 Aug 2012 ++]

B-17 Flying Fortress Tours: The Experimental Aircraft Association's B-17G-VE, serial number 44-85740 - nicknamed, Aluminum Overcast, was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Corps on May 18, 1945. Although delivered too late to see action in World War II, the airplane has an interesting history. *The plane* proudly carries the colors of the 398th Bomb Group of World War II, which flew hundreds of missions over Nazi-held territory during the war. Aluminum Overcast commemorates B-17G #42-102515 which was shot down on its 34th combat mission over Le Manior, France, on August 13, 1944. Veterans of the 398th helped finance the bomber's restoration. The economic reality of simply maintaining a vintage bomber, let alone the cost of restoration, prompted the group to donate the B-17 to the Experimental Aircraft Association in 1983. Since that time, an extensive program of restoration and preservation was undertaken to insure *Aluminum Overcast* would be a living reminder of World War II aviation for many years to come. The restoration has taken more than 10 years and thousands of hours by dedicated staff and volunteers at EAA Oshkosh, Wisconsin, headquarters.

Touring the United States since 1994, tens of thousands have experienced the allure of the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) fully restored B-17 Flying Fortress "Aluminum Overcast". History comes alive at each stop, prompting aviation and history enthusiasts alike to take a step back in time. The EAA tours the country offering mission flight or ground tours for a fee. Visitors can experience the role of bombardier, navigator, and waist gunner as they walk around or fly in the aircraft and relive the legacy of the thousands who heroically flew World War II bombing missions. It is a living tribute to the brave men who served, sacrificed, and, in many cases, gave up their lives defending freedom.



B-17G Aluminum Overcast visits Santa Barbara

The next scheduled tour is 7-9 SEP in Cincinnati, OH. Tour locations and dates are posted at <http://www.b17.org/tour>. Ground Tour (weather permitting) rates are \$10 Individual or \$20 Family (adults & children up to age 17; immediate family). Children under 8 with a paying adult are free. Active Military and Veterans are free. Mission Flights (weather permitting) are \$409 and \$449 for pre-booked EAA members and non-members. Walk-Up rates are \$435 and \$475 for EAA Members and Non-Members. Each flight experience lasts approximately 35 minutes, of those 20 - 22 minutes will be in the air. The schedule for a typical flight experience is:

- **Arrive** - One hour prior to your scheduled flight time to get acquainted with the aircraft and crew. You will be asked to fill out a form, and if you have not yet paid, the fee will be requested at this time as well.
- **Preflight** - Shortly before boarding the airplane, the crew will discuss aircraft safety with you and the other riders (maximum of 10 per flight). Seating assignments and flight procedures will be discussed at this time.

You will then be taken aboard the aircraft. All passengers must be seated and wear a seatbelt for engine start, taxi, and takeoff.

- **During Flight** - Once the aircraft is in the air, you will be allowed to move about the aircraft freely. Take this time to visit the various compartments of the aircraft like the nose, bomb bay, navigation/radio, cockpit and waist sections. For safety reasons it is not possible to enter the ball turret or the tail turret. Explore as much as you like and feel free to take pictures and video.
- **Landing** - All passengers must be seated and wear a seatbelt for landing, taxi, and engine shutdown

To book a flight, call 800-359-6217 or click on https://secure.eaa.org/B17/securejoin_B17.html . Revenues from the B-17 tour help cover maintenance and operations costs for the aircraft and aid EAA's ambition to "keep 'em flying" for many years to come. It costs about \$4000 an hour to fly the Aluminum Overcast. To see what it's like to fly on the bomber that helped turn the tide in World War II, learn about the crew that keeps the historic warbird flying, and hear stories from veterans who flew served and sacrificed on the aircraft during wartime click on the Virtual B-17 Experience at <http://www.b17.org/multimedia/b17flash.html>.

Retiree Newsletters: The latest edition of the military service's retiree newsletters can be accessed at:

- The Navy Shift Colors <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/Publications/ShiftColors/Pages/default.aspx>
- The Marine Corps Semper Fidelis https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MM/SR/RET_ACT/Semper_Fidelis
- The Coast Guard/NOAA Evening Colors <http://www.uscg.mil/ppc/retnews>.
- The Air Force Afterburner <http://www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner>.
- The Army retiree newsletter Army Echoes <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/echoes.asp>.

[Source: NAUS Weekly Update 17 Aug 2012 ++]

Twilight Tattoo: The weekly Wednesday night performances of the Twilight Tattoo ended 29 AUG. Twilight Tattoo is an hour-long military pageant featuring Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) and The U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own." The time-honored tradition takes place at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, VA. Attendees will experience a glimpse into American history through performances by The U.S. Army Blues, vocalists from The U.S. Army Band Downrange, The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, and The U.S. Army Drill Team. This performances are free and open to the public. Bleacher seating is on a first-come, first served basis. Performances normally run APR thru AUG. If you live near or will be visiting D.C you ought to consider attending during this time frame next year. For more information and schedule details refer to the U.S. Army Military District of Washington's Twilight Tattoo website <http://twilight.mdw.army.mil>. For more information on group reservations, contact the U.S. Army Military District of Washington at (202) 685-2888 or <mailto:ncr.webeventsmail@jfhqncr.northcom.mil>

VA Burial Benefit Update 15: Many veterans are under the impression that their status as a veteran means that the government will pay for their burial. This is not true and it can cause great financial hardship for families who don't understand it at a time when they are least prepared to deal with it. It is very important that veterans have their discharge papers located in a secure place known to their next of kin. Eligibility for potential

burial benefits depends on these documents, and they cannot always be obtained quickly from government sources. To be eligible for burial benefits, a veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Certain other factors including time period and length of service may apply, so the family should contact the VA at 1-800-827-1000 for final determination of eligibility. Burial benefits available include a gravesite in any of VA's 131 national cemeteries, as well as in state- owned- and- operated veterans' cemeteries.

For veterans interred at a national or state veterans' cemetery, the opening and closing of the grave and perpetual care are provided at no cost. If buried at a private cemetery, the family must pay these costs, as well as the cost of the plot and any related expenses. The VA will provide a burial flag, a government marker, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, regardless of where the veteran is buried. If burial is to take place in a national or state veterans' cemetery, the cemetery will make the arrangements for the interment only. Neither the cemetery nor the VA makes funeral arrangements or performs cremations. It is the responsibility of the veteran's family to make arrangements for funeral services with a funeral home, including memorial services, viewings, preparing and transporting the remains, the casket, etc. Any items or services obtained from a funeral home will be at the families' expense, including the plot and grave provisions if the veteran is not buried in a national or state cemetery. The VA does not pay for any expenses related to a veteran's burial or funeral.

Certain survivors may apply for a monetary burial allowance paid after-the-fact by the VA, but generally only if the veteran was in receipt of VA disability compensation or pension at the time of death, or if the veteran died while hospitalized by VA or while receiving care under VA contract at a non-VA facility. The amount payable depends on whether the veteran's death was related to a military service-connected disability, with the payments ranging from \$300 to \$2,000. There are other factors that can affect potential eligibility for this benefit, so veterans or their families should contact the VA at the 800 number above or your county veterans service officer for more information prior to actually needing the information. [Source: TREA News for the Enlisted article 17 Aug 2012 ++]

Vet Cremains Update 16: Four military veterans were interred with full military honors at a funeral at Willamette National Cemetery 15 AUG. The Oregonian's Mike Francis was at the ceremony, which caps eight years of detective work involving state and federal veterans' agencies. The four are all men who died at the Oregon State Hospital and their cremated remains were unclaimed and unidentified for decades. The men are: Army Pvt. James Edward Butler, who served from Sept. 1940 to May 1941 and died in July 1961; Navy sailor Lanier Dick Johnson, whose rank is unknown and who served from Jan. 1917 to Nov. 1919, dying in April 1968; Army Sgt. William Julius Madson, who served in 1918 and 1919 and died in January 1965; and Navy Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Frank John Martin, who served from June 1943 to March 1946 and died in July 1971. Not much is known about them. A lot of information that is routinely entered today when a patient enters an institution wasn't captured in the early and middle years of the Oregon State Hospital. In some cases, information was limited to just a few basic items -- name, date of death, perhaps a little biographical detail. In the case of these five, no relatives have been found. [Source: The Oregonian Mike Francis article 15 Aug 2012 ++]



Willamette National Cemetery 15 AUG

Vet Cemetery Colorado Update 03: To those dying to be buried in a new veterans cemetery planned for southern Colorado: Burials should be allowed in 2015, before its first phase is completed in 2017. In a draft environmental assessment, U.S. Veterans Affairs says the proposed action calls for developing 50 acres in a first phase that will accommodate burials for about 10 years. The cemetery could approach 500 acres if Kane Ranch south of Fountain is selected from four options. The other sites are smaller. Without naming a favorite, the assessment also looked at 4-Way Ranch, north of U.S. Highway 24 near Falcon; Rolling Hills Ranch, east of Marksheffel Road between Bradley and Drennan roads; and Bradley Heights, southwest of Bradley and Marksheffel. With no significant impact at any site, no environmental impact statement is needed. The Pueblo Chieftain reports that the Kane site actually is the preferred choice, with U.S. Rep. Scott Tipton saying the site "is the most accessible place for veterans and their families in the Southern Colorado region." [Source: Colorado Springs Independent Pam Zubeck article 15 Aug 2012 ++]

IRS Fraud, Waste, & Abuse: In 2010, 741 tax returns were filed to the federal government from a single address in Belle Glade, Fla., the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reports. In response, the Internal Revenue Service issued over \$1 million in combined tax refunds to that address. Most or all of those returns were probably filed by identity thieves, and the Belle Glade case isn't even the worst of it, according to a report issued last month by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). That report notes that in addition to the Belle Glade home, there was an address in Tampa that sent in 518 tax returns and got back almost \$1.8 million in refunds, and an address in Lansing, Mich., sent in 2,137 tax returns and got more than \$3.3 million back. The returns from these addresses all bore the hallmarks of identity theft, according to TIGTA. Tax-refund scams don't seem to be going away any time soon. Identity theft and fraud are reportedly rampant in some parts of the country, especially Florida, which is home to three of the five U.S. addresses that filed the greatest number of tax returns in 2010, according to the TIGTA report.



More than 2,100 tax returns were filed in 2010 from a single address in Lansing MI

Scams of this kind are growing more common, and they're making it harder for law-abiding taxpayers to get refunds that are rightfully theirs. Identity thieves reportedly have a number of ways to soak the IRS, from borrowing the names and information of dead people to hijacking the Social Security numbers of Puerto Rican citizens, who don't pay federal income tax. The TIGTA report estimates the IRS will send out \$21 billion in refunds to criminals over the next five years. That's a forecast the IRS itself has, not surprisingly, taken issue with, and the agency claims it's cracking down on identity thieves and fraudulent returns. The IRS has reportedly put controls in place to spot stolen identities and returns that use the Social Security numbers of dead people. Last week, CNNMoney reported the agency has already picked out almost twice as many suspicious returns this year as it had by this time last year. Still, fooling the IRS doesn't seem like an impossible task, considering one guy reportedly did it from a jail cell with a typewriter, according to a recent story in The Kansas City Star.

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) addressed this issue in an e-Brief to his constituents stating Florida has emerged as a particular hotspot for identity theft-related tax fraud. Tampa and Miami are two of the top cities the IG calls out for having the most potentially fraudulent tax returns filed in 2010. He has chaired two investigative hearings on the issue where it was discussed what the IRS is doing to help the victims, steps the agency is taking to hold fraudsters responsible and what else could be done to stop the problem. He was joined by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) in filing a new, bipartisan piece of legislation to curb identity theft in the tax system in several ways, including removing Social Security numbers from Medicare cards and restricting access to Social Security numbers of the deceased, among other measures. Identity theft-related tax fraud has become an epidemic that's costing law-abiding U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars. And Sen. Nelson says it's one we've got to fix. [Source: The Huffington Post | Alexander Eichler article 8 Aug 2012 ++]

TRICARE Addiction Care: To cope with a growing population of drug- and alcohol-addicted personnel, the Defense Department has outsourced substance abuse treatment to a network of 1,053 civilian rehabilitation facilities through the TRICARE insurance plan. But a Nextgov investigation shows military health care executives evaluate those facilities with less rigor than Consumer Reports applies to the testing of toasters. Concerned about the quality of substance abuse care, Congress in 2009 required the department to bring treatment back in-house by October 2012. The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, signed by President Obama in October 2009, required TRICARE to stop outsourcing substance abuse treatment and instead establish regional long-term inpatient substance abuse treatment programs. Nonetheless, Pentagon officials have declined to follow this directive. Defense currently has 200 beds for inpatient substance abuse treatment at its hospitals. Cynthia Smith, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said the services determined they had enough in-house capacity and did not need to build new treatment facilities.

The Defense Department faces a spiraling number of addicted personnel, with 316,248 active-duty troops diagnosed with either alcohol or drug dependence from 2000 through 2011. That's 22 percent of the today's 1,422,000 total active-duty force, the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center reported in July. This is more than

triple the number of active-duty troops diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder -- 102,549 -- in the same time period, AFHSC detailed in its report on mental health problems of active-duty troops during the past decade. The number of troops diagnosed with alcohol abuse and dependence conditions alone -- 232,625 -- was more than double the number of PTSD diagnoses, according to the AFHSC report. Only the catchall categories of "adjustment disorders" and "other mental health" problems eclipsed substance abuse diagnoses during this period, AFHSC reported. An active-duty Army doctor, who declined to be identified, said, "substance abuse has reached epidemic levels within the military. DoD failed to anticipate the magnitude of the crisis and is now caught playing catch-up." The center based its report on medical record diagnostic codes and said the figures probably underestimate mental health conditions in the active-duty force due to miscoding and poor documentation of care provided by private clinicians or at deployment health clinics.

Smith told Nextgov that Defense provides substance abuse treatment through 215 outpatient programs; two Army inpatient programs with a total of 40 beds; and three Navy programs with a total of 160 beds. Smith said Defense also uses more than 390 inpatient and 663 long- and short-term residential treatment facilities across the United States and Puerto Rico that accept TRICARE reimbursement. She did not explain why Defense felt it could ignore the 2010 law that mandates a switch from outsourced treatment to in-house treatment. "The role of long-term inpatient treatment programs is less prominent than it was in the past," Smith said. "The most restrictive environment for care, inpatient substance use hospitalization, is reserved for the sickest of patients." Senate and House Armed Services Committee spokesmen have not responded to queries about the Pentagon's decision to continue outsourcing substance abuse treatment.

When asked how Defense evaluates the private treatment facilities, Smith said TRICARE outsourced certification of the centers to Keystone Peer Review of Harrisburg, Pa. The quality monitoring company says on its website that it helps manage "the utilization of health care resources and optimize quality of care for public and commercial clients," including the Department of Health and Human Services, the General Services Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and state Medicaid agencies. Substance abuse treatment facilities seeking initial certification from Keystone Peer Review must fill out a 10-page form that includes questions on staffing, state licenses and accreditation by bodies such as the Joint Commission (formerly the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) or the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. Once a treatment center receives certification from Keystone Peer Review, the only subsequent requirement is to submit an annual one-page self-assessment form. In addition to providing the facility name, type and tax identification number, facility operators are asked to provide notice of any areas in which the center is not in compliance with TRICARE standards. In essence, Keystone Peer Review outsources the evaluation to the accreditation bodies.

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities also uses a self-assessment process, raising questions about the rigor such bodies bring to evaluations. While the commission sends a team for an on-site visit following the self-assessment, the team "comprises industry peers who follow a consultative (rather than an inspective) approach in conducting the on-site survey." When asked about this approach, spokesman Al Whitehurst said, "we're not the sheriff." The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported in June that there are no clearly delineated, consistent and regulated national standards that govern addiction treatment. The center, in its 586-page report, "Addiction Medicine: Closing the Gap Between Science and Practice," said most treatment providers are addiction counselors who are not required to have any medical training. An analysis of state standards found that 14 states do not require addiction counselors to be licensed or certified; six states do not mandate any educational degree to become credentialed; 14 states require only a high school diploma or GED; six states require a bachelor's degree and only one requires a master's degree, the center said. One retired flag officer who battled his own alcoholism 17 years ago and has since been sober told Nextgov that the quality of care for substance abuse treatment should have the attention of top Pentagon leadership. But, he added, despite the staggering substance abuse statistics reported by AFHSC, "trouble is, there aren't many very senior folks who

understand -- or care -- about treatment for alcoholism. [Source: NextGov.com Bob Brewin article 14 Aug 2012 ++]

VAMC Orlando Update 02: Rain had recently fallen inside the long-awaited Orlando VA Medical Center when members of the Florida congressional delegation gathered 13 AUG near the unfinished facility to find out why the project is off schedule and to determine how much it will exceed cost estimates when done. A roof change is one among hundreds of costly design changes blamed for delaying completion, originally scheduled for October 2012. The hearing, called by House Committee on Veterans Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL) did not produce clear answers about when the medical center will be ready to treat some 90,000 veterans in the region, nor how much it will cost in the end. “A billion dollars,” American Legion Department of Florida Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Chairman Kelton Sweet estimated afterward. “And 2014. I would say about October.” VA and the general contractor, Brasfield & Gorrie, differ about when the project will be completed and money owed over mid-project design changes. The 1.2-million-square-foot medical center was originally expected to cost \$347 million, a figure that has since swollen to \$656 million and rising, depending on two uncertain variables: the number of order changes yet to come and what the actual completion date will be.



Design plan changes, both in the form of architectural drawings (foreground), and binders (background), served as props for a House Committee on Veterans Affairs hearing Monday in Orlando to find out why the new VA medical center project there is behind schedule.

Stacks of color-coded architectural drawings, some more than two feet deep, and rows of binders describing order changes were arranged in front of the congressional panel and as a backdrop to illustrate the project’s many design revisions since ground was broken in 2008. “My single interest is the expeditious completion of this facility for the veterans of central Florida, who have been waiting over a decade for this medical center,” Miller said in the auditorium of a brand-new University of Central Florida College of Medicine Health Sciences. “This project, we need to get off the dime and get it done,” said Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) who was joined at the hearing by Reps. Corrine Brown, Gus Bilirakis, Richard Nugent, John Mica, Sandy Adams and Daniel Webster. Brown, a Democrat, and Bilirakis, a Republican, both serve on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. “I have been working on getting a veterans hospital built here for over 25 years,” Brown said. “Veterans can’t wait. “I am 78 years old and still no hospital,” said Sweet, a military retiree who has been closely involved with efforts to build a new VA medical center in Orlando since the mid-1980s when central Florida was first identified as a high priority for a full-

service, around-the-clock inpatient veterans health-care facility. Veterans requiring full inpatient care still have to travel two or more hours to receive it in Tampa. "It's all very frustrating," Sweet said.

As the years passed and conflicts arose over where to locate the facility, funding opportunities came and went. The 2004 Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) report made it clear that Orlando was past due for a VA medical center of its own. Once it was finally budgeted, the new veterans hospital was expected to be a cornerstone in a new "medical city" in southern Orlando that would complement the Central Florida University medical school, two academic research centers, alongside a new children's hospital that is now nearly finished. "Our VA medical center, which was scheduled to be complete by October of this year, the anchor of this city, is still an empty shadow," Miller said. "Four years and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars later, VA has yet to yield anything near the same results as its neighbors. Brand-new state-of-the-art facilities are all around us. Students are being educated, and VA can't even turn the lights on, much less accept visitors inside their facility."

VA issued a Contract Cure Notice in June to Brasfield & Gorrie. Company officials at Monday's hearing argued that neither final cost nor exact completion date could be set because change orders continue to arrive, disrupting work flow and leading to problems like the unfinished roof that has allowed rainwater into the building, rusting some of the medical equipment inside. "Changes are still coming," explained Jim Gorrie, president and chief executive officer for Brasfield & Gorrie, who added that VA's final list of medical equipment for the hospital has yet to appear. "I can't commit to something I don't have. You have to have a direction. We haven't gotten it yet." VA and the contractor are meeting this month to resolve the problem and get the project back on track. VA officials estimated that a change of contractor could delay the project an additional eight to 10 months and balloon the final costs even more. [Source: American Legion Online Update 16 Aug 2012 ++]

VAMC Las Vegas: In response to the growing health care needs of Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs opened a new Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Las Vegas, with the dedication ceremony held 6 AUG. It was the first new medical center opened in 17 years. "This is, importantly, a promise kept with the 164,000 Veterans who live in Clark, Nye, and Lincoln counties, and all 234,000 Veterans who call Nevada home, as well as Veterans from surrounding states who will find here the care and compassion they seek," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, who provided keynote remarks at the dedication ceremony. "As President Obama recently told the Veterans of Foreign Wars: 'We keep our promises.'" Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health said, "The Las Vegas VAMC underscores VA's commitment to provide the best care anywhere to America's Veterans, particularly in the critical area of mental health. The opening of this world-class facility is another milestone, and ensures VA provides the care and services our Veterans have earned through their service." The brand-new \$600 million facility will have 90 inpatient beds, a 120-bed community living center (skilled nursing home care facility), and an ambulatory care center. The 90 inpatient beds include a state-of-the-art 22-bed mental health unit, 48 medical/surgical beds, and 20 intensive care unit beds.

The outpatient mental health clinic will be operational the month. The clinic will provide specialized treatment programs for general mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, gambling addiction, and other unique services such as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) for the treatment of traumatic brain injury, PTSD, and other conditions. The mental health section has ample patient parking and is located next to the main facility. The inpatient unit is directly above the outpatient mental health clinic, and is in close proximity to the main facility. Beyond the mental health services, the new VAMC will provide 23 dental exam chairs; 13 surgical, 14 radiology, and 6 audiometric sound suites; as well as a 268 seat food court. A phased opening is planned for August through December 2012. The center will possess a telehealth unit, with bidirectional just-in-time communication capability with its outlying clinics. This allows doctors to deliver specialized mental health and other services to

these clinics. The VAMC and its outlying clinics are also equipped with “smart boards,” to enhance continuing education for staff and patients. The new facility meets the latest environmental standards. Portions of the parking areas will have overhead solar panels to provide additional energy to the campus. [Source: VA News Release 6 Aug 2012 ++]



Las Vegas VA Medical Center

PTSD Update 109: Dr. Phil McGraw has been slammed by a military mom who believes the good doctor is something of a misleading twit. (Or words to that effect.) In a Veterans Affairs column gently titled “Dr Phil: Pretends to be a Hero ‘Helping’ Heroes” a woman who has children and a spouse in the military says Dr. Phil “... perhaps by the ‘sin of omission’ clearly misled the people watching his show.” A promo for the show appears to portray veterans suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as dangerous, suicidal and/or reviled in the sort of way we’ve all come to expect from ratings harlots TV talk shows. The McGraw clip has people talking about veterans like this:

- Unidentified woman: “I hated watching him walk in the door.”
- Ominous Announcer Voice: “Damaged goods.”
- McGraw “So he set you on fire?”

Elizabeth Benson wrote in a blog for Vantage Point (Dispatches from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs) that at a time when veteran unemployment is “so high and employers comment that they are wary of hiring vets he decided to completely undermine all the good results working with Vets, so he could look like a hero—rather than really uplift the heroes.” She called the show “Dr. Phil grandstanding disabled veterans to get ratings.” Benson, by does have room to talk. Two of her daughters served in the Navy, one who is now disabled. Her son is an active duty Marine who has served in combat zones. Her youngest daughter serves in the U.S. Air Force. She ended her column by saying the show should highlight the “real work being done ... by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Wounded Warriors and Boston’s Vet Run.” Benson’s entire column can be read at <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/7867/dr-phil-pretends-to-be-a-hero-%E2%80%9Chelping%E2%80%9Dheroes/>. [Source: Watchdog Bytes article 13 Aug 2012 ++]



Dr. Phil McGraw

PTSD Update 110: It makes sense that a person with post-traumatic stress disorder might have relationship problems, too. And researchers have now found that couples therapy that's designed around PTSD helps both problems. The partner with PTSD reported reduced symptoms, and the couple reported increased relationship satisfaction from couples therapy, researchers reported in the 15 AUG issue of the Journal of the American Medical Assn. They compared 20 couples who got the therapy with 20 couples who were put on a waiting list for it in 2008 to 2012. The couples, in Boston and Toronto, were diverse in sexual orientation and type of trauma. "There are well-documented associations between PTSD and intimate relationship problems," the researchers wrote. Individual psychotherapy for PTSD help that disorder, but improvements have not been found specifically in intimate relationships, they wrote. After the joint therapy, the PTSD symptoms were three times less severe than for the people on the waiting list. And they reported that relationship satisfaction increased four times more than the couples on the waiting list. A followup three months later found that the treatment results were maintained, the researchers said. "There is increasing recognition that intimate relationships play a potent role in recovery from PTSD," the researchers wrote. Lisa M. Jajavits of the Veterans Affairs Boston Healthcare System called the therapies "important scientific attempts to study new options for the treatment of PTSD." [Source: Los Angeles Times Mary MacVean article 14 Aug 2012 ++]

PTSD Update 111: Created by VA's National Center for PTSD and their collaborators. PTSD mobile apps include the award winning PTSD Coach mobile app and the first PTSD treatment companion app. These free PTSD apps are available for Android and Apple mobile devices, including tablets.

The **PTSD Coach** app can help you learn about and manage symptoms that commonly occur after trauma. Features include:

- Reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work.
- Tools for screening and tracking your symptoms
- Convenient, easy-to-use skills to help you handle stress symptoms.
- Direct links to support and help.
- Always with you when you need it.

Prolonged Exposure (PE) is an evidence-based psychotherapy for PTSD that helps you decrease distress about your trauma. PE has been shown to be one of the most effective treatments for PTSD. PE Coach is a mobile application (mobile app) for patients to use with their therapists during PE therapy for PTSD. PE Coach is a treatment companion that helps you and your therapist work through the PE treatment manual. Features include:

- Education about PE therapy and common reactions to trauma.
- Ability to record your PE therapy session as an audio file on your mobile device.
- Reminders to complete homework.
- Tools to keep track of tasks you did between sessions.
- Ability to track your PTSD symptoms over time.
- Guidance for breathing retraining - ways to change your breathing that help reduce your stress.

Many more apps are coming soon such as PTSD Coach ONLINE for those who do not have a Smartphone. Scheduled for release this fall are:

- Stay Quit Coach: Used between a patient and provider to help those with PTSD quit smoking, and stay quit.
- PTSD Family Coach: Help for families dealing with PTSD.

[Source: PTSD Monthly Update 21 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Fraud Waste & Abuse Update 51:

- **Washington DC** - The Veterans Affairs Department's inspector general is investigating allegations that some employees illegally accepted gifts — possibly including free rides in helicopters and a stretch limo — from hotels they were scouting as possible locations for two conferences held last year. A Capitol Hill staffer told Federal Times 14 AUG that the alleged gifts to conference organizers also may have included free lodging, food, alcohol, concert tickets, spa treatments and gift baskets. The IG has not reached any conclusions on those allegations yet, the staffer said. VA spent \$5 million on the two human resources training conferences at the Marriott World Center in Orlando, Fla., in July and August 2011. A combined 1,829 employees attended the two conferences, according to the IG's office. VA's IG began investigating allegations of wasteful spending and improper acceptance of gratuities in April after receiving a tip on its hotline. The staffer said the IG is investigating roughly \$200,000 in questionable spending at the two conferences. IG's office told Federal Times Monday that the conferences were for legitimate purposes but it has "uncovered questionable activities" in its probe.

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said that "if the results of the IG investigation are upheld, this represents an egregious misuse of funds meant to provide for the care of America's veterans." The IG's preliminary findings have concluded that "multiple planning trips to multiple destinations cost the taxpayers thousands of dollars," Miller said. Tens of thousands of dollars were spent on promotional items for attendees, Miller said. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), in an Aug. 10 letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, called the allegations and preliminary findings alarming. "Despite the legitimate purpose of training, there can be no excuse for excessive or wasteful spending of VA resources," Collins said in the letter. "At a time when so many veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are in need of care and assistance, the VA must make every effort to spend each dollar in support of its important mission." Collins' office said the IG's office briefed lawmakers last week, and that the IG received its original tip in the wake of the General Services Administration's infamous Las Vegas conference scandal detailed in an April report from GSA's IG. Shinseki was also briefed.

In a statement to Federal Times, VA said the alleged misconduct is unacceptable. "Secretary Shinseki ... will hold accountable any individuals who are found to have misused taxpayer dollars or violated our standards of conduct," VA said. VA said that it has removed the contracting authority of any employees who are under investigation. And Shinseki ordered an outside review of all training policies and procedures to be completed within 90 days, the agency said. VA also ordered employees involved in recertifying, planning and executing training conferences to undergo ethics training. In April, the GSA IG's office detailed a 2010 conference for GSA employees in Las Vegas that cost \$823,000, a fraction of the alleged costs of the VA conference being investigated. The April release of the report on the GSA conference quickly led to the ouster of GSA's top leaders. The VA IG's office told Federal Times that it will likely release its report by the end of September, but would not provide any more details on what it found. It said the conferences were for legitimate purposes. Lawmakers are likely to hold hearings on the conferences after the final report is released. [Source: Federal Times Stephen Losey article 13 Aug 2012 ++]

- **Monroe County KY** - A woman accused of helping her husband lie about being war hero and scamming the federal government with him out of \$500,000 in disability benefits over six years was shown on videotape 14 Aug during in federal hearing doing yard work, lifting a wheelchair and walking without a cane. Martha Ann Kaczmarczyk, 62, told the Social Security Administration in her benefits application and subsequent reports that she could not cook, clean, walk without a cane, drive a car or parse out her own medications without help. She wrote that she couldn't go to the bathroom without assistance and couldn't shower without using a walker. During her detention hearing, Kaczmarczyk of Monroe County appeared with her walker and large back brace around her torso. U.S. Magistrate Judge Clifford Shirley, after almost four hours of what he called "troubling testimony," elected to release her under house arrest with electronic monitoring. "Despite what you may think, there was a lot of evidence put on today that you aren't very trustworthy," Shirley told Kaczmarczyk.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Zachary Bolitho, who presented the video that suggested Kaczmarczyk was not as debilitated as she claimed, also offered evidence that Kaczmarczyk had withdrawn \$26,300 from an account law enforcement didn't know about when they initially seized nearly \$80,000 in cash from the couple in late May. Bolitho suggested Kaczmarczyk had the means and motive to flee before her trial. But her attorney, Scott Saidak, insisted that if she had wanted to flee she would have done so in the weeks between learning of the investigation and her arrest. Saidak also suggested the video of Kaczmarczyk helping her husband could have been filmed after steroid injections or other therapy that offers her pain relief, and insisted the video offered no context for the amount of pain she had at the time or afterward.

Saidak also offered an accounting of 45 guns owned by the Kaczmarczyks that factored into the judge deciding last month to keep the couple jailed. Three of the guns were in the possession of a relative, three others were sold, and the remaining 39 guns had been collected by a private investigator hired by Saidak and stored in a secure location that the Kaczmarczyks cannot access. According to the indictment, her husband, Charles, 59, a veteran of the Air Force, claimed benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder he said he suffered in a series of well-known military conflicts, including the Vietnam War and the Iran hostage crisis. Military records show, however, that he spent most of his military career stateside and never saw combat. [Source: Knoxville News-Sentinel Megan Boehnke article 15 Aug 2012 ++]

- **Spartanburg SC** - U.S. Attorney Bill Nettles said in a statement that Sandra D. Jeter, 48, has been charged with stealing government funds. Agents with the Department of Veterans Affairs investigated the case, which has been assigned to assistant U.S. Attorney William J. Watkins Jr. of the Greenville office for prosecution. Jeter faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted, according to the statement. The following also face federal charges: Wilfredo Santa, 39, and Patience Downs Santa, 35, both of Mauldin, have been charged in a one-count indictment with conspiring to create fraudulent prescriptions and could receive four-year prison sentences if convicted, according to the statement. Richard Jody Silvers, 43, of Pickens; Heath Anderson Cash, 29, Shelley Nicole Dillard, 26, and Gabriel E. Calderon, 26, all of Easley, are each charged in a single-count indictment with conspiring to create and pass fraudulent prescriptions, according to the statement. Each suspect could receive a 20-year sentence. [Source: GoUpstate.com article 14 Aug 2012 ++]
- **Rapid City ND** - Patricia Maki, 69, falsified documents to receive another's Veterans Administration benefits for six years will have to pay back almost \$55,000. A federal jury found her guilty of theft of government property, providing a fictitious name and address to the U.S. Postal Service, and fraudulently accepting VA payments in April. When her neighbor Wanda Amos died in 2004, Maki conspired with Amos' son, Kenneth Rouse, to keep Amos' bank account active. The VA was unaware that Amos had died and continued making direct deposits to the account. After Rouse died in 2008, Maki changed the address

on the account and continued receiving Amos' mail. She used Amos' ATM card to withdraw money from the account. United States District Judge Jeffrey Viken has placed Maki on probation for five years and ordered her to pay \$54,940 in restitution to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Maki's fraud was discovered by the VA in 2012 through a project called "Death Match." [Source: Rapid City Journal Andrea J. Cook article 14 Aug 2012 ++]

- **Cleveland OH** — Sixteen veterans are accused of stealing more than \$240,000 from the federal government by submitting bogus reimbursement claims for travel to local medical facilities. The fraud is believed to be the largest of its kind uncovered in the country, said Gavin McClaren, resident agent in charge of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Inspector General. The veterans were charged individually and are not suspected of being part of a conspiracy. According to McClaren, the scam worked like this: Instead of stating the actual mileage traveled, made-up addresses, or someone else's address many miles away were used. For example, some defendants were living in public housing in Cleveland, but claimed they traveled from a Youngstown address to a Cleveland-area medical facility on their reimbursement forms. All the visits were to the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Affairs Medical Center on East Boulevard or to its Brecksville location that is now closed, McClaren said. Federal prosecutors say the veterans took advantage of a government policy that allows disabled veterans and those who meet specific income requirements to be reimbursed for their mileage when driving to receive medical attention. Qualifying veterans currently receive 41 1/2 cents a mile. Most, if not all, of the defendants qualified for reimbursement based on their incomes, but some also may have disabilities, McClaren said. In some cases, the defendants increased their opportunities to scam the system by scheduling medical visits more frequently than necessary, he said. "This has been a problem at other facilities throughout the country so we started to look at the system here," McClaren said. Among those indicted for theft and the amounts they are charged with stealing are: Mandell Calvin, 55, of Cleveland, \$3,459; Robert Daniels, 54, of Warren, \$30,144; Rebecca Dickson, 51, of Lakewood, \$6,712; Thurman Harris, 59, of East Cleveland, \$12,575; \$11,925; Ivan Jackson, 54, of Cleveland, \$13,477; Timothy Knotts, 54, of Akron, \$9,326; Nathaniel Marshall, 52, of Cleveland, \$8,052; Amm Pearson, 55, of Euclid, \$8,257; Thomas Scott, 49, of Roanoke, Ala., \$22,104; James Sharpe, 62, of Sandusky, \$19,210; Anthony Shumpert, 54, of Akron; \$17,134; and Raymond Williams, 54, of Lakewood. [Source: Sun-News Peter Krouse article 24 Aug 2012 ++]

Flu Shots Update 03: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is preparing a vaccine for a new H3N2 variant influenza virus that recently appeared in Indiana, Ohio, and Hawaii. The reason the CDC is concerned about this particular virus is that it contains an element seen in the pandemic 2009 swine flu strain, strongN1, which may make it more likely for the virus to spread from person-to-person. The CDC is watching this situation closely. To prevent contracting this flu, the CDC advises people to limit their contact with swine and avoid contact with sick swine. People who have contact with these animals should take precautions such as washing their hands, not eating or drinking in areas with swine and controlling their cough. For more information, visit the CDC H3N2v webpage http://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/h3n2v_us_cases.htm. [Source: Mil.com article 13 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Disputed Claims Update 10: Former Army staff sergeant Jarrid Starks, who earned a Bronze Star with Valor In Afghanistan, has run out of the medications that keep him stable. He has severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental and physical wounds of war. He's currently not eligible for veterans' health benefits that would include prescription refills. That's because Starks was kicked out of the Army for bad behavior. He's far from alone. Starks joined the Army right out of high school with dreams of a 20-year career. He left the Army

earlier this year in disgrace. Starks recalls being escorted from the psychiatric ward at Madigan Army Hospital to an out-processing center and then to the front gate of Washington's Joint Base Lewis-McChord. "I had a 90-day supply of medication that I received from Madigan in a paper lunch sack," he says. That sack of pills was Stark's lifeline: a combination of antidepressants, beta-blockers, anti-psychotics, muscle-relaxants and sleep aides. A daily cocktail that allowed Starks to keep his anger and anxiety in check. He sports a baseball cap that reads, "Warning this vet is medicated for your protection." It's a joke, but not really. "Ya, in every joke lay a bit of truth," Starks quips.



Jarrid Starks, with his medications to treat PTSD and a hat that reads “Warning this vet is medicated for your protection.”

If Starks was a typical veteran he'd sign up for VA benefits and get his prescription drug refills. But he doesn't qualify for veteran's health care -- at least for now. That's because in May he was kicked out of the Army with an "other than honorable" discharge for drug use and going absent without leave. Starks says he did those things because when he came home from Afghanistan he was messed up. "Just the act of putting my uniform on in the morning would trigger flashbacks and would bring my anxiety and depression to a level that was just unbearable," he says. He says he just simply could not face work. Even Army doctors concluded he was unfit for duty and should be medically retired. Starks says there were times he was so angry he might have even been capable of murder. "It's possible," he says. When asked if he could have potentially killed himself he responded, "It's possible." Starks was in and out of psychiatric hospitals three times. But his misconduct prompted the Army to take a hardline. Starks was jailed on base and charged with crimes related to his drug use and going AWOL. Rather than face court martial, Starks accepted a voluntary separation from the Army..

Officials at Lewis-McChord respond that Starks knew the risks when he voluntarily chose to separate from the Army to avoid court martial and possible conviction. According to Defense Department records, more than 20,000 soldiers and Marines were booted from the military between 2008 and 2011 with other than honorable discharges. Current federal law says these former service members -- even if they suffer from the mental or physical wounds of war -- lose their automatic right to veterans' medical benefits. Kristin Cunningham with the Veterans Health Administration in Washington, D.C. explained what happens if an "other than honorable" veteran shows up seeking care. "The veteran is counseled that we cannot provide healthcare unless there is an emergent condition at that point in time." Instead, the veteran is placed in a sort of healthcare limbo while the VA conducts a comprehensive review of the record -- including the misconduct. That can take months and there are no guarantees of care at the end of the process. The VA says it doesn't track how many "other than honorable" veterans apply for these reviews or how many are ultimately awarded health coverage.

For the last several years these vets have found support from an unlikely source -- senior military lawyers. Major Evan Seamone, Chief of military justice at Fort Benning, Georgia says, of course, it's important to maintain good order and discipline in the ranks. But Seamone also argues the military must recognize that, "It's pretty clear that there's a connection often times between misconduct and mental health conditions." Seamone isn't the only military

lawyer to raise this concern. In a 2010 law review article, Army Major Tiffany Chapman called on Congress to change federal law to ensure that soldiers with PTSD get treatment regardless of the circumstances under which they were discharged. Washington Senator Patty Murray -- who's established herself as a veterans' advocate -- doesn't go that far. Instead she says, "What we have to focus on first and foremost is making sure that the process that they go through for appeals is done in a quick and accurate manner." Back in Salem, Starks has applied to a review of his case, but his county Veteran's Services rep recently advised him that a decision will likely take a year or more. That's a heck of a long time for someone dealing with multiple flashbacks everyday. [Source: Seattle Times Austin Jenkins article 11 Aug 2012 ++]

Mobilized Reserve 21 AUG 2012: The Department of Defense announced the current number of reservists on active duty as of 21 AUG 2012. The net collective result is 117 fewer reservists mobilized than last reported in the 15 AUG 2012 RAO Bulletin. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 46,096; Navy Reserve 4,253; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve 8,965; Marine Corps Reserve 3,249; and the Coast Guard Reserve 850. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 63,413 including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found online at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20120821ngr.pdf>. Reservists deactivated since 9/11 total 791,644. [Source: DoD News Release No. 698-12 dtd 22 Aug 2012 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 79: Australian mining companies are head-hunting U.S. war veterans to work Down Under as electricians, carpenters and heavy equipment operators. Australian exports of minerals such as gold, iron ore, oil, gas and coal have more than tripled in the past decade to \$190.5 billion last year, with China accounting for a third of the total, according to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Additionally, dozens of new mines are planned but, with a population of just 22 million, there aren't enough skilled Australian workers to fill all of the jobs being created. In May, the Australian government streamlined procedures for Americans, with new visas allowing skilled workers to stay in the country for four years. Those with job offers can apply online and get approval in a matter of days, according to Australian recruiters. With the war in Afghanistan winding down and the Army and Marine Corps ordered to cut 100,000 troops over the next five years, the Australian job offers couldn't come at a better time for many servicemembers who soon might be unemployed. Despite President Obama's efforts to encourage more government and private sector hiring of veterans, the unemployment rate for those who served in the post-9/11 era remains high. Last month, 8.9 percent of recent veterans were out of work, which is better than previous years but still above the overall U.S. unemployment rate.

Australian government officials, employment consultants and mining company representatives believe U.S. veterans have some of the skills they need and have been attending job fairs in places like Houston and Detroit in recent months to woo them. Colleen Lucas, a recruiter with Employment in Australia, traveled to the Detroit job show to interview 15 U.S. veterans for jobs as diesel mechanics. The mechanics can expect starting base pay of at least \$65,000 a year, she said, adding that engineers and project managers could expect at least \$200,000 annually. Australian companies are attracted to veterans because many have experience operating the same type of heavy equipment used in mines, she said. "It is exactly the same, but some of the mining machinery is bigger," she said. "The computer systems are the same too, and some of these machines have five computers in them. That is a great synergy for the diesel mechanics and heavy equipment operators." Sandi Logan, a spokesman for the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, said officials who attended the U.S. job fairs were looking to fill 400 to

500 skilled positions. “Our resources sector is particularly keen to get people like electricians, plumbers and carpenters,” he said.

Some of the things that make U.S. veterans attractive for Australian companies include English-language proficiency, a lifestyle similar to that of Australians, qualifications accepted in Australia and the possibility that they might have personal connections to the country, he said. “In most surveys when Americans are asked where they would like to go, Australia tops or is close to the top of their list,” Logan said. “It is not like we are trying to persuade them to come somewhere that they don’t want to go. They can have the dream and a well-paid job.” Jeff Clifton, an Australian mining projects manager who also interviewed veterans at the Detroit jobs fair, told an Australian television channel that his company, Mackellar Mining, can’t find enough skilled Australians to fill all of its available jobs. “There are some good tradespeople, but with the boom going on, they are always jumping the fence and going somewhere else or moving onto bigger and better things,” he said. “We have a real shortage of mechanical tradespeople at the moment, especially with Caterpillar experience.” Jobs that support mining also are going unfilled, Lucas said. The massive construction industry is looking for workers to help make new roads, railways, buildings and other infrastructure. “There are a lot of projects in the start-up phase, so they also need a lot of project planners,” she said, adding that military personnel involved in logistics may be able to transfer their skills to the civilian marketplace.

Australia would be happy to open its arms to U.S. veterans, Kim Beazley, Australian ambassador to the U.S., said in comments posted by the Australian immigration department. “In Australia, we have a culture of assuming that men and women who have been through the defense forces arrive in the broader community with very great skills discipline and motivation and, therefore, we assume that a similar atmosphere surrounds those who are veterans of American armed services,” he said. The immigration department has posted interviews with U.S. soldiers considering a move Down Under on its website. Army veteran John-Edward Kanewske, who said he was wounded in Afghanistan in September 2007, appears in one interview, saying his dream is to live and work in Australia. “I’ve been in stressful situations and know how to overcome them,” he said, adding that he’d learned to work with people from all nationalities and walks of life during his military service. Chase Thompson, a former soldier who deployed to Afghanistan with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, also appears in the video, saying U.S. veterans have a lot to offer. “We come from working in really difficult situations facing a lot of adversity and we are willing to get the job done no matter what it takes,” he said.

U.S. veterans recruited to work Down Under will receive the same wages as their Australian workmates, Logan said. In the resources industry, the average salary is about \$100,000, and qualified professionals such as electricians and plumbers can receive \$150,000 to \$175,000, Logan said, adding that the high salaries reflect big commitments by workers. Veterans who like their new lifestyle can apply for permanent residence or Australian citizenship, and most will receive it, he said. “The majority of skilled migrants end up taking out citizenship, and we welcome that,” he said. “We are not a nation that is reliant on guest workers. When people come to build Australia, we invite them to become part of the nation.” [Source: Stars & Stripes Seth Robson article 21 Aug 2012 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 80: Working for the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID) may not turn out to be as slick and Hollywood-ized as, say, your typical episode of NCIS, but if you’re a veteran (or soon-to-be veteran), it’s certainly attractive, as the CID looking for qualified applicants to become highly-trained criminal investigators. The mission of CID is to investigate and deter serious crimes in which the Army has an interest. CID collects, analyzes, processes and disseminates criminal intelligence; conducts protective service operations; provides forensic laboratory support to all DoD investigative agencies, and maintains Army criminal records. CID also provides criminal investigative support to all U.S. Army elements and deploys on short notice in support of

contingency operations worldwide. CID manning is made up of fewer than 2000 Soldiers and civilians and approximately 900 special agents. CID is organized into six major subordinate organizations: 202nd MP Group (CID), 3rd MP Group (CID), 6th MP Group (CID), 701st MP Group (CID), U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory and the U.S. Army Crime Records Center.

To qualify, applicants must be a U.S. citizen and must be at least 21 years old. Applicants must be no more than an E-5 (non-promotable). Those E-5s who are promotable, or those who have achieved E-6 but have one year or less time-in-grade, may apply with waiver. All applicants must have at least two years, but not more than 10 years' time-in-service among other requirements. The complete listing of qualification requirements for Enlisted, Reserve and National Guard, Warrant Officer, and Civilian Special Agent can be found on the CID website <http://www.cid.army.mil>. Applications and other required paperwork can be downloaded at <http://www.cid.army.mil/faqs.html#relatedforms>. To apply to become a CID Special Agent, prospective applicants should contact their local CID office or visit the Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID) website at <http://www.cid.army.mil> for additional information. [Source: Military.com | Veteran Jobs article 20 Aug 2012 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 81: Here are the latest dates for the Hiring Our Heroes Job Fairs being sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce. For more information on a particular site click on the website provided:

- ✓ September 06 – [Foxyborough, MA](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/foxborough-ma-0) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/foxborough-ma-0>
- ✓ September 06 – [San Diego, CA](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/san-diego-ca-0) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/san-diego-ca-0>
- ✓ September 06 – [Military Spouse Event - Quantico, VA](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/quanticova)
<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/quanticova>
- ✓ September 07 – [Springfield, VA](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/springfield-va-0) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/springfield-va-0>
- ✓ September 07 – [Midland, MI](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/midland-mi) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/midland-mi>
- ✓ September 11 – [Concord, NC](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/concord-nc) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/concord-nc>
- ✓ September 12 – [Dedham, MA](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/dedham-ma) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/dedham-ma>
- ✓ September 12 – [Camp Lejeune Wounded Warrior Event](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/camp-lejeune-wounded-warrior-event)
<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/camp-lejeune-wounded-warrior-event>
- ✓ September 12 – [Boise, ID](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/boise-id0) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/boise-id0>
- ✓ September 12 – [Trenton, NJ](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/trenton-nj) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/trenton-nj>
- ✓ September 12 – [Sumter, SC](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/sumter-sc) <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/sumter-sc>

[Source: NAUS Weekly Update 24 Aug 2012 ++]

GI Bill Update 126: The Yellow Ribbon program is designed to help students avoid up to 100 percent of their out-of-pocket tuition and fees associated with education programs that may exceed the Post 9/11 GI Bill tuition benefit. The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program is a provision of the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. The program is designed to help students avoid up to 100 percent of their out-of-pocket tuition and fees associated with education programs that may exceed the Post 9/11 GI Bill tuition benefit, which will pay up to 100 percent of the public in-state tuition, but it only covers up to \$17,500 a year for private colleges and universities. Your actual tuition & fees costs may exceed these amounts if you are attending a private school or are attending a public school as a nonresident student. This is where the YRP can help. Like the other Post 9/11 GI Bill programs, Yellow Ribbon benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. No payments can be made under this program for training pursued before that date. To qualify to receive the Yellow Ribbon benefits you must meet the following criteria:

- Served an aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, of at least 36 months;
- Were honorably discharged from active duty for a service connected disability and they served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001;
- Are a dependent eligible for Transfer of Entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on a veteran's service under the eligibility criteria listed above.

The Yellow Ribbon program allows institutions of higher learning (degree granting colleges and universities) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed these amounts if you are attending a private school or are attending a public school as a nonresident student.. Participating schools and VA can match funds to help waive a portion of those expenses. Students can search for VA GI Bill approved programs at http://gibill.va.gov/resources/education_resources/choosing_a_school.html They can also search for institutions that will participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program during the 2012-2013 School Year at http://www.gibill.va.gov/gi_bill_info/ch33/yrp/yrp_list_2012.htm. The Institution of Higher Learning (College or University) must agree to:

- Enter into an official agreement with VA
- Provide contributions to eligible individuals who apply for the Yellow Ribbon Program on a first-come first-served basis.
- Make contributions toward the program on behalf of the individual in the form of a grant, scholarship, etc.
- State the dollar amount that will be contributed for each participant during the academic year.
- State the maximum number of individuals for whom contributions will be made in any given academic year.

[Source: Military.com | Education article 16 Aug 2012 ++]

Obit ~ Neil Armstrong: Neil Armstrong, who made the “giant leap for mankind” as the first human to set foot on the moon, died 25 AUG of complications resulting from cardiovascular procedures. He had undergone heart bypass surgery this month in Cincinnati, near where he lived. His recovery had been going well, according to those who spoke with him after the surgery, and his death came as a surprise to many close to him, including his fellow Apollo astronauts. The family did not say where he died. He was 82. During the Korean War Armstrong was a Navy fighter pilot who flew 78 combat missions, one in which he was forced to eject after the plane lost one of its ailerons, the hinged flight-control panels on the wings.



NEIL ARMSTRONG 1930-2012

Veteran License Plates Delaware: The Delaware Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Vehicle Services Special License Plates Division offers a number of special plates that can be ordered from any Division facility. Special plates are restricted to passenger vehicles or trucks with a 3/4-ton or less manufacturers gross vehicle weight rating. A number of plates have eligibility restrictions that must be complied with before the plate can be ordered. Division registration specialists can provide information on the requirements and can provide anyone qualified with an application. Call one of your local DMV facilities for information on eligibility requirements for these plates: New Castle County 302-326-5000, Kent County 302-744-2500 or Sussex County 302-853-1000. Refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Vet License Plates DE**" to view the plates that are available or go to http://www.dmv.de.gov/services/vehicle_services/tags/tags_military.shtml. [Source: http://www.dmv.de.gov/services/vehicle_services/reg/ve_reg_sp_tags.shtml Aug 2012 ++]

Stolen Valor Update 79: He lied about his military service, his medals, his war wounds. He spun the tales for anyone who'd listen, from curious college students to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. But Charles Chester Kaczmarczyk hesitated when the time came to tell the truth 24 AUG. "Are you pleading guilty because you are guilty?" U.S. District Judge Thomas Phillips asked. Kaczmarczyk hesitated, mumbled and looked at his lawyer before answering. "Yes, your honor," he said. Kaczmarczyk, 58, pleaded guilty to Social Security fraud, conspiracy to steal public money and two counts of stealing public money. Federal prosecutors said the Air Force veteran, who barely left U.S. shores and never saw a day of combat, swindled the government out of nearly half a million dollars in disability benefits with his lies. Kaczmarczyk, who claims to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, wove tales of his exploits in the Vietnam War, of helping to evacuate the U.S. embassy during the fall of Saigon, of rescuing merchant ships from Cambodia's Khmer Rouge and of watching the secret mission to rescue victims of the Iran hostage crisis fall apart in 1980. He told his stories to anyone who would listen, including an audience of University of Tennessee students in 2008. Kaczmarczyk faked documents for various medals, including the Purple Heart and the Silver Star, and filed for veteran's and Social Security benefits to the tune of \$457,986, Assistant U.S. Attorney Zachary Bolitho said. The judge set sentencing for 12 DEC. Kaczmarczyk's wife, Martha, faces charges of

helping him file his bogus claims and lying to get disability benefits for a bad back. She remains on house arrest with a trial set for 26 SEP. Both face a term of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Both are also subject to pay restitution and to forfeit the proceeds of this conspiracy. [Source: Knoxville News-Sentinel Matt Lakin article 24 Aug 2012 ++]



Charles and Martha Kaczmarczyk

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>:

- **August 13, 2012.** The HVAC full Committee held a field hearing on construction issues in Orlando. The hearing took place in Orlando.
- **September 13, 2012.** HVAC, Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing on the Patient-Centered Community Care (PCCC) and Non-VA Care Coordination (NVCC) programs.
- **September 20, 2012.** HVAC, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity will hold a hearing entitled, "Examining the Re-Design of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)."

[Source: Veterans Corner w/Michael Isam 30 Aug 2012 ++]

WWII Vets Update 26: During World War II, Edwin Lent Jr. had the job of dropping depth charges off the end of a naval destroyer. The explosions ruptured both eardrums. Later in life, he lost part of a leg in a road accident working for the state of Ohio. It was a hardship, recalled his widow, Lucille. We went on food stamps," she said. She spoke on 23 AUG about Edwin as she sat at the end of her kitchen table. She's 95 and smokes. Asked how much she smokes, she said: "I don't keep track." She said it with a smile. She's infirm, partly a result of infantile

polio, and gets around with crutches. Still, that didn't keep her from taking care of Edwin for the last seven or eight years of his life, as his Alzheimer's progressed. She refused to give up on him, she said. She had helped him weather health problem before. Every winter in Ohio, he'd get pneumonia, she said. "The doctor said 'you have to move to a warmer climate,' so we moved to Arizona," she said. That was around 1980. The warmer climate seemed to help. Edwin had other issues, however, including the Alzheimer's. He died of colon cancer on July 31 at the Southern Arizona VA Health System's hospice in Tucson. He was 88. And now he's back in the cold, awaiting burial.



Lucille Lent, 95, holds a picture of her late husband (on the right) in his Navy uniform.

"He's still at the Heritage Mortuary (410 W Roosevelt Ave, Coolidge, AZ Tel: (520) 723-7755)," Lucille said. That's where he ended up shortly after his death. Lent plans to have him buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona on Cave Creek Road in Phoenix. But she doesn't have the money to pay the mortuary. And until she comes up with it, there will be no funeral. And Edwin's body will remain in Heritage's temperature controlled environment. That's not how you treat a WWII veteran and his 95-year-old widow, said Palmer Miller, a retired Army master sergeant and an advocate for veterans rights in Casa Grande. "There's no dignity. There's no respect," Miller said. Lent offered to pay funeral costs on the installment plan, but Heritage refused. "We do not do payment arrangements," Heritage funeral director Jay Furness said. "Most funeral homes don't. We are compassionate in what we do." But he added: "We are a family-owned business. We have to have a cash flow to serve other families."

Heritage knocked \$550 off the original \$4,300 bill, Furness said. That includes a nearly \$1,000 casket and preparation of the body. The VA, Furness added, will pay some death benefits and the cost of transporting Edwin to his final resting place. That's \$1,100 in savings, though Lent still has to pay up front. The VA will reimburse her, Furness said. And once the body reaches the national cemetery, the VA will pick up the cost of burial. All the same, it's money Lent doesn't have. So she sold off her husband's guns to raise it. She'd like to sell off his tools, too. They're in the shed, but she can't get in there just now. It's infested with bees. Still, she managed to scrape together nearly \$2,000, about half of what's needed to free up Edwin's body. She kept the money in a coffee can. It's not all there now. Somebody stole more than \$800. Perhaps it was taken by a caretaker who no longer works for her. Lent has her suspicions but no proof.

Her story came to the attention of Miller's wife, Sharon, on 16 AUG. She is Lent's insurance agent. Discussions about insurance premiums eventually turned to Edwin Lent's prolonged stay at the mortuary. Sharon Miller told her

husband, and he began to make calls. He wanted to bring Lucille's predicament to light. He also made calls to U.S. Veterans Affairs and filed paperwork, seeking to secure survivor's benefits for her. And she is a survivor, ignoring the Surgeon General's Warning as she lit another cigarette. She spoke about her husband and how they met. "I was sitting in a beer tavern with my girlfriend," she said, laughing. Some sailors walked in. Her girlfriend alerted her: "That's Ed Lent's boy." Lucille and Eddie Lent Jr. were married in 1942. She remembered him as a guy who liked to kid. Somebody who was fun to be around. "He was a very good person for me," she said. Now that he's gone, Lucille has depended on the kindness of neighbors and her caretakers to get by. Kim Tapia and her husband have known the Lents for more than 20 years. Both couples moved into what was then a new subdivision built around the artificial lake in Arizona City. Tapia remembered her first encounter with Edwin. He came over to help remove a snake that had crawled into her house, showing up with a big pellet gun.

"He looked like Jed Clampett," Tapia said. After Edwin developed Alzheimer's, Tapia would help Lucille. She still does, often bringing over meals. "I'm trying to help her as much as I can," she said. Lucille gets help from caretakers as well. She can't recall exactly how she came by them, other than word of mouth. One of her caretakers, it happens, spoke to the mortuary on her behalf — apparently representing herself as her daughter. Furness said the first time he or anybody with Heritage spoke to anybody about Edwin was 13 AUG. His body had been there at least 10 days by then. Furness spoke to a person he said was Lucille's daughter. But that's unlikely, Lucille said. She and Edwin had no children. All the same, she let the caretaker do the talking for her. Those discussions, of course, went nowhere, because it's money that talks. And while Lucille was trying to scrape together enough for a burial, the county apparently decided she made too much to warrant assistance afforded indigents. Her household income was reportedly \$4,000 a month, Furness said.

By Lucille's calculations, their income came to little more than \$2,500, if that, when Edwin was alive. That included his \$800 in Social Security, no longer in the mix. Lucille now lives on about \$1,600 from her Social Security and a state of Arizona pension. It's barely enough to keep up with expenses, neighbor Tapia said. Lucille has no savings and she bounced a couple of checks recently, Tapia added. Like a lot of stories, the details differ in this one, depending on who's talking. But one fact is clear. Edwin Lent, who moved west for the warmth, is still in cold storage. [Source: Valley Life Editor Bill Coates article 26 Aug 2012 ++]

Korean War Vets: The United States military forces in Korea at the onset of the war in 1950 had been devastated by enemy forces. By July of 1950 they had been cornered in the southeast corner of the Korean Peninsula. But the battered men were determined to maintain the "Pusan Perimeter" that surrounded the strategically important port city of Pusan on the coast. At this time the U.S. Army 1st Cavalry Division was rushed to the front lines from Japan. Lee Tilford was with them. He had joined up after graduating from Yuma Union High School in 1948 and had spent the subsequent years as part of the occupation force in Japan. "We were there either the 15th or the 17th of July," he said about the date he arrived in Korea. "Nobody kept a diary then. They just put you on a boat and sent you."

His first experience in combat was slightly comedic, he recalled. "It was a funny deal, really. They sent another guy and I in a jeep to go up there and see what was happening." The two soldiers parked on the south side of the compound surrounded with high walls. Tilford crept to the corner and laid down on the ground, sticking his head out to take a peek at the enemy forces. "About that time a mortar round hit inside the compound and a ... tile fell off the roof and hit me on the head," he said with a laugh. He thought for sure he had been hit with shrapnel, and not a tile, and would be sent home. "One day out and here I'm going back. I thought for sure I was hurt." Fortunately, his steel helmet took the brunt of the impact, so he and the other man "got up and got the hell out of there."

Tilford and a few other surviving veterans of the Korean War gathered at American Legion Post 19 on 27 JUL where they were honored in commemoration of the Korean Armistice Agreement that ended combat operations. The document was signed 59 years ago on July 27, 1953. The summer on the Korean Peninsula is miserable, Tilford continued. "In the summer time you were hub deep in mud (after the morning rains). By afternoon it would get so hot it would be dust. You couldn't see anything and you couldn't breathe." The nasty conditions made it difficult for Yuma native Lyle Nelson and the rest of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to maintain roads during the war. "We poured cement and before you knew it the whole thing was washed out from the rain," he said. When winter came, that just made things even more abominable, because the worst thing about the war "was the cold," said Yuma native James Fernandez, who served in the First Marine Division during the war. "You had to fight the cold first and then the enemy. I've never been so cold in my life. Yuma is 120, and you go out there and it was below zero."

The armed forces on the ground in the winter knew they had to keep moving their bodies, because to sit around meant to risk freezing to death. The gear they were deployed with compounded the issue because it was left over from World War II and not designed for the cold. "We didn't have the gear to keep us warm," Fernandez said. "It was miserable. The boots we had weren't too good. A lot of Marines got frostbitten." Calvin Riley, who served on the front lines with the 40th Infantry Division, remembers the bitter cold well, and the shoddy boots. "You had those Mickey Mouse boots on," he said. "They weren't made for it. I don't know what they were made for." When the cold dipped below freezing the icy winds blew "right through you," he added, noting there was "no warm spot" to find refuge. Although many troops on the ground suffered from frostbite, Riley was never afflicted with the condition because he "was careful about it. I kept clean socks on and dry ones. That was the key."

The only time the soldiers got relief from the freezing temperatures was when the enemy attacked. "It got warm when you were in action," Riley said. And when the enemy attacked, they meant business and came in huge numbers. "They looked like ants," Fernandez said. "You could tell when they were going to attack because they would start blowing that bugle." When they attacked, Riley was waiting, often in a fixed position with his trusty BAR semi-automatic rifle in hand. "They were young kids from 14 to 17," he said about the first waves. "They fell on the mine bombs, and kept right on a-coming. They made a bridge for somebody else to ride right over top of them." And no matter how many enemy soldiers were killed "there were just more coming," Riley added, noting it was terrifying. "Oh yeah, but that was an afterthought at the time being. You are at it, and you keep at it. Keep on pulling (the trigger)."

Vietnam veteran Bob Carey Jr. was at the event at Post 19 to honor the remaining veterans and his now deceased father, Robert Carey Sr., who served in the Marine Corps in Korea during the war. He believes it is important to keep their stories and memories alive. "They saved us, they saved the world, they kept our freedoms, and there are not a lot of them left," Carey said. "If you sit here and look, most of these Korean veterans are bucking 80. They are leaving us fast, so we need to honor them and need to remember. Too many young people nowadays don't have the slightest idea what military veterans have done for them. We need to have programs that teach them. People need to remember." [Source: Yuma AZ The Sun Chris McDaniel article 28 Jul 2012 ++]

Traumatic Brain Injury Update 24: (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.) The Army is expected to have an FDA-approved battlefield blood test for traumatic brain injuries in two years, according to an official spearheading the service's efforts. The Army's trials of the blood test among troops in Afghanistan have proved promising, Col. Dallas Hack, a doctor and director of Combat Casualty Care at Medical Research and Materiel Command, Fort Detrick, Md., told reporters.

“Individuals that are diagnosed with a concussion and go to our recovery centers in Afghanistan, the vast majority are showing up positive in our biomarker tests,” said Hack, speaking by phone 15 AUG from the Military Health System Research Symposium in Fort Lauderdale. Hack said the Army has reached an agreement with the FDA on the indications for use of the test and is in the midst of modifying the testing protocol.

The Army has increased the number of subjects in the pivotal trial to 2,000, Hack said, adding the trial is expected to be complete in a year, after which the FDA will analyze the data. The current trial includes sites in the United States and abroad. Researchers have identified proteins that appear in the blood after cells are damaged by a brain injury, Hack said. The test is meant to indicate the presence of those proteins. Hack emphasized that the test is for use only within days of an injury. “It doesn’t really help with the long-term,” he said, “but the reason we are pushing that particular test —especially what I consider a battlefield test or a sideline test — is that we can actually find these cell breakdown products in the blood.” Hack has said previously there is no objective way to diagnose a soldier with a mild TBI. Current, subjective tests typically involve the soldier balancing, repeating words, answering questions or following an object with his eyes. [Source: ArmyTimes Joe Gould article 15 Aug 2012 ++]

VA Presumptive AO Diseases Update 21: (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.)

Veterans suffering peripheral neuropathy from exposure to the toxic herbicide Agent Orange could be eligible for compensation from the Veterans Affairs Department. Early-onset peripheral neuropathy is initially characterized by numbness, tingling or pins-and-needles in the extremities, progressing to symptoms of pain in hands and feet, loss of balance and weakness. VA on 10 AUG proposed substituting early-onset peripheral neuropathy for acute and subacute neuropathy on its list of diseases presumed to be related to Agent Orange exposure. The distinction removes the requirement that the symptoms resolved themselves in two years after they appeared. Eligible veterans must have developed the condition within one year of exposure to a degree that it is at least 10 percent disabling. Those who have lingering neuropathy as a result of service in Southwest Asia in the 1960s and 1970s could be affected.

Those who think they qualify can apply now for the benefits, but they may not be compensated until the ruling is final. The proposed change was published in the 10 AUG Federal Register. The comment period on the proposal is open until Oct. 9. The proposed swap is the result of a 2010 Institute of Medicine report that concluded there is “limited or suggestive evidence of an association” between exposure to Agent Orange and persistent, early-onset peripheral neuropathy. The IOM report said more research must be done to determine whether several other illnesses, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, tonsil cancer, melanoma, brain cancer, Alzheimer’s disease and birth defects passed on to children are related to Agent Orange exposure. VA said in a press release that it currently has no plans to add these or any other conditions to the list of diseases presumed to be service-connected. [Source: AirForceTimes Patricia Kime article 17 Aug 2012 ++]

POW/MIA Update 26: "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

- The National League of POW/MIA families reported 16 AUG the identification of SGT **John R. Jones**, USA, TX, listed as MIA in South Vietnam on June 4, 1971. SGT Jones remains were recovered on September 8, 2011 and identified July 23, 2012. Recently announced is Lt Col **Clarence Finley "Bill" Blanton**, USAF, listed as KIA/BNR in Laos on March 11, 1968 when the TACAN radar installation (Lima Site 85) on top a mountain in Houaphan Province was overrun by Vietnamese forces. His remains were recovered January 18, 2008 and identified July 12, 2012. The identification of PFC **James Rickey Maxwell**, USMC and PFC **Richard William Rivenburgh**, USMC, was posted on DPMO's website on July 20th. PFC Maxwell and PFC Rivenburgh were killed on May 15, 1975 during an attempted rescue of the SS Mayaguez crew when their HH53 helicopter crashed near Koh Tang, Cambodia. Their remains were recovered December 6, 1995 and identified January 23, 2012.
- DPMO announced 27 AUG the remains of three U.S. servicemen, missing in action from the Vietnam War, were recently identified and are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors. Army Sgt. 1st Class **William T. Brown**, 24, of La Habra, Calif., Sgt. 1st Class **Donald M. Shue**, 20, of Kannapolis, N.C., and Sgt. 1st Class **Gunther H. Wald**, 25, of Palisades Park, N.J., will be buried as a group on Aug. 30, in a single casket representing the three soldiers, in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. Brown and Shue were each individually buried on Sept. 26, 2011, at Arlington and May 1 in Kannapolis, N.C. On Nov. 3, 1969, the men and six Vietnamese soldiers were part of a Special Forces reconnaissance patrol operating in Quang Tri Province, near the Vietnam-Laos border. The patrol was ambushed by enemy forces and all three Americans were wounded. Brown was reported to have suffered a gunshot wound to his side. Due to heavy enemy presence and poor weather conditions the search-and-rescue team was not able to reach the site until eight days later. At that time, they found military equipment belonging to Shue, but no other signs of the men. Between 1993 and 2010, joint U.S./Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted multiple interviews on nine different occasions in Quang Tri Province. Additionally, the S.R.V. unilaterally investigated this case, but was unable to develop new leads. Among those interviewed by the joint teams were former Vietnamese militiamen who claimed in 1969 they ambushed three Americans in the area near the Laos-Vietnam border. In 2007, a Vietnamese citizen led investigators to human remains that he had discovered and buried near the site of the ambush. In 2008, a military identification tag for Brown was turned over to the U.S. Government from a U.S. citizen with ties to Vietnam. Finally, in April 2010, joint teams excavated a hilltop area near Huong Lap Village, recovering additional human remains, and military equipment, another military identification tag for Brown, and a "Zippo" lighter bearing the name "Donald M. Shue" and the date "1969." Scientists from the JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used circumstantial and material evidence, along with mitochondrial DNA—which matched that of some of the soldiers' family members—in the identification of the remains.

Korea

- DPMO) announced 24 AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, were recently identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Cpl. **Kenneth R. Block**, 22, of Ann Arbor, Mich., will be buried Aug. 29, in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. In late November 1950, Block and elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team,

known as “Task Force Faith,” were advancing along the eastern banks of the Chosin Reservoir, in North Korea, when they came under attack. On Dec. 3, 1950, Block, along with many other Americans, was listed as missing in action as a result of the heavy fighting. In September and October 2001, two joint U.S./Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), excavated a mass grave that had been discovered on the eastern shore of the Chosin Reservoir. Human remains, of at least 12 individuals were recovered, along with two military identification tags and military equipment. For 2004 through 2011 scientists from JPAC used mitochondrial DNA to determine the identification of six of the soldiers, who served with Block as part of Task Force Faith. To identify Block’s remains, experts used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including radiograph and dental comparisons.

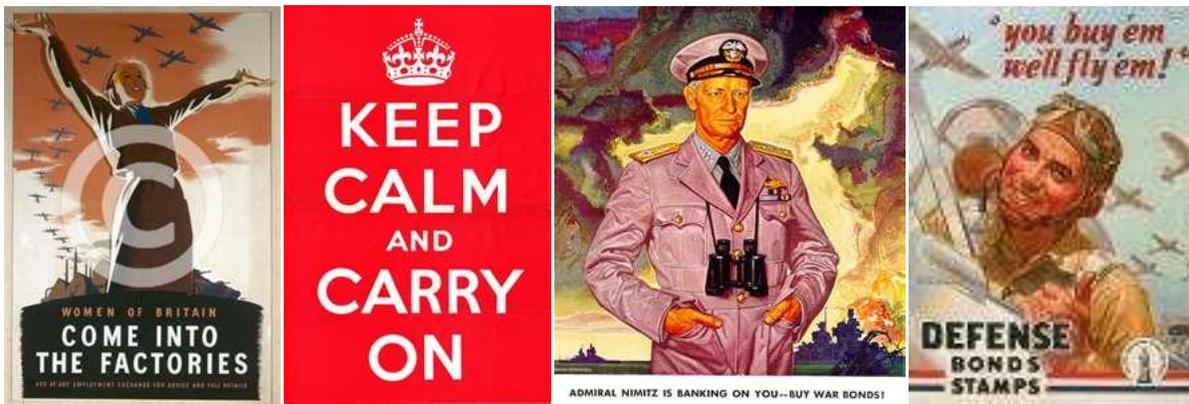
World War II

- DPMO announced 21 AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. **John E. Hogan**, 20, of West Plains, Mo., will be buried Aug. 24, in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. On Sept. 13, 1944, Hogan and eight other crew members were on a B-17G Flying Fortress that crashed near Neustaedt-on-the-Werra, Germany. Only one of the crewmen is known to have successfully parachuted out of the aircraft before it crashed. The remaining eight crewmen were buried by German forces in a cemetery in Neustaedt. Following the war, U.S. Army Graves Registration personnel attempted to recover the remains of the eight men, but were only able to move the remains of one man to a U.S. military cemetery in Holland. In 1953, with access to eastern Germany restricted by the Soviet Union, the remains of the seven unaccounted for crewmen were declared non-recoverable. In 1991, a German national who was digging a grave in the cemetery in Neustaedt, discovered a metal U.S. military identification tag and notified officials. Due to German burial law, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) wasn’t granted access to the site until 2007 and excavated the location in 2008. The team recovered human remains and additional metal identification tags from three of the crewmembers. Scientists from JPAC used forensic identification tools, circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA – which matched that of Hogan’s cousin – in the identification of his remains.

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

World War II Posters (12)





Pin-Ups for Vets: Patients at the Fresno VA Hospital got a special visit 21 AUG from Pin-Up girls dressed in World War II era costumes visited veterans. They were in town promoting their new calendar, which benefits VA hospitals nationwide to buy state of the art rehab equipment. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the calendars is donated to military and VA hospitals across the country. Pin-Ups for Vets is a non-profit organization. Its founder Gina Elise, inspired by her grandfather who was a World War II vet, came up with the idea to recreate a nostalgic pin-up calendar that would serve three purposes:

- 1) The calendars would be sold to raise funds for our hospitalized Veterans.
- 2) The calendars would be delivered as gifts to our ill and injured Veterans with messages of appreciation from the donors.
- 3) The calendars would be sent to our deployed troops to help boost morale and to let them know that Americans back home are thinking of them.



The organizations goal is to visit at least one VA hospital in every state. Since 2007 they have visited 37 hospitals and 16 military bases passing out their calendars. To purchase a 2013 calendar, visit www.pinupsforvets.com. Calendars are \$10 plus tax with free shipping. At that site can also be found a variety of other items bearing the pinup decals which can be ordered. When ordering you are given 3 options:

- 1) Have it sent to yourself.
- 2) Donate it to a hospitalized veteran.
- 3) Donate it to a active duty service member.

[Source: KFSN-TV Fresno CA report 22 Aug 2012 ++]

Saving Money: According to Bloomberg Businessweek the national average for a gallon of gas as of 24 AUG was \$3.74 – a record for this time of year and 16 cents higher than the same time last year. This is causing many drivers to shop around more for non-brand cheaper gas. What many area not aware of is that this gas most likely does not sufficient additives intended to keep their engine cleaner for improved performance. Gasoline containing additives that exceed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards carry the Top Tier logo. At first glance, Top Tier may seem like another way of saying “premium.” But they’re unrelated. Premium is gasoline with a higher octane rating. Octanes are a group of hydrocarbons added to gas to slow down the fuel’s urge to self-ignite. They simply help engines run without pinging or knocking. Car manufacturers recommend premium gasoline for some cars, but many don’t need it. And if your car is rated for a lower octane, buying premium offers no benefit. Top Tier gas is a special blend promoted by GM, BMW, Honda, Toyota, Audi, and Volkswagen. It contains detergent additives designed to reduce the buildup of deposits from combustion chambers, intake valves, and fuel injectors. Any octane rating can be Top Tier.

While there’s no denying that Top Tier gasoline has added cleaning agents, there is debate as to whether they make a distinguishable difference. All gasoline has to contain enough detergent additives to meet a standard set by the EPA. Top Tier simply has more. The question is, do you really need more. You can read opposing viewpoints in the USA Today article at http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2007-06-13-bad-gas-usat_N.htm?AID=4992781&PID=4003003&SID=13n28t9e120e3. The bottom line: Top Tier could help your engine and won’t hurt it. And since Top Tier gas only costs refiners about a penny more per gallon to produce than traditional blends, unlike premium, it shouldn’t set you back much more at the pump. Even if your retailer increases

his price as much as three cents a gallon to cover his extra cost of carrying Top Tier gasoline this only amount to about \$0.50 per thankful on average. Considering what is charged for car repairs these days it could be worth it in the long run. If in doubt as to whether or not your filling station's gasoline meets Top Tier standards you can verify it at <http://www.toptiergas.com/retailers.html>. The site maintains a list of current retailers licensed to carry it. It also contains a video which elaborates on the benefits of using Top Tier gas. [Source: MoneyTalksNews Angela Colley article 29 Aug 2012 ++]



Notes of Interest:

- **Congress.** The 112th Congress is set to have the worst legislative year in nearly seven decades, according to an analysis by USA Today. Of the 3,914 bills that lawmakers have submitted this session, only 61 or approximately 2 percent, have become actual laws.
- **COLA.** The Consumer Price Index (CPI) dipped another 0.2% in July. As of now, inflation is only up 1.0% for the year. The 2013 COLA will be based on the CPI average from July through September.
- **Vet Jobs.** General Dynamics is searching for veteran talent to help them deliver innovative technology solutions for our nation's highest-priority defense and homeland security initiatives. If interested go to <http://www.military.com/jobs-in/employer/gdit/?ESRC=mrvr.nl> to find featured jobs, hiring events and career opportunities with their company.
- **College-educated workers.** A new study shows the lifetime earnings of college-educated workers are nearly double those without degrees. The unemployment rate for recent high school grads is also four times as high as for recent college grads.
- **Law suits.** New research shows Democratic-leaning firms are less likely than Republican-leaning firms to be sued for environmental, labor, and civil rights violations. Firms with a Republican culture are less likely than Democratic-oriented firms to face legal action for securities fraud and intellectual property rights violations.”
- **Congress.** The wealthiest Congressmen are Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX) – \$290.5 million, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA – \$198.8 million, and Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA – \$140.6 million. For a list of the top 50 refer to <http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/243625-the-hills-2012-50-wealthiest-in-congress>.
- **Deficit.** For fiscal year 2012 (which ends on September 30), the federal budget deficit will total \$1.1 trillion, CBO estimates, marking the fourth year in a row with a deficit of more than \$1 trillion.
- **ACAP.** There has been a change in the regulations on the paydate of the Annual Clothing Allowance Payment. It is now 1 SEP (Saturday) so those eligible should see it on 31 AUG.
- **Price gouging.** The Florida Attorney General has activated a Price Gouging Hotline at 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226). Florida law prohibits extreme increases in the price of essential commodities such as food, water, hotels, ice, gasoline, lumber and equipment needed as a direct result of any officially declared emergency.

- **Age.** Besse Cooper, the world's oldest person according to the Guinness World Records, celebrated her 116 th birthday 26 AUG. Guinness claims Cooper is one of only eight people who have reached 116.
- **Buy American.** As of 24 AUG, Mazda split ways with Ford after decades of partnership - and set up shop in Mexico. Toyota, Nissan and Honda “have announced significant expansion plans for North America in recent months.
- **Ears.** Older people have bigger ears. Ear circumference increases an average of 0.51 millimeters per year and never stops until death.

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

Medicare Fraud Update 99:



- **Rome GA** - George Dalyn Houser, 64, of Sandy Springs, Georgia, was sentenced 13 AUG to serve 20 years in federal prison on charges of conspiring with his wife to defraud the Medicare and Georgia Medicaid programs by billing them for “worthless services” in the operation of three nursing homes. The 20-year-sentence is to be followed by 3 years of supervised release. Houser was also ordered to pay \$6,742,807.88 in restitution to Medicaid and Medicare, and \$872,515 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service. Houser and his wife, Rhonda Washington Houser, ran two nursing homes in Rome between July 2004 and July 2007, known as Mount Berry and Moran Lake. Each home had approximately 100 residents. The Houser's also ran a home known as Wildwood in Brunswick from September 2004 until September 2007. Houser lived large, bought real estate and planned to build a hotel while nursing home residents went without food and lived in horrible conditions. During the trial, the government introduced evidence that instead of providing sufficient care for the nursing home residents, Houser diverted slightly more than \$8 million of Medicare and Medicaid funds to his personal use. Houser spent more than \$4.2 million on real estate for a hotel complex that he planned to build in Rome, and he also had plans to develop hotels in Atlanta and Brunswick. Houser also bought his ex-wife a house in Atlanta for \$1.4 million, and instead of paying her alimony, he paid her a salary as a nursing home employee even though she never worked at any of the homes. Houser also used the nursing homes’ corporate bank accounts for personal expenses, such as Mercedes-Benz automobiles, furniture, and vacations. The nursing homes suffered from food shortages bordering on starvation, leaking roofs, virtually no nursing or housekeeping supplies, poor sanitary conditions, major staff shortages, and safety concerns, Staffing shortages and resignations plagued the nursing homes due to the fact that employees were receiving bad paychecks. Health insurance premiums were being withheld from employees’ wages, even though Houser had let the insurance lapse for non-payment, leaving many employees with large unpaid medical bills for surgery and treatment. Employees spent their own money to buy milk, bread, and other groceries so that residents would not starve. Employees also bought nursing supplies for the residents, cleaning supplies for the homes. Some employees also washed the residents’ laundry in Laundromats or in their own homes. One nursing home

resident testified that residents used to pass the time by making bets on which service or utility would be the next to be cut off for nonpayment. In addition to the health care fraud conspiracy count, Houser was also convicted of eight counts of failing to pay over \$800,000 in his nursing home employees' payroll taxes to the IRS, and failing to file personal income tax returns in 2004 and 2005. The conviction by United States District Judge Harold L. Murphy marks the first time that a defendant has been convicted after a trial in federal court for submitting claims for payment for worthless services. Rhonda Washington Houser pleaded guilty to misprision of the felony of health care fraud in December 2011, and she awaits sentencing.

- **Miami FL** - A Miami man who authorities say is responsible for an \$11 million Medicare fraud scam has just been added to the list of most wanted fugitives. Francisco Chavez ran a company that sold medical equipment including pressure support ventilators and motorized wheelchairs. Federal health officials said Chavez submitted more than \$11 million in claims to Medicare for equipment that patients never received. He was paid about \$1.7 million. Chavez was indicted in 2011 in the scam. He is being detained in Spain on drug charges. U.S. officials are working to have him extradited back to the United States. The list of most wanted fugitives is compiled by the Department of Health and Human Services inspector general. To view the list refer to <http://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/fugitives/index.asp>.
- **Lake Ozark MO** - A western Missouri psychologist who was accused of claiming to see patients 364 days a year has pleaded guilty to defrauding Medicare and Medicaid of \$1 million. The U.S. Attorney's office says 67-year-old Rhett McCarty, of Lake Ozark, pleaded 16 AUG to charges of health care fraud and forgery. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled later. McCarty is a licensed psychologist in private practice who treated Medicare and Medicaid recipients in their homes in the Lebanon area. Prosecutors said that from 2008 to April 2012, he was paid nearly \$1.3 million from the programs after claiming he treated 19 patients almost daily. He also admitted that signatures of five patients were forged on paperwork. McCarty's plea requires him to forfeit \$1 million to the government.
- **Jackson MS** - Cassandra Faye Thomas was ordered 17 AUG to serve 168 months in federal prison followed by three years of supervised release on health care fraud charges. The charges range from wire fraud to conspiracy. Thomas owned Central Mississippi Physical Medicine Group, Incorporated which claimed to provide free physical therapy services to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. Thomas billed Medicare and Medicaid for false claims of more than \$12 million and was paid \$6.9 million dollars. According to the FBI, Thomas was ordered to pay close to \$7 million in restitution
- **Houston TX** - Dr. Emmanuel Nwora was indicted on 20 AUG with 12 counts of health care fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud in a Medicare and Medicaid billing scheme case worth more than \$850,000 and involving patients who were tested for inner ear disorders. The 48-year-old is accused of filing testing claims to Medicare and Medicaid without seeing the patients or ordering follow-up care for them between 2006 and 2010. In the case of one patient, Nwora allegedly submitted to Medicare 171 claims worth \$121,836 over a one-year period. Of the \$852,502.91 submitted to the two insurance programs, \$363,742.99 was paid to Nwora. Prosecutors say the scheme began in 2006 and involved an arrangement in which Nwora signed off on "vestibular" testing for the inner ear disorders performed by Cevine Health Care and Rehabilitation, which has locations on Harwin Drive and Bissonnet, business records show. Cevine's owner Charles Harris, who also goes by two other names - Celestine Nwajfor and Okechi Nwajiofor - also was charged in the case and remains at large. Cevine Health Care and Rehabilitation, which is not an authorized Medicare and Medicaid provider, would have their tests signed off by Nwora, who would file the claims. Once the claims were paid by Medicare and Medicaid, Nwora would write a check to Harris. Last year, the Texas Medical Board dismissed a formal complaint against

him after Nwora agreed to take a class on medical record keeping. A board review found he did not maintain adequate medical records when he examined patients at a health fair at a retirement village. During his appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Nancy Johnson, Nwora pleaded not guilty. His bail was set at \$100,000. For Nwora to be released from federal custody, he also must surrender his Nigerian and U.S. passports.

- **Miami FL** - Eight individuals and a Miami-based corporation were convicted by a federal jury for their participation in a Medicare fraud scheme involving the submission of more than \$50 million in fraudulent billings to Medicare. The defendants were charged in a superseding indictment returned June 5, 2012. Twenty other individuals who worked at Biscayne Milieu have all previously pleaded guilty. Evidence at trial demonstrated that the defendants and their co-conspirators caused the submission of false and fraudulent claims to Medicare through Biscayne Milieu, a Florida corporation headquartered in Miami that purported to operate a partial hospitalization program (PHP) in that city. Biscayne Milieu purported to provide PHP services, a form of intensive treatment for severe mental illness, for Medicare beneficiaries suffering from mental illnesses. In fact, however, the defendants devised a scheme in which they paid patient recruiters to refer ineligible Medicare beneficiaries to Biscayne Milieu for PHP services, which were never provided. Many of the beneficiaries admitted to Biscayne Milieu were not eligible for PHP because they were chronic substance abusers, suffered from severe dementia or Alzheimer's disease and would not benefit from group therapy, or had no mental health diagnosis at all. Indeed, some beneficiaries were seeking fraudulent mental health treatment in order to be declared exempt from certain requirements for their applications for U.S. citizenship. Throughout the course of the fraud conspiracy, beneficiaries who did not qualify for PHP services attended treatment programs that did not provide legitimate PHP services. Biscayne Milieu billed tens of millions of dollars in services to patients who did not need the services and to whom the appropriate services were not provided. According to the evidence, co-conspirators personally altered, and caused the alteration of, patient files and therapist notes for the purpose of making it appear, falsely, that patients being treated by Biscayne Milieu were qualified for PHP treatments and that the treatments provided were legitimate PHP treatments. Once Biscayne Milieu received reimbursement from Medicare for these fraudulent services, its owners and executives laundered the money through various accounts to launder the proceeds of their illegal scheme.
- **California** - United States has entered into a settlement agreement with Pacific Health Corporation (PHC) and related entities in which they agreed to pay the government and the state of California \$16.5 million for allegedly engaging in an illegal kickback scheme in Los Angeles. The civil settlement resolves a U.S. and state investigation of three PHC-affiliated hospitals for engaging in a scheme in which the hospitals paid recruiters to deliver homeless Medicare or Medi-Cal beneficiaries (homeless beneficiaries) by ambulance from the "Skid Row" area in Los Angeles to the hospitals for treatment that often was medically unnecessary. The hospitals, Los Angeles Metropolitan Medical Center (LA Metro); Newport Specialty Hospital, formerly known as Tustin Hospital and Medical Center; and Anaheim General Hospital, then allegedly billed Medicare and Medi-Cal for these services, violating rules that permit payment only for necessary treatment. The governments contended that these services were induced by illegal remuneration in violation of the Anti-Kickback statute (AKS), and the resulting billings to Medicare and Medi-Cal violated the False Claims Act.
- **Detroit MI** - Jawad Ahmad, 42, pleaded guilty 28 AUG to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud for his role in managing a \$13.8 million psychotherapy fraud scheme. Ahmad faces a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. According to court documents, beginning in July 2008, two of Ahmad's co-conspirators, Tausif Rahman and Muhammad Ahmad, acquired control over a home health care company known as Physicians Choice Home Health Care LLC (Physicians Choice).

From in or around January 2009 and continuing through in or around March 2010, Jawad Ahmad managed the operations of Physicians Choice. Jawad Ahmad managed numerous aspects of the fraud at Physicians Choice, including delivering the payment of kickbacks to beneficiary recruiters who obtained Medicare beneficiaries' information needed to bill Medicare for home health services, including physical therapy and skilled nursing, that were never rendered. Jawad Ahmad also provided information to employees of Physicians Choice to check the billing eligibility of the Medicare beneficiaries before Physicians Choice began billing them. In exchange for kickbacks, Medicare beneficiaries pre-signed forms and visit sheets that were later falsified to indicate they received home health services they had never received. Jawad Ahmad delivered the pre-signed beneficiary paperwork to various medical professionals, including nurses, physical therapists and physical therapy assistants to create and/or sign fictitious patient files to document purported home health services that were never rendered. From in or around January 2009 through in or around March 2010, Medicare paid more than \$5 million for fraudulent home health care claims submitted by Physicians Choice. Between 2008 and 2009, Ahmad's co-conspirators acquired beneficial ownership and control over three additional home health care companies: First Care Home Health Care LLC, Quantum Home Care Inc., and Moonlite Home Care Inc. Each of these home health companies billed Medicare and operated in a manner the same as or similar to Physicians Choice. The four home health companies at the center of the indictment received approximately \$13.8 million from Medicare in the course of the conspiracy.

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

Medicaid Fraud Update 69:

- **Pierce County WA** - Diana Esterly and Shawn Gronau were arraigned 13 AUG in Pierce County Superior Court, accused of overbilling the Medicaid program. The Washington State Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) last month filed three counts of first degree theft against Esterly and two counts against Gronau. Gronau, who is Esterly's niece, faces an additional four counts of fraud related to false statements made to Medicaid administrators. Prosecutors at the Attorney General's Office regularly prosecute those who make such false statement in an attempt to bilk the state and federally funded healthcare program. Esterly is charged with receiving Medicaid payments for services she didn't provide to three developmentally disabled adults. Gronau is charged with billing Medicaid for three hours of work for every hour of care that she provided, contrary to her Medicaid Care Provider contract. According to charging documents filed by the Attorney General's Office, Gronau told investigators, "I honestly thought that I was able to claim all three kids per hour." However, rules for Medicaid providers, communicated in writing, require payments per the hour, not per-recipient. As a result of fraudulent billing, Esterly received nearly \$19,000 and Gronau received over \$12,000 in money they were not eligible to receive. The case is scheduled for trial on Oct. 8.
- **Charlotte NC** - Charlotte Elizabeth Garnes, 37, was charged 22 AUG with health care fraud conspiracy and obstruction of official proceedings in a scheme to defraud Medicaid of at least \$650,000. Garnes was part of a scheme in which she gave her Medicaid provider number to others so they could submit fraudulent reimbursement claims for mental and behavioral health services. Garnes is a licensed professional counselor. Garnes, who was arrested in Goldsboro, had her initial appearance in federal court in Raleigh on Wednesday. She faces up to 30 years in prison and fines totaling \$500,000 if convicted on the two counts. Two others have been sentenced to prison for their roles in the scheme.

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

State Veteran's Benefits: The state of Connecticut provides several benefits to veterans. To obtain information on these refer to the “**Veteran State Benefits CT**” 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
- Education Benefits
- Other State Veteran Benefits

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

Military History: A section of an ingenious tunnel built by U.S. and British spies to intercept Russian phone conversations in Cold War Berlin has been found after 56 years in a forest 150 kilometers (93 miles) from the German capital. The 450-meter-long tunnel, built in 1955, led from Rudow in West Berlin to Alt-Glienicke in Soviet-occupied East Berlin. By tapping into the enemy's underground cables, Allied intelligence agents recorded 440,000 phone calls, gaining a clearer picture of Red Army maneuvers in eastern Germany at a time when nuclear war seemed an imminent threat. The western part of the tunnel was excavated in 1997 and part of it is preserved at the Allied Museum in the former American sector of Berlin. The Soviet authorities dug up the eastern part in 1956 and until now, its fate was unknown. "It seemed to have vanished without a trace," said Bernd von Kostka, a historian at the Allied Museum. "I looked through the East German Stasi files, and there was nothing to be found about its whereabouts. We assumed it had been melted down because it was made of valuable metal."

The find is one missing piece of a puzzle that will take decades to solve completely, as access to intelligence files about the construction and discovery of the tunnel — a tale worthy of a John le Carre novel — is still restricted. The man who discovered the buried segment is Werner Sobolewski, 62, formerly employed in a civilian capacity by the East German army. He was chopping wood in his local forest in Pasewalk, near the Polish border north of Berlin, when he stumbled across the wide metal pipe. He remembered it being used for military exercises at the local barracks, where he had worked before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He recalled too that it was then rumored to have been a part of the Allied spy tunnel, infamous throughout eastern Germany after the Soviets exposed it in a major propaganda campaign in 1956. He contacted the Allied Museum and Kostka traveled to Pasewalk to identify it last week. "We would like to have it in the museum so that we have a part of the eastern tunnel," Kostka said in an interview at the Allied Museum. "The sections we have are from the western side. It shouldn't stay buried underground." The western tunnel segment is a prize exhibit at the Allied Museum, which is also home to the original Checkpoint Charlie guard-hut and a Royal Air Force Hastings plane used in the Berlin airlift of 1948 and 1949.

Displays describe the complexity of building the tunnel and tapping the wires. The British had already constructed similar underground listening-posts in Vienna and brought the idea, manpower and know-how to the project, Kostka said. The operation was codenamed "Stopwatch" by the British, "Gold" by the Americans, and "Regal" jointly. It was funded by the U.S. at a cost of \$6.7 million (then a vast sum) and operated jointly by the CIA and the British SIS. Yet the KGB learned about the tunnel when it was still in the planning stages — thanks to intelligence from George Blake, the notorious British double agent who was later imprisoned, then escaped to the Soviet Union. Strangely, the KGB concealed its existence from the Soviet military because they wanted to protect their valuable mole. The tunnel operated for 11 months and 11 days, intercepting some of the Red Army's most secret communications, including those between Moscow and the military headquarters in East Berlin. Historians do

not know why the Soviet authorities chose to expose it when they did, on April 22, 1956. The reason is still buried in the Kremlin's files.

"It was clear that the tunnel had a finite lifespan and would be discovered one day," Kostka said. "But the Allies expected the Soviet authorities to sweep it under the carpet." Instead, they held their first international press conference in 11 years of occupation and bussed in as many as 50,000 East German citizens so that they could see first-hand the treachery of the west. Yet it was also a propaganda coup for the U.S. intelligence services as the tunnel's ingenuity impressed American observers. "It's a great Cold War story," said Kostka. "Each side could say they won." For a more detailed explanation on the project refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Berlin Spy Tunnel**". [Source: Bloomberg News Catherine Hickley article 21 Aug 2012 ++]

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

- Sep 01 1864 – Civil War: Confederate troops abandoned Atlanta in the face of continuing attacks by federals under General W.S. Sherman .
- Sep 01 1939 – WW2: Nazi Germany attacks Poland beginning the war in Europe.
- Sep 01 1950 – Korean War: 13 North Korean divisions open assault on UN lines
- Sep 01 1982 – The United States Air Force Space Command is founded
- Sep 01 1983 – Cold War: Korean Boeing 747 strays into Siberia & is shot down by a Soviet jet. All 269 on board are killed, including United States Congressman Lawrence McDonald.
- Sep 02 1898 – Machine gun 1st used in battle
- Sep 02 1864 – Civil War: Union forces enter Atlanta, Georgia a day after the Confederate defenders flee the city.
- Sep 02 1945 – WW2: V–J Day. Combat ends in the Pacific Theater: The final official surrender of Japan is accepted aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.
- Sep 02 1958 – Cold war: United States Air Force C–130A–II is shot down by fighters over Yerevan, Armenia when it strays into Soviet airspace while conducting a sigint mission. All crew lost.
- Sep 03 1783 – Revolutionary War: The war ends with the signing of the Treaty of Paris by the United States and the Kingdom of Great Britain. America is officially free from Britain
- Sep 03 1855 – Indian Wars: In Nebraska, 700 soldiers under American General William S. Harney avenge the Grattan Massacre by attacking a Sioux village, killing 100 men, women, and children.
- Sep 03 1916 – WWI: Allies turned back Germans in WW I's Battle of Verdun
- Sep 03 1941 – WW2: 1st use of Zyklon-B gas in Auschwitz (on Russian prisoners of war)
- Sep 03 1943 – WW2: The allied invasion of Italy began.
- Sep 04 1862 – Civil War: Gen Lee invades North with 50,000 Confederate troops
- Sep 04 1886 – Indian Wars: after almost 30 years of fighting, Apache leader Geronimo surrenders with his remaining warriors to General Nelson Miles in Arizona ending last major US–Indian war.
- Sep 04 1918 – WWI: U.S. troops land in Archangel, Russia, stay 10 months
- Sep 04 1940 – WW2: A German submarine makes the first attack against a United States ship (the USS Greer).
- Sep 04 1967 – Vietnam: Operation Swift begins: U.S. Marines engage the North Vietnamese in battle in the Que Son Valley.
- Sep 05 1914 – WWI: Battle of Marne begins: Germans chase out Russians.
- Sep 05 1939 – WW2: FDR declares US neutrality at start of WW II in Europe
- Sep 08 1943 – WW2: Gen Eisenhower announced unconditional surrender of Italy in WW II
- Sep 08 1945 – Cold War: United States troops arrive to partition the southern part of Korea in response to Soviet troops occupying the northern part of the peninsula a month earlier.

- Sep 08 1975 – USAF Tech Sergeant Leonard Matlovich, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, appears in his Air Force uniform on the cover of Time magazine with the headline "I Am A Homosexual". He is later given a general discharge.
- Sep 09 1914 – WWI: Battle of Marne. German advance stalls, Paris saved .
- Sep 09 1942 – WW2: 1st bombing on continental U.S. soil. A Japanese floatplane drops an incendiary bomb on Mount Emily Oregon.
- Sep 09 1943 – WW2: USS Grayling (SS-209). Most likely rammed and sunk by Japanese transport Hokuan Maru, South China Sea west of Luzon. 76 killed
- Sep 10 1776 – Revolutionary War: George Washington asks for a spy volunteer, Nathan Hale volunteers.
- Sep 10 1813 – War of 1812: Battle of Lake Erie. U.S. Naval Captain Oliver Hazard Perry defeats a British flotilla.
- Sep 10 1919 – Latin America Interventions: Honduras. U.S. Marines land during election campaign.
- Sep 11 1941 – WW2: FDR orders any Axis ship found in American waters be shot on sight.
- Sep 11 1965 – Vietnam: The 1st Cavalry Division of the United States Army arrives in country.
- Sep 11 2001 – 911: 2996 people are killed when terrorists hijack four passenger planes crashing two into New York's World Trade Towers causing the collapse of both and one into the Pentagon. Another headed toward Washington likely to strike the White House or Capitol, crashed just over 100 miles away in Pennsylvania after passengers storm the cockpit and overtake the hijackers.
- Sep 11 2001 – Terrorists hijack a passenger plane and crash it into the Pentagon causing the death of 125 people.
- Sep 12 1814 – War of 1812: Battle of North Point is fought near Baltimore.
- Sep 12 1847 – Mexican–American War: The Battle of Chapultepec begins.
- Sep 12 1862 – Civil War: Battle of Harpers Ferry VA.
- Sep 12 1918 – WWI: St Mihiel France. 1st U.S. Operation and Victory by an Independent American Army.
- Sep 12 1944 – WWI: U.S. Army troops enter Germany for 1st time
- Sep 13 1847 – American–Mexican War: U.S. forces capture Mexico City effectively ending the war.
- Sep 13 1861 – Civil War: 1st naval battle of the war. Union frigate "Colorado" sinks privateer "Judah" off Pensacola, Fla.
- Sep 13 1900 – Philippine–American War: Filipino resistance fighters defeat a small American column in the Battle of Pulang Lupa.
- Sep 13 1942 – WWI: Battle of Edson's Ridge (2nd Japanese assault) at Guadalcanal.
- Sep 13 1951 – Korean War: Battle of Heart Break Ridge began.
- Sep 14 1814 – War of 1812: During a British naval attack on the City of Baltimore, Francis Scott Key composed a poem entitled "The Star Spangled Banner."
- Sep 15 1776 – Revolutionary War: British forces capture Kip's Bay Manhattan.
- Sep 15 1914 – Vera Cruz Incident: U.S. Marines march out of Vera Cruz, Mexico.
- Sep 15 1916 – WWI: 1st tank used in war, "Little Willies" at Battle of Flors, France
- Sep 15 1950 – Korean War: UN forces land at Inchon in South Korea.

[Source: Various Aug 2011 ++]

Military Trivia 57: America Special Forces WWII

1. In which year was the Airborne program introduced? 1915 | 1940 | 1955 | 1932

2. The newly formed 'Rangers' were named as such because 'Commandos' was already being used by the British.

True | False

3. 1st Special Forces, nicknamed the 'North Americans,' was an elite allied unit formed with men from the Rangers, the Airborne and the British SAS. True | False

4. Africa: Rangers and Paratroopers would first see action together in the spearhead attack on axis forces in Africa. The attack was given which codename? Torch | Roundup | Sledgehammer | Desert Fox

5. Sicily: The Airborne Forces had a terrible entry into Sicily. They were dropped all over the place! What was the cause of the poor drop?

Poorly trained airwing (52nd Troop Carrier) | No radar pathfinders | Gale force winds | All of these

6. Italy: Early German successes in protecting the Italian beachhead were pushed back by reinforcements from the Airborne divisions. The Germans fell back to a series of fortified positions known as what?

The Winter Line | Difensa Line | The Chiunzi Pass | Volturno River Line

7. Italy: The 1st Special Forces were brought in to crack the German fortifications and bust the German defenses. How did they penetrate the line?

- Spearheading a heavy infantry attack with artillery support
- By scaling a mountain deemed impassible by the Germans
- A wide flanking maneuver to attack the German rear defenses
- A night time stealth attack through the middle of the lines

8. The 'Triple Nickels' 555th Airborne, an attachment of the 82nd were highly trained and exceptionally motivated troops. What was the 555th's distinction?

They were a mix of Australians and Canadians | They fought on every continent at war | They were the first African-American paratroopers | They specialized in amphibious assault methods

9. D-Day: Utah beach was far less 'bloody' than Omaha due to the 82nd Airborne taking this town and the 101st holding surrounding causeways, preventing German reinforcements from reaching the beachheads at: Les Moullins | Chef du Pont | Cherbourg | Ste. Mere-Eglise

10. D-Day: Sections of Rangers had the unenviable task of securing well fortified sections between Omaha and Utah beach using amphibious landings. Where were these fortifications?

Barfleur | Pointe du Hoc | St. Lo | Valognes

11. Market Garden: The famous Airborne drop into Holland to seize roads and bridges so XXX Corps could advance quickly to Eindhoven was the idea of which general?

George Patton | Matthew Ridgeway | Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery | Omar Bradley

12. The Bulge was a massive spearhead counter attack by the Germans that cost both sides dearly. One million German troops poured into which area? Ardennes | Champagne | Hurtgen Forest | Monts Focille

13. Why were the allies so concerned about defeating the Germans in the Hurtgen Forest when casualties were so high, when the main thrust had so much momentum further south?

To find an alternative route around the Siegfried Line | To take control of the dams on the Roer River | To decimate the German Northern Army | To give green troops combat experience

14. Both the Airborne and Rangers led the advance through Germany after the Siegfried Line was broken. Elements of the 5th Rangers, 101st and the 82nd saw things that few would mention but none would forget. What were these things?

Concentration camps | The surrender of 150,000 German troops | The treasures at Obersalzberg (Berchtesgaden) | Russians killing prisoners in the Baltic |

15. Which elite force was first to enter Berchtesgaden, a town on the Austrian border where many of the high ranking Nazis had holiday homes, including Hitler? 2nd Rangers | 71st Airborne | 101st Airborne | 5th Rangers

ANSWERS:

1. **1940.** The Americans saw the early success of the Soviet Airborne and especially the German Paratroopers who were dropped on specific targets in Norway and Belgium. The American Army went forward with the airborne program. A test platoon of 50 men was formed on June 25, 1940.

2. **True.** The Ranger units were actually based on the British commando units. The men were hand picked from two divisions that were already in the UK. The 1st Armored and the 34th national Guard. The Rangers were formed in the summer of 1941.

3. **False.** 1st Special Forces was a purpose designed outfit. It was made up of men who could survive in the cold outdoors - lumberjacks, game wardens, prospectors, etc. The unit was a mix of Americans and Canadians which is how they got their nickname the 'North Americans'. Their first deployment in the war was to break the winter line in Italy. More info in question 7.

4. **Torch.** Torch was a diversion that the American army didn't want. They were eager to commence the liberation of Europe. However, the British persuaded the Americans to land amphibious forces in Africa. The Brits were keen to have their Eighth Army relieved who were battle fatigued and at a stalemate.

5. **All of these.** The Airborne forces did a great job behind enemy lines even though they were badly separated. They cut German and Italian communication lines and accomplished missions that were scheduled for much larger forces. They created a sense of confusion for the enemy and kept larger forces from getting to the beachhead.

6. **The Winter Line.** By this stage of the campaign, most airborne troops had been pulled back to England for Overlord, leaving behind the 504th and the 509th. These units joined forces with Darby's Rangers and were used as heavy combat troops as the allies tried to breach the Winter Line. Casualties were enormous with little to no gain.

7. **By scaling a mountain deemed impassible by the Germans.** This was the first combat action of the 1st Special Forces and they excelled. In the cover of darkness and with a diversionary arty attack, the North Americans scaled a 70 degree slope and attacked German positions on the mountain top. A few days later they crossed a saddle and defeated the Germans on a second mountain top and the Winter Line was cracked.

8. **They were the first African-American paratroopers.** Due to racial segregation, the 555th trained harder than any Airborne company in order to prove to their white counterparts and themselves that they were capable Airborne soldiers. Their contribution to the war effort was considerable. The Japanese were floating incendiary balloons over North America in order to create fires. The government was keen to keep a lid on the threat and the 555th were deployed to jump on the resulting fires at exceptional risk. They excelled in their duty and clocked up over 1200 jumps. The men marched with and were awarded the same battle field decorations as the 82nd.

9. **Ste. Mere-Eglise.** Again the Airborne drop was a disaster and few units were dropped near their targets. With Paratroopers everywhere in Normandy, the Germans were very confused as to where to focus their attacks. The Paratroopers cut communications and did exceptionally well to meet their main objectives.

10. **Pointe du Hoc.** The Rangers suffered massive casualties from machine gun and mortar fire from the well protected cliff top fortifications. Their objective was to remove the threat of artillery that was believed to be placed on the cliff top. After taking the high ground it was discovered that the arty had been moved inland. A small group of Rangers moved inland, found the artillery and destroyed the breech blocks thus preventing further landing casualties. The Rangers were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their actions on the beach head.

11. **Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.** Every year a runner brings a torch from Normandy to Eindhoven to commemorate Liberation Day. Many veterans from the 101st have returned to march in the Liberation Parade over the past 50 years.

12. **Ardennes.** As the Airborne units were currently in reserve, they were deployed quickly into some crucial areas of the bulge and cut the German advance to Antwerp. They came up against some of the most proficient crack troops of the German Army and held fast preventing a further German breakout.

13. **To take control of the dams on the Roer River.** While 'no good reason' is true in hindsight, there was a huge risk of the Germans flooding the areas adjacent to the Roer and Rhine Rivers and literally washing away the advancing allies. The Rangers fought hard and at great loss to take Castle Hill (Hill 400) which was crucial for the relieving 517th Airborne force to launch a diversionary attack from. They kept the Germans busy while the 78th took the dams. The Germans still blew the Dam valves and flooded the Roer Valley delaying the Allies 2 weeks.

14. **Concentration camps.** The shock of stumbling across the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps was a lot for these men to handle. They thought that no one would believe them if they told the story, so most men didn't say anything about the camps to the folks back home. Maybe the memory was one that they just could not relive. The soldiers offered what rations they had to the human skeletons they found alive only to see them die before them as their fragile bodies could not handle the food. Mass pits with thousands of bodies, it was too much.

15. **The 101st Airborne.** The contribution made by Ranger and Airborne divisions was considerable, as was the horrific casualty rate they experienced. These soldiers returned to America and became the most highly educated and successful of all combatants.

[Source: <http://www.funtrivia.com/playquiz/quiz97780b33f68.html> Aug 2012 ++]

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

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 6.85% until June 2013 (food and prescription drugs exempt). Counties may add up to 1.18% additional.

Gasoline Tax: 33.1 cents/gallon

Diesel Fuel Tax: 28.6 cents/gallon

Cigarette Tax: 80 cents/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

State: No state income tax

Retirement Income Taxes: Not taxed

Property Taxes

All property in the state is subject to tax by the state, counties, cities, towns, and school districts. Property taxes are applied to property of every kind and nature, including real and personal property. The assessed valuation for tax purposes is based on 35% of the fair market value of the property and is revalued every year. [Click here](#). The Department of Taxation and county assessors and treasurers are required to provide information on the Internet concerning property taxes, including, a description of the assessment process, an explanation of the manner in which property taxes are calculated, the rates of taxes imposed by various taxing entities and the revenues generated by those taxes.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

There is no inheritance tax and a limited estate tax related to federal estate tax collection.

For further information, visit the Nevada Department of Taxation site <http://tax.state.nv.us> or call 866-962-370
[Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com> Aug 2012 ++]

Aviation Art (12):



Leader of the Pack

by Matthew Waki

"I have seen flak at high altitude and low level over Berlin, the Ruhr... I have seen it darken the sky... I have seen tracers like your're waving a hose... but I have never seen the absolute sheets of fire that erupted in the skies of Thai Nguyen". -Robin Olds

Wearing a handlebar mustache throughout most of his Vietnam tour, exuding an image of ruggedness and bravado, Robin Olds was undoubtedly the best-loved and most successful fighter wing commander of the Vietnam War. Despite the severe restrictions placed on aerial fighting in 1967, Col. Olds used his experience of thirteen air-to-air victories in World War II, and in some cases bent more than a few rules, to blast four MiGs from the sky during the time he commanded the 8th TFW, known as the "Wolfpack".

Ironically, it was on a grand attack mission to the Thai Hguyen steel mills that Robin Olds' mettle was put to the most severe test of the war. With only one approach to the target possible, the North Vietnamese set up a gauntlet of 85mm, 57mm, 37mm, 23mm, and countless other automatic anti-aircraft guns. Any attacking aircraft had to fly down the gauntlet at low-level, during daylight, for over 20 miles.

Extremely bad weather approaching Thai Nguyen on mission day and combat tactics required that only three aircraft go in. Even with an entire wing of pilots to choose from, Robin Olds decided to lead the attack.

Artist Matthew Waki states: "As wing commander it was possible for Robin not to fly on this particular mission. But his way was to lead by example. I can think of no other mission that better represents Robin Olds' leadership, courage, and character. My painting shows Robin leading the pack, flying on a mission he didn't have to, confronting the most intense anti-aircraft fire of his two-war career. His F-4C Phantom II has just received a hit in the right wing fuel tank as his flight makes a turn on final approach to the target. Despite an inbound speed of 500 knots all three aircraft were hit. Incredibly, all three F-4s bombed the target and made it home". [Source: <http://www.brooksart.com/Leaderofpack.html> Jul 2012 ++]

Veteran Legislation Status 28 AUG 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>.

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: www.loc.gov Aug 2012 ++]

Have You Heard? Senior Citizens

An older lady decided to give herself a big treat for her significant 70th birthday by staying overnight in an expensive hotel. When she checked out the next morning, the desk clerk handed her a bill for \$250.00.

She exploded and demanded to know why the charge was so high. "It's a nice hotel, but the rooms certainly aren't worth \$250.00 for just an overnight stay! I didn't even have breakfast."

The clerk told her that \$250.00 was the "standard rate", so she insisted on speaking to the Manager.

The Manager appeared and, forewarned by the desk clerk, announced: "This hotel has an Olympic-sized pool and a huge conference centre which are available for use." "But I didn't use them," she said.

"Well, they are here, and you could have," explained the Manager.

He went on to explain that she could also have seen one of the in-hotel shows for which the hotel was famous.. "We have the best entertainers from the world over performing here," the Manager said.

"But I didn't go to any of those shows," she said.

"Well, we have them, and you could have," the Manager replied.

No matter what amenity the Manager mentioned, she replied, "But I didn't use it!", and the Manager countered with his standard response.

After several minutes discussion with the Manager unmoved, she decided to pay, wrote a check and gave it to him.

The Manager was surprised when he looked at the check. "But madam, this check is for only \$50.00."

"That's correct. I charged you \$200.00 for sleeping with me," she replied.

"But I didn't!" exclaims the very surprised Manager. "Well, too bad, I was here, and you could have."

Don't mess with Senior Citizens

Naval Term of the Day: “**Bravo Zulu**”. The term originates from the Allied Signals Book (ATP 1), which in the aggregate is for official use only. Signals are sent as letters and/or numbers, which have meanings by themselves sometimes or in certain combinations. A single table in ATP 1 is called "governing groups," that is, the entire signal that follows the governing group is to be performed according to the "governor." The letter "B" indicates this table, and the second letter (A through Z) gives more specific information. For example, "BA" might mean "You have permission to . . . (do whatever the rest of the flashing light, flag hoist or radio transmission says)" "BZ" happens to be the last item in the governing groups table. It means "well done".

Government is the great fiction, through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else.

— **Frederic Bastiat** (French economist | 1801-1850)

facebook USERS TIP: DON'T POST EMBARRASSING PHOTOS!



YOUR STUPID OUTFIT



YOUR STUPID PARTY



YOUR STUPID SPRING BREAK



YOUR STUPID STOCK PURCHASE



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