

RAO BULLETIN

1 November 2012

PDF Edition

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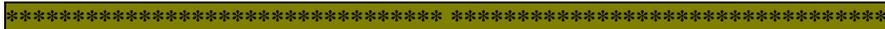
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DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse Update 01: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cannot produce about \$1 billion of receipts for fuel and other supplies it bought in Iraq using Iraqi money, a government investigation has found. The total amount of funds unaccounted for has now reached a staggering \$7 billion, officials say — and they warn that the Iraqi government is likely to demand at least some of that money back. The United States has been managing billions of dollars of Iraqi money through the U.N.-created Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) since 2003, money that was the result of Iraqi oil and gas sales or was left over from the "oil-for-food" program. The Army Corps of Engineers has been spending that money on energy and infrastructure programs in Iraq, but its recordkeeping was so poor that the Corps cannot prove it actually received goods for about \$1 billion of the money it spent, according to the report, which was released 26 OCT by the office of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR).

SIGIR reviewed \$1.1 billion of DFI-related transactions by the Corps and found that a key document, the receiving report — which documents that the goods or services were actually delivered to the intended recipients — was missing for 95 percent of the transactions. "Missing receiving reports involved commodities vulnerable to fraud and theft, such as fuel, televisions, and vehicles. SIGIR has not concluded that fraud or theft occurred, but the absence of receiving reports raises questions," the report stated. "Instead of using the required receiving reports to document fuel deliveries in Iraq, USACE officials told us that they maintained a fuel delivery log book. However, the log book is missing. In the absence of receiving reports and the fuel delivery log book, USACE has no evidence that shows whether fuel products paid for with DFI funds were received."

The Corps also didn't have enough trucks with meters to determine how much fuel was being delivered to more than 100 sites around Iraq. Nor has the Corps completed the required financial audits, so it's impossible to determine the status of all the DFI contracts, SIGIR says. "Without these audits, USACE cannot close out these contracts and task orders and assess whether the contractor owes the U.S. money, whether the U.S. owes the contractor money, and ultimately, whether the U.S. needs to return unused DFI funds to the [government of Iraq]," the report said. In an interview with The Cable, Deputy Inspector General Glen Furbish said that even though there's no evidence of fraud, there's a good chance the Iraqi government will try to seek some or all of this money from the U.S. government. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Josh Rogan | 27 Oct 2012 ++]

NDAA 2013 Update 12: More than a dozen teams of 'The Military Coalition' representatives visited offices of Senate Armed Services Committee members in late OCT, seeking senators' support to change the Senate's FY2013 Defense Authorization Bill in two key ways:

- Avoid tripling TRICARE beneficiaries' pharmacy copays by adopting the House alternative plan to achieve equivalent savings through requiring a temporary test of refilling TFL maintenance medications through either the mail-order or military pharmacy system.
- Amend a provision to establish a military retirement reform commission by dropping rules that would require Congress to vote "yes or no" on any commission recommendations, without any changes and with only limited debate.

These issues were identified as the top defense bill priorities for the 34-association Coalition. With the legislators out of town, even the most sympathetic staffers couldn't commit specifically how their bosses would vote on these issues. And not all were sympathetic. One senator's staff member said unequivocally that his boss was on the side of the "big box pharmacies" and would oppose any mail-order plan (which means sticking military beneficiaries with far higher copays). Many others said they had been visited by drug store lobbyists arguing against the House proposal. Just one such group already has made more than \$170,000 in campaign donations. This is an important

fight that, if lost, will impact financially on all present and future retirees. You are encouraged tell your legislators to protect the military families who have sacrificed so much to protect America. One way to do this is to forward them the preformatted email/ letters provided available at <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=61574871> (NDAA Amendments) and <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=62016531> (Pharmacy Copay). [Source: MOAA Leg Up 26 Oct 2012 ++]

South Carolina DOR Data Breach: State and federal officials confirmed to WLTX, The Greenville News, and USA TODAY that one of the South Carolina Department of Revenue's servers was hacked by someone in a foreign country. The agency is responsible for 32 separate state taxes, licenses, and your state income tax returns, and that contains South Carolina resident's information. The first breach occurred on August 27, 2012 in which allegedly no information was taken at that time. On 10 OCT the SC Division of Information Technology informed the Dept. of Revenue of a potential cyber attack. On 16 OCT investigators uncovered two attempts to probe the system from September. In mid-September, two other intrusions occurred, and the hacker got data for the first time. The extent of the breach was massive: an estimated 3.6 million Social Security numbers and 387,000 credit and debit card numbers were exposed . Just 16,000 of these credit card numbers were not encrypted; however, none of the Social Security numbers were.

For perspective, there are almost 4.7 million South Carolinians, according to the 2012 U.S. Census, meaning three out of four people's Social Security numbers were compromised. State Law Enforcement Division Chief Mark Keel told WLTX that this is one of the biggest investigations he has ever been a part of in his career. They have been working to secure taxpayers information. The state is offering credit counseling to those affected. Anyone who has paid taxes since 1998 should call 1-866-578-5422. The phone line is busy, but keep trying, you will get through and the process takes about 10 minutes. Alternately, you can request an access code to use at <http://www.protectmyid.com/scdor>. Mandiant, a top information security company, says they are assisting in the investigation. They are also helping to secure the state's system, and are installing new equipment and software. Meanwhile, Governor Nikki Haley promised action against the person responsible. "I want that man just brutalized," she said. "I want him slammed against the wall." Haley issued an executive order where she outlines areas where she wants the state's cyber security to improve. According to the state Inspector General at present there are no mandatory standards for information security in the state. Only recommended policies which are optional for state departments to use. The WLTX news clip can be viewed at <http://www.wltx.com/news/article/206768/2/Hacker-Takes-Millions-of-SC-Citizens-Personal-Info>. [Source: WLTX News Report 26 Oct 2012 ++]

Editors Note: The IG and GAO have repeatedly issued similar reports on government agencies warning of weaknesses in our nation's Data security systems. The public has no control over protecting themselves from Identity theft occurring in these agencies and little recourse in recouping losses that could result from unauthorized release of their personal data/financial records. If the government cannot guarantee protection, imagine the weaknesses that exist in your banking and credit institution's security systems. Readers who have not yet obtained identity theft insurance are advised to do so. A number of companies providing this coverage can be found on the internet. One, "Lifelock" offers a 25% discount to the military community.

VA Conference Scandal Update 02: The Department of Veterans Affairs is putting new safeguards in place to prevent a repeat of financial waste and abuse linked to a pair of multi-million dollar training conferences held at a Florida resort in 2011. The Human Resources training conferences at the Orlando World Center Marriott were lavish affairs that cost just over \$6 million in all and saw VA employees accepting gifts from

contractors. One senior official resigned just before a VA Inspector General's report on the conferences was issued Sept. 30; the fates of other officials are still up in the air pending a review of their roles and activities by a panel assembled by VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. Among the safeguards will be

- Quarterly meetings where department senior administration or staff officials will brief the VA's chief of staff on any conferences the VA proposes to host or have its employees attend as far as 12 months out.
- Senior executives will be appointed within any department or branch hosting a conference to make sure all proper steps are followed and funds are spent only in accordance with the approved program.

New VA policies aimed at preventing future abuses are noted in the IG's published report. Under the new conference approval system,

- all planned events costing more than \$20,000 in funds or resources will require a concept plan that will be reviewed by the VA chief of staff at a quarterly briefing. Proposed conferences expected to come in under the \$20,000 threshold will be submitted in a lump-sum estimate. A
- Each administrative and staff office has to ensure their budget officer is engaged throughout the process.
- To help make sure everything is done correctly along the way through to the end, the process will be monitored by a Conference Certifying Official and a Responsible Conference Executive designated by the department hosting the event. According to the VA, both officials must be senior executive service or SES-level employees.
- Any cost increase of 5 percent or more of an approved conference has to be authorized., and
- When a conference does go off, officials now will have to complete an "after action" review to make sure everything went as it was supposed to under the VA's new guidelines.

The greater oversight of the process should remedy some of the wasteful and questionable spending the IG highlighted in its report. This spending included more than \$10,000 for VA officials to scout the Orlando World Center Marriott in advance of the conferences. The IG also questioned more than \$37,000 reimbursed to some VA employees who arrived early to the resort or stayed late, apparently to carry out support work for which the VA had already contracted, and another \$43,000 in awards to VA staff for managing the conferences in light of so much mismanagement. During the conference, VA employees also accepted gifts ranging from massages and shows to helicopter rides from contractors doing business or wanting to do business with the VA. The VA is now going to make it clear that pre-planning site visits are unnecessary, since conference information is readily available online. There are some exceptions, according to the VA. A site visit may be authorized by a contracting officer in some instances before a contract is awarded. And there would be a location meeting -- post-awarding of the contract -- that would include the contracting officer and others directly associated with the conference and venue to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Of the 49 separate recommendations made by the IG, the VA concurred with nearly all, including consulting with legal counsel to determine if action is warranted against officials for their roles in the over-the-top conference. Shinseki accepted the resignation of John Sepulveda, the VA's assistant secretary for human resources, just before the public release of the IG report. Shinseki appears to have stopped short of administrative action against his VA Chief of Staff Robert Gingrich, as recommended by the IG. In the official response to the IG recommendations, the VA makes no direct reply to the recommendation on Gingrich. The VA said Shinseki met with Gingrich and told him he had failed to ask enough questions before signing off on the conferences. The work of the panel formed by Shinseki to review the actions of officials linked to the scandal is still underway. [Source: Military.com] Bryant Jordan | 24 Oct 2012 ++]

Veterans Day 2012: Below are listed some of the restaurants and companies that offer Veteran's Day discounts, deals, and free meals as a "Thank You" to our veterans and active-duty military for their service to our nation. Check out <http://www.lewpblog.com/2012/10/22/veterans-day-appreciation-offer> for updates to this list.

Restaurants with Veterans Day Free Meals

- **Applebees** Free Meal: Applebees is offering a free signature entree on Sunday November 11th, 2012, at participating locations. Choose a 7-oz House Sirloin, Fiesta Lime Chicken, or a Bacon Cheeseburger. Beverages and gratuity are not included. Must present valid veteran's form of identification.
- **Denny's** All You Can Eat Pancakes: Get all-you-can-eat pancakes for all active-duty military and veterans with a valid ID on Monday, November 12, 2012.
- **Golden Corral** Free Meal: A Veterans Day free meal is offered to any veteran who has served in the United States military or is a current active duty service member. All Golden Corral locations will be participating on Monday, November 12, 2012, from 4 PM to 9 PM. No identification is required to get your free Veterans Day meal.
- **Chili's**: Choose from Margarita Grilled Chicken, Chicken Club Tacos, Santa Fe Wrap, Old-time w/Cheese, Cobb Salad, and more. Beverages and gratuity are not included.
- **Olive Garden**: Choose from Seafood Alfredo; Chicken Parmigiana; Braised Beef & Tortellini; Cheese Ravioli; or Spaghetti & Meatballs.
- **Texas Roadhouse**: Choose from Country Fried Chicken, Country Fried Sirloin, Cheeseburger, BBQ, Grilled Chicken Salad, and more. Dine in only.
- **Outback Steakhouse**: Get a free Bloomin' Onion and beverage (non-alcoholic drinks only).
- **Hooters**: Get 10 free boneless or traditional style wings. Drink purchase required.

Retail Stores with Veterans Day Discounts

- **Home Depot** Veterans Day Discount: Every year on Veteran's Day, the Home Depot offers a 10% discount to veterans. Must present a valid military ID. Home Depot also offers this discount to Veterans on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day.
- **Lowe's** Veterans Day Discount: All Veterans receive a 10% discount on Veteran's Day up to \$5,000 on in-stock and special-order purchases. The offer can't be used online, on previous sales, or on sales of services or gift cards. Must present a valid Veteran Identification Card (VIC); valid Form DD214; or other proof of service. Lowes also offers this Veteran's discount on Memorial Day and the Fourth of July.
- Other Discounts and Veterans Day Deals - National Parks Free Veterans Day Admission: Everybody gets free entrance to our National Parks Veterans Day weekend. Dates this year include November 10 – 12, 2012.

The following companies offer discounts, but you may find that *NOT all locations participate:*

Restaurants

Arby's
A&W
Burger King
Carl's Jr.
Chevy's Fresh Mex
Chick-Fil-A
Chipotle
Denny's
Dunkin' Donuts
IHOP
KFC
Long John Silver's
McDonald's
Panda Express
Pizza Hut
Quizno's
Red Robin
Sonic
Taco Bell
Wendy's

Travel

AmTrak
Best Western
Choice Hotels
Continental Airlines
Cruise lines (most)
Hyatt Hotels
Marriott HotelsWyndham Hotels and Resorts

Car Care

AutoZone
Checker Auto Parts
General Motors
Jiffy Lube
Kragen Auto Parts
Meineke
NAPA Auto Parts
Super Sonic Car Wash

Cell Phone Service Discounts

Alltel
Cingular
Sprint/NexTel
T-Mobile
Verizon

Clothing and Shoes

Aeropostale
The Children's Place
Dress Barn
Fanzz (10%)
The Finish Line
Foot Action (15%)
Foot Locker (20%)
Hot Topic
Jos. A. Bank
Jockey
Kohl's
Lerner
New York & Company
Pac Sun
Reebok
Timberland Outlets (active duty only)
Wilson's Leather

[Source: VVA Web Weekly 24 Oct 2012 ++]

Oklahoma Vet Homes Update 02: On 23 OCT Susan Early shared a tragic story of her father's recent death with a legislative panel looking into allegations of inadequate care at the Oklahoma state's seven

veterans' centers. Early said her father died of sepsis 11 APR following a urinary tract infection that went untreated at the Claremore Veterans Center. Jack E. Young, 91, was in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He enlisted when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. He watched the Claremore Veterans' Center being built and told his family that was where he wanted to be when he was older, she told the Senate panel that was conducting its final meeting during an interim study on veterans' care. Early detailed her perception of the lack of care and inadequate treatment he received as a resident.

- "I have seen my father wear the same dirty clothes for four days straight," she said in a written statement.
- During one visit, she found her father so overly medicated that he was unresponsive, she said.
- In another incident, her father, who had osteoporosis, was found on the bathroom floor and put back in bed, she said. It was later determined he had a broken hip, Early said.
- In April, she got a call from the facility saying her father had pneumonia and was taken to the hospital, she said. "Not long after we arrived I was told by the Emergency Room doctor and later confirmed by the doctor in the hospital that he did not have pneumonia, but his entire system was sepsis," she wrote. Sepsis is also known as blood poisoning. "He had a massive, raging infection that the VA never treated or acknowledged," Early said in her statement. "The nurses in the Emergency Room replaced his catheter bag. It had been there so long that it had turned brown and was nasty because the urine had turned color and crystallized." Early said she held his hand while he died. The place he chose to call home ended up killing him from pure neglect, she said.

John McReynolds, Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs interim director, said he had to assume Early's story was correct. He began his job on 20 AUG, he said, adding that he had nothing to refute her story. "I wish that wasn't the case," McReynolds said. He spoke of another incident when Jay Minter, 85, died in May of complications from thermal injuries after being scalded in a whirlpool bath at the Claremore Veterans Center. His widow, Frances Minter, settled a claim with the state for \$175,000, the maximum allowed. An investigation into his death found caretaker abuse and neglect.

Esther Houser, the state's long-term care ombudsman, said patients in the centers were negatively affected when legislation in 2003 removed the centers from unannounced inspections by the Oklahoma State Department of Health under the Oklahoma Nursing Home Care Act. The legislation was in response to a dispute over remodeling at one of the centers, she said. "I don't know about you, but I don't think an announced inspection is an inspection," Houser said. She said some other protections that veterans living in the centers lost when the law was changed included: unannounced complaint investigations; appeal rights when evicted; protection from retaliation for complaints; and direct-care staffing requirements. The facilities are inspected by a contractor of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Reinstating the state inspections would cost at least \$150,000, said Mark Newman, Oklahoma State Department of Health director of state and federal policy. [Source: Tulsa word | Barbara Hoberrock | 24 Oct 2012 ++]

National Museum of the Marine Corps Update 01: Against a steel-blue sky, a giant crane finally lifted the larger-than-life bronze sculpture of Marine Lt. Gen. Lewis Burwell "Chesty" Puller to its place on a slab of stone a few hundred yards from the National Museum of the Marine Corps. The transfer 23 OCT of the 1,000- pound statue of the Marine icon was supposed to have been a simple operation. But in art, as sometimes in the Corps, the situation got a little more complicated. Two three-quarter-inch holes that a contractor was supposed to have drilled in the top of the stone pedestal--to receive metal stabilizing pins on the base of the statue--had been forgotten. Pennsylvania sculptor Terry Jones, who had seen to practically every detail in the planning, production and transfer of the statue, was incredulous. "There's no holes!" he said. But not to worry--a large drill and bits were quickly secured, and it was mission accomplished. The likeness of Puller, the most decorated Marine, who died in

1971, was pointing the way to the museum and posterity. The statue, in the museum's Semper Fidelis Memorial Park, will have a formal dedication 12 NOV.



New eight-foot bronze sculpture of Lt. Gen. Lewis Burwell "Chesty" Puller

Among those on hand for the statue-raising was retired Lt. Gen Robert R. Blackman Jr., president and chief executive officer of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, which oversees the museum off Interstate 95 in Triangle. "Chesty Puller is, perhaps, the most iconic of Marines. To this day, at Parris Island and San Diego, before recruits have lights-out, they recite in unison, 'Good night, Chesty, wherever you are,'" he said. New Marines attend boot camp at the South Carolina and California bases. "So Chesty Puller lives with all Marines, all the time. This magnificent statue is really important to us, in terms of preserving the history, tradition and culture of the Marine Corps." Before the stone pedestal was hoisted into place, vials of sand and soil from Korea to Haiti--where Puller had fought--were emptied into the space beneath it. Blackman said the museum and heritage center are not intended to honor individual Marines, but Puller and a few others of legendary stature--Gen. John A. Lejeune, Gunnery Sgt. Manilla John Basilone and Sgt. Maj. Dan Daly--are exceptions. Lejeune was the 13th commandant of the Marine Corps; Basilone the only enlisted Marine in World War II to receive the Purple Heart, Navy Cross and Medal of Honor; Daly received the Medal of Honor in Haiti in October 1915.

Blackman said Jones was commissioned to sculpt Puller based on his body of work, which includes other monumental statues, smaller sculptures of historical, military and religious figures, and coin designs. Blackman said another factor was important: "Terry's a Marine." Jones, 65, who lives near Valley Forge, Pa., served from 1966 to 1972. Along with the Puller sculpture, some of his other large works include likenesses of Ernest Hemingway at the Custom-House Museum of Art History in Key West, Fla.; John Philip Sousa at the Marine Corps Barracks in Washington; and Union Maj. Gen. John Gibbon at Cemetery Ridge on the Gettysburg battlefield. Jones remembers reciting the "Chesty prayer" in boot camp. "When you've been doing that for three months, you know Chesty Puller," he said.

When Jones got the commission for the statute, he delved deeper into Puller's 37-year military career. Among the highlights: four World War II campaigns, the Chosin Reservoir in Korea, and expeditionary service in China, Nicaragua and Haiti. Puller was the only Marine ever to receive the Navy Cross--second only to the Medal of Honor for naval forces--five times for heroism in action. Jones said he starts with a concept, works closely with the client "and I try to satisfy all the parties, while keeping the [project] pleasing, artistically and design-wise." He added, "There's only so much you can do with a standing figure, so I had to come up with a couple different concepts." The consensus choice was the gruff, pointing version of Puller. Jones said, smiling, "I looked at this mug for a solid year." When the statue was firmly in place, retired Lt. Gen. Stephen G. Olmstead walked over to Jones to compliment him on capturing Puller's scowl. Olmstead was a private in Puller's 1st Marine Regiment at the Chosin

Reservoir in Korea. "That is what I remember from the old man, and you got it perfect," Olmstead said. [Source: Free Lance-Star | Rusty Dennen | 24 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Work-Study Program. If you're a full-time or 3/4-time student in a college degree program, or a vocational or professional program, you can "earn while you learn" with a VA work-study allowance. This is available to persons training under the following programs:

- Post-9/11 GI Bill--(38 U.S.C. Chapter 33)
- Montgomery GI Bill--Active Duty (38 U.S.C. Chapter 30)
- REAP Participants
- Montgomery GI Bill--Selected Reserve (10 U.S.C. Chapter 1606)
- Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (38 U.S.C. Chapter 32)
- Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (38 U.S.C. Chapter 35)
- Eligible dependents under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 35 may use work study only while training in a State.
- National Call to Service Participants
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program -- (38 U.S.C. Chapter 31)

To receive a formal decision from VA on your eligibility you must file a claim for benefits. VA will select students for the work-study program based on different factors such as:

- Disability of the student
- Ability of the student to complete the work-study contract before the end of his or her eligibility to education benefits
- Job availability within normal commuting distance to the student
- VA will give the highest priority to a veteran who has a service-connected
- Disability or disabilities rated by VA at 30% or more.
- The number of applicants selected will depend on the availability of VA-related work at your school or at VA facilities in your area

Under the program participating veterans earn an hourly wage equal to the Federal minimum wage or their State minimum wage, whichever is greater. If in a work-study job at their college or university, the school may pay them the difference between the amount VA pays and the amount the school normally pays other work-study students doing the same job. You may elect to be paid in advance for 40 percent of the number of hours in your work-study agreement, or for 50 hours, whichever is less. After you've completed the hours covered by your first payment, VA will pay you each time you complete 50 hours of service. You may work during or between periods of enrollment. You can arrange with VA to work any number of hours you want during your enrollment. But, the total number of hours you work can't be more than 25 times the number of weeks in your enrollment period. Services you perform under a VA work-study program must be related to VA work. Examples of acceptable work are:

- Processing VA paperwork at schools or VA offices
- Performing outreach services under the supervision of a VA employee
- Performing services at VA medical facilities or the offices of the National Cemetery Administration

For forms and information, one or more of the following offices or representatives can assist you:

- Any VA regional office.
- Any VA office or Vet Center.
- Local representatives of Veteran's organizations.
- Reserve Education and Incentives Officers.

- You can download a copy of the application form at <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22-8691-ARE.pdf>.

Consult a telephone directory under United States Government, Department of Veterans Affairs, for the telephone number of the office nearest you. Toll-free telephone service is available in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands. Call 888-GI-BILL-1 (888-442-4551) or for the hearing impaired call 711. To obtain information on other sources of assistance, contact the financial aid office at your school. [Source: http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/pamphlets/work_study_program.pdf Oct 2012 ++]

VA Work-Study Program Update 01: Many veterans participating in a work-study program with the Veterans Affairs Department while attending college have complained of late paychecks, according a report from the Associated Press. VA created the program for veterans who are enrolled as full-time or three-quarter-time students and seek additional income. The students work up to 25 hours per week, usually helping other veterans with paperwork at VA offices, but sometimes they are assigned to hospitals and cemeteries. The average biweekly paycheck is around \$360 and typically is received anywhere from a couple of weeks to three months late, AP reported. In a statement, VA said it recently lost three employees at a processing center in St. Louis, but it is working toward a solution to send out checks more quickly. The department said it already has reduced the average processing time from 12 days down to five days at the regional office. The processing office in St. Louis is one of four nationwide. Several of the veterans interviewed by AP said they depend on the paychecks and VA's tardiness has put them in dire financial situations. "If I hadn't gotten [an] emergency loan, if that hadn't gone through, I would have gotten kicked out of my apartment for sure," said Loki Jones, an Army Special Forces veteran who served in Iraq and is now a student at the University of Colorado, Denver. More than 10,000 veterans participate in VA's work-study program. [Source: GovExec.com | Eric Katz | 24 Oct 2012 ++]

Arlington National Cemetery Update 39: Arlington National Cemetery on 22 OCT made available to the public a massive electronic database detailing the gravesites of the roughly 400,000 people buried there. Cemetery officials built the database over the last two years to verify the accuracy of their records brought into question by reports of misidentified graves. Prior to 2010, the cemetery used paper records and maps to track who is buried where. On Monday at the Association of the United States Army convention in Washington, the cemetery debuted an interactive map available through its website and through a free smartphone app. It uses geospatial technology to hone in on specific graves and can also be searched by name. It can be accessed through the cemetery's website <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil>.

When a name is called up, a viewer can see when the person was buried and the dates of their birth and death. Photos of the front and back of the headstone can also be viewed. Monuments and memorials that commemorate the service of specific military units are also included in the database. The application also highlights some of the notable graves throughout the cemetery that are popular with the roughly 4 million visitors annually that the cemetery draws. "This is a great day for veterans and our families," said Kathryn Condon, executive director of the Army National Military Cemeteries, which includes Arlington. Officials say the new app makes it easier for people walking the cemetery to locate a loved one's burial place. The app can be downloaded at the cemetery's visitor center.

The database has been the subject of a painstaking review and even now is not 100 percent complete. Katharine Kelley, the cemetery's director of accountability, said that about 99.4 percent of the nearly 260,000 gravesites,

niches and markers have been verified. The remaining few deal largely with some of the cemetery's oldest graves and records, which date to the Civil War. In many cases, it may be an effort to verify the spelling of the first name of a spouse buried at the cemetery among disparate handwritten records. Condon said she could not say how much it cost to develop the website and mobile app, largely because the work to develop the technology was conducted in house. The geospatial technology used to power the smartphone is the same that the cemetery uses to coordinate the 25 to 30 burials conducted there every day. Care is taken to ensure, for example, that maintenance work at the cemetery is not conducted at the same time and place as a burial service. Arlington officials say the cemetery is one of the most technically advanced in the nation. [Source: The Associated Press | Matthew Barakat | 22 Oct 2012 ++]

GI Bill Update 130: Sergeant Hayleigh Perez deployed to Iraq in January 2007 and returned back to Fort Bragg, North Carolina after a 15 month tour. She was honorably discharged in 2009, although her husband is still on active duty. Following her discharge, she decided to use her GI Bill benefits as a veteran to go to school. Perez enrolled in University of North Carolina, Pembroke. The university then told her that she did not qualify for in-state tuition rates. The Post 9/11 GI Bill only covers in-state tuition and the difference has to be made up out-of-pocket by the veteran. In-state tuition ranges from \$1,500 to \$3,700 while out-of-state students pay \$10,000 to \$20,000. One of the criteria that UNC uses to determine residency status is income tax filings. Because Perez had been a stay at home mom, she didn't have any recent NC income tax returns. She and her husband owned a house near Fayetteville and had been paying property tax, even when he was stationed with the Army in Texas. But because she was originally from Iowa and paid her state income taxes there during her military service, North Carolina won't recognize her as a resident.

Sergeant Perez and her husband have been living in North Carolina for the last seven years, are registered to vote and own a home there. That wasn't enough. The university said in a statement that the law, North Carolina G.S. 116-143.1, mandates specific criteria for determining whether a person may be considered a resident for tuition purposes. "The actual determination of residency is a complex legal matter," the university said. "It is the student's responsibility to provide the documentation necessary to support his or her claims for in-state residency for tuition purposes by the applicable deadlines. Supporting documents should show evidence of the student's physical presence in North Carolina for the requisite amount of time and creation of his or her domicile in North Carolina" Perez was given the opportunity to appeal the decision to the State Residency Committee. The committee upheld the university's decision that she was a non-resident. "I'm an American and I served our great country," she said. "My husband continues to serve and I don't have a state of residency if North Carolina is not considering me a resident"

Hers is not an isolated case. So far the Student Advocacy Group, that assists veterans has helped 32 veterans appeal their residency status with the University of North Carolina. However, there had been a movement in North Carolina to automatically grant in-state tuition status to illegals. In North Carolina, an estimated 1,500 illegal immigrants graduate each year from public high schools. But they cannot receive in-state tuition at public universities. But there has been a movement from within the state's university system to change that. In 2007, UNC President Erskine Bowles said that illegal immigrants already are in the state and that creating another permanent underclass is not the right thing to do. Also, Chancellor James Moeser supports their success, saying, it's in the interest of the state to educate all of the people who live here to their highest potential. "They are honor students. In some cases, they are valedictorian(s) of our high schools," Moeser said. "Are we going to deprive this intellectual talent?"

Currently, thirteen states do offer illegal students in-state tuition rates. The move to grant illegals in-state residency status has been blocked by the state's Republicans and now seems dead. In response to SGT Perez's

claims, UNC Pembroke Chancellor, Dr. Kyle Carter issued a statement 22 OCT saying "On the issue of illegal immigrants: The University of North Carolina (UNC) is not considering giving illegal immigrants in-state tuition benefits. UNCP complies with all applicable laws and does not treat undocumented students as residents for tuition purposes. No change to that policy is being considered" North Carolina is home to a number of military bases including Marine Corps Base Camp Lajeune, Pope Air Force Base and Fort Bragg, home of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division and US Army Special Operations Command. Thousands of Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen have deployed to combat from these bases while leaving their families behind. North Carolina has suffered 177 heroes killed in action since the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is little comfort that after their sacrifices, at least our servicemen and women have the same status as illegal aliens in the University of North Carolina. [Source: Examiner.com | Joseph Gilbert | 22 Oct 2012 ++]

Telemarketing Call Elimination Update 10: The U.S. Federal Trade Commission is challenging the public to create an innovative solution that will block illegal commercial robocalls on land lines and mobile phones. As part of its ongoing campaign against these prerecorded telemarketing calls, the agency is offering a \$50,000 prize for the best technical solution. [FTC challenges innovators to do battle with robocallers. FTC news release, Oct 18, 2012] <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2012/10/robocalls3.shtm>. The FTC is also working with industry insiders and other experts to identify potential solutions. However, current technology still allows shady telemarketers to cheaply autodial thousands of phone calls every minute and display false or misleading caller ID information. Among these are the notoriously annoying calls from "Rachel from Cardholder Services." <http://www.ftc.gov/video-library/index.php/for-consumers/scam-watch/robocalls:-all-the-rage/1910213405001?page=18>

Since 1 SEP 2009, the only legal sales robocalls are ones that consumers have stated in writing that they want to receive. Political calls, survey calls, and charitable calls remain legal and are not covered by the 2009 ban. Large-scale commercial robocalls typically involve financial fraud but can also become a colossal nuisance to the vast majority of recipients who reject what is offered. The FTC advises consumers who receive such calls to hang up rather than pressing a number offered to supposedly stop further calls. So far, the FTC has brought 12 enforcement actions, collected \$5.6 million in penalties, and shut down companies responsible for more than 2 billion illegal calls, For more information about the FTC's robocall initiatives refer to <http://www.ftc.gov/robocalls>. [Source: Consumer Health Digest #12-36 Ot 18 2012 ++]

Widow(er)'s SSA Benefits Update 02: Normally, when a veteran dies the surviving spouse, starting at age 60 [50 if handicapped], is entitled to collect full monthly social security benefits based on the veterans' SSA account. This is true only if the widow(er) is not drawing another pension based on his/her prior employment (such as schoolteacher or postal worker) with an employer that had its own retirement plan under which there was no deduction for social security. However, if the widow(er) receives anything from that pension, regardless of the amount, his/her entitlement based on the veterans SSA account will be reduced by two thirds. [Source: RAO Social Security Inquiry 22 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Pension Program: VA's pension program provides monthly benefit payments to certain wartime Veterans with financial need, and their survivors. As Veterans and survivors consider applying for these benefits,

VA would like to share important information about the pension program and organizations offering assistance with pension applications. Towards this effort the VA has released a new and updated fact sheet on VA pension programs that includes important information for veterans, survivors and their families. The fact sheet explains who is eligible to receive pension benefits, and who is eligible for "aid and attendance." The document also provides a website list of accredited representatives that are available to assist claimants with preparation, presentation and prosecution of a claim for VA benefits. The information is accessible in the attachment to this Bulletin title, "**VBA Pension Program**" or via VBA's website link at http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/docs/PensionProgramInfo_final.pdf. [Source: VA Secy Vet Group Liaison Officer Kevin Sector 22 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Burial Benefit Update 16: A father in Indiana is upset because the man he says killed his wife has been buried with full military honors. Alicia Koehl was killed in May during a shooting spree at an apartment complex in Indianapolis. Police say Michael Anderson killed himself before he could be arrested for killing Koehl. Five others were shot. "The person who murdered my wife has been given military honors and buried in a national cemetery up in Michigan and I'm very upset," said Paul Koehl. "I've been told it was a mistake and I've been told that the family either didn't give all the information, or they just lied about information that was asked of them. I was not prepared for, to be a single parent, so it is very challenging. I am not afraid to tell anyone, I miss her cooking every day." The Department of Veterans Affairs released a statement saying it found out about the shooting after Anderson was buried and is now reviewing the case. VA rules say veterans can't be interred in its cemeteries if there's convincing evidence they committed a capital crime but didn't stand trial because of death or flight to avoid prosecution. [Source: CNN WISH | Brandie Piper | 19 Oct 2012 ++]

Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial Update 06: The American Civil Liberties Union told a federal judge 19 OCT, in a hearing to decide whether the group should be dropped from the case, that a veterans' organization should have no say in legal talks on how to modify a war memorial cross that is located on federal land. U.S. District Court Judge Larry Burns said he will issue his ruling on the ACLU's request soon, but he told the court that he was inclined to allow the Mount Soledad Memorial Association to continue to intervene as a party in the case. The association maintains the Mount Soledad cross, which has been deemed to be an unconstitutional mixing of government and religion by a federal court that ordered it be modified but did not specify what needs to be done. David Loy of the ACLU in San Diego argued the veterans' organization maintains the memorial but does not own it and therefore has no right to decide how the property should be reconfigured. Lawyer Jeff Mateer for the Mount Soledad Memorial Association said the veterans' group erected the 29-foot cross in 1954 on a San Diego mountain top and has contractual rights to decide the future of the memorial. [Source: Associated Press article 22 Oct 2012 ++]

USS Enterprise (CVN-65): After the USS Enterprise is defueled and stripped down at Newport News Shipbuilding as part of its retirement from the Navy fleet, the hulking ship must be towed to the Seattle area, home of the only shipyard capable of disposing its nuclear reactors. Initially Navy officials had hoped the widening of the Panama Canal in 2014 would allow for a shorter tug for the 50-year-old aircraft carrier. But after a Navy evaluation of the canal's new lock designs, the ship will likely have to go the long route: around South America and the hard-to-navigate Cape Horn. "The Panama Canal was evaluated, however the current design and build plans for the locks

present obstructions to the carrier flight deck during passage through the canal," the Navy said in an official response to questions from the Daily Press.

A shipping agent with Gateway Transit Limited agreed that the carrier's flat top, which flares out to 257 feet wide, would be problematic. The agent, John Bamber, who's based in Panama, said that the new locks, scheduled to be complete by late 2014, will allow for passage of ships as long as 1,200 feet long and 160 feet wide, which would seemingly accommodate the 1,123-foot-long ship that's 132 feet wide at the water line. "I was approached by a couple of people not long ago about trying to get some of these smaller aircraft carriers through the canal that are 130 feet wide at the water line," Bamber said, in an interview via Skype. But he said the current lock configuration, which is likely to be replicated with the canal widening, presents a problem. There are two locks — an east lane and a west lane — with a control house in between and lamp posts flanking the length of the locks. "So something very, very wide like that would just break off those lamp posts," he said.

A Navy process, referred to as inactivation, kicks off with a 1 DEC ceremony for the country's first nuclear powered carrier in Norfolk, the Big E's home port. Sailors at Naval Station Norfolk will spend the next six months taking equipment off the Newport News-built ship. At that point the Enterprise will dock at Newport News Shipbuilding, a subsidiary of Huntington Ingalls Industries, for an extensive four-year process, in which the company will drain hydraulic systems, empty tanks, remove hazardous materials, and nearly strip it bare. "Some of the equipment on Enterprise is going to be reused on other ships in the fleet, some of it will be mothballed, some of it will be put into storage, some of it will be destroyed," Huntington Ingalls president and CEO Mike Petters said in a recent interview.

The shipyard will leave the eight reactors on the ship, however. "Only Puget Sound Naval Station and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (in Bremerton) has the specialized equipment and expertise to package the reactor compartments for disposal and recycle the rest of the ship," says a Navy fact sheet on the Enterprise's inactivation and decommissioning process. The eight reactor components won't be junked in Bremerton. According to a Navy environmental assessment, the four pairs of compartments will be pulled onto barges, taken into the Pacific Ocean and then up the Columbia River, past Portland, Ore., and on to the Department of Energy's Hanford Site in the desert of southeast Washington. The U.S. government buries nuclear waste in trenches in Hanford, a small town that was cleared out to make way for a World War II-era nuclear production facility.

Tugging an aircraft carrier without its own propulsion from Newport News to the Pacific Northwest requires heavy horsepower and a lot of patience, according to shipping and tug company professionals. "You're not gonna knock any fish out of the water towing a carrier," said Capt. J. Elliott Westall, a retired Navy tug captain and harbor pilot, and general manager and vice president of McAllister Towing's Norfolk office. Westall, who said he served in battle groups with the Big E, said towing smaller warships from San Francisco to Brownsville, Texas, through the Panama Canal, a much shorter voyage, took his company 54 days. With the Enterprise, he estimated, "it's gonna be all-ahead snail speed at 3 1/2, 4 knots ... 5 tops," he said. Five knots works out to about 5.75 mph. Westall called the voyage — which would require accounting for storms, possible refueling of the tugboat, a crew change, and several hard-to-maneuver passages — "a logistical nightmare."

Jonathan Platt, vice president of J.M. Martinac Shipbuilding Corp., a Tacoma, Wash., yard that builds tugboats, used softer language. "Going around the horn is always an entertaining trip and, to be honest, it's pretty nasty weather down there usually," Platt said, estimating it would take two large ocean-going tugs to handle the Enterprise. The cape in particular requires ships and boats to idle for long periods of time until they can pass safely. It provides narrow windows of opportunity for passage, Westall said. And for the entirety of the trip, he said, storms have the potential to add days to the tug: "In some cases you're just stemming the seas to try and ride them out, and when it's real bad you have to pull (your tow) to port."

Platt said pulling the Enterprise would probably require two ocean-going tugs – boats that can be up to 170 feet long and 40 feet wide, with at least 10,000 horsepower. The tugs carry crews of five or six, he said, and "they'll probably leave Newport News, go for 3,000 miles or so, and put a new crew on the boat because that gets to be a really long ride." "You need big power for a big ship," said Westall. "You're talking 90 tons of bollard horsepower, bubba." Bollard horsepower measures the towing strength of a tugboat. And for some company, it could also be a big contract. The Navy does not have its own "towing vessel capable of safely towing a (nuclear carrier) so it will have to be contracted," said the Navy response to the Daily Press. Westall said only a few tug companies have the ships to compete for the tow, which is scheduled to happen in 2017. But he predicted the award would be worth big bucks. Whoever does the work, one thing is for sure, he said — "they're gonna have that picture of the Enterprise in their rear view mirror for a long time." [Source: Stars & Stripes Michael Welles Shapiro article 29 Jul 2012 ++]

USS Enterprise (CVN-65) Update 01: A group of Navy veterans want to preserve the USS Enterprise's history, but it appears they'll be doing it without the ship itself. The veterans learned in March that making a museum out of the aircraft carrier, the largest in the U.S. fleet and the first to be powered by nuclear reactors, isn't an option. More recently they learned that a more modest effort to preserve the ship's island, also wouldn't fly. And for the 10 Nimitz-class carriers in the 11-ship U.S. fleet, a future as a museum seems unlikely. "Inactivation of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers requires removing large sections of ship structure to facilitate reactor compartment removal and disposal," Rear Adm. Thomas Moore, the Navy's program executive officer for carriers, said in a statement emailed to the Daily Press. Converting any one of the carriers, all built in Newport News, Moore wrote, would likely "cost tens of millions of dollars." The Navy already ruled out making a museum out of the Enterprise.

At 50 years old, the ship is the oldest carrier in the fleet. Its inactivation ceremony — a retirement party for ships — is set for Dec. 1. After that the ship will be defueled and stripped down in Newport News, and eventually towed to Puget Sound, Wash., where its eight reactors will be taken out of the ship for disposal. "We had wanted to think that of all the (nuclear) carriers Enterprise would be the one that would be used as a museum," said Don Thiry, who lives in Woodhaven, Mich., and served on the ship during a refueling in Newport News from 1969 to 1971. But Thiry, who also chairs the USS Enterprise Association, said veterans of the ship understand that the ship's eight reactors, and the process to get them off the ship, take that option off the table. "We'd hoped that someplace like Alameda, where we were homeported, or Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth or somewhere in that area would like to have it, but the cost is prohibitive," he said. "And once it's taken apart, nobody wants to pay to put it back together." Another Enterprise vet put it succinctly in a recent issue of the association's newsletter: "Too big. Too nuclear."

The Enterprise was commissioned in 1961, and given the motto, "The First, The Finest." It was and remains the longest aircraft carrier in the U.S. fleet, earning it the nickname the Big E. Early in the ship's career, it was part of a blockade during the Cuban missile crisis and then joined the first nuclear-powered naval task force. That three vessel group steamed around the world without a single refueling. The carrier first saw combat in Vietnam in 1965 — another first for nuclear-powered ships — and was one of the first ships to respond to the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, steaming overnight to establish a presence in the North Arabian Sea. Knowing that the ship itself would not become a museum, the USS Enterprise Association started coming up with other ideas. Thiry said the association asked the Navy about preserving the "island" — the tower that rises above the flight deck. The answer was no. "They said the cost to save even that is just prohibitive," Thiry said. And the island on the Enterprise is not original — it was replaced during the ship's mid-life refueling and overhaul. But some documents and artifacts from the Big E will be saved under policies laid out by the Naval History & Heritage Command. Some of those items can then be donated to museums that showcase naval and aviation history like the Smithsonian National Air and Space

Museum. The command's website includes a long list of such items that are kept from decommissioned ships, including the last flown flag on a vessel, certain plaques, the helm, spyglass and ship paintings and photographs. Thiry said the association is talking with Naval officials and a contact person at Newport News Shipbuilding, a business unit of Huntington Ingalls Industries, as its members continue to think about possible preservation plans.

Joe Brunner, a San Diego-area retiree who was a member the Nimitz's commissioning crew, said he's not surprised to hear that the Navy is reluctant to make a museum out of his old ship and the other carriers in its class. Ship museums are expensive endeavors, even without the nuclear factor, said Brunner, a member of the USS Nimitz Association. "These nonprofit organizations that take over these ships to preserve them are just about, to the last one, in financial trouble," Brunner said. "They're very, very expensive to maintain, and they don't get the support they need to keep them going." All that becomes trickier for a ship that runs on nuclear energy, he added. "You have to remove all the reactors, but you also then have to establish a new power system on the ship," he said. Three aircraft carriers have become museums in the U.S., but none of them was built in the last 60 years. They are the USS Intrepid in New York City, the USS Yorktown in Mount Pleasant, S.C., and the USS Midway in San Diego. As a museum, the Midway has drawn more than 4 million visitors in its first five years. Fans and veterans of the USS Ranger, one of the first so-called supercarriers, learned last week that the Navy plans to scrap that ship instead of donating it for use as a museum on the banks of the Columbia River near Portland, Ore. [Source: Newport News Daily Press | Michael Welles Shapiro | 21 Oct 2012 ++]

USERRA Update 16: Sgt. 1st Class Dwayne Coffey, an Army reservist and Afghanistan veteran, alleges in a lawsuit that he lost his job as a North Carolina school administrator because of his military service. Coffey claims his contract at Warren County High School was not renewed after he was ordered to instruct at an Army leadership course for one month in March 2008, according to court documents filed 19 OCT. Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, it is illegal to terminate employment if a person misses work because of a military deployment. Despite Coffey receiving positive performance reviews from the school's outgoing principal, he was told by Superintendent Ray Spain in April 2008 that he would not recommend that his contract be renewed, and at first would not tell him why, according to the complaint. Spain said that he would provide Coffey with information regarding the reason for his recommendation if Coffey voluntarily resigned," the complaint states.

Coffey did not resign. Three days later, the school board followed Spain's recommendation to end Coffey's employment. Spain then told Coffey that he made the move because "Coffey had a choice as to whether to take military leave during the school year," according to the complaint. When Coffey left for his military assignment in March 2008, he had been appointed acting principal by the principal at the time, who was on medical leave. When Coffey returned, the administrator who assumed control in his absence refused to turn the job back over to him. That administrator was later named principal following Coffey's loss of employment, according to court documents. Coffey is asking for a new contract with the Warren County school system, lost wages since 2008 and other remedies. Coffey first filed a complaint with the Labor Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, which referred the complaint to the Justice Department. The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina then filed suit on Coffey's behalf, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office. [Source: Stars and Stripes | Erik Slavin | 22 Oct 2012 ++]

POW Reconciliation Tours: In OSAKA, Japan the fifth-graders looked curiously at three aging Americans who were imprisoned there a lifetime before they were born, one in a forced labor camp less than a mile from their school. Their questions were innocent and blunt.

- “Why did the war start?”
- “Why do we have to have war?”
- “What do you think of the atom bomb?”



Douglas Northam, 92, gazes down at a thank-you plaque presented to him and two other former prisoners of war by fifth graders at Takami Elementary School

The questions reminded the men of the heartbreak and pain they endured for years as prisoners of war in Japan. But it also gave them hope that such concerns by those so young might help avoid another war. Before the discussion began at Takami Elementary School on a rainy Thursday morning, the ex-POWs kicked off their shoes in traditional Japanese style and slid into slippers before entering the classroom, just as the children did. In his native Texas drawl, Douglas Northam, 92, smiled brightly at the students while venturing a few words of Japanese. He asked them to pass along an “Ohayo” (good morning) to their grandparents from an “American grandpa and an American grandma,” referring to his wife, Hazel, who sat next to him in front of the class. The couple now lives in Reno, Nev.

The ex-POWS arrived in Japan in mid-OCT for a “reconciliation tour” funded by the Japanese government as a way to apologize for the horrible mistreatment the men endured. Osaka has “changed so much since I was here,” said Bob Ehrhart, 89, who was held at the nearby Sakurajima work camp, which once housed hundreds of American and other allied POWs. The camp is just a memory, paved over by towering apartment buildings and neon-lit grocery stores in Osaka’s Konohana ward. Before going to the school, the men were driven through the neighborhood where Ehrhart was held for 19 months. Despite the gray gloom that shrouded the city, Osaka is “just beautiful now,” Ehrhart, who lives in Carmichael, Calif., told the children. “When I left, there was nothing but rubble,” he said, referring to the allied firebombings of Osaka that began March 13, 1945, and ended Aug. 14, the day before Japan surrendered. “It was terrible for us and it was terrible for you,” Ehrhart told the students. “War is stupid. ... I hope you kids never see war.”

The men answered the children’s questions while sipping hot green tea and nibbling on flower-shaped bean paste sweets. “We didn’t know it was an atomic bomb. We POWs were hopeful that it would help release us from our bondage so we could go home,” Northam said. “When we went home and found out what the atom bomb was, we were horrified.” But without it “more people would have died,” said Northam, echoing a long-held position by many Americans that had the U.S. not dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki — the only time such weapons have been used against civilian targets — millions more Japanese and Americans would have died as the war dragged on. “If the bomb didn’t drop I wouldn’t be here before you now,” George Summers, 90, told the children.

“Would you be here today if it weren’t for the bomb?” Summers, a brusque man from Riverside, Calif., who was accompanied by his daughter, Linda Oberman, asked the students if they had heard of the horrors that the men endured as POWs. “I was only six and seven years older than you when I came here,” Summers said. “I often said to myself, ‘Why am I here? ... Where is the happiness I learned in school? Where is my beautiful girlfriend?’ “When I look back I say to myself, ‘What a waste of time. Four years gone,?’” said Summers, who was held as a POW in Guam before coming to Japan on one of the notorious “hell ships” the Imperial Army used for transport. “War is the curse of the world,” Summers said with a booming voice that filled the room, his responses translated by an official from Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “You must always remember that.”

The U.S. enemy-turned-ally captured some 27,000 U.S. troops and forced them into slave labor during World War II; 40 percent died. Most of the POWs who were brought to Japan were dispersed among more than 100 camps run by approximately 60 companies, some of which are still in business today. The POWs suffered at the hands of their Japanese captors: torture, starvation, disease, exposure and the all-too-regular deaths of their brothers-in-arms. During a lecture 15 OCT in Tokyo, seven POWs recounted tales of life as slave laborers and the subtle acts of defiance they pulled off while working in Japanese factories and mines. Summers recounted being so hungry that while on latrine duty, he picked out undigested soy beans from fecal matter. Another time, he stashed stolen rice in his shoes but was caught after being sent to the doctor for an injury. “I had to stand for hours with my hands tied behind my back and an apple on my head,” he said. When the guard came to check on him, he said he was beaten if the apple had fallen.

Ehrhart later told Stars and Stripes he survived by finding black humor in the horror before it could swallow his soul. During his three years as a POW, first in the Philippines, Ehrhart drew 133 cartoons that he managed to bring back home and is in the process of publishing. He sketched on toilet paper, labels from cans of condensed milk and any other scraps of paper he could swipe from his Japanese captors or that he bought from other POWs with his cigarette rations. He drew on the backs of the milk labels and documented atrocities in tiny print in between the listed ingredients. “It not only helped me but also my barracks men. They would give me ideas,” Ehrhart said. “It was about the only time we weren’t thinking about food.” He had to redraw many of them after returning to his barracks one day to find it had been ransacked by the Japanese, who found the cartoons and “gave me the beating of my life.” Some are funny — caricatures of the often brutal POW camp bosses the men knew as honchos; others are dark — depictions of imagined self-mutilation to get out of work. “Some are just crappy,” said the soft-spoken man. “But they all tell a story.”

Several companies have hosted site visits for the POWs since Japan began the reconciliation tours in 2010, when the country issued a long-awaited apology for the brutality the men suffered in captivity. When meeting with the POWs each year, Japanese officials reiterate the apology. Despite some corporate willingness to meet with the men, the companies have yet to apologize. Still, Hitachi Zosen opened the doors to one of its factories to the men 17 OCT. Known as Osaka Iron Works during the war, the former shipbuilding company now makes steel and other industrial materials. Ehrhart was a riveter for the company for 19 months — a job he said he was lucky to get because it allowed him to escape the heinous Sakurajima camp for most of the day. The factory, buried deep in city’s glum industrial district and one of several Hitachi factories in Osaka, is not the same place where Ehrhart worked. That one no longer exists, said plant manager Toru Hosokawa. It’s now a Universal Studios site. “I really wanted to come back,” Ehrhart told the company officials who sat at a square of four long tables in a fluorescent-lit room in the factory’s executive building. “I don’t know why, maybe go back to the scene of the crime. “I’m happy to be here to get closure,” he said. “Although the work was hard, we were not treated badly like we were in the camp. I was lucky. The owners were interested in getting work done, not getting revenge on us.”

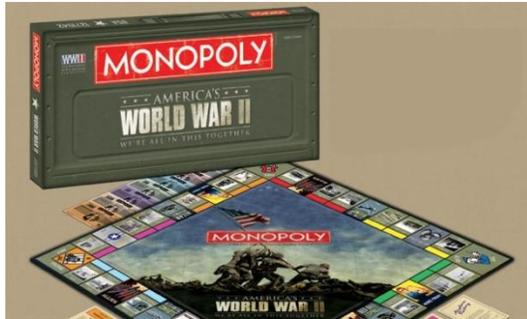
After touring the graphic POW exhibition at the Osaka International Peace Center as middle school-aged Japanese students buzzed around, the men spoke with local resident Takao Iga, 79, who was a girl when they were POWs, and Koichi Ikeda, 86, a former Imperial Army soldier from Osaka who was a POW in Siberia during WWII.

Summers was struck by Iga's story of how she lost her mother and younger brother during the firebombing yet still felt pity for the skinny, downtrodden men she would spy on at the camp. "I wanted her to feel that she was not alone," said Summers, who remembers bombers filling the Osaka sky "from one end to the other," after which "there was nothing left but smoldering ruins." "I was there with her," Summers said. Iga's tale reminded the men of the intermittent but deeply meaningful kindnesses shown to them by some Japanese. Northam recalled when a honcho brought two bottles of beer for him and 17 other men to share around Christmas 1944. "We each got about two swallows," he said. And with it, "a little hope." "It shows that the human spirit will always offer help to someone in dire need." Northam said he built up a sense of hatred and resentment to help him get through his years of brutality. "But I purged myself of that hatred," he said. "I made peace with myself." The children at Takami Elementary School melted his and the other men's hearts. "I feel hopeful today meeting with you," Northam told the students. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Charlie Reed | 20 Oct 2012 ++]

DoD/VA Seamless Transition Update 14: Lack of electronic health record interoperability at a new hospital jointly run by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense is adversely affecting clinical care and costing the government millions of dollars, according to a new report published this week by the Institute of Medicine. The state-of-the-art facility--the Lovell Federal Health Care Center in Chicago (FHCC) -- merged two separate hospitals, and was intended to deliver integrated and cost-efficient healthcare. However, neither VA or DoD wanted to change their EHR systems, resulting in an inability to share patient data between the two systems, according to the report. VA and DoD were going to rely on the development of software interfaces that would permit the systems to work together, but that endeavor has proved too challenging to implement.

As a result, the two EHRs have to be maintained separately, which requires time consuming workarounds at an added cost of \$1 million a year. "The committee recommends that no new federal healthcare centers be implemented until an interoperable or joint EHR system is available," the report said. The IOM also recommended that the two entities standardize their overall policies and procedures and build a framework to evaluate the success of the merger. The VA and DoD previously expressed concern that they would not be able to use a single interface to fully integrate their EHR systems. The joint VA/DoD EHR, known as iEHR is in development. A preliminary roll out of the integrated system is expected in 2014, and a fully integrated system is due in 2017. To learn more the IOM report can be accessed at <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Evaluation-of-the-Lovell-Federal-Health-Care-Center-Merger.aspx>. [Source: FierceEMR | Marla Durben Hirsch | 17 Oct 2012 ++]

Monopoly - America's World War II: The National World War II Museum in New Orleans has created a new edition of a classic board game to educate younger generations about the essential 1940s struggle to halt tyranny and secure cherished freedoms. "Monopoly: America's World War II: We're All In This Together" replaces railroads with supply routes, hotels with camps, and board spaces with World War II events. Up to 6 players can wheel and deal World War II events such as Pearl Harbor, D-Day Normandy and Battle of the Bulge while building support and/or rallying the troops as they establish Camps and Headquarters on their way to victory. The museum was able to create the educational game by teaming up with toy and board game company Hasbro, as well as USAopoly, Inc. Additionally, the museum's education, curatorial, research and retail departments worked with Hasbro to make the game as engaging and historically accurate as possible. To order refer to. To purchase visit <http://store.nationalww2museum.org>. [Source: AL Online Update 18 Oct 2012 ++]



HMS Ambush: The British launched the world's most sophisticated and powerful nuclear submarine 5 January 2011. The HMS Ambush, the second of seven planned Astute class submarines, cost one billion dollars to build. She weighs 7400 tons, is 291ft long, as wide as four double-decker buses, and 12 storey's high. Some of her unique features are:

- Carries 38 Tomahawk cruise missiles capable of hitting targets 1,200 miles away
- Her sonar can detect vessels moving 3,000 miles away on the other side of the ocean
- Powerful nuclear reactor allows her to cruise non-stop for 25 years
- Her propellers are said to make less noise than a baby dolphin — making her virtually undetectable to enemy vessels.
- She is able to make oxygen and fresh water from seawater, to keep the crew of 103 alive in time of crisis.
- Her nuclear-powered engine will propel her through the water at more than 20 knots.
- She is so hi-tech the giant submarine doesn't even need a periscope



Two shipyard workers, to the lower left of the huge propeller show the enormous scale of HMS Ambush

Ambush also has a more human side. One of the benefits of the submarines being so much bigger than their predecessors is that the crew will be the first in the Navy to have their own beds. Submariners at present work round the clock and have to "hot bunk", or share a bed with someone on the opposite shift pattern, one sleeping while the other one works. But conditions are still hardly luxurious. The captain is the only man who has his own room and wash-hand basin. The bunks for everyone else are stacked three high, with the middle bed the favored choice - the top one is harder to get in to and the bottom one means being close to people's feet, which after 90 days without fresh air is not a desirable place to be. Each submariner has one small locker to keep all his worldly goods in during the 10 week tours. There are five showers and five toilets for the sailors. The new design a huge improvement, but it will still be a special kind of person who can live on a submarine.[Source: Various 4 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Pension/Disability: VA Pension by definition says that the person does not have and can not hold gainful employment due to disability and their total income is below the threshold set by law and regulation. The rules for working on a VA Disability are not so cut and dry and vary with the type of service compensation and each veteran's circumstances. There are several types of VA Service Compensation 100% disability for work purposes.

1. **100% Scheduler** – rated 100% for physical disabilities based on the VA CFR schedule. Disabled veterans on a 100% scheduler disability can work without limitations except where the definition of the disability makes the presumption that the veteran is unable to hold a job.
2. **100% TDIU – Individual Unemployability** - You are only allowed to be marginally employed. You can only make a certain amount of money, and if you make more than that marginally amount of money, your IU rating will be reviewed for possible reduction in your current rating!
3. **100% Scheduler for PTSD or other psychiatric disability** – Veterans receiving 100% disability for PTSD may not work, as that is part of the definition of 100% disabled by psychiatric disability. The definition of 100% PTSD is, “Total occupational and social impairment, due to such symptoms as: gross impairment in thought processes or communication; persistent delusions or hallucinations; grossly inappropriate behavior; persistent danger of hurting self or others; intermittent inability to perform activities of daily living (including maintenance of minimal personal hygiene); disorientation to time or place; memory loss for names of close relatives, own occupation, or own name.”
4. **70% TDIU – Individual Unemployability** – The PTSD 70% definition is, "Occupational and social impairment, with deficiencies in most areas, such as work, school, family relations, judgment, thinking, or mood, due to such symptoms as: suicidal ideation; obsessional rituals which interfere with routine activities; speech intermittently illogical, obscure, or irrelevant; near-continuous panic or depression affecting the ability to function independently, appropriately and effectively; impaired impulse control (such as unprovoked irritability with periods of violence); spatial disorientation; neglect of personal appearance and hygiene; difficulty in adapting to stressful circumstances (including work or a worklike setting); inability to establish and maintain effective relationships." You can see that even at 70% employment is not consistent with the rating, and at 100%, 'inability to perform activities of daily living' and 'Total occupational and social impairment' says that work is an issue. Having this problem implies a person is unable to work. Veterans should exercise caution even if working as a volunteer. If the VA determines that the nature and amount of unpaid work that you are performing demonstrates that you are not unemployable, TDIU can be revoked. Anytime the VA revokes a TDIU rating, the amount of disability compensation drops to the level of the veteran's actual rating under the rating schedule.

There are laws and regulations that protect VA disability ratings that have been in place for certain periods of time. If a VA award of service connection for a disability has been in effect for ten years or more, absent evidence of

fraud in applying for compensation for that disability, the VA may not revoke service connection but can reduce the rating percentage. Similarly, if a specific rating percentage has been in effect for 20 years or more, absent evidence of fraud, the VA may not revoke service connection nor reduce that rating.

Bottom line, veterans assigned a VA disability rating are subject to reevaluation based on employment or improved condition. Lowering a rating is possible up to a point and the criteria for lowering can vary with each veteran's circumstances. The type and duration of any work is a major factor in the VA's decision on whether to lower or remove a preassigned percentage. If in doubt check with your assigned primary physician and/or local VARO for clarification on any limitations placed on you regarding employment or voluntary endeavors. [Source: <http://forums.military.com>, vetsfirst.org & CalVet Oct 2012 ++]

VA Medical Marijuana Policy Update 05: A medical marijuana advocate on 16 OCT urged a federal appeals court to require the U.S. government to relax, or at least rethink, a more-than-40-year-old rule that treats marijuana as a highly dangerous drug with no medical value. Federal drug regulators "have failed to weigh the evidence" from a growing number of medical studies showing that marijuana is effective for relieving pain and nausea, said Joe Elford, counsel for Americans for Safe Access. In his legal brief, he said the Drug Enforcement Administration displayed a "bias" against marijuana by ignoring its medical benefits and exaggerating its danger. That is the only way to explain how the "federal government could conclude that marijuana is as harmful as heroin and PCP and even more harmful than methamphetamine, cocaine and opium," he told the court. Elford was challenging the DEA's insistence that marijuana is properly classified as a Schedule I drug, meaning it has no accepted medical benefits and has a high potential for abuse. This classification means, for example, that doctors at the Veterans Administration may not give marijuana to a disabled veteran to treat his chronic pain, he said, citing the plight of one of the plaintiffs in the case. If marijuana were reclassified, Elford said, it would help doctors and patients by permitting its use under medical supervision.

Marijuana's classification as a Schedule I drug dates to 1970, when Congress passed the Controlled Substances Act. On two occasions since then, marijuana advocates have petitioned the DEA to reconsider the classification, citing the medical benefits of cannabis. They also noted that 16 states and the District of Columbia have opted to allow medical use of marijuana in some instances. But the DEA turned down the most recent petition last year and made no change in the classification schedule. By way of explanation, the agency said there was not a scientific consensus on the medical benefits of marijuana. It also said marijuana has many "chemical components" that are not well understood.

During the argument, a Justice Department lawyer said the government remained convinced of the danger of marijuana. "It's the most widely abused drug in the United States," said Lena Watkins, the government lawyer. The case was heard by a veteran panel of three judges who questioned whether they were in a position to reject the DEA's determination. "Don't we have to defer to their judgment" on what the medical studies show? asked Judge Merrick Garland. "We're not scientists. They are." Judge Harry Edwards added, "The real question is to what extent we have to defer to the agency.". The two judges said they could not overturn the DEA's decision unless they found it to be "arbitrary and capricious." Elford responded that the judges should send the case back to the DEA to require the agency to hold a hearing to consider research over the last decade on the benefits of marijuana. Judge Karen Henderson, the third member of the panel, noted that changing the classification of marijuana would not decriminalize it. "It would still be illegal," she said. [Source: Los Angeles Times | David G. Savage | 16 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Fraud Waste & Abuse Update 26:

- **Maui HI** - The son of a celebrated World War II 442nd Regimental Combat Team veteran is scheduled to stand trial in U.S. District Court for allegedly continuing to cash his father's military disability checks more than six years after his father died. A federal grand jury returned an indictment last month charging Charles T. Takahashi for allegedly stealing \$202,662 from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs from March 2, 2006, to Aug. 31 this year. Takahashi pleaded not guilty 16 OCT by telephone from his home on Maui. His trial is scheduled for December. He declined comment following his arraignment. Takahashi is an officer of the 442nd Maui Veterans Council. His father, Suguru A. Takahashi, died March 2, 2006. He was 85. The elder Takahashi was a member of the storied 442nd RCT in WWII and a survivor of the famous rescue of the Texas Lost Battalion in the Vosges Mountains of eastern France. A larger-than-life-size cut-out of a wartime photograph of Takahashi is one of the displays at the Nisei Veterans Memorial Center in Kahului. [Source: The Honolulu Star-Advertiser | Nelson Daranciang | 17 Oct 2012 ++]
- **Syracuse NY** - Authorities say a postal worker has admitted stealing prescription drugs out of the mail in northern New York. The U.S. Attorney's office in Syracuse says 38-year-old Phillip Wiley of Dexter pleaded guilty to stealing the drugs, mostly hydrocodone, and said he had a drug problem. He was working at the Watertown post office when he stole 55 packages or envelopes from the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs starting in 2009. The postal service and veteran's affairs department began investigating in 2010 after getting complaints from customers who didn't receive medications. The felony carries a penalty of up to five years in prison plus a fine up to \$250,000. Wiley is scheduled to be sentenced March 6. [Source: WSJ article 19 Oct 2012 ++]
- **Philadelphia PA** - Doris Whitfield Richardson , 60, was sentenced 22 OCT to nearly three years in prison for stealing \$222,000 in government assistance checks sent to her grandmother for decades after the older woman had died. For 21 years, Richardson went to great lengths to keep collecting her grandmothers' federal veterans and pension benefits, authorities said, depositing the checks into her own account. At the same time, Richardson was getting Social Security and housing assistance checks of her own. U.S. District Judge Paul S. Diamond handed down the 33-month prison term after rejecting arguments from her attorney that the money didn't pay for a lavish lifestyle but just to keep afloat a poor family "on the edge of desperation." Richardson only used the money to care for her grandchildren, including a disabled granddaughter, Toplin said. A prison term would destroy the family, she argued.

Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Amanda Reinitz noted that Richardson lied twice to agents during the investigation by the Secret Service and Veterans Administration's Office of Inspector General. The agencies depend on people receiving assistance to be honest, she said. "These programs are simply too large to individually monitor each person who received benefits," the prosecutor wrote in a sentencing memo to the judge. The judge said he recognized that Richardson had become a key provider for her grandchildren, but said that didn't justify fraud. He also noted that Richardson had five previous convictions for crimes including assault, drugs and weapons possession. The only reason she stopped taking the money, Diamond concluded, was because she got caught. Richardson didn't deny it. "Did it ever occur to you to go out and get a job?" the judge said. "Did it ever occur to you that the way to help your grandchildren is not to commit a series of endless federal frauds?" He also rejected a request that Richardson, who uses a walker and a wheelchair, be allowed to report to prison at a later date. He ordered her into custody immediately. [Source: Philadelphia Inquirer | John P. Martin | 23 Oct 2012 ++]
- **Dayton OH** - Nine Ohio veterans are accused of submitting false mileage information to gather thousands of dollars in reimbursements. The Montgomery County prosecutor said 23 OCT that the veterans qualified for mileage reimbursements for driving to the Dayton VA Medical Center for medical services. Prosecutor

Mat Heck Jr. says the veterans took advantage of their status and submitted false mileage information resulting in a combined theft of more than \$56,000. The indictment includes charges of theft and tampering with government records. Heck said each defendant faces a potential sentence of four to four-and-a-half years. Gavin McClaren, of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, said in a written statement the money should have been used for medical care of Dayton-area veterans, particularly those returning from combat.

As a result of the indictment federal investigators are conducting a statewide audit of veteran mileage reimbursement claims. More than \$2 million was paid to a total of 9,074 veterans for travel reimbursement through the Dayton VA Medical Center in fiscal year 2012, according to VA figures. Within the past two years nationwide, the VA has investigated 173 cases and worked with authorities to make 140 arrests that led to 84 convictions. The penalties imposed more than \$790,000 in fines and restitution while the federal agency recovered more than \$200,000 in additional cash through administrative action. [Source: AP News 23 Oct 2012 ++]

Big Brother: Verizon admits it's going to make money spying on you, according to CNET. The company this month began offering reports to marketers showing what Verizon subscribers are doing on their phones and other mobile devices, including what iOS and Android apps are in use in which locations. Verizon says it may link the data to third-party databases with information about customers' gender, age, and even details such as sports enthusiast, frequent diner or pet owner. "We're able to view just everything that they do," Bill Diggins, U.S. chief for the Verizon Wireless marketing initiative, told an industry conference earlier this year. "And that's really where data is going today. Data is the new oil." Experts quoted in the article suggest that may be illegal. Here's how to prevent it: Go to the Verizon Wireless account privacy page, log in, and scroll down to "Business & Marketing Reports." Check the radio button in the "Don't use my information" column in the "All Cell Phone Numbers" row – it's the upper left circle. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Brandon Ballenger | 17 Oct 2012 ++]



Blunders in Arms: Military weaponry has come a long way from the bow and arrow. In the modern era, each year brings ever more intricate and sophisticated weaponry — for the most part. But this upward trend occasionally takes a detour into some pretty strange territory, resulting in some weird contrivances that make you wonder whether their inventors were, let's say, one cartridge short of a full clip.

Just Plane Ice - Project Habbakuk, no doubt, is the most ambitious example of it-seemed-like-a-good-idea-at-the-time hubris. In 1942, Allied shipping was taking a beating from German U-boats because of a lack of aircraft carriers to provide air cover. British scientist Geoffrey Pyke thought to create a 4,000-foot-long, 600-foot-wide carrier made of ice mixed with wood pulp, claiming it would be unsinkable because ice always floats. Holes from bombs or torpedoes simply could be filled with water and frozen. A model of the carrier was constructed and floated in a Canadian lake to prove the concept to American military officials because Britain was running low on

research and construction funding and eager for a partner. Predictably, the Navy brass decided ice was better in cocktails than carriers, and the project was scuttled. All that remains is a commemorative plaque on the lakeshore.

Spin Doctor - English inventor Raoul Hafner apparently thought any military asset could be improved by slapping a pair of rotors on top. His first invention was the Rotochute, a contraption that replaced a parachute with a crude autogyro that would allow a paratrooper to glide to a safe landing. When that project was canceled, he came up with the Rotabuggy, a flying Jeep that actually made it to the prototype stage before being deep-sixed. Mercifully, his flying tank concept quite literally never got off the ground.

Nasal Warfare - Today, the development of nonlethal weapons has become a prime focus of inventors, for purposes of crowd dispersal and other uses. But the concept goes back to World War II, when the U.S. Office of Strategic Services developed a spray called “Who Me?” for the French Resistance that smelled like, well, poop. The idea was to clandestinely spray it on German officers, who would become embarrassed, weakening the command structure and bringing the entire Third Reich to its knees — or something like that. Unfortunately, it was so pernicious it escaped and covered everything it touched, making the sprayer smell just as bad as the sprayee. The concept of stench warfare died a merciful death — until the Pentagon, whose officials apparently think the idea still passes the sniff test, recently resurrected it.

Musical Hearing Aids - For sheer whimsical weirdness, it’s hard to top Japanese War Tubas, which looked like something Dr. Seuss might dream up. These acoustic listening devices were placed beside anti-aircraft batteries to detect the sound of aircraft engines during World War I and the beginning of the World War II. The advent of radar relegated them to the trash heap of history — and articles like this one.

Seer Suckers - Other countries don’t have a monopoly on dubious military inventions. In the late 1960s, the CIA began to hear rumors of Soviet experimentation with psychic phenomenon such as clairvoyance and remote viewing, the ability to “see” events before they happen, or at a distance. Being beaten into space by the Soviets had been bad enough; the CIA had no desire to get caught flatfooted in the extrasensory perception arena as well. If there was to be any enemy mind-reading going on, CIA agents wanted to be the ones doing it. And so Project Stargate was born. Sponsored by DoD, Stargate was an umbrella term for several programs that aimed to evaluate and develop psychic abilities for military information-gathering purposes. When Army Col. William Johnson was assigned to head up the remote viewing unit, he began to hire a series of psychics for the project. At its peak, 22 “remote viewers” worked in the program, making predictions and describing their remote visions to researchers. Stargate’s participants still insist their efforts resulted in several successful predictions, but noted psychic debunker James Randi contends they were a matter of chance. The project was bounced around from agency to agency under a series of code names until, after \$2 million had been expended, the CIA finally killed it in 1995, letting the Soviets win the clairvoyance race.

Flying Parasites - When long-range bombers were invented just before World War I, distant targets were no longer out of reach. But with the extra range came a problem: Although bombers could carry enough fuel to get them to the objective and back, the same wasn’t true of the fighters that provided them protection on their missions. And without that fighter cover, the big, lumbering bombers were sitting ducks. In the late 1920s, one Vladimir S. Vakhmistrov, a Soviet aviation designer and project engineer, had a brainstorm: Why not just bring the fighters along, attached to the bomber? They could be released midair to battle enemy fighters and make their way home under their own power, it was reasoned. Experiments soon were being carried out with a twin-engine TB-1 bomber carrying a Tupolev I-4 fighter above each wing. Vakhmistrov called it the Zveno. At one point, the Soviets loaded a bomber with five fighters, two above and two below the wings, with a fifth hanging from a trapeze underneath. Why they didn’t call it the Flying Circus is anyone’s guess. The composite aircraft made exactly one successful flight, blowing up a bridge in Romania during the early days of World War II, before the project was canceled. But that wasn’t the end of parasite fighters. In the late 1960s, Convair unveiled an atomic-powered bomber concept that

included two jet fighters plugged into its tail, but by then, midair refueling had eliminated the need for parasite fighters, and they live on only in model kits.

Bat Bombs - It is not widely known, but the U.S. had its own kamikaze program in World War II. Fortunately, the airborne forces were bats. The idea, dreamed up by dental surgeon Lytle S. Adams, was to fit the flying rodents with tiny time-delay incendiary bombs and drop them over Japan in cardboard boxes attached to parachutes. The containers would open at around 1,000 feet, and the bats would scatter, coming to roost in the eaves of buildings where the bombs would go off, starting fires. Testing began in the spring of 1943 at an Army auxiliary field near Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico, where the bats were obtained. The tests went well — in fact, too well. After being released from a B-25, the bats returned to the base and burned down a barracks, a control tower, and some other buildings. The project then was transferred to the Navy, which spent another \$2 million on it before cutting their losses in mid-1944.

Bird-Brained Bombardiers - One particularly snicker-inducing invention was the brainchild of famed behaviorist B.F. Skinner, who during World War II thought he had come up with a better way to guide missiles to their targets. He proposed putting a lens on the front of a missile that would beam an image to a screen inside, in front of which perched — and this is not a joke, although it probably should be — a pigeon. The bird would be trained to recognize targets and peck at them on the screen. The touch-sensitive screen was connected to the missile's guidance system, and as long as the target remained centered as he pecked, the pigeon would receive a few kernels of grain. If the missile drifted off course, the pigeon's food supply would be cut off and it would peck frantically at the target, moving the crosshairs back to the center. Skinner actually had some success in training the pigeons before the program was canceled in 1944. (Check out one YouTuber poking fun at the concept in the animation Pigeon: Impossible.)

Today, of course, technology has become much too sophisticated to produce such oddball inventions. Well, except for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency programs to develop cyborg moths, a robot that looks like The Blob from the titular 1958 movie, and a way to map cities by their odors. It's comforting to know some things never change. [Source: MOAA News Exchange | Mark Cantrell | 27 Sep 2012

COLA 2013 Update 02: Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 62 million Americans will increase **1.7 percent** in 2013, the Social Security Administration announced 16 OCT. The 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that more than 56 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2013. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2012. Some other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$113,700 from \$110,100. Of the estimated 163 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2013, nearly 10 million will pay higher taxes as a result of the increase in the taxable maximum. Information about Medicare changes for 2013, when announced, will be available at <http://www.Medicare.gov>. For some beneficiaries, their Social Security increase may be partially or completely offset by increases in Medicare premiums. The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola>. [Source: SSA Fact Sheet <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/factsheets/colafacts2013.htm> ++]

COLA 2013 Update 03: Federal retirees will receive a 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment in 2013, according to the latest government figures. The Bureau of Labor Statistics early 16 OCT released September's inflation figure, the final data point needed to calculate the 2013 COLA. Inflation stayed relatively low over 2012, resulting in a 2013 COLA that is much less than this year's 3.6 percent bump. The government publishes the annual cost-of-living adjustments typically in late October, based on the percentage increase (if any) in the average Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for the third quarter of the current year over the average for the third quarter of the last year in which a COLA became effective. The CPI-W measures price changes in food, housing, gas and other goods and services. The 3.6 percent boost in 2012 was the first COLA increase since 2008. The average of the July, August and September numbers along with the average figure from the third quarter of 2011 are used to calculate the 2013 COLA.

All federal retirees -- whether they are covered by the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System -- will receive the full 1.7 percent. According to the formula, if the full COLA increase is 3 percent or higher, as it was for 2012, then FERS retirees receive 1 percent less than the full increase. So FERS retirees received a 2.6 percent boost for 2012. If the COLA falls between 2 percent and 3 percent, then FERS retirees would receive 2 percent. If the increase is less than 2 percent, as it will be in 2013, FERS retirees receive the same as CSRS retirees. The increase will result in about \$21 more per month for retirees, according to an Associated Press report. This year's increase takes effect on Dec. 1 and will be reflected in retirees' first annuity payments in January 2013. The salaries of federal employees are not affected by the COLA announcement.

The COLA amount that recipients actually end up with is affected by Medicare Part B premiums, since those premiums are deducted from Social Security payments. The government will announce the 2013 premiums, expected to increase between 5 percent and 10 percent over 2012 rates, later this fall. That means recipients likely will see less than the 1.7 percent expected increase. Joseph A. Beaudoin, president of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, said his organization was pleased that retirees will receive "some relief" from inflation. "This is welcome news for retirees who have seen the cost of living continue to increase over the past year," he said. "As Congress debates ways to avoid the 'fiscal cliff,' NARFE is prepared to oppose any changes to the COLA formula that would have an adverse effect on retirees." [Source: GovExec.com | Kellie Lunney | 16 Oct 2012 ++]

COLA 2013 Update 04: The 1.7% 2013 COLA will be the fourth-lowest COLA for military retirees since the turn of the century – trailing only the zero-COLA years of 2009-10 and the 1.4% of 2002. But there are two categories of military retirees who won't receive a 1.7% COLA:

- 1) 2012 Retirees: Some servicemembers who retired during calendar year 2012 will receive a somewhat smaller, partial COLA for this year only, because they weren't in retired status for the full year. Their partial COLAs generally reflect the amount of inflation experienced in the calendar quarters since they retired. Jan.-Mar. retirees will receive 1.7%; Apr.-Jun. retirees, 1.0%; and Jul.-Sept. retirees 0.2%. Those who retire after Oct. 1, 2012, will see no COLA this year. All members who retired during 2012 will receive full-year COLAs in future years.
- 2) REDUX Retirees: Servicemembers who entered service on or after Aug. 1, 1986 and who elected to accept a \$30,000 career retention bonus at the 15-years-of-service point agreed to accept reduced retired pay and COLAs as a trade-off for the bonus. REDUX retirees' COLAs are depressed 1% below the normal COLA rate, so they'll see a 0.7% COLA this year.

[Source: MOAA Leg Up 19 Oct 2012 ++]

COLA 2013 Update 05: The U.S. Senate was widely expected to clear a bill providing a cost-of-living increase for veterans "during one of the biweekly pro-forma sessions being held during the congressional recess." But Senate Democratic leaders have set aside action on the bill until the post-election session of Congress because they are "concerned that passage by unanimous consent would erode the White House's position in a federal lawsuit challenging the president's recess appointments of Richard Cordray as head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), and three members of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)." It has also been speculated that Democrats balked at this idea so they could continue to claim through Election Day that Republicans are trying to deny a cost-of-living adjustment for veterans. But they also will have a must-pass bill lined up for a vote when Congress returns to work. VA officials have promised veterans will receive the 1.7 percent COLA in January checks as long as the law providing the increase is enacted by the first week of December. [Source: GQ article 17 Oct 2012 ++]

Vet Benefits (Federal): In addition to the pensions and benefits to which you may be entitled because of both public and private employment, you may also be eligible for certain benefits based on your military service. The following is a summary of veteran's benefits and what you need to know about them:

- Major Veteran Benefit Programs - <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#1>
- PTSD Support - <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#PTSD>
- Important Documents <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#2>
- Eligibility - <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#3>
- Application - <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#4>
- Related Links - <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefits-explained.html#5>

Major Veteran Benefit Programs. The Department of Veterans Administration operates a number of programs providing financial, medical and other assistance to veterans. For Americans who received an honorable or general discharge, there are 4 major benefit programs:

- Disability compensation <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veteran-disability-compensation.html>
- Veteran's pension programs <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-pensions.html>
- Free or low-cost medical care through VA hospitals and medical facilities <http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/veterans-health-care-overview.html>
- Education Programs <http://www.military.com/education/gi-bill/learn-to-use-your-gi-bill.html>

There are also benefit programs concerning:

- Housing and Home Loan Guarantees.
- Job Training.
- Small Businesses and business loans (Through Small Business Administration).
- Counseling.
- Burials and Memorials.
- Franchise Opportunities (Vet Fran).
- PTSD Support - National Center for PTSD Website.

PTSD Support: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a disorder that occurs after a life-threatening event, such as personal assault, natural disaster, or military combat. The affects of PTSD can be debilitating with symptoms ranging from severe nightmares and flashbacks to insomnia and increasing social isolation. It is common for service members to deal with post-combat depression, insomnia, nightmares and family issues; however, it's the duration and intensity that differentiates PTSD. Each military branch has programs for its service members, and the Department of Veterans Affairs offers free counseling sessions. For more information on PTSD or VA assistance, go to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder website <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>.

Important Documents: If you are applying for a VA benefit for the first time you must submit a copy of your service discharge form (DD-214, DD-215, or for WWII veterans, a WD form), which documents your service dates and type of discharge, or give your full name, military service number, branch and dates of service. Your service discharge form should be kept in a safe location accessible to the veteran and next of kin or designated representative. Your preference regarding burial in a national cemetery and use of a headstone provided by VA should be documented and kept with this information. The following documents will be needed for claims processing related to a veteran's death: (1) veteran's marriage certificate for claims of a surviving spouse or children; (2) veteran's death certificate if the veteran did not die in a VA health care facility; (3) children's birth certificates or adoption papers to determine children's benefits; (4) veteran's birth certificate to determine parents' benefits.

VA Benefits Eligibility: Eligibility for most VA benefits is based on discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active service means full-time service as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, the Environmental Services Administration or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Current and former members of the Selected Reserve: You may be eligible for certain benefits, such as home loan guarantees and education, if you meet the time-in-service and other criteria. Honorable and general discharges qualify a veteran for most VA benefits. Dishonorable and bad conduct discharges issued by general courts-martial may bar VA benefits. Veterans in prison and parolees may be eligible for certain VA benefits. VA regional offices can clarify the eligibility of prisoners, parolees and individuals with multiple discharges issued under differing conditions.

Application: Veterans and their family members who wish to contact the Department regarding a claim, benefits, or services, may fill out question forms on the website (<http://www.va.gov>), or call VA Toll-Free:

- (800) 827-1000 - Phone
- (800) 827-4833 - TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf)

[Source: Military.com Oct 2012 ++]

Veterans' Treatment Court Update 16: Two and a half million Americans have served in Iraq and Afghanistan; many of them, more than once. The VA tells us about 20 percent come home with post-traumatic stress disorder, known as PTSD. So, that comes to about 500,000. For some, returning is harder than they imagined. The suicide rate for the Army is up 15 percent over last year. For the Marines its up 28 percent. A few of our troops return to become something they never thought they could be: criminals, for the first time in their lives. Around Houston, in Harris County, Texas, 400 veterans are locked up every month. 60 Minutes met a judge there who saw them coming before the bench, fresh out of the warzone and he thought a lot of them were worth saving. On 14 OCT 60 Minutes aired their Coming Home: Justice for Our Veterans segment which tells what is happening to some of these vets, their stories, and how they are being helped. Correspondent Scott Pelley tells the story which can be

viewed at <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50133122n&tag=contentMain%3BcbsCarousel>. A scrip of the show is also available at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57531938/coming-home-justice-for-our-veterans/?pageNum=2&tag=contentMain:contentBody. Good viewing/reading. [Source: Vantage Point | Alex Horton | 15 Oct 2012 ++]



Veteran: I felt like a monster

VA Cancer Treatment Update 03: Age, not overall health or prognosis, plays too large a role in determining what patients get cancer treatment, according to a new study from the San Francisco VA Medical Center and the University of California, San Francisco. The study focused on more than 20,000 patients 65 and older with non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and found that younger patients were more likely to receive treatment than older patients, regardless of their health status or chance for improvement. In fact, for all stages of the cancer, treatment rates decreased more in association with advancing age than with the worsening of other illnesses. As a result, patients between the ages of 65 to 74 who were severely ill from other illnesses received treatment at roughly the same rates as those in the same age range with no comorbidities. Yet, the authors noted, the patients who were severely ill from other conditions were less likely to benefit and more likely to be harmed from cancer treatment. “It’s clear that, as human beings and physicians, we fixate on age in deciding whether to pursue cancer treatments, including lung-cancer treatments,” said lead author Sunny Wang, MD, a San Francisco VAMC physician and an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the University of California-San Francisco. “Instead, we should be looking at our patients’ overall state of health.” The study, based on an analysis of the electronic health records of veterans who were in the VA Central Cancer Registry from 2003 to 2008, was published earlier this year in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. “The message here is, ‘Don’t base cancer treatment strictly on age,’” said Wang. “Don’t write off an otherwise healthy 75 year old and don’t automatically decide to treat a really ill 65 year old without carefully assessing the risks and benefits for that patient.” [Source: U.S. Medicine | Oct 2012 ++]

Supermarket Food: No matter how low the price, certain foods aren’t worth your hard-earned cash. While some inexpensive foods can offer great nutritional bang for your buck, others are heavy on fat, sugar, and artificial ingredients. MoneyTalksNews asked nutritionists, chefs, and other experts which “deals” you should approach with caution. They advised the following 7 items were the worst buys:

Lunch meats - “They usually contain fillers such as wheat, sugar, MSG and preservatives,” says Erika Kormeili, founder of The Center for Healthy and Happy Living. Many also have sodium nitrate, a preservative that has been linked to digestive problems and cancer. Look for brands that are labeled “no nitrates” or “no nitrates added.”

White bread - “The processing depletes nutrients and fiber from the wheat,” says registered dietician Lisa Hugh. “The bread is basically devoid of needed, natural nutrients and may contain undesirable preservatives.” White bread

can also contain plenty of sugar. Whole grains are the better pick – they have more fiber and will keep you full longer.

Frozen meals - Earlier this year, Men’s Health listed the 20 Worst Foods in America, including frozen fried chicken as “worst supermarket meal.” Most frozen meals are loaded with trans fats, sugar, and artificial ingredients. For example, one of the meals the article cited compared it to eating 8.5 fried chicken drumsticks. Another roasted chicken meal made Fitbie’s list of the top supermarket gut bombs with a sugar equivalent of three donuts. Bottom line: Read the nutrition labels carefully.

Processed cheese - “Spring for the real stuff,” Hugh says. Processed American slices or “singles” aren’t technically cheese. This product is mostly composed of milk and whey protein concentrates, salt, and other food chemicals. (By law, they can’t even be labeled “cheese,” just “processed cheese.”)

Snack cakes and bars - Don’t let the size fool you – these small snacks can pack a powerful caloric punch. These packaged treats also made the Men’s Health list of worst supermarket buys. Just one of the cakes listed in the article has as many calories as five ice cream bars. Even “healthy” choices need a look at the label, says chef George Vutetakis, director of research and development at Garden Fresh Gourmet Salsa in Ferndale, Mich. “They often contain ingredients added just for taste alone, which ultimately undermines any attempt to have a healthy diet,” he says.

Soda - Soda is a prime offender. “Sometimes, soda is cheaper than buying a bottle of water. However, it is full of sugar or artificial sweeteners that spike people’s blood sugar levels. Then they crash and need more sugar and food to keep going,” Kormeili says. There’s no nutritional value in this beverage – skip it.

Powdered creamer - “Fresh milk or cream is better,” Hugh says. The powdered version contains trans fats, corn syrup, and preservatives. “Some preservatives have been linked to blood vessel disease in otherwise healthy people.”

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | 15 Oct 2012 ++]

Telemarketing Call Elimination Update 09: Automated political calls are legal to landlines, even if you’re on the national Do Not Call list, says NBC News... That’s because political calls, whether delivered by a live person or a computer, are exempt from the Telemarketing Sales Rule, which is enforced by the Federal Trade Commission. (Note: some states have their own rules about robocalls that may be stricter than federal regulations.) “It doesn’t matter if it’s a political call to a landline or a cell phone,” noted Lois Greisman, associate director of the FTC’s division of marketing practices. “We don’t consider those calls to be ‘telemarketing’ because they’re not trying to sell you something.” That means you can have your telephone number listed on the FTC’s Do Not Call Registry but it won’t stop political calls of any kind. You may not like it, but that’s the law. Lois Greisman may have misspoke, because the article goes on to note automated calls are illegal to cell phones unless permission was given. Live calls, however, are legal. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Brandon Ballenger | 15 Oct 2012 ++]

Debt Collector's Rules Update 03: After garnishing exempt disability payments from a 100% disabled Army veteran's wife, a debt collector told the vet he was "living off social security while the rest of us honest Americans work our a-- off. Too bad; you should have died," the veteran claims in court. Michael Collier and

his wife, Kim, sued Gurstel Chargo, P.A., a Golden Valley Minnesota-based third-party debt collector, in Federal Court. The Colliers seek actual damages, statutory damages, and punitive damages for violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, conversion, privacy invasion, and malicious infliction of emotional distress. Collier suffered spine and head injuries in the Army and was declared 100 percent disabled. He and his wife, a college student, receive disability payments, which are exempt from execution, according to his complaint. Nonetheless, Gurstel garnished Kim's savings account, and the credit union froze her money, to seek \$6,000 from Michael's defaulted student loan. The Colliers say they "immediately filed an objection and request for hearing."

At the hearing, Gurstel's attorney told the court that the frozen funds were indeed exempt, and promised the court that the money would be released "Right away," according to the complaint. "The court then issued its ruling finding that the garnished funds were exempt from execution, and entered an order quashing garnishment on the credit union effective that day, May 24, 2012," the complaint states. But in the parking lot, the Gurstel attorney told Michael Collier "he would need to get a lawyer in order to get his money back." Collier says he called Gurstel's office, and an unidentified paralegal told him he would have to sue to get the money. When he said the money was exempt veteran disability payments, "the assistant told Michael, 'F--- you! Pay us your money! You can't afford an attorney. You owe us. I hope your wife divorces your a--. If you would have served our country better you would not be a disabled veteran living off social security while the rest of us honest Americans work our a-- off. Too bad; you should have died.'" (Spelling as in complaint.) [Source: Courthouse News Service | Jamie Ross | 12 Oct 2012 ++]

OBIT ~ Basil L. Plumley: Basil L. Plumley, a renowned career soldier whose exploits as an Army infantryman were portrayed in a book and the movie "We Were Soldiers," died 10 OCT at 92 -- an age his friends are amazed that he lived to see. Plumley fought in World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam. His Army awards included the Silver Star with one oak leaf cluster and the Bronze Star with one oak leaf cluster. He made all four combat jumps with the 82nd Airborne in World War II and one in Korea making him one of a handful of men to receive three awards of the Combat Infantryman's Badge. The list of his awards and decorations fill half a page - typed single space. Friends said Plumley, who died in hospice care in west Georgia, never told war stories and was known to hang up on people who called to interview him. Still, he was near-legendary in the Army and gained more widespread fame through a 1992 Vietnam War book that was the basis for the 2002 movie starring Mel Gibson. Actor Sam Elliott played Plumley in the film.

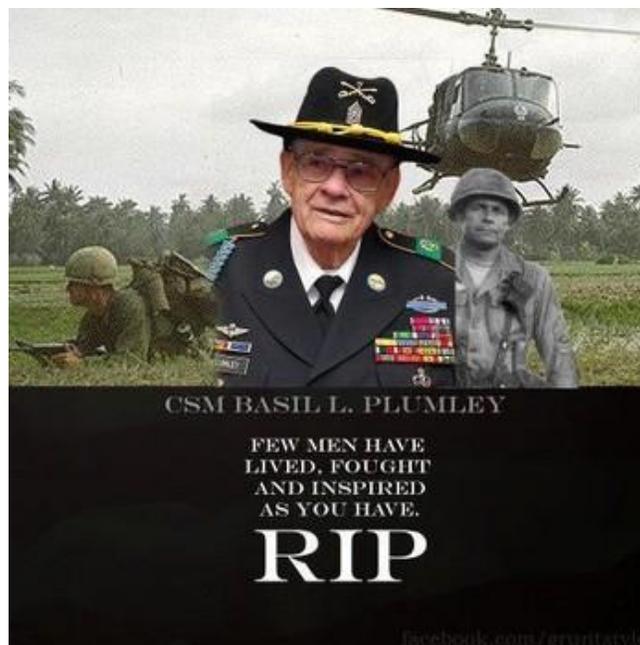


Plumley was ably portrayed by actor Sam Elliott in 'We Were Soldiers Once'

Plumley didn't need a Hollywood portrayal to be revered among soldiers, said Greg Camp, a retired Army colonel and former chief of staff at neighboring Fort Benning who befriended Plumley in his later years. "He's iconic in military circles," Camp said. "Among people who have been in the military, he's beyond what a movie star would be. ... His legend permeates three generations of soldiers." To this day, there are veterans of the 1/7 CAV who are convinced that God may look like CSM Plumley. Debbie Kimble, Plumley's daughter, said her father died from cancer after spending about nine days at Columbus Hospice. Although the illness seemed to strike suddenly, Kimble said Plumley's health had been declining since his wife of 63 years, Deurice Plumley, died last May on Memorial Day.

A native of Shady Spring, W.Va., Plumley enlisted in the Army in 1942 and ended up serving 32 years in uniform. In World War II, he fought in the Allied invasion of Italy at Salerno and the D-Day invasion at Normandy. He later fought with the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment in Korea. In Vietnam, Plumley served as sergeant major -- the highest enlisted rank -- in the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. "That puts him in the rarest of clubs," said journalist Joseph L. Galloway, who met Plumley while covering the Vietnam War for United Press International and remained lifelong friends with him. "To be combat infantry in those three wars, in the battles he participated in, and to have survived -- that is miraculous." It was during Vietnam in November 1965 that Plumley served in the Battle of Ia Drang, the first major engagement between the U.S. Army and North Vietnamese forces. That battle was the basis for the book "We Were Soldiers Once ... And Young," written nearly three decades later by Galloway and retired Lt. Gen. Hal G. Moore, who had been Plumley's battalion commander in Vietnam.

Along with Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, Plumley led the Army's 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment in the November 1965 battle that saw 450 U.S. forces face off against 2,000 troops from the North Vietnamese army in the first major engagement between the two armies. More than 230 U.S. troops were killed. In the 2002 film version, Mel Gibson played Moore and Elliott played Plumley. Galloway said several of Elliott's gruff one-liners in the movie were things Plumley actually said, such as the scene in which a soldier tells the sergeant major good morning and is told: "Who made you the (expletive) weather man?" "Sam Elliott underplayed him. He was actually tougher than that," Galloway said. "He was gruff, monosyllabic, an terror when it came to enforcing standards of training." That's not to say he was mean or inhuman, Galloway said. "This was a man above all else who had a very big, warm heart that he concealed very well."



Plumley retired with the rank command sergeant major in 1974 at Fort Benning, his last duty station. He then took a civilian job doing administrative work for the next 15 years at Martin Army Community Hospital. Camp said Plumley remained strong until just a few weeks before his death. He helped open the Army's National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning in 2009. Camp, who now works for the museum's fundraising foundation, said Plumley helped him get Elliott to come narrate a ceremony dedicating the parade ground outside the museum. When Camp mentioned the actor's name, Plumley handed him Elliott's cellphone number. After Plumley became ill, Galloway mentioned his worsening condition on Facebook. Fans of the retired sergeant major responded with a flood of cards and letters. The day before he died in hospice, Camp said, Plumley received about 160 pieces of mail. "He was dad to me when I was growing up," said Kimble, Plumley's daughter. "We are learning every day about him. He was an inspiration to so many. He was a great person, and will always be remembered." [Source: Fox News 10 Oct 2012 ++]

Tricare Prime Update 14: This October retirees have seen their TRICARE Prime enrollment fees increased to \$269.28 per year for individuals and \$538.56 per year for retirees with families. However, retirees should know that TRICARE is warning that these enrollment fees could increase again when Congress passes the final FY 2013 budget. Retirees can choose to pay the enrollment fees annually, quarterly or monthly. But they must keep in mind that TRICARE Prime enrollment fees are non-refundable, in most cases. TRICARE is recommending that retirees pay either monthly (through automatic deduction/charge) or quarterly due to the chance enrollment fees may increase again before the end of the fiscal year. NOTE: To date there have been no changes to TRICARE for Life – enrollment remains free to retirees over age 65. The current fee payments for TRICARE Prime are:

- Annual Payment: Individual: \$269.28 - Family: \$538.56
- Quarterly Payment: Individual: \$67.32 - Family: \$134.64
- Monthly Payment: Individual: \$22.44 - Family: \$44.88

An exception to the fee increase applies to survivors of active duty deceased sponsors and medically retired uniformed service members and their dependents. Their fees remain frozen at the rate in effect at the time they are classified in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) as survivors or medically retired and enrolled. Fees remain frozen as long as there is no break in their TRICARE Prime enrollment. Payment requirements differ slightly for each region. Retirees enrolled in the TRICARE Prime in the North, South and West regions can pay by allotment from retired pay, online, pay-by-phone, and through electronic funds transfer and first time TRICARE Prime enrollees can pay the initial enrollment fee by check. TRICARE North and West beneficiaries can also pay by recurring credit card charges. TriWest currently offers beneficiaries the added ability to pay by check monthly. Refer to http://tricare.mil/mybenefit/Download/Forms/PrimeFee_FS.pdf TRICARE Prime Fact Sheet for additional info. [Source: Military.com | Terry Howell | 11 Oct 2012 ++]

Tricare Prime Update 15: (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.) An Oregon lawmaker has asked the Pentagon's top doctor to explain why military retirees and family members in his district will lose access to Tricare Prime starting next April. After hearing last week that the Defense Department will stop offering Tricare Prime in Oregon and several other areas in the Tricare West region in 2013, Republican Rep. Greg Walden fired off a letter to Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr Jonathan Woodson on 18 OCT asking for confirmation and urging him to publicly announce the move. "These changes could have a significant impact on the lives of Tricare beneficiaries in my district, the

state of Oregon and in the Tricare West region and affected service members and veterans should be made aware right away,” Walden wrote. The Pentagon has made no formal announcement of the proposal, which includes eliminating the Prime option in Oregon as well as Iowa; Minnesota; Reno, Nev.; and Springfield, Mo.

An official said 18 OCT the intention is to bolster health care support around core active-duty populations at military bases and facilities that have been left shorthanded due to the deployment requirements of military medical providers. “This will not affect active-duty military and their families,” Pentagon spokeswoman Cynthia Smith said. “This change also will not impact areas where there is a military treatment facility.” The areas targeted to lose their Prime networks lie outside service areas covered under new Tricare regional contracts. Tricare will offer Prime only within “catchment areas,” defined as a 40-mile radius around military treatment facilities and in areas affected by the 2005 base closure and realignment process. Some provisions will allow Prime beneficiaries living within 100 miles of a service area to stay in the network or permit new enrollments if there is network capacity. The plan to pull Prime back has been in the works since at least 2007, when it was written into a draft of the proposed Tricare contracts. With the last regional contract award having been settled in July, the Tricare Management Activity is quietly moving ahead with the initiative. But a source told Military Times last week that Pentagon officials have discussed delaying a formal announcement until after the Nov. 6 election.

Walden said he has heard the same. “I’ve been led to believe the Pentagon was holding back the announcement until after a certain date in November. I certainly hope that was not the case. This tremendously affects those who have relied on Tricare Prime in my district,” Walden said. Military beneficiaries who lose Tricare Prime won’t be without health care; they qualify for Tricare Standard, traditional fee-for-service coverage that has no enrollment fees but carries greater out-of-pocket costs. But Walden expressed concern that with the dissolution of the Prime networks in his district, physicians won’t be eager to take Tricare Standard patients or assist them with claims. “In a state like Oregon, which already has limited medical resources, this places an undue hardship on our veterans, especially when we have come to rely so heavily on the National Guard and reserves, who most often hail from rural areas,” he said. [Source: NavyTimes | Patricia Kime | 22 Oct 2012 ++]

VA Claim Denial Update 08: (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.)

National Guard and reserve members who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan are having a harder time than other veterans getting disability compensation claims approved by the Veterans Affairs Department. New data obtained by Veterans for Common Sense under the Freedom of Information Act shows the denial rate for claims filed by reserve component combat veterans is four times higher than for post-9/11 combat veterans who were active-duty members. On the positive side, the statistical reports show a 97 percent approval rate for Iraq and Afghanistan claims. But the difference between active and reserve claims could be a sign that the system isn’t being fair to reserve component members, who make up 40 percent of this new generation of veterans, said Paul Sullivan, the former executive director of the nonprofit veterans group who identified the problem while he was still with VCS.

- “We do not know why this has happened,” said Sullivan, now managing director for public affairs at the law firm of Bergmann & Moore. “We do know this is not a new problem.” In 2008, the denial rate for Guard and reserve disability claims was twice as high as for other Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, so the difference has grown.
- “This is disturbing, and what is even more disturbing is we do not know why,” said Tom Tarantino, chief policy officer for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. “Funky” record keeping, filing claims without the help of a veterans’ service officer who understands the process, or structural problems in how claims are handled could all contribute to the discrepancy, he said.

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said the higher denial rate for Guard and reserve members is a sign of miscommunication between the VA and Defense Department. "Sadly, these figures are hardly surprising given the lack of coordination between VA and DoD," Miller said in a statement. "Both need to treat veterans of the National Guard and Reserve as they would any member of the armed forces, and this includes providing timely benefits for their service," Miller said. "Once again, this underlines the need for a single electronic medical health record, shared by both departments, as well as better communication between National Guard and reserve components with VA to ensure those who served in either have access to their records." Guard and reserve members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan and have filed benefits claims are, on average, about four years older than their counterparts who served on active duty, which could be a reason for more wear and tear on the body. But while they are older, Guard and reserve members who have filed claims have served less time, on average, which could make it harder to prove a disability was service connected. The average length of service of Guard and reserve members is 3.8 years, compared with an average of 9.3 years for veterans of active service.

There are 1.6 million post-9/11 combat veterans. About 566,000 are receiving disability benefits; 53,000 have been identified with service-connected conditions that merit disability ratings too low to qualify for compensation. Another 15,640 claims were denied, according to the VA records. While Guard and reserve members make up 40 percent of post-9/11 combat veterans, they accounted for 60 percent of the claim denials. VA reports indicate the hearing disorder tinnitus is the most frequently claimed disability for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, claimed by about 40 percent of post-9/11 combat veterans who were awarded service-connected disabilities. Spinal or cervical injuries or strains account for 24 percent of the awards, while post-traumatic stress disorder appears in 22.5 percent. Details about specific disabilities are not broken down by active or reserve status, making comparisons by conditions impossible, Sullivan said. Among the almost 900,000 pending disability claims, those from post-9/11 combat veterans make up 186,000 of the backlog, with Sullivan warning that the number is likely to rise. Post-Vietnam War claims from combat veterans did not peak until a decade after that conflict ended, Sullivan said. "I really think we face a situation where we have 1 million new claims by 2013," he said. "We are getting about 10,000 new veteran patients at the VA and 9,000 new claims filed every month." [Source: NavyTimes | Rick Maze | 23Oct 2012 ++]

Times Square V-J Day Kiss: (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.)

Feminist bloggers are saying the iconic image of a sailor kissing a nurse on V-J Day in Times Square depicts an act of sexual assault. At least two people, however, disagree — the sailor and the woman, who was actually a dental assistant, in Alfred Eisenstaedt's famous Life magazine photo. George Mendonsa and Greta Zimmer Friedman — identified as the kissing couple by "The Kissing Sailor," a book published this year by the U.S. Naval Institute — called the moment an act of unbridled celebration. "I can't think of anybody who considered that as an assault," said Friedman, who exchanges Christmas cards with Mendonsa every year and has appeared with him at several reunion events. "It was a happy event."



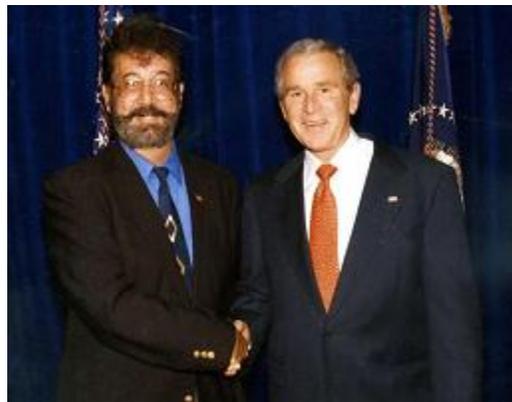
London-based blogger “Leopard” wrote a post titled “The Kissing Sailor, or ‘The Selective Blindness of Rape Culture,’ ” on 30 SEP at <http://www.cratesandribbons.com> . She posted a follow-up Oct. 5 to “debunk misconceptions.” Her original post drew more than 600 comments as of Oct. 11, and her work has been cited across the Internet by sites such as the Huffington Post, London’s Daily Mail newspaper and other feminist blogs. In her blog, Leopard cites a 2005 interview with Friedman conducted by the Veteran’s History Project of the Library of Congress about the kiss between strangers. In the interview, Friedman says she was “grabbed by a sailor” and that she “felt that he was very strong. He was just holding me tight.” “It seems pretty clear, then, that what George had committed would be considered sexual assault by modern standards. Yet, in an amazing feat of willful blindness, none of the articles comment on this,” Leopard wrote in the blog post. “Without a single acknowledgement of the problematic nature of the photo that her comments reveal, they continue to talk about the picture in a whimsical, reverent manner.”

Friedman doesn’t see a problem. “There is just no way that there was anything bad about it,” she said. “It was all good news, the best news we’d had for a number of years.” Both Mendonsa and Friedman acknowledged the kiss was a surprise but that it was not unwelcome or offensive. Mendonsa was just excited that he didn’t have to return to war, and thankful for the nurses who cared for his wounded shipmates. “I had just come back from the Pacific. I’d been there for two years and I’d been involved in a lot of battles,” said the former sailor, who was stationed aboard the destroyer The Sullivans. “I happened to be glad the war was over and grabbed a nurse because I saw what the nurses did on the hospital ships out there in the Pacific.” Another blog, Feministing.org , analyzed Friedman’s body language — a “clenched fist and limp body” — in the photo. The site also examined the reactions of the crowd, drawing attention to the smirking sailors in the background. Lawrence Verria, co-author of “The Kissing Sailor,” pointed out the reaction of another person in the background: an older woman with white hair just to the right of the kissing couple. “She grins widely throughout the entire scene,” Verria said, referencing the four successive frames of the same scene taken by Eisenstaedt. “Obviously, it was a happening being received well by all types of spectators: males, females, young and old.”

In her blog post, Leopard criticized people for romanticizing the image where a woman is kissed against her will. Verria agrees that those who view the image as an icon of romance are looking at it the wrong way. “I think we need to be careful how we characterize a kiss from over 60 years ago, far removed from the day and its circumstances,” he said. “Calling it a sexual assault caught on film is not accurate, but also viewing the kiss as romantic as it’s often characterized is not accurate. It’s a celebration of a war’s victorious end.” Many sailors expressed a similar love for the image on Navy Times’ Facebook page. “That picture right there doesn’t scream sexual assault to me. It screams pride, joy, jubilation, a feeling of complete euphoria that the war, which had taken so many young men’s lives (and yes even women), was finally over,” wrote one woman who identified herself as a sailor.

Others sided more with the blogger, writing that just because Friedman didn’t press charges doesn’t make the kiss OK. “Are you people LISTENING to yourselves?” a reader wrote. “If your son, sailor or not, grabbed a strange woman he’d never met in his life and forced himself on her, he’d go to JAIL. I don’t care whether he was ‘celebrating’ or not.” Leopard, who only said she began to think of the kiss as sexual assault after hearing Friedman’s account of the event, said people need to stop romanticizing the image as a first step to recognize a woman’s right to her own body. “I’m not saying that we should downplay the exuberance of V-J Day at all. I’m also not trying to vilify George for something he did 67 years ago, in a time where there was less awareness of women’s rights,” the blogger wrote in an email. “If we ignore the fact that this kiss was not mutual, and insist on calling it romantic, then we send out the message that a woman’s bodily autonomy is not that important, and can be sacrificed under special circumstances.” [Source: NavyTimes | Jacqueline Klimas | 19 Oct 2012 ++]

Vet Charity Watch Update 28: A prolific con-man who bilked donors out of \$100 million using a fake Navy veteran's charity and routinely rubbed elbows with GOP bigwigs is a Harvard-trained lawyer who has been wanted for 25 years, authorities said. Since his arrest in May, the accused scam artist has been known as either "Bobby Thompson" or "Mr. X" - the name he gave to investigators and used to sign legal documents. On 2 Oct, U.S. Marshals identified him as John Donald Cody, 65, a lawyer who has been wanted since 1987 for various frauds -- including stealing \$99,000 from two former clients in Arizona - and espionage, The Associated Press reported. "We always knew there was a reason Thompson signed his name as Mr. X and did not want to be identified," U.S. Marshal Pete Elliott said, according to ABC News. "Now we know why." The University of Virginia and Harvard Law grad was arrested in Portland, Ore., in April for running a phony vets' charity based in Tampa, Fla., the U.S. Navy Veteran's Association. Using the Thompson alias, Cody spent a decade pretending to raise hundreds of millions of dollars in donations for Navy vets and their families. Instead, he lined his own pockets and used hefty donations to get access to top-level Republicans.



Cody as Thompson with President George W. Bush. The scam artist donated large sums to top-level GOP members and delighted in having his picture taken with them.

The website of the phony non-profit boasted of 66,000 members in 40 states, but none of it was true. Now-infamous photos show a grinning, pony-tailed and pompadour "Thompson" posing with President George W. Bush, House Speaker John Boehner and former Mayor Rudy Giuliani. In 2010, the Tampa Bay Times published reports exposing the NVA as a scam - 84 of 85 "officers" listed were made up names and \$22 million in supposed donations had vanished -- and Thompson was charged by the attorney general in Ohio with fraud, money laundering and theft. Cody had been wanted by the FBI since 1987 and had appeared on the TV show 'America's Most Wanted.' After a two-year manhunt, he was nailed by the feds on 30 APR 2010 at a boarding house in Portland, where he was posing as a retired Canadian mountie, ABC News reported. He was travelling with a DVD of the Leonardo DiCaprio flick, "Catch Me If You Can." Since then, he has been in jail in Cleveland, refusing to answer to anything other than "Mr. X."

His true identity was revealed on 2 OCT after U.S. Marshal said they matched his fingerprints with ones taken during Cody's military service in 1969. The Marshals were prompted to check the finger prints after Google searches turned up old FBI wanted posters showing Cody with his signature pompadour. Another clincher was a large stash of eye drops found at Thompson's Portland hideout. During his years in Arizona, Cody was known to use eye drops constantly because his tear ducts were destroyed by radiation poisoning he suffered while serving as a military intelligence officer in the Philippines, the Tampa Times reported. "This is definitely John Donald Cody," Elliott told the AP. "He's a guy that thought, No. 1, he could never get caught, and No. 2, he would never be identified. And we were able to do both." Both UVA and Harvard Law confirmed that Cody was a graduate. He's due in court on March

11. His attorney, Joseph Patituce, told the AP the state had a "weak case" against his client. [Source: New York Daily News | Philip Caulfield | 2 Oct 2012 ++]

Mobilized Reserve 23 OCT 2012: The Department of Defense announced the current number of reservists on active duty as of 23 OCT 2012. The net collective result is 96 more reservists mobilized than last reported in the 15 OCT 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 45,292; Navy Reserve 4,507; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve 9,411; Marine Corps Reserve 2,974; and the Coast Guard Reserve 703. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 62,887 including both units and individual augmentees. Since 911 there have been 798,032 reservists deactivated. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found online at <http://www.defense.gov/news/MobilizationWeeklyReport102312.pdf>. [Source: DoD News Release No. 849-12 dtd 24 Oct 2012 ++]

PTSD Update 120: U.S. Sen. Patty Murray is pushing the Pentagon to move forward with its military-wide review of how soldiers are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and other behavioral health. Murray, the chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, sent a letter to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on 18 OCT. In June, Panetta called for the review after it was disclosed that medical screeners at the Madigan Army Medical Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord have reversed since 2007 hundreds of diagnoses of PTSD based on the expense of providing care and benefits to members of the military. The evaluations are the key first step in determining soldiers' disability benefits. In the letter, Murray calls on Panetta to provide a timeline of the review and requesting the next steps. [Source: Associated Press article 19 Oct 2012 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 90: Officials from General Electric, Alcoa, Boeing and Lockheed Martin announced a new initiative 15 OCT to train 100,000 veterans in advanced manufacturing jobs, with the dual goals of repaying their service and restocking the talent needed for those high-tech jobs in the coming years. The "Get Skills to Work" program — which will be run by the Manufacturing Institute — will launch with 15,000 veterans immediately and work to train 85,000 more over the next three years. According to industry experts, roughly 600,000 high-tech manufacturing jobs are unfilled in the United States, but hiring managers have difficulty finding workers with the necessary skills. "Where we really see the need is in the supply chain, not just the big corporations like GE," said Jay Timmons, CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers. "We've heard so much about manufacturing jobs in this election cycle, and the need to strengthen the industry. One of the ways we can do that is through veterans."

The initiative goes beyond government training programs for separating troops and is the latest push by corporate America help bridge the gap between veterans' military skills and the ones they'll need to succeed in business. On 27 OCT, Home Depot will host a career workshops for veterans at stores across the country, to cover resume writing and interview techniques for any job. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has hosted more than 300 "Hiring our Heroes" job fairs in the last year, and offered a host of resources to help connect unemployed veterans and understaffed companies. And the White House's Joining Forces campaign has teamed with hundreds of businesses to find jobs for more than 175,000 veterans over the last 18 months, with a goal of more than 250,000 by 2016. The

new “Get Skills to Work” program will offer accelerated skills training, through regional community colleges, for veterans with a range of technical military skills — a population primed to succeed in the industry, Timmons said. Officials said the initiative will work with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University to develop toolkits for veterans and employers to help both understand the interview process better and how military skills translate to the civilian manufacturing sector.

Jeff Immelt, CEO of GE, said his company plans to hire about 1,000 veterans annually, so creating better trained potential employees helps the company’s bottom line. “But we do really think this is a plan where one plus one equals three,” he said. “It helps our suppliers, it helps our veterans, and it’s good for us. We think this is something that is good for everybody.” Earlier this month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the September unemployment rate for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars at 9.7 percent — down about one percent from a month earlier and down several points from a year earlier, but still significantly higher than the 7.8 percent rate for the country as a whole. More information is available online at <http://www.GetSkillstoWork.org>. [Source: Stars and Stripes | Leo Shane | 15 Oct 2012 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 91: In early OCT, the US Chamber of Commerce held its 300th Hiring Our Heroes job fair, leading to 10,400 jobs for Veterans and spouses. And they're just getting started. Below you'll find a list of hiring events from 1 thru 29 NOV in 400 communities. If you're looking to attend one of the fairs, double check to make sure the date hasn't changed since being posted. Click on the city of each event below to access a link to more information on the time and location, as well as registration information:

- November 1, 2012– [Philadelphia, PA](#)
- November 1, 2012– [Kingsport, TN](#)
- November 1, 2012– [Fort Carson, CO Wounded Warrior Event](#)
- November 2, 2012– [Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, DC](#)
- November 3, 2012– [Kona, HI](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Parker, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Casa Grande, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Phoenix, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Hellgate, MT](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Tucson, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Nogales, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Mesa, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Kingman, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012– [Naperville, IL](#)
- November 7, 2012 – [Mesa, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012 – [Nogales, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012 – [Kingman, AZ](#)
- November 7, 2012 – [Naperville, IL](#)
- November 8, 2012 – [Salt Lake City, UT](#)
- November 8, 2012 – [Los Angeles, CA](#)
- November 8, 2012 – [Seattle, WA](#)
- November 8, 2012 – [Oak Forest, IL](#)
- November 8, 2012 – [Virginia Beach, VA](#)
- November 8, 2012 – [Burlington, VT](#)
- November 9, 2012 – [Anchorage, AK](#)

November 9, 2012 – [Warwick, RI](#)
 November 9, 2012 – [Baltimore, MD](#)
 November 9, 2012 – [St. Louis, MO](#)
 November 9, 2012 – [Chicago, IL](#)
 November 13, 2012 – [Jefferson City, MO](#)
 November 13, 2012 – [Portland, OR](#)
 November 14, 2012 – [Des Moines, IA](#)
 November 15, 2012 – [Irving, TX](#)
 November 15, 2012 – [Charlotte, NC](#)
 November 15, 2012 – [Dover, DE](#)
 November 16, 2012 – [Fayetteville, NC](#)
 November 27, 2012 – [Fort Polk, LA – Military Spouse Event](#)
 November 29, 2012 – [Oakland, CA](#)
 November 29, 2012 – [Las Vegas, NV](#)

If you don't see an event near you, check out the interactive map at Vantage Point 22 Oct 2012 ++]

Veteran License Plates Idaho: Idaho offers a variety of vehicle specialty license plates for their residents. In the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet License Plates ID**” can be viewed the 30 different plates of interest to the military community which can be purchased from the Idaho DMV. They cover the five branches of service for the last six wars. Special military plates for vehicle use are only available in customized format. For vehicle registration, military plates type requires documentation of military service (copy of DD-214 or equivalent). In addition to vehicle registration fees, the plate will cost \$50.00 for the first year with a \$30.00 renewal fee each year thereafter. Plates cannot be ordered online. All customized plates must be personalized with a maximum of 5 characters. To verify if your choice of characters is available refer to

<https://www.accessidaho.org/secure/itd/personalized/plates.html?ScriptForm.startstep=type>

1. Personalized plate text must be tasteful (in any language).
2. Plate choice must contain at least one alpha character (letter) and have no punctuation.
3. Spaces are allowed anywhere in the plate choice but do consume available spacing.

Idaho DMV also offers 20 different military related souvenir plates. These plates cannot be used for vehicle display. Plate choice must contain at least one alpha character (letter) and have no punctuation. Spaces are allowed anywhere in the plate choice but do consume available spacing. Souvenir plates may be ordered online for \$21.00 each. [Source: <https://www.accessidaho.org/secure/itd/personalized/plates.html?ScriptForm.startstep=type> Oct 2012 ++]

Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule: Following is the current schedule of recent and future Congressional hearings and markups pertaining to the veteran community. Congressional hearings are the principal formal method by which committees collect and analyze information in the early stages of legislative policymaking. Hearings usually include oral testimony from witnesses, and questioning of the witnesses by members of Congress. When a U.S. congressional committee meets to put a legislative bill into final form it is referred to as a mark-up. Veterans are encouraged to contact members of these committees prior to the event listed and provide input on what they want their legislator to do at the event. Membership of each committee and their contact info can be found at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/committees.tt?commid=svete>. Missed House Veteran Affairs

committee (HVAC) hearings can viewed at <http://veterans.house.gov/in-case-you-missed-it>. Text of completed Senate Veteran Affairs Committee (SVAC) hearings are available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/committee.action?chamber=senate&committee=va&collection=CHRG&plus=CHRG>:

- **November 15, 2012.** House Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing titled, "Review of Veterans Employment Challenges and Initiatives in the 112th Congress." 10:00am in Cannon Room 334.

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

WWII Vets Update 30: Former U.S. Army Sgt. Darrell Morris said there are war veterans who paid a higher price than he did. Yet he has carried the trauma of war thousands of miles — and for more than 65 years. A Van Buren County farm boy drafted into World War II, Morris first went into combat at the Battle of the Bulge, one of the bloodiest prolonged conflicts in Europe. “They drove us 12-15 miles from the front line,” Morris, now 87, recalls. “They said we had to be in our foxholes by daylight, because if you weren’t, you were dead. We marched all night. I never thought we’d get there, but we did.” He and the sergeant they’d put him with on his first night saw a German grenade land in their two-man foxhole. “I knew I was in a war and a long way from home. I guess I learned to pray in the Army. I prayed and prayed and prayed.” The other soldier, recalled as “a full-blooded” Native American from New Mexico, picked up the grenade and threw it right back, killing three Germans. “Sergeant Wayne. I tell you, he was a soldier. I never seen any better,” Morris said.

The bodies — Americans and Germans — around the foxholes reminded him of what could happen if you didn’t keep your head down, or if you did but were unlucky. Being killed quickly seemed better to him than slowly. “The unit first sergeant, who I hadn’t met, had been shot, but you couldn’t go get him. You couldn’t even peek your head out, they’d shoot you.” While the new recruits sat shivering on their first day, the top enlisted man for their company lay a few yards away, moaning and dying. He survived the night, then part of the next day before going silent. Every day seemed to reveal more death, more suffering — and more cruelty. When they’d find fellow soldiers who’d been killed, the SS troopers left the bodies in a way that still gives Morris nightmares. The boys’ own rifles with the bayonet would be jammed straight into the soldier’s heart and left sticking up. And a “certain external body part” would be cut off and placed partially into the soldier’s mouth to freeze that way for his friends to find him. Morris sees these horrors still, he said, as if he saw them yesterday. It was more than anyone should have to bear, but none of them had a choice, he said.

After months of freezing and starving, not being able to touch anything for fear it was mined (because they almost always were) and only fitful sleep, few Americans were feeling merciful toward the enemy. “Our platoon leader took six of us for our first hot meal. We got there about 15, 20 minutes before the mess truck. And there was this German, gut shot, on the ground, with all this, I don’t know, green coming out of him, and he was still alive. He was begging us to shoot him.” The snow all around the SS trooper was stained with green, but no one felt like killing him quickly. They just let him lie there, crying and begging to die. Two of his buddies, snipers, were in a nearby tree, dead. When the food jeep arrived, one of the supposedly dead snipers shot the driver through the head. “We killed the one in the tree, but not the other one,” Morris said. Then, with the dead snipers, the disemboweled, weeping German and the recently killed driver still there, the men ate breakfast. “Hot coffee, pancakes. For our butter and syrup, they’d sent us orange marmalade.”

Morris also can’t forget one of the very few men in the 134th Regiment who “was no soldier at all.” He was one of the least liked men in the whole of 3rd Army’s 35th Division. Morris saw him hack a dead American’s fingers off

and steal his wedding ring. The thief eventually disappeared in the combat zone. Morris doesn't know or care, he said, what happened to him. "What he done was nearly as bad as what the [SS] Germans had done." Once in a while, he said, he caught "a break," like when everyone was marching and he was able to ride on the top of a tank. Zipping through the forest, there was barely a handhold on the armored vehicle, and if you fell, the next speeding tank was only about 10 feet behind, plus it felt like every frozen branch in those woods whacked him in the face. Worse was the crunch made by bodies as tanks went over their heads, one of the sounds Morris said he'd never forget. "I want people to realize there was a lot of prayer involved," he said. And for him, one miracle.

Toward the end of the war, trudging through snow, alone and separated from his unit, he knew he was dying. He couldn't feel his legs. A tank he'd seen burning with American soldiers still inside would be his final resting place, too, he decided. "I knew I was never going to survive the night. I got down in front of the tank tread and leaned back. That was where I was going to die." He would have, too, if a military ambulance hadn't seen him while it'd been passing. "He called out, 'I have room for one more.' It was a miracle." He remembers being put on a stretcher, being "inside" for the first time in days and that the ambulance was heated. Though frostbitten, he didn't lose his legs. After starting to recover, he helped pin patients to the operating table when the hospital ran out of pain medicine, helped feed thousands of American POWs so thin, they couldn't walk or eat and eventually got out of the Army.

If he had to do it over again, he would — with one heart-breaking regret. "I made a promise, and I never kept it." His one good buddy, Don Swagger from Michigan, had traded addresses, promising if the other were killed, they would contact the other's family to tell them what happened. "I kept putting it off. Then it seemed like it'd had been so long, would it do more harm than good?" Or maybe his wife had remarried. ... whatever the case, he never contacted his friend's family. That guilt has plagued him for 65 years. A group of GIs were staying in a bombed-out house for a little bit of shelter. They switched guards late one night, and Don went upstairs to sleep. He lay down on the floor on his back; there was no roof, but it was better than laying on the ground, Morris said. Downstairs, the soldier next to Morris put his M-1 on the ground, butt first. The sentry's weapon discharged, fired up through the first-floor ceiling and instantly killed Don Swagger where he lay. Maybe, Morris agreed, someone in 2012 would like to know that.

Morris was just recently — fifty years after his discharge — diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. "I never asked the government for anything. I got a letter telling me to go to Iowa City for a physical [a few years ago], so I went. They said I've had the PTSD, untreated, since I was discharged more than 50 years ago." The best they can do for him now, he said, is "stabilize" the disorder, and give him something to help him sleep. That's actually important, he said. "If I don't take it, I don't sleep. I fight Germans all night long." [Source: Ottumwa Courier Mark Newman article 6 Jul 2012 ++]

Korean War Vets: He flew fighter planes his entire career, and as a wingman during the Korean War in 1952 and 1953, he flew 100 missions and extended his tour to perform 25 more. Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. William Earl Brown Jr. spent 34 years in the military, but his experiences as a young pilot in the Korean War left a lasting impression, he said in an interview with the Pentagon Channel. In Korea, Brown said, he flew the F-86 Saber fighter jet, the first operational swept-wing aircraft in the Air Force inventory. "Our mission was to prevent the MiGs from attacking the other aircraft. The MiG-15s were being flown by the Chinese communists and by active-duty Soviet fighter wings." A typical mission took up to two hours. "If we were lucky, we'd run into the MiGs and manage to down a few of them," he added.

As a wingman, Brown flew with a more-experienced major or captain in the lead, many of whom had World War II experience. They flew in flights of four, in "fingertip" formation with a leader and a wingman, and an element leader and a wingman, he explained. "The wingman's job was to look to the rear and protect the leader from any aircraft closing [in] to shoot him," Brown said. "And the second lieutenants were invariably assigned to the jobs as wingmen, while the captains and majors would shoot down the MiGs." Brown said he was fortunate to fly with some good aviators in the Korean War. "I'd been flying maybe 10 or 15 missions and never saw a MiG," he said, "Except one day, ... I was No. 4 in a flight. A MiG-15 that was obviously flown by a guy who was superior to me in skill latched onto me." The MiG was so close, Brown said, he could hear the sound of its guns firing. It had two 23 mm cannons in addition to a larger one, compared to the Americans' six machine guns – three on each side of the aircraft. Brown said he is alive today because his element leader came in behind the MiG, and while it shot at Brown, the element leader poured bullets into the MiG and shot the aircraft down. "That encounter really got my attention," he said. "Up until that point, I had no real understanding of what it meant to have some guy really try to kill you."

Brown, an African-American, said he didn't face any discrimination during the Korean War. "I never ran into the kinds of discriminatory practices that the Tuskegee airmen had to face when they began flying in the Air Force," he said. "One thing about flying in fighters [is] when you don the fighter pilot's helmet and don the oxygen mask and pull down the visor, no one can see what color you are. All they can see is how you position your aircraft. Is it where it should be? Do you drop the weapons? Do they strike the target?" "I guess I was fortunate," he said. [Source: AFPS Terri Moon Cronk article 26 Jul 2012 ++]



Lt. Gen. William Earl Brown Jr. Retired Dec. 1, 1984

World War II Posters (16)





POW/MIA Update 30: "Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,000+), Korean War (7,900+), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,655), 1991 Gulf War (0), and OEF/OIF (6). Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for . For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1420. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

- DPMO announced 2 OCT that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be buried, as a group, with full military honors. Air Force Col. **Wendell Keller**, 34, of Fargo, N.D., and Capt. **Virgil K. Meroney III**, 25, of Fayetteville, Ark., will be buried as a group, in a single casket representing the crew, on Oct. 19 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. Meroney was interred individually on June 9, in his hometown. On March 1, 1969,

Keller and Meroney were the crew of an F-4D Phantom II aircraft that crashed while carrying out a nighttime strike mission in Khammouan Province, Laos. Nearby U.S. aircrews reported seeing the aircraft hit by enemy fire. No parachutes were seen after the aircraft was hit. Heavy enemy presence in the area prevented recovery efforts. From 1994 to 2011, joint U.S./Lao People's Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) teams, led by Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted several investigations and excavations of the crash site in Khammouan Province, Laos. The teams located human remains, military equipment, a military identification card, and aircraft wreckage of an F-4, including an engine data plate and radio call-sign plate. During the 17 years, analysts evaluated the material evidence and the accounts of more than 40 eyewitnesses to confirm the information correlated with the crew's loss location. To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools including dental comparisons and radiograph comparisons.

- DPMO announced 23 OCT that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, killed in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Air Force Airman 1st Class **Jerry M. Wall**, 24, of Jacksonville, Texas, will be buried Oct. 26, in San Antonio. On May 18, 1966, Wall and four other crew members were aboard a C-123B Provider aircraft that crashed while carrying out a nighttime flare-drop mission over Binh Dinh, South Vietnam. Nearby U.S. ground troops reported seeing Wall's aircraft hit by enemy ground fire and crash. Heavy enemy presence in the area prevented immediate search and rescue efforts. Later that day the remains of three of the five crew members were recovered. From 2007 to 2012, joint U.S./Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams conducted interviews and excavations of the crash site in Binh Dinh Province. Department of Defense casualty and life support experts identified the location as Wall's possible loss site. The teams excavated the site and found human remains, military equipment, a military identification tag bearing Wall's information, and aircraft wreckage of a C-123. In the identification of the remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as radiograph, dental records and mitochondrial DNA—which matched Wall's mother.

Korea

- DPMO announced 24 OCT that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Cpl. **Joseph W. Fontenot**, 20, of Maurepas, La., will be buried Oct. 27 in Whitehall, La. In February 1951, Fontenot was assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division when he was captured by enemy forces near Saemal, South Korea. He reportedly died in June 1951, while in captivity at Camp 1 near Changsong, North Korea. In 1954, United Nations and Communist Forces exchanged the remains of war dead in what came to be called "Operation Glory." Among the remains that were turned over at that time were remains of servicemen who had died in Camp 1. All of the remains recovered in Operation Glory were turned over to the Army Central Identification Unit for analysis. Those which were unable to be identified with the technology at that time were interred as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. In 2010, analysts from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) re-examined the case records and determined that advances in technology could likely aid in the identification of the unknown remains as one of seven possible soldiers. Once the remains were exhumed, scientists from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including dental records and radiographs, to identify Fontenot.

World War II

- DPMO announced 24 OCT that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, who went missing in November 1946, will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. **William S. Cassell**, of Mt. Airy, N.C., will be buried on Oct. 28, in Amelia, Va. On Nov. 1, 1946, Cassell and seven other crew members were aboard a B- 17G Flying Fortress that went missing after departing from Naples, Italy, bound for Bovington, England. During the months following the loss, search and rescue attempts proved unsuccessful and the remains of the crewmen were declared non-recoverable. In 1947, a French military unit operating in the French-Italian Alps, near Estellette Glacier, found the wreckage of a U.S. aircraft at an altitude of more than 12,000 feet. The French team recovered human remains from the site which were turned over to U.S. officials. They also reported that much of the ice-covered wreckage would likely not emerge for 30 years, after the glacier descended the slope. Due to the technology limitations of the time, the remains could not be attributed to individuals and were interred as a group, representing the B- 17G crew, at Arlington National Cemetery. From 1983 to 1999, as the glacier descended, additional remains and personal effects were recovered and turned over to U.S. officials. In 2010, due to advances in technology, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) reevaluated the evidence and used mitochondrial DNA— which matched that of Cassell’s mother— in the identification of his remains.

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

Saving Money: The next time you plan to buy something consider whether you need a new item or if it can be used. Because it's often true: You get what you pay for. When it comes to safety, hygiene, and warranties, there's no substitute for buying some things new. But for the most part, you can save a lot of money without sacrificing quality by purchasing many things used. Consider buying the following 14 items used and if you do you will save a lot of money:

1. Cars. The biggest way to save on car ownership is to avoid paying the sticker price. A properly maintained year-old vehicle looks and functions like a new car - but costs 20 percent less. If you can save just \$4,000 by buying used, then earn 10 percent on it for 20 years, you'll be \$26,000 ahead. And if you can avoid interest by paying cash rather than financing your ride, you'll be richer still. You can find a reliable used car for \$5,000 (<http://www.moneytalksnews.com/2010/03/31/how-to-buy-a-5000-car/>) The older the car the greater the risk, but having a car inspected by a mechanic can reduce it. The important thing when it comes to cars: Ignore the commercials. Cars are transportation, not status symbols.

2. Houses. With new homes, you don't have to worry about repairs. But even factoring in fix-up costs - which you'll know prior to purchase because you've had a professional inspection done - a pre-owned house will normally save thousands over new. According to the latest data from the National Association of Home Builders (http://www.nahb.org/fileUpload_details.aspx?contentID=55764) , the average price for a new home in April (\$282,600) was about 25 percent higher than the average price for an existing home (\$226,400). Save \$50,000 by buying used and you'll have a lower mortgage payment, freeing up cash to do other more important things - like saving for retirement. Pre-owned also means more flexible negotiations and mature landscaping.

3. Books. There's no good reason to buy a new book. Pick up a copy online or at a local store for pennies on the dollar. Or rediscover the library, which these days may even offer free e-book downloads (<http://www.moneytalksnews.com/2010/09/20/free-e-books-yours-for-the-downloading/>). The high price of college

textbooks makes buying used especially attractive. But you can save even more by checking the library (before your classmates), finding a textbook exchange, or buying an older edition for less. Do some searching and you'll find lots of ways to get textbooks cheaper, or even free (<http://www.moneytalksnews.com/2010/01/04/4-places-to-get-free-textbooks/>). Depending on demand and when a new edition is released, you may also be able to recoup much of your cost by reselling them in the right places (<http://www.moneytalksnews.com/2012/05/24/4-tips-to-turn-textbooks-into-cash/>).

4. Timeshares. A new timeshare is a terrible buy. Reuters recently reported owners are so desperate to ditch the annual maintenance fees that many timeshares are selling for \$1 (http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/25/us-developer-s-high-pressure-sales-pitch-will-make-you-tens-of-thousands-of-dollars-richer_housing-timeshares-idUSBRE84O0TJ20120525) . If you can buy a timeshare for basically nothing, avoiding a

5. Recreational toys. From boats to RVs to bikes, buying used makes sense for all the reasons Stacy mentioned in the video above: They're terrifically expensive new, they depreciate rapidly, and if someone is selling, they may not have had the free time to use it very much.

6. Sports and exercise gear. Everybody wants to lose weight, but few make the time to do it. That means many people have exercise gear they want to unload cheap or even free on sites like eBay and Freecycle. There are also stores that specialize in used gear, like Play It Again Sports. Weights can't go bad, although you'll want to test things like treadmills and other more complex equipment. Note that , bicycle helmets are one thing you should buy new for safety reasons.

7. Furniture. Used furniture from garage sales and consignment stores (<http://consignmentpal.com/Resale-and-Consignment-Directory.html>) is often a great bargain. Look around your house and mentally add up the amount you've spent on new furniture. Had you bought used, you could easily have saved 50 percent, which means that money would be in your pocket instead of a furniture retailer's. Moving sales are great places to save on furniture, since moving furniture is expensive, and sellers have a deadline to dump it. Snap up bargains when college dorms and apartments start emptying in the Spring. Added bonus of buying used: you might find stuff that's better built than today's.

8. Jewelry. Jewelry depreciates faster than cars. And unlike cars, used jewelry isn't going to break down, and nobody can tell a ring made this year from one made in 1950. In fact, vintage styles can be highly sought after. Best sources include pawn shops, online at places like eBay, and government and other auctions (<http://www.usa.gov/shopping/shopping.shtml>) Obviously, if you're buying something expensive, be knowledgeable or enlist the help of someone who is.

9. Baby gear. Baby stuff doesn't get much use - they outgrow everything in months. So baby clothes, toys, and nursery furniture can be smart used buys. But there are definitely used baby items to avoid. Car seats and cribs have safety risks, and everything should be checked for product recalls (<http://www.babycenter.com/product-recall-finder>) . If you're not sure, say no. But if you are, you can easily save 50 percent or more.

10. Clothes. Clean out your closet and get a tax deduction by donating the clothes you don't want to a thrift store. Better yet, take them to a resale shop and make some money. And while you're there, shop around. The problem with buying clothes this way - as with many things you buy used - is that it might be hard to find exactly what you're looking for. But if you're not in a hurry, buying used can cut your clothing budget by 90 percent. For nicer clothes, head to the thrift and resale stores closest to upscale neighborhoods.

11. Dishware. Dishes don't go bad with time, and buying used can save 80 percent or more. Got a friend getting married? Odds are good they're going to be getting rid of old stuff to make room for wedding gifts. Thrift shops, yard sales and online sites like freecycle are also good bets.

12. Electronics. Used electronics are a mixed bag: Things a few years old might be obsolete or incompatible with the latest technology, and it's often hard to tell whether there are hardware issues. However, buying used a few months after a product's release (or even getting last year's model) can be a great way to save. Purchasing from someone you know personally is a good way to avoid lemons, and factory-refurbished items have been professionally examined and repaired, and may even come with a warranty. Electronics are a great place to save because so many people foolishly feel the need to buy the latest edition of everything. Not being one of those people will make you richer.

13. Video games and movies. These media are a lot like books. Many buy them new, enjoy them once, then toss them on a shelf. If that's you, recycle your entertainment money and trade them in. Online-only stores such as Amazon and Newegg sometimes feature sales with new copies cheaper than the used ones at brick-and-mortar stores, so be sure and check. But used prices are typically 10 to 70 percent less than new, with the best deals on the older stuff. As with electronics, patience pays.

14. Tools. Most people don't use tools regularly, so it may make sense to borrow or rent them. But well-maintained tools last a long time, and are easy to find at yard sales. It can be hard to tell how much life power tools have left - so only buy them used from people you trust.

Bottom line? You can be thousands of dollars richer simply by letting other people take the depreciation hit that accompanies virtually all consumer purchases. While it's convenient to go into a local store and walk out with something new, there's a high price to pay for that convenience. If you can save \$10,000 every year by buying used, then compound that money at 10 percent, in 30 years you'll be \$1,809,434 richer than someone who buys the same things new. And what have you sacrificed? Nothing. After all, those new items become used the minute you bring them home. [Source: MoneyTalksNews Brandon Ballenger article 17 Jun 2012 ++]

Notes of Interest:

- **TRICARE.** In the MOAA TRICARE care access survey, 44% of respondents experienced some kind of difficulty finding a doctor who accepts TRICARE patients.
- **Heart Attack.** A heart attack is more likely to kill a woman than a man (9% versus 4.4%), perhaps because women are more likely to delay seeking treatment for myocardial infarction symptoms.
- **DST.** Do not forget that the Time Change back to Standard time will be Sunday morning (4 November) at 0200 hrs (2:00 AM). Fall forward, Spring back.
- **Safety.** Forbes released its list of the top 10 most dangerous cities in the U.S. they are in descending order: Detroit, St. Louis, Oakland, Memphis, Birmingham, Atlanta, Baltimore, Stockton, Cleveland, and Buffalo.
- **VA Home Loan.** The Department of Veterans Affairs announced 26 OCT it has guaranteed 20 million home loans since its home loan program was established in 1944 as part of the original GI Bill of Rights for returning World War II Veterans.

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

Medicare Fraud Update 103:



- **Detroit MI** - Federal prosecutors say a Detroit-area couple who ran clinics that claimed to specialize in treating HIV have pleaded guilty to participating in a multimillion-dollar Medicare fraud scheme. U.S. attorney's office in Detroit says the Troy residents made the pleas 17 OCT before U.S. District Judge Paul Borman. Forty-year-old Raymond and 25-year-old Emelitzia Arias face sentencing Feb. 12, 2013, for conspiracy to commit health care fraud. It carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Prosecutors say the couple owned Elite Wellness LLC and Carefirst Occupational & Rehabilitation Center Inc. They say Raymond Arias paid doctors to refer Medicare patients so he could submit fraudulent claims. The government says the couple submitted about \$13.4 million in bogus claims in 2009-2011, and Medicare paid about \$5.9 million.
- **Naples FL** - An offshore remittance company called Caribbean Transfers financed a complex money-laundering ring that moved more than \$30 million in stolen Medicare money from South Florida into Cuba's banking system, federal authorities said 18 OCT. The revelation surfaced in the widening case of a now-convicted check-cashing store owner who was first believed to be at the center of the federal case. It marked the first time that investigators traced tainted Medicare proceeds to Cuba's state-controlled bank. Now, Caribbean Transfers appears to have played the dominant role in the unprecedented money-laundering scheme. Prosecutors have filed new conspiracy charges against the founder of the Caribbean-based company, Jorge Emilio Perez, who is at large, and two Miami-Dade men suspected of defrauding the taxpayer-funded Medicare program. The latter defendants, Felipe Ruiz and Kirian Vega, are accused of laundering their Medicare profits through the convicted check-cashing store owner, who did business with Caribbean Transfers. The new information about Caribbean Transfers, which prosecutors say is licensed by the Cuban government, was disclosed during Ruiz's bond hearing. Ruiz, a Cuban-born U.S. citizen, was denied bail because a judge found he might flee to Cuba or another country. In June, the U.S. attorney's office in Miami made national headlines when prosecutors charged Oscar L. Sanchez, owner of the Naples check-cashing store, with conspiring to launder millions of Medicare dollars via Canada and Trinidad into Cuba's national bank. By late August, Sanchez, 47, pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate with authorities and repay the U.S. government \$10 million, consisting primarily of residential investment properties he acquired with his wife in Southwest Florida. Sanchez, who is also a Cuban-born U.S. citizen, was indicted on the single conspiracy charge of playing a pivotal role in laundering the profits of 70 South Florida medical companies that falsely billed Medicare for \$374.4 million and were paid \$70.7 million.
- **Detroit MI** - A federal jury in Detroit on 26 OCT, convicted a physician, a home health agency owner, and a patient recruiter for their participation in a \$14.5 million Medicare fraud scheme. Dr. Pramod Raval, 59, was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and one count of conspiracy to solicit or receive health care kickbacks in exchange for referring patients to two Detroit area home health care companies, Patient Choice Home Healthcare Inc. and All American Home Care Inc. Chiradeep Gupta,

38, a physical therapist and part-owner of All American, was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and three substantive counts of money laundering. The charge of health care fraud conspiracy carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The charge of conspiracy to violate the Anti-Kickback Statute carries a maximum prison sentence of five years and a fine of up to \$25,000. Richard Shannon, 39, a patient recruiter, was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. The defendants were charged in a superseding indictment returned March 27, 2012. Sixteen other individuals who worked at or were associated with Patient Choice and All American have previously pleaded guilty. According to evidence presented at trial, the defendants and their co-conspirators caused the submission of false and fraudulent claims to Medicare through Patient Choice and All American, two home health care companies located in Oak Park, Michigan that purported to provide skilled nursing and physical therapy services to Medicare beneficiaries in the greater Detroit area. The evidence showed that the defendants and their co-conspirators used patient recruiters who paid Medicare beneficiaries to sign blank documents for physical therapy services that were never provided and/or medically unnecessary. The owners of Patient Choice and All American paid physicians to sign referrals and other therapy documents necessary to bill Medicare. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants provided through contractors would then create fake medical records using the blank, pre-signed forms obtained by the patient recruiters to make it appear as if physical therapy services were actually rendered, when, in fact, the services had not been rendered. According to evidence presented at trial, Raval referred both patients from his own practice and patients brought into the scheme by recruiters to Patient Choice and All American in exchange for kickbacks. Gupta provided to Patient Choice and All American physical therapists and physical therapist assistants who created fake patient files using blank, pre-signed forms obtained by patient recruiters, to make it appear as if the physical therapy services billed to Medicare had actually been given. Gupta also doctored and directed the doctoring of fake patient files. The evidence at trial showed that Gupta laundered the proceeds of the fraud through multiple shell companies. Shannon paid patients in cash in order to obtain their signatures on blank physical therapy forms used to create fake therapy documents.

- **Manhattan NY** - Davit Mirzoyan pled guilty 29 OCT in Manhattan federal court to racketeering and other crimes in connection with his involvement in an Armenian-American criminal organization involved in a wide range of criminal activity, including a massive Medicare fraud. Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: “Davit Mirzoyan was a criminal parasite feeding on a grand scale off our country’s health care system for personal financial gain and draining Medicare of needed funds. His guilty plea today ensures he will be held to account for his actions.” According to the indictment and other documents filed in this case from 2006 to 2010, he led a nationwide Medicare scam that fraudulently billed Medicare for over \$100 million. Mirzoyan and others created dozens of “phantom clinics,” health care providers that existed only on paper. These clinics did not have any doctors and treated no patients. At least 118 fraudulent Medicare providers, located in approximately 25 states, submitted fraudulent bills to Medicare totaling approximately \$100 million, and received approximately \$35.7 million. Mirzoyan pled guilty to one count of participating in a racketeering conspiracy, and one count each of conspiracies to commit health care fraud, bank fraud, money laundering, and identity theft. He faces a maximum penalty of 75 years in prison. He is scheduled to be sentenced on 6 FEB.

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

Medicaid Fraud Update 73:

- **Topeka KS** - Jason Sellers, 43, a former executive with Topeka-based nonprofit corporation Kansas Health Solutions has pleaded guilty to scheming to steal more than \$2 million in Medicaid funds, U.S.

Attorney Barry Grissom said today. Sellers admitted that while he was chief financial officer he diverted Medicaid funds to Advanced Business Consulting, which was a shell company he created. Sellers fraudulently billed Kansas Health Solutions for information technology services ostensibly performed by the sham business. He also billed Kansas Health Solutions for sports equipment and uniforms for sports teams with which he associated, as well as computer equipment for the local school, for himself and for his family. From about 2007 to 2011, Sellers was involved with several Topeka area sports teams. In addition to billing Kansas Health Solutions for sports equipment and uniforms for sports teams, Sellers used some of the stolen money to build and furnish a \$375,000, 3,755-sq. ft. home on 11 acres in Lyndon, Kan. Sentencing is set for Jan. 17. The parties are recommending a sentence of three years in federal prison and restitution of more than \$2 million.

- **Medina OH** - Chiropractor John N. Heary, 38, faced more than 50 charges that he overbilled Medicare and insurance companies more than \$1.8 million for equipment and treatments that were not medically necessary, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office. Heary did business under his name and as two corporate entities — HealthSource of Medina and Medina Health & Wellness Center Inc., the attorney's office reported. According to court documents, Heary provided unneeded custom orthotics and expensive back braces without any demonstration of medical necessity or any pursuit of less costly alternatives. He also billed for supervised physical therapy when patients were not supervised. Insurers reimbursed Heary for more than \$812,000, an amount he will repay in restitution, according to the attorney's office. Sentencing is scheduled for April 22.
- **Lubbock TX** - Licensed Professional Counselor Margie E. Hollingsworth, of Lubbock, Texas, was sentenced 22 OCT by U.S. District Judge Sam R. Cummings to 46 months in federal prison, following her guilty plea in February 2012 to one count of making a false statement in a health care matter. In addition, Judge Cummings ordered that Hollingsworth pay a \$6,000 fine and \$556,704 in restitution to Medicaid. She must surrender to the Bureau of Prisons on or before November 23, 2012. Today's announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Sarah R. Saldaña, of the Northern District of Texas. According to the factual resume filed in the case, from January 2, 2004 through December 2009, Hollingsworth, an approved Medicaid provider, submitted a claim to Medicare for three hours of face-to-face counseling provided to a patient in Lubbock on Christmas Day 2009, when in fact, she was in Colorado at the time. According to the indictment, during this time period, the total amount Hollingsworth billed for services provided to Medicaid beneficiaries was between \$1 million and \$2.5 million. Of that amount, Hollingsworth was paid approximately \$576,234.39. Of that, \$556,704 was paid for fraudulent claims.



Margie Hollingsworth

- **Valhalla NY** - Westchester Medical Center is to pay \$7 million to settle charges that it submitted false Medicaid claims for nearly 10 years. The Manhattan U.S. Attorney's Office announced the settlement 24 OCT. The federal complaint alleges Westchester Medical Center repeatedly billed Medicaid for outpatient mental health services from Aug. 2001 through June 2010 without having the core documentation required

by Medicaid regulations. The Westchester Medical Center released a statement saying the settlement does not involve the quality of its medical services, but only deficiencies in the documentation that the Medicaid program requires. The Valhalla hospital also says it has improved the documentation practices of its clinicians.

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

State Veteran's Benefits: The state of Hawaii provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below.

To obtain information on these refer to the “**Veteran State Benefits – HI**” attachment to this Bulletin for an overview of the benefits listed below. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state.

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

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

Military History:



The Dec. 17, 1935 maiden flight of the DC-3 at Clover Field in Santa Monica, California did not produce huge expectations. Donald Douglas was not certain his company should build this aircraft and could not anticipate that its 75th anniversary – Dec. 17, 2010 – would be a landmark for pilots, historians and aviation buffs. Douglas had succumbed to the advances of American Airlines, which wanted a transport that would provide sleeper berths for 14 passengers. His Douglas Aircraft Company believed the DC-3 would be a modest success. A typical example was pulled through the air by two 1,200-horsepower Wright R-1830-90C engines and was unremarkable in appearance. Before World War II, a dozen airlines purchased versions. In military guise, it was the Dakota to the British, the C-47 to the U.S. Army, and the R4D to American sailors and Marines. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called the Douglas aircraft one of four “Tools of Victory” that won World War II for the Allies (together with the atom bomb, the Jeep and the bazooka).

World War II Duties. The U.S. Army began buying military versions in 1939. One later flew with Edo pontoons. To the Royal Air Force, the Dakota, or “Dak” was a mainstay. American pilots used their C-47 Skytrains and C-53 Skytroopers mostly to haul airborne soldiers. One pilot was retired Air Force Lt. Col. James J. Krajicek, 87, of Longwood, Fla., who flew risky supply missions over the infamous “Hump.” Krajicek devised a new way to climb into the cockpit of a C-47. “We would walk up the spine of the fuselage, open the hatch above the flight deck, and climb down into the pilots’ seats,” Krajicek said in an interview. “That way, we didn’t have to be near the horses.” Yes, Krajicek was carrying *horses*. With four of the equine beasts jammed together, there was no route to enable the

pilots and radio operator to walk through the fuselage to the flight deck. The Hump operation was the first sustained, long range, 24-hour, all weather, military aerial supply line. It was a predecessor of today's strategic airlift missions, but at the time there was no precedent for it.



Troops load a C-47 apparently in North Africa in preparations for the Sicily invasion

Sicily and Normandy. The Gooney Bird was the victim one of the worst “friendly fire” incidents in U.S. history. “It was horrible,” said former C-47 pilot Capt. Charles E. Pitzer. On July 10, 1943, the Allies landed 170,000 troops at Sicily. In the second airdrop of the invasion on the night of July 11, one hundred forty four C-47s and C-53s carried 2,000 paratroopers from Tunisia to Sicily. Historian Rick Atkinson wrote in *The Day of Battle* of “panicked gunners” ashore and on ships at sea who sent volleys of fire lofting into the night sky. *Time* magazine later cited the inefficiency of naval gunners. “Fountains of fire erupted from the beaches and the anchorage,” Atkinson wrote. Aboard the paratroop planes, “Men fingered their rosary beads or vomited into their helmets. Bullets ripped through wings and fuselages.” Three hundred eighteen American soldiers were killed or wounded. Twenty-three C-47s and C-53s failed to return. Brig. Gen. Charles L. Keerans, Jr., the assistant 82nd Airborne Division commander, was on an aircraft that was lost at sea.



Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, artillery commander of the 101st Airborne Division, gives his various glider pilots last minute instructions before the take-off on D minus 1.

C-47 and C-53 transports led the way in the Allied invasion of southern France. On the night of June 5, 1944, when airborne divisions dropped into Normandy in advance of the D-Day invasion, 500 C-47s and C-53s carried paratroopers in mass, nocturnal formations. Dropping the airborne troopers was “a different kind of flying,” said Pitzer. “In the front of the plane we were very busy. Our main communication with the jumpmaster out back consisted of switching the red light to green to tell them it was time to jump.” The “Gooney Bird” and Pitzer later took part in the last major airborne assault of the war, Operation Market Garden.

Postwar Era. The Gooney Bird gave good service in the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift and in brushfire wars in Algeria, Indochina and elsewhere. In 1949, Douglas proposed to sell airlines a new flagship: The Super DC-3 made its initial flight on June 23, 1949 at Clover Field with test pilot John F. Martin at the controls. With an increased wingspan (now 95 feet), more powerful engines, and squared-off wing and tail surfaces, it performed well and would have made a good airliner – but the airlines didn't want it. Except for a trio of Super DC-3s that went to Capital Airlines, Douglas was unable to sell the new plane to commercial carriers. The Air Force bought one and called it the C-129. The Navy purchased 98 for the Marine Corps as R4D-8s. Some became nocturnal flare ships for night bombing during the Korean War. The Marine Corps operated this version, later called the C-117D, until July 1976.

Korea & Vietnam. In the 1950-53 Korean conflict, U.S. Air Force C-47s hauled cargo, dropped leaflets and flew loudspeaker missions. On March 23, 1961, when few Americans had any interest in Southeast Asia, an SC-47 Skytrain was shot down over the Plain of Jars in Laos by anti-aircraft fire from pro-communist Pathet Lao Rebels. All but one aboard were killed. In Vietnam, the AC-47 gunship, called Spooky or Puff the Magic Dragon, could be devastating on a night combat mission. Spooky carried three 7.62-mm MXU-47A mini-guns. More than once this new type of arack aircraft prevented the Viet Cong from overrunning friendly outposts. On Feb. 24, 1969, after his AC-47 was hit by antiaircraft fire, wounded Airman First Class John L. Levitow fell upon a burning flare that had rolled loose. Levitow tossed the flare out instants before it would have exploded. He was awarded the Medal of Honor. EC-47N, EC-47P and EC-47Q versions of the Gooney served as flying intelligence platforms in Vietnam.



Warbirds of America Squadron 14, Inc. restored this AC-47 gunship in the markings of the airplane in which John Levitow won his MOH. Note the Minigun snouts poking from the cabin window openings.

Called “Methuselah with Wings,” the Gooney Bird refuses to go away. Of 10,636 DC-3s manufactured in the USA, 400 are flying today, some as turboprop versions. Because of changes in political jurisdictions and borders, DC-3s have served in more nations than exist in the world today. [Source: <http://www.defensemianetwork.com/stories/the-beloved-gooney-bird-turns-75/> Oct 2012 ++]

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

- Nov 00 1943 – WW2: USS Capelin (SS-289) sunk by unknown causes, either Japanese aircraft (934 Kokutai) and minelayer Wakatake, a Japanese mine in the northern Celebes, or perhaps a hull defect reported prior to her departure from Darwin. 78 killed
- Nov 01 1915 – Parris Island is officially designated a US Marine Corps Recruit Depot.
- Nov 01 1942 – WW2: Matanikau Offensive begins during the Guadalcanal Campaign and ends on November 4.

- Nov 01 1943 – WW2: American troops invade Bougainville in the Solomon Islands.
- Nov 01 1951 – Cold War: Operation Buster–Jangle: 6,500 American soldiers are exposed to 'Desert Rock' atomic explosions for training purposes in Nevada. Participation is not voluntary.
- Nov 01 1952 – Cold War: Operation Ivy – The United States successfully detonates the first large hydrogen bomb, codenamed "Mike" ["M" for megaton], in the Eniwetok atoll, located in the Marshall Islands in the central Pacific Ocean. The explosion had a yield of 10 megatons.
- Nov 01 1968 – Vietnam: President Lyndon B. Johnson calls a halt to bombing in Vietnam, hoping this will lead to progress at the Paris peace talks.
- Nov 02 1775 – American Revolution: Americans under General Richard Montgomery capture the British fort of Saint Johns.
- Nov 03 1783 – American Revolution: The American Continental Army is disbanded.
- Nov 03 1942 – WW2: The Koli Point action begins during the Guadalcanal Campaign and ends on November 12.
- Nov 03 1943 – WW2: 500 aircraft of the U.S. 8th Air Force devastate Wilhelmshafen harbor in Germany.
- Nov 03 1967 – Vietnam: Beginning of the Battle of Dak To (3–11 NOV).
- Nov 04 1791 – Northwest Indian War: The Western Confederacy of American Indians win a major victory over the U.S. in the Battle of the Wabash.
- Nov 04 1962 – The last atmospheric nuclear test is conducted by the U.S. in a test of the Nike–Hercules air defense missile, Shot Dominic–Tightrope.
- Nov 04 1967 – Vietnam: American troops broke a North Vietnamese 6 day assault at Loc Ninh, near the Cambodian border .
- Nov 04 1979 – At the American Embassy in Teheran, Iran, 90 people, including 63 Americans, are taken hostage for 444 days by militant student followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. The students demand the return of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was undergoing medical treatment in New York City.
- Nov 05 1814 – War of 1812: Having decided to abandon the Niagara frontier, the American army blows up Fort Erie.
- Nov 05 1862 – Indian Wars: In Minnesota, 303 Dakota warriors are found guilty of rape and murder of whites and are sentenced to hang. 38 are ultimately executed and the others reprieved.
- Nov 05 1917 – WWI: General John Pershing leads U.S. troops into the first American action against German forces near the Rhine–Marne Canal in France.
- Nov 06 1945 – The first landing of a jet on a carrier takes place on USS Wake Island when an FR–1 Fireball touches down
- Nov 06 1986 – The Iran arms–for–hostages deal is revealed, damaging the Reagan administration.
- Nov 07 1944 – WW2: USS Albacore (SS–218) missing. Possibly sunk by Japanese mine off northern tip of Honshu, Japan. 85 killed
- Nov 07 1957 – Cold War: The Gaither Report calls for more American missiles and fallout shelters.
- Nov 08 1942 – WW2: Operation Torch begins with Allied landings in northwest Africa.
- Nov 08 1944 – WW2: USS Growler (SS–215) missing. Most likely sunk by Japanese destroyer Shigure, escort vessel Chiburi, and Coast Defense Vessel No. 19 off Mindoro. 86 killed
- Nov 09 1989 – Cold War: Fall of the Berlin Wall. Communist–controlled East Germany opens checkpoints in the Berlin Wall allowing its citizens to travel to West Germany. This key event led to the eventual reunification of East and West Germany.
- Nov 10 1775 – American Revolution: Continental Congress establishes two battalions of Marines.
- Nov 10 1782 – American Revolution: In the last battle of the Revolution, George Rodgers Clark attacks Indians and Loyalists at Chillicothe, in Ohio Territory.
- Nov 11 1778 – American Revolution: Cherry Valley Massacre: Loyalists and Seneca Indian forces attack a fort and village in eastern New York during the War, killing more than forty civilians and soldiers.

- Nov 11 1813 – War of 1812: Battle of Crysler's Farm – British and Canadian forces defeat a larger American force, causing the Americans to abandon their Saint Lawrence campaign.
- Nov 11 1865 – Civil War: Dr. Mary E. Walker, the first female surgeon in the Union Army, is presented with the Medal of Honor, the first woman to receive that award.
- Nov 11 1909 – Construction begins on the naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.
- Nov 11 1921 – The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery is dedicated by U.S. President Warren G. Harding.
- Nov 11 1918 – WWI: War ends at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month with the signing of an Armistice. This is annually honored with a two-minute silence.



- Nov 11 1944 – WW2: USS Scamp (SS-277) sunk by Japanese naval aircraft and Coast Defense Vessel No.4 in Tokyo Bay area. 83 killed
- Nov 11 1968 – Vietnam : Operation Commando Hunt initiated. The goal was to interdict men and supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, through Laos into South Vietnam
- Nov 11 1970 – Vietnam: U.S. Army Special Forces raid the Son Tay prison camp in North Vietnam but find no prisoners.
- Nov 12 1948 – In Tokyo, an international war crimes tribunal sentences seven Japanese military and government officials, including General Hideki Tojo, to death for their roles in World War II.
- Nov 12 1951 – Korea: The U.S. Eighth Army is ordered to cease offensive operations and begin an active defense.
- Nov 12 1969 – Vietnam: My Lai Massacre – Independent investigative journalist Seymour Hersh breaks the My Lai story.
- Nov 13 1982 – The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is dedicated in Washington, D.C. after a march to its site by thousands of Vietnam War veterans.

- Nov 14 1910 – First airplane flight from the deck of a ship (USS Birmingham at Hampton Roads to Norfolk VA).
- Nov 14 1961 – Vietnam: President Kennedy increases the number of American advisors in Vietnam from 1,000 to 16,000.
- Nov 14 1965 – Vietnam: Battle of Chu Pon–ia Drang River. U.S. 1st Calvary fought North Vietnamese regulars 14–17. The second battle was fought by ARVN Airborne Brigade 18–26 NOV.
- Nov 15 1777 – American Revolution: After 16 months of debate the Continental Congress approves the Articles of Confederation.
- Nov 15 1864 – Civil War: Union General W.T. Sherman's troops set fires that destroy much of Atlanta Georgia as he began his march to the sea in an effort to cut the Confederacy in two.
- Nov 15 1960 – Cold War: The first submarine with nuclear missiles, USS George Washington, takes to sea from Charleston, South Carolina.
- Nov 15 1969 – Vietnam: A quarter of a million anti–War demonstrators march in Washington, D.C.
- Nov 15 1969 – Cold War: The Soviet submarine K–19 collides with the American submarine USS Gato in the Barents Sea.

[Source: Various Oct 2012 ++]

Military Trivia 61: Spanish American War 3

Questions

1. Which country was once the most powerful colonial nation on earth, but by the end of the 19th century lost most of its colonies?
Spain | Great Britain | United States | France
2. Which of these rebelled against Spain between 1868 and 1878?
United States | Puerto Rico | Cuba | Mexico
3. Who responded to the Cuban rebellion by putting Cubans from central and western Cuba into barbed-wired reconcentration camps?
Valeriano Weyler | George Dewey | Jose Marti | James Creelman
4. What does the term "yellow journalism" mean?
 - A policy in which stronger nations extend their economic, political, or military control over weaker territories
 - The yellow pages
 - The use of sensationalized reporting in the popular press
 - Dishonest journalism
5. What ship did President McKinley order to evacuate American citizens who were in danger from the fighting and also to protect American property in 1898?
U.S.S. America | U.S.S. New York | U.S.S. Maine | U.S.S. Florida
6. When did the United States declare war on Spain?
June 30th 1894 | June 3rd 1894 | April 2nd 1899 | April 20th 1898 |
7. Where did the Americans first strike against Spain?

In Central America | In Cuba | In the Philippine Islands | In Spain

8. Who was the American Commodore during the Spanish-American war in the Pacific?

James Creelman | Jose Marti | George Dewey | Valeriano Weyler

9. What were the "Rough Riders"?

- A flotilla of small, fast American ships
- A crack Spanish cavalry regiment
- A volunteer cavalry unit
- Mounted guerrillas

10. Who was described as "the hero of the battle at San Juan Hill"?

Leonard Wood | Theodore Roosevelt | George Dewey | Valeriano Weyler

ANSWERS:

1. **Spain** - The country had only retained the Philippines and the island of Guam in the Pacific and a few very small colonies in Africa. (Spain turned to parts of West and Central Africa as a source of slaves until slavery ended in 1873), the Caribbean islands of Cuba, and Puerto Rico in the Americas.

2. **Cuba** - The Americans had sympathy for the Cuban people during this rebellion. This revolt was not successful, but later the Cubans would have success against the Spanish.

3. **Valeriano Weyler** - In 1896, the Spanish sent General Valeriano Weyler (1838-1930) over to Cuba to suppress the rebellion. He soon came to the conclusion that the only way to suppress the rebellion was to cut off the guerrilla rebels from any source of civilian support. In order to do this, he had about 300,000 Cuban civilians deported to camps. These were very poorly run and many of the inmates (who, after all, had committed no crime) perished from hunger and disease. If he'd wanted to encourage popular stereotypes about "Spanish brutality" he could hardly have made a better job of it.

4. **The use of sensationalized reporting in the popular press** - The popular press ("yellow journalism"), which developed from about 1880 onwards, was loudly patriotic. It focused on events - allegedly as seen by "our man in Havana" - and discouraged critical thinking. In the Spanish-American war it whipped up nationalistic enthusiasm in America for the war.

5. **U.S.S. Maine** - The popular press claimed that the U.S.S. Maine had been blown up by the Spaniards and said, "The warship Maine was split in two by an enemy's secret infernal machine."

6. **April 20th 1898** - On April 11th, McKinley asked Congress for authority to use force against Spain, but it took until the 20th of April for Congress to agree.

7. **In the Philippine Islands** - The Spanish were expecting the Americans to attack Cuba first because they had once tried to buy Cuba from them, but the Americans attacked the Philippines first.

8. **George Dewey** - He gave the command to open fire on the Spanish fleet in Manila, the Philippine capital on April 30th.

9. **A volunteer cavalry unit** - The "Rough Riders" were under command of Leonard Wood. Theodore Roosevelt also was a commander of this group.

10. **Theodore Roosevelt** - Two days after San Juan Hill the Spanish fleet tried to escape the American blockade at the harbor of Santiago, but a naval battle that followed this ended in the destruction of the Spanish fleet. Roosevelt was said to be the hero of San Juan Hill because he had done so much during the war and it seemed to the American people that he should be the true hero because he was a great leader.

[Source: <http://www.funtrivia.com/trivia-quiz/History/The-Spanish-American-War-220179.html> Oct 2012 ++]

Tax Burden for Oklahoma 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 Oklahoma.

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 4.5% (prescription drugs exempt); cities, towns and counties may levy local sales taxes. The county tax cannot exceed 2% but some cities have sales taxes over 4.25%.

Gasoline Tax: 17 cents/gallon

Diesel Fuel Tax: 14 cents/gallon

Gasohol Tax: 17 cents/gallon

Cigarette Tax: \$1.03/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Low – 0.5%; High – 5.5%. The rate range reported is for single persons not deducting federal income tax. For married persons filing jointly, the same rates apply to income brackets ranging from \$2,000 to over \$15,000. Separate schedules, with rates ranging from 0.5% to 10%, apply to taxpayers deducting federal income taxes.

Income Brackets: Lowest – \$1,000; Highest – \$8,700

Number of Brackets: 7

Personal Exemptions: Single – \$1,000; Married – \$2,000; Dependents – \$1,000

Additional Exemptions: 65 or older – \$1,000

Standard Deduction: Single – \$5,700; Married filing jointly – \$11,400; Married filing separately – \$5,700

Medical/Dental Deduction: Federal amount

Federal Income Tax Deduction: Full but higher rates apply to the remaining taxable income

Retirement Income Taxes: Each individual may exclude their retirement benefits, up to \$10,000, but not to exceed the amount included in the Federal Adjusted Gross Income. For any individual who claims the exclusions for government retirees on Schedule 511-A, line 4 and 5, the amount of the exclusion cannot exceed \$10,000 minus the amounts already claimed on Schedule 511-A, 4 and 5 (if less than zero, enter zero). The retirement benefits must be received from an employee pension benefit plan, an eligible deferred compensation plan, an individual retirement account, annuity or trust or simplified employee pension under IRC section 408, an employee annuity (a) or (b), United States Retirement bonds under IRC section 86, or lump-sum distributions from a retirement plan under IRC section 402 (e). There is no longer a modified AGI limit beginning with tax year 2010. For more information, click here.

Retired Military Pay: Any individual who is retired from any component of the Armed Forces may exclude the greater of \$10,000 or 75% of their retirement income beginning with tax year 2007.

Military Disability Retired Pay: Retirees who entered the military before Sept. 24, 1975, and members receiving disability retirements based on combat injuries or who could receive disability payments from the VA are covered by laws giving disability broad exemption from federal income tax. Most military retired pay based on service-related disabilities also is free from federal income tax, but there is no guarantee of total protection.

VA Disability Dependency and Indemnity Compensation: VA benefits are not taxable because they generally are for disabilities and are not subject to federal or state taxes.

Military SBP/SSBP/RCSBP/RSFPP: Generally subject to state taxes for those states with income tax. Check with state department of revenue office.

Property Taxes

Real property is assessed at an amount between 11% and 13.5% of its fair cash value. Oklahoma offers a homestead exemption for homeowners which reduces the property's assessed value by \$1,000. In most cases this will result in a tax savings of \$80 to \$120. If gross household income is under \$20,000 a year or less and you meet all of the homestead exemption requirements, you may qualify for an additional \$1,000 exemption. A property tax refund worth up to \$200 is available if you are 65 or older, or totally disabled, and have an income of \$12,000 or less. There is a 100% property tax exemption for disabled veterans. Veterans and the surviving spouse of a veteran may also qualify for a property tax exemption.

Senior citizens with a household income of less than \$25,000 previously qualified for a valuation freeze on their primary residence. This meant that their property tax would not go up just because the value of other homes in the neighborhood has gone up. As the result of a law passed in 2004, the amount of qualifying income would be fixed to the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's estimate of median family income. Call 405-713-1236. For more information on ad valorem taxes refer to <http://www.tax.ok.gov/advform/TES-14.pdf>.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

There is no inheritance tax but there is an estate tax. Estate tax is 1/2% to 10% of the net estate at the time of death and is independent of the federal estate tax. It also imposes an additional estate tax that is essentially designed to absorb any available federal estate credit for state death taxes. The amount of Oklahoma estate tax imposed depends on who gets what. For details refer to <http://www.tax.ok.gov/oktax/forms/45499.pdf>.

For further information, refer to the Oklahoma Tax Commission site <http://www.oktax.state.ok.us> or call 405-521-3160. [Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com> Oct 2012 ++]

Aviation Art (16):



Rocket Hunters

by Heinz Krebs

A pair of North American Mustangs from the 1st Scouting Force, 8th Air Force, with P-51 D Chip flown by Merrill Dewey DuMont in the foreground, detects a German V-2 rocket launch site near the English Channel in the spring of 1945. Oil on canvas on board 28" x 42" - \$12,500 [Source: <http://www.brooksart.com/Originals.html> Oct 2012 ++]

Veteran Legislation Status 28 OCT 2012: The Senate and House are in a “legislative lull” until the General Election is over. Both chambers have been conducting pro forma sessions throughout the extended break. These very brief meetings take place with just a handful of congressional members in attendance and legislation is not normally discussed or passed. 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: <http://www.loc.gov> Oct 2012 ++]

Have You Heard? CHIPs Radar gun

Two California Highway Patrol Officers (CHIPs) were conducting speeding enforcement on I-15, just north of the Marine Corps Air Station at Miramar. One of the officers was using a hand held radar device to check speeding vehicles approaching the crest of a hill.

The officers were suddenly surprised when the radar gun began reading 300 miles per hour. The officer attempted to reset the radar gun, but it would not reset and then turned off. Just then a deafening roar over the treetops revealed that the radar had in fact locked on to a USMC F/A-18 Hornet which was engaged in a low flying exercise near the location.

Back at the CHIPs Headquarters the Patrol Captain fired off a complaint to the USMC Base Commander. The reply came back in true USMC style:

Thank you for your letter. We can now complete the file on this incident. You may be interested to know that the tactical computer in the Hornet had detected the presence of, and subsequently locked on to, your hostile radar equipment and automatically sent a jamming signal back to it, which is why it shut down.

Furthermore, an Air-to-Ground missile aboard the fully armed aircraft had also automatically locked on to your equipment location. Fortunately, the Marine Pilot flying the Hornet recognized the situation for what it was, quickly responded to the missile system alert status and was able to override the automated defense system before the missile was launched to destroy the hostile radar position.

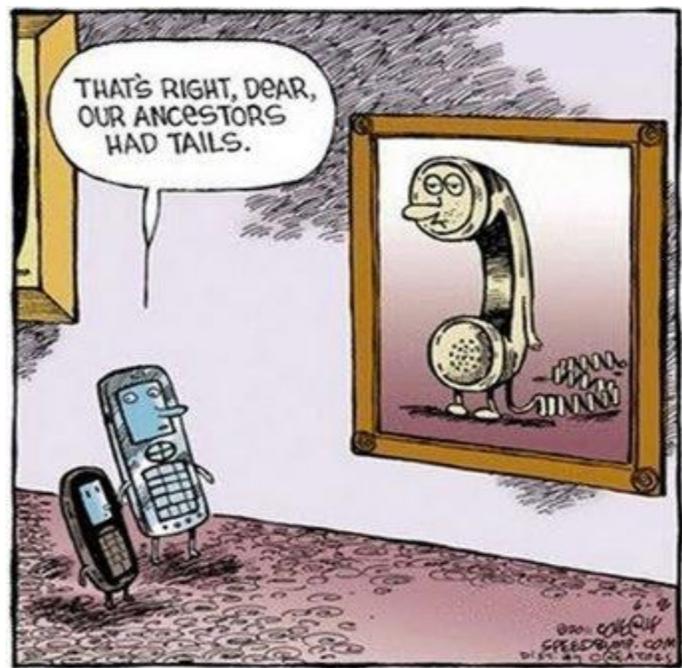
The pilot also suggests you cover your mouths when cussing at them, since the video systems on these jets are very high tech.

Sergeant Johnson, the officer holding the radar gun, should get his dentist to check his left rear molar. It appears the filling is loose. Also, the snap is broken on his holster.

Thank you for your concern.
Semper Fi.

Naval Lingo: Clothes Stops. Small diameter cords, approximately 12 inches long, used to tie laundry to a clothes line. The early Navy clothes pin. Issued in recruit training until 1973. Recruits often had to do extra pushups if it was discovered they had not used a square knot to hang their cloths.

A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have.
--- **Thomas Jefferson** (1743 – 1826 Principal author of the Declaration of Independence)



**USE A (CLEAN) DUSTPAN TO
FILL A CONTAINER THAT
DOESN'T FIT IN THE SINK**



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