

RAO

BULLETIN

15 July 2014

PDF Edition

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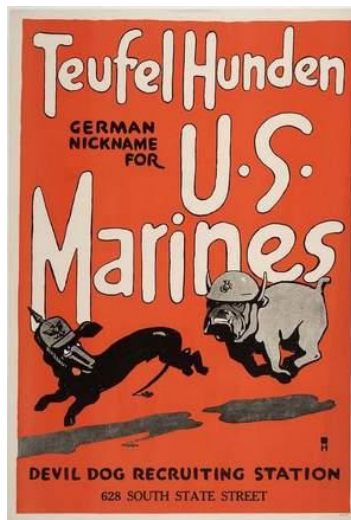
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*** DoD ***



Selective Service System Update 09 ► Centenarian Military Force

The United States isn't trying to build a military force of centenarians. It just seems that way after the Selective Service System mistakenly sent notices to more than 14,000 Pennsylvania men born between 1893 and 1897, ordering them to register for the nation's military draft and warning that failure to do so is "punishable by a fine and imprisonment." The agency realized the error when it began receiving calls from bewildered relatives last week. Chuck Huey, 73, of Kingston, said he got a notice addressed to his late grandfather Bert Huey, a World War I veteran who was born in 1894 and died in 1995 at age 100. "I said, 'Geez, what the hell is this about?' It said he was subject to heavy fines and imprisonment if he didn't sign up for the draft board," he said. "We were just totally dumbfounded."



A World War One-era recruiting poster for the Marine Corps.

Huey said he tried calling the Selective Service but couldn't get a live person on the line. That frustrated him even more because he wanted to make sure the agency knew there had been a mistake. "You just never know. You don't want to mess around with the federal government," he said. The glitch, it turns out, originated with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation during a transfer of nearly 400,000 records to the Selective Service. A clerk working with the state's database failed to select the century, producing records for males born between 1993 and 1997 — and for those born a century earlier, PennDOT spokeswoman Jan McKnight said 19 JUL. "We made a mistake, a quite serious selection error," McKnight said.

The Selective Service didn't initially catch it because the state used a two-digit code to indicate year of birth, spokesman Pat Schuback said. The federal agency identified 27,218 records of men born in the 1800s, began mailing notices to them on 30 JUN, and began receiving calls from family members on 3 JUL. By that time, it had sent 14,250 notices in error. "It's never happened before," Schuback said. The men are almost certainly all dead, given that the youngest would be turning 117 this year. Families of those men who received the notices can simply ignore them, he said. Their files will be deactivated and they shouldn't receive additional communications from the Selective Service. The agency also posted a notice and an apology on its website Thursday. The state Transportation Department, meanwhile, said it had taken steps to ensure its mistake won't be repeated. "We're really sorry," McKnight said. "We apologize." [Source: The Associated Press | Michael Rubinkam | Jul 10, 2014].

F-35 Lightning II ► \$355 Billion Plane to Nowhere

Burying bad news before a long holiday weekend, the Pentagon announced just before 9 p.m. on July 3 that the entire F-35 Joint Strike Fighter fleet was being grounded after a 23 JUN runway fire at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. The grounding could not have come at a worse time, especially for the Marine Corps, which had lots of splashy events planned this month for its variant of the next-generation plane, whose costs have soared to an estimated \$112 million per aircraft. Effectively saying that the most expensive warplane in American history is too dangerous to fly is a huge public relations blow for the Pentagon, which has been under fire for years for allowing the plane's costs to increase even as its delivery time continued to slide right. The plane's prime contractor, Lockheed Martin, could also take a hit to its bottom line if the F-35 isn't cleared to fly to the United Kingdom for a pair of high-profile international air shows packed with potential customers. One thing the grounding won't do, however, is derail the F-35, a juggernaut of a program that apparently has enough political top cover to withstand any storm.



Part of that protection comes from the jaw-dropping amounts of money at stake. The Pentagon intends to spend roughly \$399 billion to develop and buy 2,443 of the planes. However, over the course of the

aircrafts' lifetimes, operating costs are expected to exceed \$1 trillion. Lockheed has carefully hired suppliers and subcontractors in almost every state to ensure that virtually all senators and members of Congress have a stake in keeping the program -- and the jobs it has created -- in place. "An upfront question with any program now is: How many congressional districts is it in?" said Thomas Christie, a former senior Pentagon acquisitions official. In the case of the F-35, the short answer is: a lot. Counting all of its suppliers and subcontractors, parts of the program are spread out across at least 45 states. That's why there's no doubt lawmakers will continue to fund the program even though this is the third time in 17 months that the entire fleet has been grounded due to engine problems. In fact, in the version of the defense appropriations bill passed by the House, lawmakers agreed to purchase 38 planes in 2015, four more than the Pentagon requested.

The Pentagon has offered little information about the cause of the fire or whether the Marine Corps' version of the plane, the F-35B, had been cleared to participate in the Royal International Air Tattoo and the Farnborough International Airshow in the U.K. next week. "Nobody wants to rush these aircraft back into the air before we know exactly what happened and investigators have a chance to do their work," Pentagon Press Secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby told reporters 8 JUL. In addition to the Marines, the F-35 is also being built for the Navy and the Air Force. Each service is getting its own unique version of the aircraft, though the most important part -- the engine -- is being shared across all three models. But the armed services are not the only customers. Eight international partners have signed on to help build and buy the planes: the U.K., Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Denmark, and Norway. While not involved in the development of the plane, Israel and Japan are buying it through the foreign military sales process, and South Korea recently indicated that it would buy at least 40 of the aircraft.

It's crucial for the Pentagon that each of these countries sticks with their planned buys to prevent the unit price of each aircraft from increasing even further. Lockheed, in turn, sees those foreign sales as an important part of its strategy to diversify away from the shrinking U.S. defense market in favor of expanding overseas ones. Unfortunately for the Pentagon -- and for Lockheed -- the Pentagon's decision to ground the planes has already caused the aircraft to miss its scheduled 4 JL international debut: flying over the naming ceremony for the British Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier -- the HMS Queen Elizabeth -- in Scotland. "This government has sold this turkey and is still selling it," Christie said. None of the countries involved in the program have indicated their commitment to it has changed since the planes were grounded.

Its future really isn't in doubt, but the F-35 is facing some criticism at home. On Capitol Hill, the F-35's biggest critic is Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). He's famous for his tirades against the plane, bemoaning the program's cost and the fact that the United States is buying the fighter jet before its testing is even complete. But so far his rhetorical bark is worse than his legislative bite when it comes to the annual defense authorization bill. On Tuesday, McCain told Defense News that the F-35 is the worst example "of the military-industrial-congressional complex," but other senators, including Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), were mostly confident that its problems would be fixed. Meanwhile, Lockheed's rival Boeing, which builds EA-18G Growlers and F/A-18 Super Hornets, criticizes the F-35's capabilities in the press and vies with it for money on Capitol Hill. But even Boeing is careful about how far it will go with its criticism, because at the end of the day, the company doesn't want to burn its relationship with its government customers, said Winslow Wheeler, a former congressional staffer who closely tracks the program's ups and downs. "The political armor of the F-35 is as thick as the heads of the people who designed the airplane and its acquisition plan," he said.

Wheeler is one of the F-35's biggest critics, but his view of the program's political protections is widely shared, and it's one of the reasons that the program appears to be here to stay despite a growing record of problems. In September 2013, the Pentagon's F-35 program office announced that the tires on the Marine

Corps model were wearing out way too fast. This February, the entire fleet was grounded for a whole week after a crack was discovered in a test aircraft's engine turbine blade. As recently as June 9, the Pentagon had to ground the entire fleet after an oil leak occurred midflight, causing a Marine pilot to emergency-land the plane at a base in Arizona. But the program office and Lockheed have worked hard to solve these problems as they crop up. And Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher Bogdan, the F-35 program manager, has brought new focus to the program's price tag, pressuring Lockheed to bring down its costs.

Still, the problems continue. According to congressional and defense sources, the June 23 incident happened right before the F-35A -- the Air Force variant -- lifted off the ground. The pilot was able to abort the takeoff and get out of the plane in time. "The root cause of the incident remains under investigation," the Pentagon said in its 3 JUL statement. More than two weeks since the event, there has been little official news. The companies, meanwhile, are staying mum. "Lockheed Martin is working closely with the F-35 Joint Program Office and industry partners in supporting the Air Force investigation," said Lockheed spokeswoman Laura Siebert. "Safety is our team's top priority." The plane's engine maker, Pratt & Whitney, also said it's standing ready to assist the investigation, but it wouldn't offer any more details. Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman, attributed the F-35 grounding to the growing pains inherent in any complicated new weapons program. "It absolutely doesn't do anything to shake our confidence in the F-35 program and the progress that has been made both from an engineering and from a financial perspective," he said.

While no one is predicting any drastic changes to the program, defense and congressional sources said the F-35's current engine problems could lead to a revival of the battle over whether General Electric and Rolls Royce should build a second engine for the plane. The effort had been deeply controversial within the Pentagon, where senior leaders like then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates derided it as a waste of taxpayer money. The effort was finally killed by Congress in 2011. If it turns out that there is a serious problem with the Pratt & Whitney engine, though, you can expect to see an explosion of advertisements from GE-Rolls Royce in the Pentagon's metro station, one former defense official said. "There will be a lot of I-told-you-sos," he said. [Source: FP | Kate Brannen | Jul 8, 2014 ++]

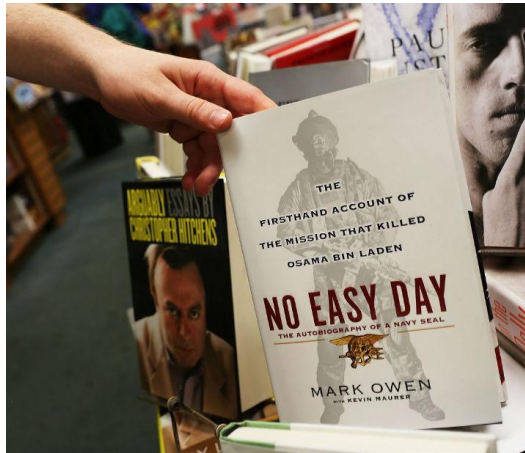
Commissary Case Lot Sales Update 01 ► Store Schedule Link

Stateside commissaries will be featuring a Commissary Customer Appreciation Case Lot Sale over two or three days between Aug. 14 and Sept. 30. The case lot sale schedule for all commissaries is available at http://www.commissaries.com/stores/html/store.cfm?dodaac=N&page=case_lot_dates. At this site you can also check the "Local Store Information" section on your commissary's store web page to details about holiday hours, sidewalk sales or other special store events. [Source: AUSA Family Readiness Weekly Update Jul 8, 2014 ++]

No Easy Day Memoir ► Pentagon Wants to Seize Author's Proceeds

The Obama administration is actively pursuing legal action against a former Navy SEAL to seize the hundreds of thousands of dollars he received for writing a best-selling but deeply controversial memoir about the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. The Justice Department and the Pentagon are in settlement talks, which have not previously been reported, with No Easy Day author Matt Bissonnette, who wrote the

book in 2012 under the pseudonym Mark Owen. The book bumped *Fifty Shades of Grey* from the top of the USA Today best-seller list when it was first published and has gone on to sell hundreds of thousands of copies. The book infuriated many at the Pentagon and in the secretive Special Operations community because Bissonnette didn't submit it for a pre-publication review designed to prevent the disclosure of any top-secret information about the raid. "The department continues to assert forcefully that Mark Owen breached his legal obligations by publishing the book without pre-publication review and clearance," a Pentagon spokesman said. "Settlement negotiations continue with an intent to pursue litigation if talks break down."



The Pentagon has long said that "all options are on the table" when it came to the book. But defense officials have only hinted that the government would go after the proceeds of the book if Bissonnette didn't participate meaningfully in settlement negotiations. Pentagon officials hadn't said, until now, that the administration was actively seeking to seize the funds from the book and would pursue charges against the author if those negotiations failed. The Pentagon's acknowledgement that it would do so suggests that administration lawyers aren't optimistic that those negotiations will produce results and are preparing a civil suit to get money from Bissonnette. The former commando had initially promised to donate most proceeds from his book to charities that support Navy SEALs or related causes but at least some groups had refused to accept the money because of the controversy surrounding the book. As a result of the Pentagon's concerns, Bissonnette and his lawyer had agreed with the government not to disperse any money until the legal issues were resolved. "We are indeed in discussions with the DOD about a possible resolution of this matter and I'm optimistic that they will be successful," Robert Luskin, an attorney representing Bissonnette, told Foreign Policy in an email. "Beyond that, I really don't want to comment."

No Easy Day was controversial as soon as it was published on September 11, 2012, for its blow-by-blow account of the raid that killed 9/11 mastermind bin Laden as told by someone who lived it, and for details it contained that didn't square with information the White House provided in the days following the famous mission in May 2011, including whether bin Laden was armed or if he used others as human shields. The book was never cleared with Pentagon officials before it was published, which means that operational details about the raid could have been remained in the book despite Bissonnette's insistence that he scrubbed anything classified. Still, it's been two years since the book caused an uproar and so far, Defense and Justice lawyers have not moved against the author or its publisher, Dutton Penguin. Typically, any member of the armed forces who writes about their time in the military or draws on their knowledge as a service member must be vetted by the appropriate service like the Army or Marine Corps. If the content of the manuscript is broad enough to warrant it, it is vetted at the Defense Department level.

But the process by which military authors agree not to disclose sensitive information -- and the signing of such "nondisclosure agreements" -- isn't necessarily formalized, critics of the process say. And the Office of Security Review, which conducts such reviews for the Pentagon, doesn't have an effective appeals process by which military authors can object to decisions made by the office to scrub their material, those critics have said. Book projects can be delayed as each service or the command assigned to look at the material scrutinizes it for sensitive or potentially classified information. It's not clear why Bissonnette didn't participate in the vetting process with the Pentagon. But critics of the Defense Department on the issue say it is a cumbersome endeavor that military authors have said is fundamentally flawed.

Peter Mansoor told Foreign Policy in September 2012 that the vetting for one of his books, Baghdad at Sunrise, took almost four months to get through the security process. The delay, he said, was discovered when a low-level staffer was found to have left her job without passing the manuscript on to someone else in her office. The book was ultimately reviewed quickly and given back to the author. Mansoor, now a professor of military history at the Ohio State University, said at the time that he felt sympathy for Bissonnette because many military authors fear content will be unnecessarily removed. "I can see why people wouldn't want to go through the process and take the chance that their words would not see print," he told FP at the time. "I understand why the system is the way it is, I just hope it's fair." Mansoor said Thursday in a brief interview that the subsequent vetting process of his second book, Surge, had gone smoothly.

Publication of Stanley McChrystal's My Share of the Task also looked as if it could be delayed at one point as Defense Department security experts scrutinized the sensitive portions of the manuscript for operational details U.S. Special Operations Command or the Pentagon deemed inappropriate for public consumption. But the issues were ultimately all addressed and the former Joint Special Operations Command commander's book was published in January. Bissonnette had claimed that most proceeds from his book would be donated to charities that support Navy SEALs. After controversy erupted upon the book's publication, at least two of those charities refused to accept any money, including the Navy SEAL Foundation and the Tip of the Spear Foundation. But Luskin said that by agreement with the government, Bissonnette has not spent or donated any of the proceeds of the book. "We have agreed with the government that Owen would not distribute any of the proceeds of the book pending our settlement discussions," Luskin said, referring to Bissonnette by his pen name. "That means that he has not touched any of the funds for any purpose. [Source: Foreign Policy | Gordon Lubold | Jul 3, 2014 ++]

DFAS myPay System Update 14 ► New Simplified password Rules

Each year, the myPay system is upgraded to meet technical and security requirements, as well as to add new and improved functions for its 6.6 million account holders. The Spring 2014 release, implemented on 17 MAY, delivered password rules more in line with the online banking industry standards, while maintaining DFAS' commitment to system and personal security. A number of functional additions and enhancements for military retirees, service members and federal civilian employees have been designed to increase our customers' ability to easily manage their pay.

What changed for retirees on May 17th? Simplified passwords: myPay password rules now allow for simpler, more memorable passwords while ensuring passwords remain strong and more secure. While still meeting the intent of DoD cyber security rules, passwords can be shorter and will last longer between changes. Current users who access their account using a log-in password will be able to create a new

password between 9 to 30 characters in length. Additionally, the new password will be valid for 150 days. About 10 days before expiration, users will be notified by SMARTDOCS to change their password. "Balancing security with usability can be challenging with the state of cyber security today," said Dave McDermott, DFAS deputy director for Operations. "This update addresses our customers concerns for creating simpler, more memorable passwords while ensuring passwords remain strong and more secure." Starting May 17th, passwords must:

- Be 9 to 30 characters in length
- Contain at least one UPPERCASE letter
- Contain at least one lowercase letter
- Contain at least one number (0-9)
- Contain at least one of the following special characters: # @ \$ ^ ! * + _ %

Passwords will remain valid for 150 days. About 10 days before expiration, users will be notified via SMARTDOCS by email to change their password. The password reset security questions introduced in 2012 will be very important to allow users to reset passwords online and avoid calling the DFAS Care Center for assistance. More information on the myPay Spring 2014 release and the new password requirements are available at the DFAS website <http://www.dfas.mil/mypayinfo.html>. Before you create your password, check out our Tips and Tricks page at <http://www.dfas.mil/mypayinfo/password.html>. [Source: <http://www.dfas.mil/mypayinfo/password.html> Jul 2014 ++]

MCRMC Update 04 ► Interim Military Compensation System Report

On 3 JUL, the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) issued a 358-page interim report ahead of the release of its final findings expected in February 2015. The MCRMC was established by the Congress in 2013 to study all aspects of military compensation and tasked to suggest reforms that will ensure the long-term viability of the all-volunteer force, foster recruitment, sustain retention and modernize military compensation. The interim report makes no formal recommendations and instead focuses on providing background information on the current military compensation system.

The report attributes military personnel cost growth in the past 20 years to inflation (particularly medical inflation), policy changes counteracting recruiting and retention challenges, and personnel funding to support 13 years of war. In addition, the establishment of several new benefits for servicemembers and veterans (i.e., the Post-9/11 GI bill) has contributed to the growth. More importantly, the MCRMC found that regardless of the reasons behind this growth, military compensation funding has consistently represented roughly 30 percent of the DoD budget; however, the report also stipulated that this does not necessarily provide evidence of fiscal sustainability. The MCRMC interim report makes it clear that the commissioners believe that a broader discussion of federal spending levels is necessary to ensure the viability of the all-volunteer force. The commission is undertaking a comprehensive review of existing compensation programs to provide a full and nuanced understanding of what it takes to sustain needed force levels during all levels of conflict and economic conditions. This includes pay, retirement, health benefits and quality of life programs.

The interim report does not reveal the leanings of the MCRMC. It's still unclear if the commission will propose drastic compensation reforms in its final report. You can read more about the commission at <http://www.moaa.org/mcrmc> and provide your own feedback to the commissioners at

<http://www.mcrmc.gov/index.php/public-comments>. The interim report can be accessed at <http://www.mcrmc.gov/index.php/reports>. [Source: MOAA Leg Up Jul 3, 2014 ++]

POW/MIA Update 32 ► JPAC/DPMO Ability to Test Remains Questioned

The Defense Department's accounting agencies have agreed to disinter and conduct DNA testing on the remains of 10 World War II servicemembers who were buried as unknowns in the Philippines, after years of fighting against unearthing the bodies. But now the relative of one veteran believed to be buried there might block the exhumation over fears that the Defense Department's accounting agencies — the Joint Prisoners of War, Missing in Action Accounting Command, Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, and Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory — are not equipped to properly test the remains. For years, John Eakin has fought with JPAC/DPMO to exhume the remains for identification. Eakin's cousin Pvt. Arthur "Bud" Kelder was one of the 10 moved to the Manila American Cemetery from the Cabanatuan Prisoner of War Camp in Luzon.



From left, Army Pvt. Arthur "Bud" Kelder, Bud's father Herman, and brother Herman & the Manila gravesite Bud Kelder is allegedly buried in

Records show that Kelder survived the Bataan Death March in April 1942, but succumbed to malaria, pellagra and diphtheria in the camp on Nov. 19. The 26-year-old Army medic was buried with 13 other Americans who died that day in communal grave 717. Just last year, JPAC/DPMO – which has been under intense scrutiny following a series of missteps - said there was not enough conclusive evidence to warrant disinterment of the remains. On Jan. 28, 2013, the scientific director of the JPAC Central Identification Laboratory, Thomas Holland, drafted a memorandum that could have closed the case on Kelder and the other nine. In it, Holland wrote, “the existing and available data do not meet the level of scientific certainty required by current DOD disinterment guidance.” But earlier this month, the lab reversed its decision. “Based upon forensic and historical input ... from JPAC and DPMO, this month the Army concurred with the recommendation to disinter unknown remains referred to as “X-816”, as well as the other unknown remains previously interred in Common Grave 717, given the probability the remains are commingled,”

Defense Department spokeswoman Navy Cmdr. Amy Derrick-Frost wrote in a statement to Stars and Stripes. “The disinterment decision was based upon a forensic and historical review by JPAC and DoD that

included a number of factors, to include the development of new techniques not available in the 1940s and 1950s (e.g., osteometric sorting, DNA analysis, etc.) and the possibility of multiple identifications if all ten Unknowns are disinterred.” And despite what appears to be a hard-fought victory with JPAC/DPMO, Eakin said he may now have to go back to court to stop JPAC/DPMO because he is worried that the Defense Department’s testing methods are outdated and will not produce results. “I feel conflicted trying to stop them after working so hard to get them to do it,” Eakin said during a telephone interview from his Texas home. “I think we have to get control of the situation here.

According to DPMO’s website, its lab uses mitochondrial DNA to test remains. But Eakin said he believes nuclear DNA testing provides the best chance to identify the remains of his cousin. Ed Huffine, vice president of international development for forensic DNA firm Bode Technology Group, Inc. and a former AFDIL DNA chief, said mitochondrial DNA is less precise than nuclear DNA and is best used to support a presumptive identification. Nuclear DNA provides a definitive ID and can stand on its own, but it’s also a far more difficult test, Huffine said. Inexperienced analysts often have a hard time getting a complete DNA profile from a sample due to environmental factors, which could include the acidity of the soil or remains being buried with metal objects. It takes about a year and more than 100 tests for an analyst to learn how to listen to a sample and set their extraction parameters properly, he said. If analysts aren’t careful, a sample will come back as having no available DNA, he said. “It’s almost an art to get nuclear DNA from skeletal remains,” Huffine said. Huffine said that the FBI uses nuclear DNA testing to identify the aged remains of missing persons. He wasn’t sure why the Defense Department didn’t as well. Derrick-Frost, the DOD spokeswoman, said planning for the disinterment is underway and a timeline still being worked out. Eakin said the DOD has denied families’ request to travel to the Philippines and accompany the remains to JPAC/DPMO’s lab in Hawaii.

For Eakin, the odyssey to bring Kelder home started in 2009 when he began pouring over declassified records pertaining to the 14 unknowns from grave 717, he said. He traced their journey from Luzon to Manila. Four of the individuals were identified using prisoner-maintained burial records, identification tags and military dental records. Kelder’s file indicated that the Army knew he was one of the 10 remaining unknowns. Eakin then contacted his family members and discovered that Kelder had gold inlays in his teeth, courtesy of his dentist brother. Two of the 10 unknowns had dental patterns that matched Kelder, yet only one had gold inlays. Those remains, designated Manila #2 X-816, were buried beneath the white cross in grave A-12-195. Yet, the DOD “denied the remains were Bud,” Eakin said. Johnie Webb, JPAC’s deputy to the commander for external relations and legislative affairs, verbally denied Eakin’s request for disinterment saying there was no evidence to support continued investigation. But Eakin fought on. His conclusions were backed by two forensic dentists, both who have consulted with JPAC in the past.

In 2012, Eakin sued the American Battle Monuments Commission and Defense Department to have the remains disinterred for identification. The case has been working its way through the courts, and Eakin said he believes a judge was about to compel the U.S. government to produce the remains for testing. Eakin said his family was floored by the call from the Army’s Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Center saying the disinterment would take place. However, he said the exhumation looks like a ploy to gain control of the remains so they can be brought back to Hawaii where JPAC can do the testing without scrutiny, on their own terms, on their clock. Eakin fears this could lead to a wait of many years or worse yet, a botched DNA test. “I just want to ensure it’s done properly,” he said. “I just want my cousin’s remains returned.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Matthew M. Burke | Jun 29, 2014 ++]

POW/MIA Update 33 ► Ongoing JPAC/DPMO Reorganization Action

Senior DoD civilian, Alisa Stack, was appointed to head a transition team, the Personnel Accounting Consolidation Task Force (PACT) that, reportedly, includes government specialists in each area to be addressed, from structure of the new agency, to the number of personnel, budget requirements, interface with other departments and agencies, and communication with the families. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations & Low Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC) Michael Lumpkin both stated that communication with the families must be a very high priority consideration in how the new agency performs. Since her appointment, Ms. Stack and PACT members have been actively interviewing interested people, in and out of government, plus appear to be focused on ensuring that a wide variety of voices are heard, responsible and irresponsible, rational and irrational, so the outcome will be interesting.



An outside firm, The Clearing, was contracted to branch out to obtain input from family members from all wars on their personal experiences in dealing with the various accounting community organizations. In addition to DPMO, JPAC and LSEL (specifically named in the restructure directive and by Congress), these include the Service Casualty Offices, AFDIL, and individuals within the various organizations. The Clearing is seeking the views of all who are willing to talk with them and can be reached via the Internet by emailing voiceofthefamilies@theclearing.com. Family members from all wars are urged to provide their views and, in view of the comparatively small number of Vietnam War family members affected, the League is hopeful that ALL Vietnam War families take this opportunity to remind members of PACT, The Clearing and senior DoD officials that uncertainty about Vietnam War missing men is still a significant factor for the families, much more so than remains recoveries of known dead from earlier wars and conflicts. The League supports accounting for losses in WWII, Korean War and Cold War, but in addition to focusing priority on Vietnam War accounting, not to its detriment.

Following review and approval by newly confirmed Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD-P) Christine Wormuth, the PACT recommendations will be provided to Deputy Secretary of Defense (DepSecDef) Robert Work. That presentation is anticipated for mid-August and, once he has approved, the final recommendations will go to Secretary Hagel. In the interim, ASD/SOLIC Lumpkin has been invited to testify before the House Armed Services Committee's (HASC's) Subcommittee on Military Personnel on July 15th, as has the newly named head of DoD's CAPE, Dr. Jamie Morin. Reportedly, he will report on CAPE's findings from their 12 months investigation, and ASD Lumpkin will testify about ongoing efforts to restructure the accounting community.

FIELD OPERATIONS

Laos. JPAC had planned to conduct a Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos January 14th to February 17th, but it was cancelled due to complications related to receipt of timely funding. Three Recovery Teams

(RTs) had been scheduled, along with one Investigation Team (IT), augmented by the DIA Stony Beach specialist. A longer JFA began March 4th and concluded April 14th, though only one RT and one IT were deployed. The next JFA in Laos started May 9th and concluded June 22nd, with only two RTs, again far below the cap of 53 US personnel operating simultaneously in Laos. JPAC will host bi-annual POW/MIA Consultations with Laos on August 26th in Hawaii.

Cambodia. Operations in Cambodia by one RT and one Underwater Recovery Team (URT), postponed twice in 2013, finally took place January 28th – April 2nd, 2014. Since the Stony Beach specialist is permanently in-country and conducts investigations when and where needed, ITs are not routinely scheduled in conjunction with JPAC Cambodia operations. There are no identified sites currently awaiting excavation/recovery; therefore, no JFAs are scheduled in Cambodia until early 2015. The 2013 cancellations had little to do with funding shortages and much to do with internal mishandling of contractual authorities by some in JPAC with no mission-related experience in SEA. Objections were posed to the payment authorization process that had been in place for over 20 years. As a result, all operations were halted while a solution was found, satisfactory to the puzzled Cambodians leaders, as well as the US Ambassador and his staff. The solution was establishing an “Order for Services” document, then convincing Cambodian officials that it was acceptable, though they regularly accommodate all US requests and concerns. For the first time in over 20 years, technical level talks will not be held with the Cambodians in FY2014, but plans are being made for senior level discussions with Cambodia’s POW/MIA Committee leadership in late October or early November.

Vietnam: Four RTs conducted operations in Vietnam February 28th – March 27th. Two ITs also deployed on that JFA, plus the RIT (Research Investigation Team) and a Field Forensic Review (FFR) at the end of the JFA. Only three RTs were deployed to Vietnam for the May 20th – June 22nd JFA, plus two ITs. An underwater operation previously scheduled along the coast of northern Vietnam was cancelled, again reportedly due to lack of available funding. There will be another JFA in Vietnam before the end of FY2014, August 5th to September 7th, involving four RTs, one Vietnamese Recovery Team (VRT) and one IT, plus the RIT will again conduct interviews and investigations on LKA cases. JPAC will host the annual Technical Talks with the Vietnamese on September 23rd in Hawaii.

Worldwide. While Vietnam War-related accounting missions slowed, six RT’s worked in Germany from April 1st to May 18th on WWII recoveries. In addition to returning to Germany May 10th – June 21st, and an overlapping team June 15th to July 23rd working on the same two large WWII bomber sites, there was one IT in Burma from April 28th to May 29th. A special RT has reportedly just concluded its work on a 1952 US loss being exposed by a melting glacier in Alaska. On this unusual site, there have already been 17 remains recovered and identified, and prospects for additional accountability are high. There will also be an underwater recovery in Botwood Bay, a harbor in Canada, of a WWII “flying boat” that crashed on take-off, and one RT in the Solomon Islands to recover WWII remains July 8th to August 6th.

League Chairman Ann Mills-Griffiths’ Comment: With the above record of on-again, off-again field operations, is it any wonder that Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are questioning US commitment to the accounting mission? The relatively well-developed working relationship that has evolved since the first joint recovery in Laos in 1984 should mean that field operations are conducted at the pace and scope necessary to achieve long-stated accounting objectives, but such is not the case. There are multiple reasons, initially from congressionally-imposed sequestration, required budget cuts that hit JPAC disproportionately, due to PACOM “borrowing” some of JPAC’s funding for other uses. Cutbacks and cancellations are also due to an inadequate number of deployable JPAC forensic anthropologists, weather restrictions in specific areas that then complicate obtaining specialists needed for specific recoveries, and

the list goes on. Of immediate concern is the need to change existing policy concerning deployable scientific personnel for field operations. If not changed, there will continue to be sporadic reductions in Vietnam War accounting operations, due to competing attention to WWII recoveries in the congressionally-mandated quest for higher numbers of IDs. [Source: The National League of POW/MIA Families <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org> Jul 9, 2014 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries ► 140701 thru 140715

"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 (73,539) Korean War (7,822) Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,642), 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 or call (703) 699-1169. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:



Family members seeking more information about missing loved ones may call the following Service Casualty Offices: U.S. Air Force (800) 531-5501, U.S. Army (800) 892-2490, U.S. Marine Corps (800) 847-1597, U.S. Navy (800) 443-9298, or U.S. Department of State (202) 647-5470. 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 - None

Korea

- The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 3 JUL that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Cpl. **Cletus R. Lies**, 26, of Bremen, N.D., was buried July 3, in New Rockford, N.D. In late 1950, Lies was assigned to the Medical Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT), east of the

Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. On Nov. 29, 1950, the 31st RCT, known historically as Task Force Faith, began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position. Following the battle, Lies was declared killed in action. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea turned over to the U.S. 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain 350 - 400 U.S. servicemen who fought during the war. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from Chongriyang-ri, a village near the area where Lies was believed to have died. To identify Lies' 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, including DNA comparisons. Two forms of DNA were used: mitochondrial DNA, which matched his maternal-line sister and brother, and Y-STR DNA, which matched his paternal-line brother.



Cpl. Cletus R. Lies

- The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identifications of remains belonging to Army Master Sgt. Lawrence O. Jock, Battery A, 955th Field Artillery, 8th U.S. Army. He was lost July 14, 1953, in North Korea. He has been returned home and will be buried with full military honors Aug. 1 in Malone, N.Y.

World War II

The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identifications of remains belonging to an American servicemen who had been missing in action since World War II. Returned home was Staff Sgt. Gerald V. Atkinson, U.S. Army Air Forces, 358th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force, who was lost April 10, 1945, north of Berlin. He was accounted for June 20, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors Aug. 16, 2014, in Chattahoochee, Fla.

[Source: http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/ Jul, 14 2014 ++]

DoD Mobilized Reserve 1 JUL 2014 ▶ Decrease of 344

The Army National Guard, Army Reserve and Navy Reserve announced this week a decrease in activated National Guard and reserve members, while the Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve announced an increase of activated National Guard and reserve members. The Coast Guard Reserve announced a decrease of 344 in the number of activated National Guard than last reported in the 15 JUN 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 25,720; Navy Reserve, 3,365; Marine Corps Reserve, 1,286; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,689; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 364. This brings the total National Guard and reserve personnel who have been activated to 37,424, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and reserve personnel at <http://www.defense.gov/documents/Mobilization-Weekly-Report-140701.pptx> lists those currently activated. [Source: DoD News Release No. NR-355-14 dtd Jul 03, 2014 ++]

* VA *



VA ID Card Update 04 ▶ Action Needed to Obtain New VHIC

The new Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) provides increased security for your personal information - no personally identifiable information is contained on the magnetic stripe or barcode. It is also a salute to your military service. The emblem of your latest branch of service is displayed on your card. Several special awards will also be listed. The VHIC replaces the Veteran Identification Card (VIC) and will be issued only to Veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system. Its purpose is for identification and check-in at VA appointments. It cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities.



In February 2014, VA began issuing the VHIC to newly enrolled Veterans and enrolled Veterans who were not previously issued the old VIC but requested an identification card. Beginning in May 2014, VA started automatically mailing VHICs to enrolled Veterans who were issued the VIC. Because VA will be reissuing more than 6 million cards, they ask for your patience during this time. Veterans who were issued a VIC do not need to return to their VA medical center to have a photo taken for the VHIC. Enrolled Veterans who do not have the VIC can contact their local VA medical center Enrollment Coordinator to arrange to have their picture taken for the new VHIC, or they may request a new VHIC at their next VA health care appointment. To ensure their identity, Veterans must provide either one form of primary identification or two forms of secondary identification. Please see the Acceptable Documents for Identity Proofing table below.

The VHIC will be mailed to all valid mailing addresses, including P.O. boxes. Veterans who are already enrolled should ensure the address VA has on file is correct so they can receive their VHIC in a timely manner. To update or to confirm your address with VA, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387). If the post office cannot deliver your VHIC, the card will be returned to the VA. Some additional actions you may need to take are:

What to do if you are NOT enrolled. If you are not currently enrolled with the VA for your health care, VA encourages you to apply for enrollment online at <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll> or by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387). You may also apply for enrollment in person at your local VA medical facility. Once your enrollment is verified, your picture will be taken at your local VA medical center so that, once production begins, a VHIC will be mailed to you. To ensure your identity, you must provide either one primary or two secondary documents. See the Acceptable Documents for Identity Proofing table below.

What to do if you do not receive your new VHIC. You should receive your VHIC within 7 to 10 days after you request a VHIC card. Although VA strives to do all they can to ensure they enroll Veterans in a timely manner, sometimes they are unable to either verify your military service or they need additional information from you. If so, VA will try to contact you to get the information they need to complete your enrollment application. If VA is unable to reach you, they encourage you to contact the local VA facility where the card was requested or contact them at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) to complete your application and find out the status of your card.

What to do with your old VIC. VA wants all enrolled Veterans to have a Veteran Health Identification Card that protects their personal information. Until Veterans receive the new, more secure VHIC, Veterans are encouraged to safeguard their old VIC, just like they would a credit card, to prevent unauthorized access to their identity information. Once the new VHIC is received, Veterans should destroy their old VIC by cutting it up or shredding it.

What to do if you're VHIC is lost or stolen. If your VHIC is lost or stolen, you should contact the VA Medical Facility where your picture was taken to request a new card be re-issued, or call us at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). Identifying information will be asked to ensure proper identification of the caller.

Acceptable Documents for Identity Proofing. The old VICs and VHICs are acceptable forms of primary identification. The chart below lists the additional forms of identification which are accepted primary and secondary identification.

PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION	SECONDARY IDENTIFICATION
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Present ONE form of Primary Identification	If a Primary form of identification is not available, present TWO forms of Secondary Identification
State-Issued Driver's License	Certified Birth Certificate
State Issued ID	Original Social Security Card
United States (U.S.) Passport	DD214 or equivalent certificate issued by Department of Defense of War Department
VA Identification Card (VIC) or VHIC	Marriage License (certified copy)
Military ID Card	State Vote Registration Card
Temporary Resident Card	Student ID Card
Resident Alien Card	Native American Tribal Document
Permanent Resident Card	Certificate of U.S. Citizenship (INS Form N-560 or N-561)
Other Federal or State issued photo ID	Certificate of U.S. Citizenship (INS Form N-550 or N-570)
	Certificate issued by US Consular Offices documenting the birth of a child on foreign soil to a US citizen. (Form FS-545, Form DS-1350, DS Form 240 or Form 240)

[Source: <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic/index.asp> Jul 2014 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste, and Abuse ► 140701 thru 140715

The Veterans Affairs is systematically overpaying clerks, administrators and other support staff, according to internal audits, draining tens of millions of dollars that could be used instead to ease the VA's acute shortage of doctors and nurses. The jobs of some 13,000 VA support staff have been flagged by auditors as potentially misclassified, in many cases resulting in inflated salaries that have gone uncorrected for as long as 14 years.

Rather than moving quickly to correct these costly errors, VA officials two years ago halted a broad internal review mandated by federal law. As a result, the overpayments continue. Moreover, in the two years since thousands of misclassified jobs were identified, hundreds of additional positions have been filled at improperly high salaries. Internal VA documents obtained by The Huffington Post show that between September 2013 and May 2014, for instance, overpayments in annual salaries for the latter jobs alone came to \$24.4 million, not counting benefits.

In May alone, senior VA classification specialists identified 284 probably misclassified positions newly posted on the federal jobs site, USAJobs. Once filled, those jobs would result in estimated overpayments of \$3.3 million per year. For that amount of money, the VA could instead hire five neurosurgeons, 10 psychiatrists and five suicide prevention case managers at the average salaries currently offered on USAJobs. The pattern continued in June, with more than a quarter million dollars of overpayments

involving jobs at the Veterans Health Administration headquarters, according to an internal VA report. Perhaps the worst news is that the department's ability to quickly stop this financial outflow is limited. Even if the improper pay grades are eventually downgraded, VA officials said that employees will be able by law to keep their higher salaries, meaning the VA will be saddled with these excessive costs for years.

Almost all of the newly documented overpaid wages and salaries involve employees of the VHA, the section of the Department of Veterans Affairs that operates 150 major medical centers and 820 community health clinics on a budget this year of \$55.2 billion. It was inside the VHA that the waiting-list scandal erupted this spring, after investigations revealed that VHA employees were systematically hiding the requests of some 57,000 veterans for medical appointments that couldn't be scheduled because of the shortage of medical staff. Scheduling clerks and other administrative staff have said they kept the lists secret for fear of reprisal by superiors. The VA's medical professionals are hired and paid under a separate accounting and oversight system from the administrative staff, and there is no indication of systematic overpayments to doctors, nurses or other health care providers.

The widespread misclassification of jobs has created a deep and systemic problem at the VA that will require massive job and pay turbulence to resolve -- and will surely set off angry protests within the ranks. The General Schedule, or GS, sets pay grades and rates for all federal employees. Even if they keep their higher pay, the loss of a GS grade can affect employees' future promotions and retirement pay. Evidently alarmed at that looming employee reaction, senior officials at VA headquarters in Washington ordered a halt two years ago to any review and correction of misclassified jobs that might lead to lowered pay grades and smaller salaries. Paula Molloy, the senior official at the VA's Office of Human Resources Management handling the issue, told HuffPost that once the VA begins to examine the misclassified jobs, it will be at least 15 months before any corrective action could be taken. "We are not going to be able to do these reviews overnight," she said.

That means VA communications clerks, for instance, will keep receiving overpayments. These jobs were misclassified above the proper civil service grade in 2003. All such clerks across the VA have been overpaid since then, at a total cost of \$33,715 for each clerk in the last decade. Checks will also continue to go out for air conditioning equipment operators who were improperly classified in 2000, resulting in overpayments for each of those jobs of \$67,172 over the past 14 years. The VA has not stopped advertising jobs at inflated grades, according to internal documents. In May, for instance, VHA managers at the Orlando, Florida, VA medical center advertised on USAJobs for two supply technician positions at a GS-7 level, which pays roughly \$39,000 a year. But senior classification specialists found the actual work should have been classified at a GS-5 level, at roughly \$31,000 a year. The recurring, annual overpayment for just those two employees: \$15,048.

In another case in May, VHA managers at the regional administrative center in Albany, New York, offered a health systems specialist job at GS-14, which pays \$96,948 a year in base salary. The classification specialists examined the job offer and determined that it described a GS-12 position paying \$69,000. Annual overpayment: \$27,679, according to an internal VA spreadsheet. Altogether, senior VA classification specialists identified 284 probable misclassified jobs newly posted for hire during May alone, which would lead to estimated overpayments of \$3.3 million per year. Once people are hired into these jobs, federal law protects their inflated salaries. An employee whose position is downgraded to correct a GS misclassification will continue to receive the original, higher salary. "Their pay is protected," Molloy told HuffPost, because it is "no fault of the employee that the position was misclassified." The problem of the thousands of current misclassified employees will be resolved through attrition, said Molloy. [Source: Huff Post | David Wood | Jul 10, 2014 ++]

VA Burial Benefit Update 33 ► Auto Payment Goes into Effect

New burial regulations effective 7 JUL will now allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to automatically pay the maximum amount allowable under law to most eligible surviving spouses more quickly and efficiently, without the need for a written application. Under former regulations, VA paid burial benefits on a reimbursement basis, which required survivors to submit receipts for relatively small one-time payments that VA generally paid at the maximum amount permitted by law. “VA is committed to improving the speed and ease of delivery of monetary burial benefits to Veterans’ survivors during their time of need,” said Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson. “The recent changes allow VA to help these survivors bear the cost of funerals by changing regulations to get them the benefits more quickly.”

This automation enables VA to pay a non-service-connected or service-connected burial allowance to an estimated 62,000 eligible surviving spouses out of a projected 140,000 claimants for burial benefits in 2014. Surviving spouses will be paid upon notice of the Veteran’s death using information already in VA systems. The burial allowance for a non-service-connected death is \$300, and \$2,000 for a death connected to military service. This revised regulation will further expedite the delivery of these benefits to surviving spouses, reduce the volume of claims requiring manual processing, and potentially make available resources for other activities that benefit Veterans and their survivors. For more information on monetary burial benefits, visit <http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp>. [Source: VA News Release Jul 7, 2014 ++]

VA Burial Benefit Update 34 ► Idaho Same Sex Couple Policy Lawsuit

Madelynn Lee Taylor figures she doesn’t have that much time to wait around, so she filed a lawsuit 7 JUL asking a federal judge to order Idaho to allow her to be buried together with the remains of her same-sex spouse at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery. Taylor, 74, is a U.S. Navy veteran with serious health problems; her wife, Jean Mixner, died in 2012 of emphysema, and Taylor has kept her cremated remains unburied in Boise because the two agreed to have their remains commingled and interred together after Taylor’s death. But the state Division of Veterans Services has refused Taylor’s application, citing the Idaho Constitution’s ban on recognition of same-sex marriages. “Your application indicates that you and Ms. Mixner are female,” wrote James Earp, cemetery director. “Same-sex marriages entered into under the laws of another state violate the public policy in Idaho and are not valid in Idaho.”



Madelynn Lee Taylor

“What harm can the ashes of two old lesbians do – do they expect us to be recruiting in there?” Taylor asked with a laugh. She said if she could talk directly to Idaho Gov. Butch Otter, she’d say, “Tell the guy over there at the VA to let me put my ashes in there with Jean’s – it’s not taking up any more space.” Taylor said she decided to head to court while in Seattle recently to have a stent placed in her neck at a Veterans Administration hospital. “The doctor asked me what I was going to do about it while I was on the operating table,” she told The Spokesman-Review in an interview on Monday. “He says, ‘I don’t want to raise your blood pressure, but what are you going to do about that veterans’ cemetery up there in Idaho?’ He said, ‘We’ve got a real nice one here.’” Taylor said she has multiple family members in Idaho, and wants to be buried in her home state. “The family’s here, and my friends, my church,” she said. “I’ve been a member of this church since 1980.”

Taylor was taken by surprise when she went to the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in December of 2013 to arrange for the interment, something she and Jean had decided on back in 2005 after attending Jean’s mother’s funeral. The cemetery routinely allows veterans to be buried with their spouses, and federal veterans cemeteries permit burials of same-sex couples. Taylor presented her valid honorable discharge papers and valid marriage certificate – the two were legally married in 2008 in California – but the state refused her application. “I got rather perturbed and left, and joined the ‘Add the 4 Words’ movement to change the state law,” Taylor said. She joined protests at the state Capitol this year calling on Idaho to add discrimination protections for gays to the Idaho Human Rights Act; Taylor was arrested three times, including once when she joined a barricade of the governor’s office.

Otter issued this statement on the issue in April: “The veteran’s cemetery rules require a valid marriage certificate in order for a spouse to be buried with a veteran. Idaho’s Constitution does not recognize same-sex marriage. The voters spoke in 2006 by passing an amendment to our Constitution defining marriage as between a man and a woman. I am defending their decision and the Idaho Constitution in federal court, so I’m not going to comment any further.” His office said Monday that the statement still stands. Taylor said, “I figure if he wants to stick by the law, we’ve got to change the law – that’s all there is to it.” Idaho’s constitutional ban on same-sex marriage was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge in May, but the state is appealing the ruling. “I don’t have time to wait around,” Taylor said. “If it goes to the Supreme Court, the earliest they can hear it is 2015.”

Taylor’s lawsuit says, “Idaho law goes so far as to deny her as a military veteran the basic dignity and respect of being interred alongside her lawful spouse in the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery.” She is seeking both a permanent injunction to approve her pre-registration application for interment with Mixner, and unspecified monetary damages for her injuries and expenses. “The first time I can remember being discriminated against was in kindergarten,” Taylor said. “I wasn’t allowed to play in the sandbox with the trucks. I had to go over to the dollhouse with the dolls. I said, ‘No, no, this is not me.’ So I’ve been discriminated against for 70 years, and I can’t see doing it when I’m dropping dead.” Todd Dvorak, spokesman for Idaho Attorney Lawrence Wasden, said, “We just got the lawsuit. We’re just in the process of reviewing it and figuring out what it means.” [Source: The Spokesman-Review | Betsy Z. Russell | Jul 7, ,2014 ++]

VA Claim Nexus Opinion ► Service Connection Likelihood

One of the criteria that is mandatory in order for a disability claim to be deemed service connected is a “nexus,” or a link between the current medical condition and the veterans military service. The only

exception to this are presumptive conditions, which merely have to be proven in order to be service connected. After a nexus is established, the VA Regional Office generally will want to know how great the odds are, percentage wise, of the current condition being a result of, related to, or aggravated by the military condition. For medical opinion and nexus formulation purposes and establishment of reasonable medical certainty, according to the Code of Federal Regulations, and upheld by the BVA Administrative Law Judge, the following terminology and definitions are recognized and utilized:

- Is due to (100% probability)
- Is more likely than not (greater than 50% probability)
- At least as likely as not (50%/50% probability); consistent with “reasonable doubt
- Not at least as likely as not (less than 50% probability)
- Is not due to (0% probability)

In analyzing a medical opinion and creating a nexus between the veterans current medical condition and his military service, VA examiners have been trained to use the “Reasonable Doubt” concept as outlined in the 38 CFR, which states that when there is an equal balance of evidence for and against the claimant (50%/50% probability) that the claimant be awarded their claim. Frequently, an independent medical opinion is an important part of the veterans claim, and can help sway the benefit of the doubt into the veterans favor if the claim is borderline, or can even help to fully substantiate the claim and provide grounds for service connection when any of the components of establishing service connection are not met. [Source: <http://www.vetcompandpen.com> Nov 14, 2011 ++]

VA Nursing Update 02 ► Full-Practice Authority Sought

The American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) on 4 JUL called on the Veterans Administration to move quickly to improve veterans’ access to high-quality, timely health care by granting the VA’s nurse practitioners full-practice authority throughout the system. AANP, the largest professional membership organization for nurse practitioners, also urged Congress to increase the number of nurse practitioners in VA facilities. According to AANP President Ken Miller, PhD, RN, CFNP, FAAN, the VA has already taken a critically important step to address the current health care crisis. Following the recommendations from nationally renowned policy organizations like the Institute of Medicine, the VA has proposed policy changes that would grant all VA nurse practitioners full-practice authority. However, they have not yet been implemented.

Dr. Miller said there is a simple solution: “Given the current crisis facing our nation’s veterans, we urge the VA to expedite the approval process and move quickly to implement these changes across all VA settings. This will have an immediate and positive impact on the quality and timeliness of care that our veterans receive.” Currently more than 5,000 Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, including thousands of nurse practitioners, provide services to veterans in VA facilities. Granting full-practice authority would allow nurse practitioners at the VA to practice to the full extent of their education and clinical expertise. Dr. Miller also urges Members of Congress and the Administration to increase the number of nurse practitioner positions and to allow these qualified professionals to practice to their full scope throughout the VA system.

Nurse practitioners play a critical role in health care delivery across the nation. The vast majority of NPs are primary care providers. Eighty-eight percent are prepared to be primary care clinicians and over seventy-five percent currently practice in primary care settings. In addition to treating acute and chronic

illnesses of patients, NPs emphasize health promotion and disease prevention in all their undertakings. Daily practice includes assessments; ordering, performing, supervising and interpreting diagnostic and laboratory tests; making diagnoses; initiating and managing treatment which includes prescribing medications as well as non-pharmacologic treatments; and counselling and educating patients, their families and communities. NPs are the healthcare providers of choice for millions of patients; in fact, more than 900 million visits were made to nurse practitioners in the United States in 2013. To locate a nurse practitioner in your area visit <http://npfinder.com>. [Source: PRNewswire-USNewswire July 3, 2014 ++]

VA Claim Processing Update 09 ► 228K Incomplete Claims Expire in JUL

Hundreds of thousands of disability claims filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs' eBenefits portal launched in February 2013 are incomplete and could start to expire this month, Nextgov has learned. VA Undersecretary for Benefits Allison Hickey touted the new portal in June 2013 as simple as filing taxes online and a way to whittle down the claims backlog. "Veterans can now file their claims online through eBenefits like they might do their taxes online," she said, including the documentation needed for a fully developed claim in cooperation with Veterans Service Organizations, or VSOs, such as the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. Gerald Manar, deputy director of the National Veterans Service at VFW, told Nextgov the Veterans Benefits Administration on 26 JUN briefed VSOs on problems with the eBenefits portal, including the fact that only 72,000 claims filed through eBenefits have been completed and approved since last June, with another 228,000 incomplete.

VA spokeswoman Meagan Lutz said since February 2013, just over 445,000 online applications have been initiated. Of those, approximately 70,000 compensation claims have been submitted and another 70,000 nonrating (add a dependent, etc.) have been submitted, leaving a total of 300,000 incomplete claims. Because a number of claims started are more than 365 days old, they have now expired, totaling an estimated 230,000 unprocessed claims. Manar said he still is trying to understand why so many vets did not complete their online claims and whether they opted to file a paper claim. Lutz said an important element of the electronic claim submission process is the ability for veterans to start a claim online with limited information to hold a date of claim, while simultaneously providing 365 days to collect data, treatment records and other related information.

Lutz said a veteran simply hits "save" and any information provided is saved in temporary tables. During that 365-day period, a veteran may add additional data or upload documents associated with that specific claim. At any point during that timeframe, a veteran can hit the "submit" button and a claim will be automatically established within the Veterans Benefits Management System, designed to entirely automate claims processing by next year, and documents will be uploaded to the veteran's e-folder. Claims submitted in eBenefits may be incomplete because "many users can potentially start a claim as part of their exploration of the system ... The VA eBenefits team has no way of actually knowing which claims that might be started within eBenefits are valid and or have been abandoned for any number of reasons After 365 days, Lutz said, the data is made inaccessible and the initiated claim date is removed from the system. The system was designed to provide the veteran as much flexibility as possible in preserving that start date as well as support the Fully Developed Claim initiative, which gives the veteran the opportunity to accrue additional benefits for providing all the data needed to rate the claim.

Lutz said if vets try to submit electronically hundreds of documents, such as PDFs of medical records, "that volume of documents makes electronic submission very difficult, and we always recommend that they

work with a Veterans Service Organization, as the VSOs have the expertise to ensure that the right information is gathered and submitted.” VSOs have little visibility into the claims filed to date through the eBenefits portal because of design problems with the information technology system set up, the Stakeholder Enterprise Portal (SEP), Manar said. That portal only allows for broad searches for claims at the state and the VBA regional office level, and limits any search to 1,000 claims. If the search results in more than 1,000 records, SEP returns a message that the system is not available, rather than the search went over the 1,000 file limit, Manar said. SEP is also not set up to notify VSOs when a claim is filed through eBenefits, nor does it provide alerts when claims are due to expire, Manar said and urged VA to fix SEP to provide such notifications.

SEP, Manar said, was not “well thought-out” when fielded and “the whole system was not ready for prime time.” Lutz said VA SEP design team is working as quickly as possible to help VSOs to review more than 1,000 files in SEP without getting an incorrect error message. She said VA plans a new release of SEP this month to VSOs, which will allow VSOs to submit claims directly to VBMS for veterans who hold power of attorney. This update would eliminate the need for the veteran to submit from the eBenefits portal. “This, we believe, will be a major milestone in the VSO community that will accelerate acceptance of the electronic process,” Lutz said. [Source: NextGov | Bob Brewin | Jan 3, 2014 ++]

VA Claims Backlog Update 137 ► Frequently Overlooked Claims

The long-standing slog within the Veterans Affairs Department to cut down its mountain of disability claims has been well documented. Or has it? The VA loves to talk about how it's on track to reach its goal next year of completing all disability compensation and pension claims within 125 days—keeping them off the dreaded "backlogged" list. Frequently overlooked? The other two-thirds of VA claims—or more than 1 million requests—aren't subject to the department's 125-days, 98-percent accuracy goal. "The VA does a good job in convincing lawmakers and the public and the media that the only claims that everybody should be focused on should be disability claims," said Gerald Manar, national veterans service deputy director at the Veterans of Foreign Wars and a former 30-year VA employee. "... It's disingenuous of VA leaders to claim that they've made progress, but there's still all this other work out there."

Veterans' Claims

Total claims as of June 21, 2014: 1,641,043



Source: Department of Veterans Affairs

What are these other claims clogging up the VA's system? They run the gamut from aiming to change the amount of disability pay a veteran receives to appealing previous decisions by the department. They also include responses to congressional inquiries. So while the number of pending VA disability claims has shrunk in recent years, the number of overall claims has mushroomed to roughly 1.64 million. That's compared with 941,666 in late 2009. Here is a breakdown of the main claims the VA is wrestling with under the radar.

- **Award Adjustments.** For those of you who don't spend your free time digging around the VA's website or aren't fluent in VA-speak, an award adjustment is, well, exactly what it sounds like. Veterans or their family members can try to change the amount awarded to them or their family members for a variety of reasons. The VA can also request a change. For example, a veteran could want to reinstate a child's dependent status, so the child can receive payments from the VA. Or the department could try to decrease pension pay for veterans whose income exceeds a certain threshold. The VA needs to tackle 471,418 of these award adjustments, which are divided between compensation and pension payments. And although these outstanding claims aren't included in the VA's drive to cut the backlog, nearly 70 percent of them have been pending for 125 days or more.
- **Appeals.** These make up the second largest group of the VA's other claims. There are 279,055 pending appeals, which is more than the VA's infamous number of backlogged disability claims. Veterans' advocates are split on what is behind a recent increase in appeals. Some believe that in the race to clear the claims that are officially "backlogged," more veterans are forced to appeal VA decisions that were rushed or inaccurate. Others say that as the number of claims that are processed increases, it makes sense to see a correlating increase in appeals. Either way, the appeals process can leave a veteran in claims limbo for an additional two and a half years.
- **The Others.** Think of it as the kitchen drawer where you stick the odds and ends—random takeout menus, those holiday cookie cutters that you never used, a broken can opener you should probably just throw away. Except when it comes to these other claims, the VA has a lot of them—327,602 to be exact, a majority of which are tied to compensation. These claims can include Freedom of Information Act requests, cost-of-living adjustments, and even correspondence with lawmakers. They also include internal quality reviews—an in-house attempt to catch serious mistakes. A minority of these claims—slightly more than 30,000—are tied to pensions, which follows a larger trend in which pension claims make up a relatively small amount of the VA's total claims workload.

And while acknowledging that the VA has made progress on its disability compensation and pension claims, Manar said, "The problem is that they've done it to the exclusion of much of the rest of the workload, and, as a consequence, there are even more glaring problems." [Source: National Journal | Jordain Carney | Jun 26, 2014 ++]

VA Credibility Update 10 ► Rob Nabors' Report to President

The Veterans Affairs health care system needs to be overhauled because of unresponsive leadership and a "corrosive culture" that affects the delivery of medical care, said a report delivered 227 JUN to President Barack Obama. "It is clear that there are significant and chronic systemic failures that must be addressed by

the leadership at VA," said the report prepared by Rob Nabors, who is Obama's deputy chief of staff and who the President dispatched to assess the situation at the troubled agency. The VA, a massive bureaucracy with more than 300,000 full-time employees, is under fire over allegations of alarming shortcomings at its medical facilities. The controversy involves delayed care with potentially fatal consequences in possibly dozens of cases. Nabors and acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson met with Obama to discuss the findings.



Obama Deputy COS Rob Nabors

At the Veterans Affairs medical center in Phoenix, for example, a preliminary report made public last month indicated that at least 1,700 military veterans waiting to see a doctor were never scheduled for an appointment and were never placed on a wait list. The VA used fraudulent record-keeping -- including an alleged secret list -- that covered up excessive waiting periods for veterans, some of whom died in the process. But the problems go well beyond Phoenix. Dozens of others of VA centers, all around the country, also face a host of allegations like possible abuse of scheduling practices. The report mentioned the Inspector General is now investigating 77 VA facilities, more than were previously reported. The report stressed that the vast majority of employees are dedicated and hard-working. Yet, it cited a "corrosive culture" that created personnel problems across the department and hurt morale and, by extension, timeliness of medical care. When problems occur, they are transferred to other departments minimized or not acknowledged at all, the report said, and the culture "encourages discontent and backlash against employees." "The department must take swift and appropriate accountability actions," the report said. "There must be a recognition of how true accountability works."

The report called for an overhaul of leadership at the Veterans Medical Administration. "It currently acts with little transparency or accountability with regard to its management of the VA medical structure," the report said. The VA central office could solve this problem with more transparency and by taking a more hands-on approach with regional leaders, the report said. Other key findings of the report were:

- The 14-day scheduling standard for a medical appointment is "arbitrary, ill-defined, and misunderstood." The goal was deemed unrealistic and "is a poor indicator of either patient satisfaction or quality of care" and should be replaced.
- The technology behind the basic scheduling system is "cumbersome and outdated."
- Additional resources, including doctors, nurses, trained support staff and other health professionals, are needed.
- Many of the resource issues facing the VA are similar to what exists in the private sector. But the VA has not clearly articulated its funding needs.

U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller of Florida, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said, "It appears the White House has finally come to terms with the serious and systemic VA health care problems

we've been investigating and documenting for years." [Source: CNN Politics | Ralph Ellis & John Crawley | Jun 27 2014 ++]

VA Credibility Update 11 ► Chief Medical Inspector Steps Down

The head of the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical investigation unit has stepped down, the department announced 2 JUN, just days after a federal watchdog sharply criticized the department for failing to adequately investigate allegations of poor care within its sprawling hospital system. The official, Dr. John R. Pierce, who had been director of the department's office of medical inspector, is the fifth senior V.A. official to depart in the past six weeks, a period in which the department has come under fierce criticism and intense scrutiny amid allegations that veterans hospitals had been hiding long delays in patient care. The departing senior officials have included the secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, and the department's head of health care, Dr. Robert Petzel. Mr. Shinseki removed Dr. Petzel in May even though he was due to retire within months.



Dr. John R. Pierce

In a sign that the White House is moving to address some of the most pressing problems as the department awaits Mr. Shinseki's replacement, the acting secretary, Sloan D. Gibson, has brought in two special advisers with deep experience in Veterans Affairs. President Obama has nominated Robert A. McDonald, a West Point graduate and former chief executive officer of Procter & Gamble, to be the new secretary of Veterans Affairs. He must be approved by the Senate. One of the two new special advisers, Leigh Bradley, was the department's top lawyer during the Clinton administration. She has returned as special counsel to Mr. Gibson, and will work with a crisis-response team that, among other tasks, will review cases of retaliation against whistle-blowers. The other adviser, Jonathan B. Perlin, has taken a leave of absence from the Hospital Corporation of America, where he was chief medical officer, to assist Mr. Gibson. Dr. Perlin was the department's under secretary of health during the George W. Bush administration.

Dr. Pierce's departure came after Carolyn N. Lerner, head of the Office of Special Counsel, which investigates whistle-blower complaints in the federal government, sent a blistering letter to Mr. Obama last week criticizing the department for not digging deeper into widespread allegations from its employees of poor or delayed care for veterans, singling out the medical inspector's office. In response, Mr. Gibson ordered a review of the office. Another official likely to play a significant role in refashioning the department is Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy, who has served since August 2013 as the assistant deputy under secretary for health quality, safety and value. She is now interim head of the department's health care system, while the Obama administration seeks a permanent under secretary for health. It is not yet clear whether Mr. McDonald will have his confirmation hearing before lawmakers leave for their August break.

In the meantime, Mr. Gibson has been taking steps to address criticism from Congress and veterans groups. On Tuesday, he met with Ms. Lerner and outlined a new way to resolve cases where whistle-blowers in the department have been the victim of retaliation.

Now, when the Office of Special Counsel brings such cases to the department, they will be handled by a crisis-response team that includes Ms. Bradley, who joins the department on Monday on temporary assignment from her current job as director of the Pentagon’s standards of conduct office. In an interview, Ms. Lerner said that Mr. Gibson has committed to resolving meritorious whistle-blower retaliation cases on an expedited basis through the integrated crisis response team. “I’m hopeful this will avoid the need for lengthy investigations and help whistle-blowers who have suffered retaliation get back on their feet quickly,” she continued. Paul Rieckhoff, who heads the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said that the personnel moves, taken together, seemed to reflect Mr. Gibson’s lack of trust in much of the department’s bureaucracy. “I think he’s doing an admirable job, but that culture hasn’t changed yet,” Mr. Rieckhoff said. “He can say all he wants at the top, but it doesn’t mean anything if the fiefdoms don’t comply.” [Source: The Associated Press | Matthew Daly | July 3, 2014 ++]

VA Credibility Update 12 ► OMI to be Restructured

In response to the Office of Special Counsel’s recent recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Sloan Gibson today announced VA will restructure the Department’s Office of Medical Inspector (OMI) to better serve Veterans. “At VA, we depend on VA employees and leaders to put the needs of Veterans first and honor VA’s core values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence,” said Gibson. “Given recent revelations by the Office of Special Counsel, it is clear that we need to restructure the Office of Medical Inspector to create a strong internal audit function which will ensure issues of care quality and patient safety remain at the forefront.”

On June 23, 2014, the Office of Special Counsel sent a letter to President Obama regarding VA whistleblowers. Following the letter, Acting Secretary Gibson directed an immediate review and subsequent briefing of OMI’s operation, process, and structure. As a result of the briefing, the Acting Secretary determined a clear need to revise the policies, procedures, and personnel structure by which OMI operates, and has directed a restructuring of the organization. As long-term restructuring moves forward, the Acting Secretary has directed that immediately, VA will appoint an interim Director of OMI from outside the current office to assist with transition, and VA will suspend OMI’s hotline and refer all hotline calls to Office of Inspector General (OIG). Gerard R. Cox, MD, MHA will serve as Interim Director of the Office of Medical Inspector (OMI). Prior to joining the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Cox served as a U.S. Navy medical officer for more than 30 years.



Gerard R. Cox

With the June 30 retirement of the individual who has served as the Medical Inspector of the Veterans Health Administration for more than a decade, this restructuring will occur with the input of the team of individuals that the Secretary has brought to VA to assist in addressing systemic issues and rebuilding Veteran trust. On June 13, 2014, Acting Secretary Gibson sent a message to all VA employees regarding the importance of whistleblower protection and has met with employees at VA Medical Centers across the country to reemphasize that message. “As I told our workforce, intimidation or retaliation – not just against whistleblowers, but against any employee who raises a hand to identify a problem, make a suggestion, or report what may be a violation in law, policy, or our core values – is absolutely unacceptable. I will not tolerate it in our organization.” [Source: VA News Release Jul 8, 2014 ++]

VA Credibility Update 13 ► **Good Health Care Claim Undermined**

Testimony from a Tuesday evening 7 JUL congressional hearing cast the troubled Department of Veterans Affairs in even greater disrepute, and undermined the agency’s claim of providing good health care. The House Veterans’ Affairs Committee that has probed the coverup of long waits at veterans hospitals focused its attention on the federal employees who turned back the covers, sometimes risking their careers to do so. The committee also heard testimony from the head of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, who provided shameful examples of patient neglect, after they were hospitalized — indicating this is more than a waiting-list problem. Instead of heeding truth-tellers, VA retaliated against whistleblowers, according to complaints filed with the Special Counsel, which deals with whistleblowers government-wide.



Christian Head, left, associate director of the Greater Los Angeles VA Health Care System, Katherine Mitchell, medical director of the Iraq and Afghanistan Post-Deployment Center in Phoenix and Scott Davis, program specialist with the VA National Health Eligibility Center are sworn in for a congressional hearing on July 8.

Tuesday’s session was another in a long series of hearings called by Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL.), who has been leading a probe into VA mismanagement. Revelations prompted by whistleblowers and outrage from members of Congress and veterans led to the resignation of former secretary Eric K. Shinseki in May. Miller criticized “the organizational cesspool at VA.” In her written remarks, Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner told the committee that “too often VA has failed to use the information provided by whistleblowers as an early warning system. Instead, in many cases VA has ignored or attempted to minimize problems, allowing serious issues to fester and grow.” In one disturbing example of bad care, Lerner told about

patient-neglect disclosures from a VA psychiatrist whistleblower at a long-term mental health-care facility in Brockton, Mass. A “veteran was admitted to the facility in 2003, with significant and chronic mental health issues,” she said. “Yet, his first comprehensive psychiatric evaluation did not occur until 2011, more than eight years after he was admitted, when he was assessed by the whistleblower. No medication assessments or modifications occurred until the 2011 consultation.” That’s disgraceful.

Also disgraceful — Lerner described a bureaucracy that appears almost unconcerned. “VA, and particularly VA’s Office of the Medical Inspector, has consistently used a ‘harmless error’ defense, where the department acknowledges problems but claims patient care is unaffected,” she said, quoting her June 23 letter to President Obama. “This approach hides the severity of systemic and long-standing problems, and has prevented VA from taking the steps necessary to improve quality of care for veterans.” She also said “schedulers were placed on a ‘bad-boy’ list if their scheduled appointments were greater than 14 days from the recorded ‘desired dates’ for veterans.” When patients were not seen within the 14-day target set by management, records were falsified or manipulated, so it would appear the goal had been met. In some cases, those actions apparently were driven by the desire to get performance awards that were based, at least in part, on the ability to meet the target. “The manipulation of data to game performance goals is a widespread cancer within VA,” Miller said. While reports and surveys indicate patients generally like VA health care once they get it, Lerner’s statement shows the agency cannot rest on laurels in the face of strong criticism.

In testimony submitted to the committee, Katherine L. Mitchell, an internist at VA hospital in Phoenix, described an agency suffering from an integrity deficit. “Ethics have never been made an official VA performance measure, and thus do not appear to be a clear administrative goal,” she said. “There seems to be no perceived financial advantage to pursuing ethical conduct. Administrative repercussions are lacking for unethical behaviors that are so routinely practiced among senior executive service employees.” Of course, federal employees should not need a financial incentive to engage in ethical conduct. But there were financial inducements, in the form of employee performance awards or bonuses that provided perverse incentives to meet productivity targets.

Without responding to specific cases raised by Lerner or the whistleblowers, James A. Tuchschildt, VA’s acting principal deputy undersecretary for health, told the committee that “intimidation or retaliation against whistleblowers . . . is absolutely unacceptable. “We all have a responsibility for enforcing appropriate workplace behavior,” he said in a prepared statement. “Protecting employees from reprisal is a moral obligation of VA leaders, a statutory obligation, and a priority for this department.” If that’s true now, with VA under tight scrutiny, the testimony indicates VA has not always met its moral obligation. Chronicling a long list of VA whistleblower cases, Lerner said “based on the scope and breadth of the complaints OSC has received, it is clear that the workplace culture in many VA facilities is hostile to whistleblowers, and actively discourages them from coming forward with what is often critical information.” [Source: The Washington Post | Joe Davidson | Jul 8, 2014 ++]

VA Secretary Update 29 ► Former Procter & Gamble CEO Nominated

The White House on 30 JUN nominated former Procter & Gamble CEO Bob McDonald to take over as the next Veterans Affairs secretary, charged with fixing the ongoing veterans care delay scandal and restoring public faith in the department. McDonald, a West Point graduate, retired from the corporate giant one year ago. He brings considerably more business experience than military experience, spending five years after

graduation in the Army and 33 years working with Procter & Gamble's various offices. Although he lacks strong ties to the major national veterans groups, McDonald still is close to officials at West Point, where he established the biennial McDonald Cadet Leadership Conference. His military career was primarily with the 82nd Airborne Division. McDonald is also a life member of the U.S. Army Ranger Association and the 75th Ranger Regiment Association.



Bob McDonald

The 60-year-old's nomination comes exactly a month after former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki was forced to resign from the post he held more than five years, the longest tenure since the department was created. More than 100 members of Congress demanded Shinseki's departure after weeks of reports about medical appointment problems at dozens of VA hospitals across the country. The department's office of inspector general is still investigating those reports and how many hospital officials may have covered up access problems to protect performance bonuses. In his final public remarks before resigning, Shinseki took responsibility for the widespread care delays but also added his own dismay and shock that numerous high-level VA employees would put their own interests before that of veterans. McDonald's departure from Procter & Gamble was also sudden, and came after external and internal criticism about how he was managing the company of 120,000-plus employees. The move is in line with calls for an executive to better manage the second-largest government department, one with more than 300,000 employees and a host of questions about whether the past leadership could handle the work.

One senior administration official said McDonald can bring "well-honed management chops" to the embattled VA. At P&G, he rose from an entry-level job to CEO, holding management positions at many different areas of expertise and countries. Still, the move was a surprise to many in the veteran's community. Paul Rieckhoff, founder and CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said officials there are looking forward to meeting and working with McDonald, but also concerned about his lack of direct ties to younger veterans. "There needs to be a youth surge at VA," he said. "We hope that one of the first things he does is to reach out to our community, to help move ahead on fixing the department." Lawmakers have characterized the department's problems as a cultural failure, caused by a bureaucracy that rewards reaching arbitrary metrics more than actually helping veterans.

The nomination comes with just a few weeks left in Congress' legislative schedule before an extended, pre-election break. Senate officials have already promised to work quickly on the nomination, but it still could be difficult to finish the background work for confirmation before August arrives. In a statement, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) said he planned on meeting with McDonald in the next week. "The VA needs significantly improved transparency and accountability and it needs an increased number of doctors, nurses and other medical staff so that all eligible veterans get high-quality health care in a timely manner," he said. House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller

(R-FL) said in a statement that McDonald will need to “root out the culture of dishonesty and fraud that has taken hold within the department” in order to succeed. “The only way McDonald can set the department up for long term success is to take the opposite approach of some other VA senior leaders,” he said. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane | Jun 29, 2014 ++]

VA Whistleblowers Update 05 ► 67 Claims of Retaliation | 25 since 1 JUN

A federal investigative agency is examining 67 claims of retaliation by supervisors at the Department of Veterans Affairs against employees who filed whistleblower complaints — including 25 complaints filed since 1 JUN, after a growing health care scandal involving long patient waits and falsified records at VA hospitals and clinics became public. The independent Office of Special Counsel said 30 of the complaints about retaliation have passed the initial review stage and were being further investigated for corrective action and possible discipline against VA supervisors and other executives. The complaints were filed in 28 states at 45 separate facilities, Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner said.

Instead of using information provided by whistleblowers as an early warning system, the VA often "has ignored or attempted to minimize problems, allowing serious issues to fester and grow," Lerner said 8 JUL at a hearing before the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Worse, officials have retaliated against whistleblowers instead of investigating their complaints, she said. Lerner said her office has been able to block disciplinary actions against several VA employees who reported wrongdoing, including one who reported a possible crime at a VA facility in New York. The counsel's office also reversed a suspension for a VA employee in Hawaii who reported seeing an elderly patient being improperly restrained in a wheelchair. The whistleblower was granted full back pay and an unspecified monetary award and the official who retaliated against the worker was suspended, Lerner said.

James Tuchschiidt, a top official at the Veterans Health Administration, the VA's health care arm, said he was sorry that VA employees have suffered retaliation after making complaints. "I apologize to everyone whose voice has been stifled," he said after nearly three hours of testimony by other hearing witnesses about VA actions to limit criticism and strike back against whistleblowers. "That's not what I stand for," Tuchschiidt added. "I'm very disillusioned and sickened by all of this." The VA said earlier Tuesday it was restructuring its Office of Medical Inspector following a scathing report by Lerner's agency last month. Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson said the department would appoint an interim director of the medical inspector's office from outside the current office and was suspending the office's hotline immediately. All complaints would be referred to the VA's Office of Inspector General.

The head of the medical inspector's office retired 30 JUN following a report by the Office of Special Counsel saying that his office played down whistleblower complaints pointing to "a troubling pattern of deficient patient care" at VA facilities. "Intimidation or retaliation — not just against whistleblowers, but against any employee who raises a hand to identify a problem, make a suggestion or report what may be a violation in law, policy or our core values — is absolutely unacceptable," Gibson said in a statement. "I will not tolerate it in our organization." Meanwhile, a doctor at the Phoenix veterans hospital says she was harassed and humiliated after complaining about problems at the hospital, where dozens of veterans died while on waiting lists for appointments.

Dr. Katherine Mitchell said the hospital's emergency room was severely understaffed and could not keep up with "the dangerous flood of patients" there. Mitchell, a former co-director of the Phoenix VA hospital's

ER, told the House committee that strokes, heart attacks, internal head bleeding and other serious medical problems were missed by staffers "overwhelmed by the glut of patients." Her complaints about staffing problems were ignored, Mitchell said, and she was transferred, suspended and reprimanded. Mitchell, a 16-year veteran at the Phoenix VA, now directs a program for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans at the hospital. She said problems she pointed out to supervisors put patients' lives at risk. "It is a bitter irony that our VA cannot guarantee high-quality health care in the middle of cosmopolitan Phoenix" to veterans who survived wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam and Korea, she said.



Dr. Katherine Mitchell

Scott Davis, a program specialist at the VA's Health Eligibility Center in Atlanta, said he was placed on involuntary leave after reporting that officials were "wasting millions of dollars" on a direct mail marketing campaign to promote the health care overhaul signed by President Barack Obama. Davis also reported the possible purging and deletion of at least 10,000 veterans' health records at the Atlanta center. More records and documents could be deleted or manipulated to mask a major backlog and mismanagement, Davis said. Those records would be hard to identify because of computer-system integrity issues, he said. Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House veterans panel, praised Mitchell and other whistleblowers for coming forward, despite threats of retaliation that included involuntary transfers and suspensions. "Unlike their supervisors, these whistleblowers have put the interests of veterans before their own," Miller said. "They understand that metrics and measurements mean nothing without personal responsibility." Rather than push whistleblowers out, "It is time that VA embraces their integrity and recommits itself to accomplishing the promise of providing high quality health care to veterans," Miller said. [Source: AP | Matthew Daly| Jul 8, 2014 ++]

VA Health Care Delays Update 06 ► Numbers Ballooned in Jun

Statistics released 3 JUL by the Department of Veterans Affairs show dramatically increased numbers of veterans who waited more than 30 days for health care appointments in June compared with the prior month. The number of wait-listed vets doubled or even tripled at most VA hospitals and clinics across the country last month, according to the most recent data released in the VA's effort at more transparency as it tackles bureaucratic dysfunction and scheduling manipulation that erupted into a national scandal. Overall, the number of veterans waiting more than a month rose from 242,059 in mid-May to 636,436 in mid-June.

Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson has warned that average wait times will grow as the department stamps out inappropriate scheduling practices and reaches out to veterans who were not receiving the health care they requested. In many VA facilities, staff were fudging records or creating off-the-books lists to

meet a VA standard of offering appointments within two weeks of a request. "As we continue to address systemic challenges in accessing care, these regular data updates enhance transparency and provide the most immediate information to veterans and the public on improvements to veterans' access to quality health care," Gibson said in a released statement Thursday. Gibson said the department is attempting to regain public trust following revelations of wrongdoing that outraged many.

The VA scandal began in April at a hospital in Phoenix where a whistleblower doctor alleged 40 veterans may have died while languishing on a secret wait list kept by staff. A series of audits have since proven such problems are widespread among 731 VA-run hospitals and clinics that serve 6.5 million vets each year, though the connection to deaths is still under investigation by the VA inspector general. The new data released Thursday show veterans waiting more than a month for care in the Phoenix hospital increased from 6,712 to 11,066 between May and June — a jump that was typical among other VA facilities nationwide:

- a VA hospital in Honolulu went from having 480 to 2,057
- in New Orleans, the number went from 708 to 3,624
- a Boston VA hospital went from 1,389 to 3,506

The data shed new light on the extent of the department's health care access crisis. Increased waits come from a combination of new patients and proper scheduling. Gibson said the VA has contacted 140,000 vets in the wake of the scandal to offer care and schedule appointments. Despite the dire picture, the statistics do show at least one bright spot: The VA appears to be shrinking the number of veterans with extremely long waits for care. In May, 57,436 veterans of about 6 million who requested medical appointments waited more than three months, according to data released by the VA last month. That figure shrank to 46,236 in June, while overall appointments increased [Source: Stars & Stripes | Travis J. Tritten | July 3, 2014++]

VA Bonuses Update 19 ► VA Defends Fayetteville VAMC Director's Bonus

VA officials on 7 JUL defended the bonus awarded to Fayetteville VA Medical Center director Elizabeth B. Goolsby earlier this year, saying it was based on more than 30 factors, including veterans' access to care. In a statement, a Department of Veterans Affairs Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network spokesman said Goolsby has worked to meet the demands of the 21-county VA enterprise based in Fayetteville despite the region growing by 15,000 veterans since she took her position four years ago. "She has put forth unmatched effort into improving access and into the delivery of quality health care to veterans throughout eastern North Carolina," said Bruce J. Sprecher, director of communications and legislative affairs for the VA network based in Durham. "A veteran herself, Ms. Goolsby, is an extremely dedicated director who has worked tirelessly to meet the growing demands of one of the nation's largest veteran populations," he said.



Fayetteville VA Medical Center and director Elizabeth B. Goolsby

Goolsby was one of nearly 300 senior VA officials to receive bonuses for 2013, according to information provided to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Those bonuses have come under scrutiny during the ongoing scandal over access to healthcare for veterans, and several congressmen have called for the bonuses to be returned. Goolsby was awarded \$6,912 for her efforts last year, on top of a \$138,246 salary. She received a bonus of \$7,604 for 2012. She was one of several VA officials based in North Carolina to receive bonuses. Daniel Hoffmann, who leads the VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network, received an \$8,985 bonus, according to the House committee. The bonuses were paid 28 FEB. Goolsby's bonus has been highlighted because of the Fayetteville VA's long wait times. A VA access audit found that local veterans have some of the longest wait times in the country for primary care appointments.

Other officials highlighted by pundits and lawmakers include the leaders of the Phoenix VA, which has come under fire for using secret wait lists to fudge data. Some veterans on those lists have allegedly died while waiting for VA care, according to reports. "The access issue in Fayetteville is directly related to wait times which are largely tied to lack of space," Sprecher said. "Fayetteville has not had secret lists." Sprecher called Goolsby a master of building coalitions and credited her with building up the Fayetteville VA enterprise. In 2010, the enterprise had four sites of care, Sprecher said. Now, construction crews are building the 16th, 17th and 18th sites in Jacksonville, Sanford and Fayetteville. "Meeting access demands has been a challenge that Ms. Goolsby has worked by pursuing every available opportunity," Sprecher said. "Together, these additional sites will demonstrably improve access to care." Goolsby also was credited with spearheading collaborations with Womack Army Medical Center on Fort Bragg and at Camp Lejeune. "One of the most notable achievements under her leadership is the fact that the Fayetteville VA Medical Center has been upgraded from a Level 3 facility to that of a Level 2," Sprecher said. "This means an increased availability of specialty care services."

The bonuses to senior VA employees ranged from \$6,705 to \$12,579 per employee. In all, the VA awarded nearly \$278 million in bonuses for 2013. The chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Rep. Jeff Miller, has called on the VA to reclaim some of that money, and last week, U.S. Sens. Clair McCaskill and Kelly Ayotte introduced legislation that would take back the bonuses paid to VA employees who were involved in the manipulation of patient wait lists. [Source: Fayetteville Observer | Drew Brooks | Jul 8, 2014 ++]

VARO New Orleans ► VA OIG Oversight Report

The VA OIG evaluated the New Orleans VA Regional Office (VARO) to see how well it accomplishes its mission. They found the VARO staff did not accurately process 42 (47 percent) of 90 disability claims reviewed. They sampled claims they considered at higher risk of processing errors, thus these results do not represent overall disability claims processing accuracy at this VARO. Specifically they determined:

- 15 of 30 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations were inaccurate, generally because management did not prioritize processing of claims requiring reduced evaluations.
- VARO staff processed 10 of 30 traumatic brain injury (TBI) claims incorrectly due to ineffective training on processing such complex cases.
- VARO staff incorrectly processed 17 of 30 special monthly compensation (SMC) and ancillary benefits claims due to a lack of training and emphasis on addressing all ancillary issues.
- Nine of 11 Systematic Analyses of Operations (SAOs) were incomplete due to inadequate oversight.

- VARO staff also did not timely or accurately complete 12 of 30 benefit reduction cases due to a lack of training and priority on addressing this workload.

OIG recommended the VARO Director develop and implement a plan to ensure staff timely process benefit reductions, review the 329 temporary 100 percent disability evaluations remaining from our inspection universe and take appropriate action, and monitor the effectiveness of training on processing TBI claims and SMC and ancillary benefits. The Director should implement a plan to ensure SAOs contain all required elements, including timeframes for implementing the recommendations. The Director should also ensure staff receive training on how to properly complete SAOs and process proposed benefit reductions. The VARO Director concurred with all recommendations. [Source: VA OIG Report 14-01053-172 July 10, 2014 ++]

VAMC Albuquerque NM ► Rapid Response Policy under Review

Emergency dispatch tapes released 11 JUL reveal further details about efforts to revive a Vietnam veteran who collapsed with a heart attack in a Veterans Affairs hospital in Albuquerque. Two calls were made while 71-year-old Jim Napoleon Garcia lay on the floor as an ambulance was called to take him to an emergency room 500 yards away. In the first, a female caller described how the man was unresponsive and bleeding from his mouth and nose. She also expressed her frustration that doctors at a cafeteria table weren't doing more to help. "We called our rapid response here at the hospital but unfortunately they won't respond to him because he's out of the main medical building," said the caller, whose name was not provided. She added that the man was being hooked up to an emergency defibrillator. "Paramedics are already on their way out there," the dispatcher told her. "There's a table of doctors sitting right next to him and none of them are doing s-," the woman continued. "OK, I'm sorry about that," the dispatcher responded. Neither the caller nor the dispatcher elaborated. In a second call minutes later, a male caller said nurses were performing CPR but the man didn't appear to be breathing.



The entrance to the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, N.M.

Asked by the Albuquerque Journal about the table of doctors, VA spokeswoman Sonja Brown said, "Regardless of who was sitting at nearby tables, VA staff along with Kirtland AFB personnel immediately responded in providing basic life support to this veteran. The staff were heroic in their attempts to save the life of this veteran." The hospital previously said the response to the emergency remained under investigation. Hospital emergency experts have said it's standard for hospitals to require staff to call 911, even when patients are near an emergency room. The death of Garcia on June 30 prompted new outrage against the VA as it faces allegations that veterans have endured long wait times and died waiting to see a doctor around the country. The revelations have led to a major shake-up of VA operations. The 911 records

indicate an ambulance arrived to aid Garcia 10.5 minutes after the emergency call. Hospital officials said it is VA policy to call 911, although the emergency response team will be called to nonresponsive patients in clinics and five other buildings on the campus, not including the cafeteria. Brown said its rapid response policy is under review. The content of the tapes was first reported by The Albuquerque Journal. On 10 JUL, New Mexico's congressional delegation sent a letter to the acting VA director saying they have serious concerns about the handling of Garcia's death. [Source: The Associated Press July 11, 2014 ++]

Battle Mountain Sanitarium ► VA Plans to Abandon Historic Site

The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently named a century-old hospital for war veterans in Hot Springs, South Dakota, as one of America's 11 most endangered historic places. The Washington, D.C.-based organization has used the list since 1988 to raise awareness about threats facing historically significant landscapes, buildings and neighborhoods. The Battle Mountain Sanitarium, built with pink sandstone in a Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style, is one of only 2,500 national historic landmarks in the country, said David J. Brown, the trust's executive vice president and chief preservation officer. "If you look at the building today, it's beautiful. It's been well kept, well maintained," Brown said. "But it's the plan that the VA has put forward to abandon the facility that really is the threat."



Battle Mountain Sanitarium

Battle Mountain Sanitarium opened in 1907 to treat Civil War veterans with lung or respiratory problems. The National Park Service says the Black Hills site was the first sanitarium to provide short term treatment to veterans. Battle Mountain reportedly used water from the fabled springs nearby to treat residents. The sanitarium is currently in use as part of the Department of Veterans Affairs Black Hills Health Care System's Hot Springs campus. The VA is planning to abandon the building, open an outpatient clinic and move some services to Rapid City. "It really is the VA's first medical center in their history, and we just think it has a bright future," Brown said.

The VA has selected Labat Environmental of Bellevue, Ne-braska, to study the potential environmental, cultural, historic, social and economic effects of the proposed changes. It could take up to 1½ years to complete the analysis. U.S. Sens. Tim Johnson and John Thune and U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem recently proposed legislation that would pause the federal agency's proposed changes and the study. Noem has said that the Hot Springs hospital has long provided critical care to South Dakota veterans and that the VA is doing a disservice to veterans by neglecting such properties. The trust says it has been able to help

save 97 percent of the places that have made the list since its inception. “We’ve only lost a handful throughout the years,” Brown said. [Source: The Associated Press | Dirk Lammers | Jun 24, 2014 ++]

VA Loans ► FAQs on Home Loans

Why get a VA loan over other types? Simply put, a VA Home Loan allows qualified buyers the opportunity to purchase a home with no down payment. There are also no monthly mortgage insurance premiums to pay, limitations on buyer's closing costs, and an appraisal that informs the buyer of the property value. For most loans on new houses, construction is inspected at appropriate stages and a 1-year warranty is required from the builder. VA also performs personal loan servicing and offers financial counseling to help veterans having temporary financial difficulties.

What if I've used a VA Home Loan Before? You can have previously-used entitlement "restored" **one time only** in order to purchase another home with a VA loan if the borrower has paid off the prior loan but still owns the property, and wants to use his entitlement to purchase a second home. This often occurs with active duty borrowers who PCS to a new station but want to keep their existing home for retirement. However if the prior loan has been paid off, AND the property is no longer owned, they can have their entitlement restored as many times as they want. They can re-use their VA eligibility for every home purchase from the first to the last.

Also, veterans who have used a VA loan before may still have remaining entitlement (see chart) to use for another VA loan. A veteran's maximum entitlement is \$89,912, and lenders will generally loan up to four times your available entitlement without a down payment, provided your income and credit qualifications are fine, and the property appraises for the asking price. Lenders may require that a combination of the guaranty entitlement and any cash down payment must equal at least 25 percent of the reasonable value or sales price of the property, whichever is less.

Loan Amount	Guaranty %	Dollar Amount	*Lender Amount
Up to \$45,000	50%	\$22,500	\$90,000
\$45,001 - \$56,250	40-50%	\$22,500	\$90,000
\$56,251 - \$144,000	40%	\$36,000	\$144,000
Over \$144,000	25%	\$89,912	\$417,000
Manufactured Home or Lot	40%	\$20,000	\$80,000
*Lenders operate under their own regulations and guidelines in these matters			

For Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and U.S. Virgin Islands? residents, note that maximum original loan amounts have now been increased 50 percent higher for first mortgages. Remaining entitlement and restoration of entitlement is not automatic. It can be requested through the nearest VA office by completing [VA Form 26-1880](#). The entitlement may also be restored one time only if the veteran has repaid the prior VA loan in full but has not disposed of the property purchased with the prior VA loan.

What service is *not* eligible for a VA Home Loan? You are not eligible for VA financing solely based upon service in World War I, Active Duty Training in the Reserves, or Active Duty Training in the

National Guard. Note: Guard and Reservists are eligible if they were "activated" under the authority of title 10 U.S. Code as was the case for the Iraq/Afghanistan.

Do all local lenders offer VA Loans? Not necessarily. Choose a VA-approved lending institution that can handle your home loan. A lender can help you review your credit History and determine how much of a loan you can qualify for. Be aware that different lenders have different closing costs and other fees, so it pays to shop around.

What types of repayment options are available? The guaranties thirty-year loans with a choice of repayment plans: Traditional fixed payment (constant principal and interest); Graduated Payment Mortgage, or GPM (low initial payments which gradually rise to a level payment starting in the sixth year); and in some areas, Growing Equity Mortgages, or GEMs (gradually increasing payments with all of the increase applied to principal, resulting in an early payoff of the [loan](#)). There is no prepayment penalty.

What is the maximum VA loan? Although there is no maximum VA loan (limited only by the reasonable value or the purchase price), lenders generally limit the maximum VA loan to **\$417,000**.

If I was discharged years ago and want to qualify for a VA loan, what forms or other documents will I need? Everyone is required to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility. If you do not have this Certificate, you will need to apply using VA Form 26-1880 and this will require a copy of DD-214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) showing character of service. Along with the Certificate of Eligibility, loan applicants will need to document their credit, savings and employment information.

Does a veteran's home loan entitlement expire? No. Home loan entitlement is generally good until used if a person is on active duty. Once discharged or released from active duty before using an entitlement, a new determination of their eligibility must be made based on the length of service and the type of discharge received.

Reservists are eligible for VA Loans, too. Who qualifies? Eligibility extends to members who have completed a total of 6 years in the Selected Reserves or National Guard (member of an active unit, attended required weekend drills and 2-week active duty for training) and received an honorable discharge; continue to serve in the Selected Reserves. Individuals who completed less than 6 years may be eligible if discharged for a service-connected disability. In addition, reservists and National Guard members who were activated on or after August 2, 1990, served at least 90 days and were discharged honorably are eligible. Eligibility for Selected Reservists is due to expire on September 30, 2009.

Can I build a home with a VA Home Loan? Yes. But there are several clauses that may make this difficult to accomplish. Many veterans use their VA Home Loan Certificate of Eligibility to negotiate in good faith a private home construction loan and then refinance the completed home using VA Home Loans.

Can you take out a VA loan for a second home or vacation cabin? The law requires that you certify that you intend to occupy the property as your home. But it specifically provides that occupancy by the veteran's spouse satisfies the personal occupancy requirement. However, there are no provisions for other family members. VA Home Loans are available for a variety of purposes including building, altering, or repairing a home; refinancing an existing home loan; buying a manufactured home with or without a lot; buying and improving a manufactured home lot; and installing a solar heating or cooling system or other

weatherization improvements. You are also allowed to buy income property consisting of up to four units, provided you occupy one of the units.

Can a veteran obtain a VA loan for the purchase of property in a foreign country? No. The property must be located in the United States, its territories, or possessions. The latter consist of Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands.

What is a VA-guaranteed manufactured home loan? A private lender makes a VA-guaranteed manufactured home loan. The VA will protect the lender against loss if the veteran or a later owner fails to repay the loan. The amount VA will guarantee is 40 percent of the loan amount or the veteran's available entitlement, up to a maximum amount of \$20,000. The guaranty amount is not the same as the amount a veteran can borrow.

If a borrower has used a VA loan in the past, can that person be eligible again? Veterans who had a VA loan before may still have "remaining entitlement" to use for another VA loan. The current amount of entitlement available to each eligible veteran is \$36,000. Veterans can have previously-used entitlement "restored" to purchase another home with a VA loan if: the property purchased with the prior VA loan has been sold and the loan paid in full, or if a qualified veteran buyer agrees to assume the VA loan and substitute his or her entitlement for the same amount of entitlement originally used by the veteran seller. The entitlement may also be restored one time only if the veteran has repaid the prior VA loan in full, but has not disposed of the property purchased with the prior VA loan.

I am a Veteran who purchased a home with my spouse utilizing my VA eligibility. I am now divorced and my spouse was awarded the home. How do I get my eligibility back? When the property is awarded to the Veteran's spouse as a result of the divorce, entitlement cannot be restored unless the spouse refinances the property and / or pays off the VA loan in full or the ex-spouse is a veteran who substitutes their entitlement.

I heard the VA has an inventory of foreclosed homes. How can I find out more about this? The VA acquires properties as a result of foreclosures on VA guaranteed loans. These acquired properties are marketed through a property management services contract with Ocwen Federal Bank FSB, West Palm Beach, Florida. Local listing agents through local Multi Listing Systems (MLS) list the properties. A list of properties for sale may also be obtained from Ocwen's website at <http://www.ocwen.com/>.

[Source: Militart.com | Home Purchase | Apr 2014 ++]

Most Wired Survey ► VA Ranks in Top 20 for 2014

The annual Most Wired national survey is an industry-standard benchmark study. The survey is designed to measure the level of IT adoption in U.S. hospitals and health systems, and is useful tool for hospital and health system leadership to map their IT strategic plans. The Department of Veterans Affairs, representing 151 VA medical centers, has been named to the "Most Wired" hospitals list. It is the second year in a row the Department has been selected for the honor. The list, which is released by Hospitals & Health Networks, in partnership with McKesson, the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives and the American Hospital Association, is the result of a national survey aimed at ranking hospitals that are leveraging health information technology in new and innovative ways. The nationwide survey regarding

information technology (IT) in health care conducted between 15 JAN and 15 MAR 2014 polled 1,901 hospitals and health systems representing 680 completed surveys, or roughly 33 percent of U.S. hospitals. The VA health care system is one of only 20 organizations that met this year's Most Wired — Advanced criteria.



Mobile Telehealth Clinic is one example of “wired” health care.

According to Most Wired, while 375 health care facilities were named as “core” Most Wired winners, VA was among the 20 to exceed “core” IT development integrating IT in patient-centered care, designating it as a Most Wired — Advance recipient. This means VA has shown exceptional results in the Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study. The characteristics include:

- Stronger security systems and faster disaster recovery
- Adoption of electronic systems and tools to improve business processes, clinical quality and patient safety
- Use of evidence-based electronic order sets and plan of care and standardized care transition process automated review of CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) key indicators with compliance alerts
- Telehealth offerings
- Online chronic disease management for patients at home
- Use of electronic disease registries
- Managing care transitions electronically

The honor means that VA is doing an exceptional job utilizing information technology to conduct business in a changing industry landscape. As the nation's largest health network, VA is constantly looking for ways to serve Veterans in the best, most efficient way possible. Over the past two years, VA has provided Veteran patients and VA health care teams with even more ways to connect and ensure 21st Century health care through the use of technology — from recent VA Blue Button enhancements that allow access to critical VA lab results more quickly, to the deployment of asset tracking devices and opening access to patients' clinical notes through OpenNotes. VA is constantly working to improve their practices and enhance their understanding of which technologies work best for their network. These efforts will

continue to enhance patient care for our nation's Veterans. An important example of VA's implementation of modern technology is the use of electronic data for performance improvement in patient care, management of care transitions and patient engagement. [Source: VHA News | Hans Petersen | June 30, 2014 ++]

*** Vets ***



Veterans' Treatment Court Update 22 ► Nashua New Hampshire

Gov. Maggie Hassan and top judicial and military officials gathered 10 JUL to dedicate the state's first court designed to handle the criminal cases of military veterans whose crimes were driven by substance abuse, trauma and anger management issues that stem from their service. "This collaborative effort exemplifies the all-hands-on-deck spirit of our people," Hassan said. The court will focus on intensive treatment to help stem the tide of recidivism and get veterans back on track. Chief Justice Linda Dalianis said the court is a tribute to the valor and sacrifice of New Hampshire's veterans. "Let it be a means for troubles to turn into triumphs," she told a packed courtroom.

Major General William Reddel, adjutant general of the New Hampshire National Guard, said the court is not about providing a get-out-of-jail-free card. He said it's about fixing the problems behind the crimes. "From a vision 18 months ago to now, I can't thank you enough, because this is huge," Reddel said. He credited Jo Moncher, bureau chief of the state health department's community-based military programs, for making the court a reality. Judge James Leary, who will preside over the court, said it will also reach out to the families of veterans "who are also seriously and significantly affected." Diane Levesque, who runs the Veterans Justice Outreach program at the VA Medical Center in Manchester, said veterans involved in the criminal court system deserve the services of a docket dedicated to their needs. She will be the liaison between the court and service providers. "We have veterans returning from deployments where they have suffered not only physical injury, but psychological and moral injury," Levesque said. "They get into a crisis due to having so much trouble readjusting upon their return."

Levesque said she has an active caseload of more than 100 veterans with pending criminal charges. She said she has handled upward of 500 cases since she took over the program in January 2012. She said about 260 convicted veterans are behind bars in the state's prisons — many of them honorably discharged Vietnam vets. "We're talking about a time when veterans were not given special consideration," Levesque said. "Who even thought they had a problem that needed treatment." There are about 160 veterans' courts nationwide. The first was founded in Buffalo, New York, by Judge Robert Russell in January 2008, after he noticed increasing numbers of veterans on the docket of his drug and mental health courts. The Veterans Behavioral Health Track court in Nashua begins hearing cases in August. [Source: Associated Press | Lynne Tuohy | Jul 10, 2014 ++]

Gulf War Syndrome Update 30 ► Presumptive Condition Requests Rejected

The Department of Veterans Affairs has rejected a request from members of Congress and veterans advocates to make brain cancer, lung cancer and migraines for Gulf War veterans. Officials said they cannot prove the high rate of these illnesses among Gulf War vets are related to military service. VA officials said the number of brain cancer deaths for soldiers exposed to sarin gas was too low to be conclusive, though it was double the rate of soldiers not exposed. And the rate of lung cancer deaths, though 15 percent higher than those who did not serve in the 1991 Gulf War, is "inconclusive" because researchers did not know how many of the servicemembers smoke. "I'm disappointed with their decision, but hold out hope that further studies will convince the VA," Rep. Timothy Walz (D-MN) told USA Today. "We must ensure our brave veterans get the care they need, and this is part of that effort."



Soldiers with the U.S. Army's 7th Corps huddle in a bunker in eastern Saudi Arabia with gas masks and chemical suits just after U.S. planes started bombing Iraq on Jan. 18, 1991.

If a veteran is diagnosed with a presumptive condition, Veterans Affairs is required to assume that it is military-connected, and that the veteran is then entitled to medical or disability benefits associated with the diagnosis. Those exposed to smoke after Saddam Hussein set his oil wells on fire, as well as to sarin gas after the U.S. bombed a munitions plant in Khamisayah, Iraq, saw an increased risk of brain cancer, according to a study Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO) and Walz cited in letters to former VA secretary Eric Shinseki in March. As many as 100,000 troops may have been exposed to sarin, a nerve agent, according to the Defense Department, but a recent study shows more may have been affected.

Gulf War vets also saw a "significant relative excess" of lung cancer, according to a second study. And a third study showed that veterans with chronic fatigue syndrome or Gulf War Illness were likely to also suffer migraines, the lawmakers wrote. "I am very interested in your opinion of whether the studies enclosed are sufficient to add these three health problems to the list of presumptives related to Gulf War Illness," Coffman wrote in March. "If you believe they are not, please detail the VA's current and planned efforts related to these three problems. [Source: USA Today | Kelly S. Kennedy | Jul 7, 2014 ++]

Vet Federal Jobs ► Initiatives that Give Vets an Edge

Federal agencies aren't trying to hire veterans just because they think it's a nice thing to do. They've been ordered to do so by their chief executive and board of directors — the president and Congress. To help agencies reach vet hiring goals, federal leaders have established several special pathways to federal jobs for vets. Taking advantage of these typically requires vets to submit particular paperwork and documentation. For more details, visit <http://www.fedshirevets.gov>. And keep in mind that many other qualified vets may be trying to use the same programs to land the same jobs. A so called “noncompetitive” job listing may eliminate civilian competition, but you'll still be competing with fellow vets. Federal hiring is still merit based, and these special perks likely will do nothing for vets who apply for jobs for which they're not qualified. But for vets who are, the following programs could push their résumés to the top of the stack.

- Veterans preference provides a slight boost to the applications of qualifying vets who are trying for open, competitive listings, often in the form of numerical points added to their exam or application scores. Vets who don't have service connected disabilities but do meet certain service requirements can get five extra points. Disabled vets can get 10.
- Veterans recruitment appointments can land vets in federal jobs without those positions being opened up to the general public. Agencies are authorized to simply appoint qualified vets to positions as high as the GS-11 federal pay lev-el. This is available to honorably discharged, recently separated vets, as well as those who are dis-abled or received a campaign badge or service medal.
- Veterans Employment Opportunity Act allows veterans to apply for job openings that are otherwise open only to current and former federal employees. This is available to hon-orably discharged, recently sepa-rated vets, as well as those who are disabled, received a campaign badge or meet other requirements. Family members of vets injured or killed in action also may qualify.
- Veterans rated 30-percent or more disabled can be appointed to a feder-al job noncompetitively if their dis-ability is service connected.
- Disabled veterans enrolled in a VA training program can undergo train-ing at a federal agency. When the training is complete, the agency can appoint that vet to a job non-competitively.
- Recent Graduates Program is an initiative for people with and with-out military service, but vets may be eligible for a longer time. It's open to recipients of everything from technical certificates and as-sociate degrees to doctorates. Non-vets must have graduated within the last two years. Vets who were prevented from applying for the program within that time frame because of military service may be able to take advantage of the pro-gram up to six years after graduat-ing. The program typically lasts for one year, after which agencies may place participants in permanent jobs.
- Presidential Management Fellows Program is also open to people with and without military service, but qualifying vets receive preference. Applicants must have graduated with an advanced degree, such as a master's or professional degree, within the last two years. This is a two-year paid fellowship, after which the participant may be placed in a permanent federal job.

[Source: NavyTimes | George Altman | Jul 14, 2014 ++]

Vet Federal Jobs Update 01 ► How to Land | Before you separate

You've probably heard that federal agencies give some hiring preferences to veterans. But did you know:

- That some positions are awarded to vets noncompetitively — i.e., they're not publicly listed for nonvets?
- That résumés submitted to federal agencies should be different from those submitted to pri-vate-sector employers?
- That if you ask, government agencies may give you important information related to a position that's not included in a public job listing, which could give you a leg up on other applicants?

As a whole, the federal government represents one of the largest, most veteran hungry job markets in the country. It's also one of the most competitive — and unconventional. To help you sort it out, Military Times quizzed hiring officials and advisers from many of the largest veteran employers in the federal government, as well as outside experts, for tips on how vets can land federal jobs. They provided advice covering every step of the process. Their advice for you to consider before you separate was:

- 1) **Start preparing early.** With his re-tirement looming, Michael Cheshire, a master chief Navy counselor, applied for a civilian position with the service to lead its military support section, last October — more than three months before the first scheduled day on the job in February. That sort of time frame is not un-usual for federal jobs, which must abide by particular application processes and, as a result, typically take longer to hire a candidate.
- 2) **Research your options.** The “federal government” doesn't function as one huge organization. It consists of many agencies, both large and small, sometimes stacked within other agencies and departments. The hiring procedures and accommodations for veterans can be similarly complicated. But vets can use one site -- <http://www.fedshirevets.gov> -- to learn almost anything they'd want or need to know about getting a federal job. The primary federal job search site <http://www.usajobs.gov> also has information and tools. Additionally, some agencies have their own sites, such as the Veterans Affairs Department's <http://vaforvets.va.gov>, with more information for vet job seekers.
- 3) **Network with your co-workers.** If you're contemplating a federal job within your current military branch or closely related to the work you're already doing, “you may have the inside track,” said Greg Rinckey, a federal employ-ment attorney and managing part-ner at the law firm Tully Rinckey. For example, you may actually know the person who would decide whether to hire you as a civilian. Or you may be working alongside civil-ians in similar jobs who can offer specific advice on how to get the gig and the inside scoop on what the job is really like. “Sit down with the civilian work-ing in the office and say, ‘Hey, what are the pros and cons?’ ” Rinckey said.
- 4) **Look for fed-focused TAP sessions.** Under recent revisions to the Tran-sition Assistance Program, TAP classes can include special modules and workshops focused on federal government work. They start with basic overviews that will help you determine if federal work is for you and delve into much greater detail for those who are interested.
- 5) **Save up for interview clothes.** After years of having Uncle Sam provide all the necessary dress uniforms, some vets might not think to stock their closets with interview appropriate clothes when they transition out. That was a jolt for Cheshire, who advises his fellow transitioning vets to start

saving for this particular need well before getting out. “It’s expensive,” he said. “You’re going to pay a good amount to dress for success.”

[Source: NavyTimes | George Altman | Jul 14, 2014 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure~Lejeune Update 46 ► Nexus Opinion Claim Impact

The major media has covered this story for years. The health effects on Marines, their dependents and civilian workers are tragic reminders of what happens when toxic chemicals are dumped into the ground and find their way into the aquifer and the tap water. The main chemicals involved were volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning solvent, and trichloroethylene (TCE), a degreaser; however, more than 70 chemicals have been identified as contaminants at Lejeune, including benzene and vinyl chloride. The last contaminated well was shut down in 1987. Providing VA health care to those injured from the toxic water took another 25 years. In August 2012, President Obama approved presumptive health care for 15 medical conditions for Camp Lejeune Marines and their dependents.

The Janey Ensminger Act requires the VA to provide health care for Lejeune victims of the contaminated water who suffer from cancer of the esophagus, lung, breast, bladder or kidney; leukemia; multiple myeloma; myelodysplastic syndromes; renal toxicity; hepatic steatosis; female infertility; miscarriage; scleroderma; and/or neurobehavioral effects or non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Retired Marine Master Sergeant Jerry Ensminger spearheaded the drive for health care coverage through Congress. Janey Ensminger, his 9 year old daughter, died from leukemia after ingesting the contaminated water. The law doesn’t provide for VA disability compensation to veterans injured by the contaminated water and veterans can’t sue the government for injuries linked to active duty. Their only recourse is to file a VA disability and compensation claim. Claims for Camp Lejeune water contamination are processed by the VA in their Louisville, KY, office.

At the VA’s Louisville office, the VA reviews all available evidence concerning the veteran’s service at Camp Lejeune, family history and exposures prior to and post-service, and all scientific and medical literature related to the particular claimed disabilities, according to an informed Congressional source. This same source provided information that supported the critical need for an acceptable VA medical nexus opinion. Camp Lejeune Marines have better odds at a black jack table than winning a VA disability claim, according to data provided by the Congressional source: The VA’s statistics as of January 31, 2014, showed that the VA’s Louisville office had processed 9,703 medical claims, approved 349 (3.6%), and denied 9,354 (96.4%). Why the extraordinarily high denial rate? The information provided to columnist Robert O’Dowd from the Congressional source stated that:

“Claims issues are denied when there is no credible medical opinion establishing a link between exposure to the contaminants and subsequent development of the claimed disability. This is reflected most in the 9,354 miscellaneous conditions that have been denied. In each of these, there was no or insufficient medical evidence establishing that it was at least as likely as not that the condition was associated with exposure to the contaminants in the water. Please note that this information does not reflect the number of unique Veterans who have received decisions. Rather, it reflects the number of individual medical issues decided, as Veterans may submit claims for multiple issues. A total of 5,217 claims have been decided, and 3,224 Camp Lejeune claims are currently pending.”

According to the VA, Camp Lejeune Marines failed to provide a “credible medical opinion” (nexus opinion) and medical evidence to support VA disability claims. Without an independent audit by the VA Inspector General or the GAO, it’s impossible to tell whether the fault lies with the veterans or the VA. It’s not unusual for veterans who suffer from cancers to be unemployed and desperate for ways to support their families. Most Americans would agree that when diseases are caused by exposure to toxic chemicals in military service, the government has a moral obligation to provide compensation to the veterans. The legal argument for presumptive disability compensation for Camp Lejeune veterans was published in the Veterans Law Review in January 2012. It fell on deaf ears. Should the Congress have approved presumptive disability compensation for Camp Lejeune veterans? The short answer is ‘HELL YES’. But, this is only wishful thinking at this point in time.

It doesn’t matter if the veteran has one of the 15 medical conditions listed in The Janey Ensminger Act (Public Law 112-154). No nexus opinion is the fastest track to a VA denial of disability. VA regulations require that Marine and Navy veterans who served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune during the period 1957 until 1987 and have one or more of the medical conditions listed in the The Janey Ensminger Act must file a VA disability compensation claim supported by a doctor’s medical nexus opinion. The nexus opinion makes the connection between an in-service event (e.g., contaminated water) and an existing medical condition. The doctor’s nexus opinion must state that the veteran’s medical condition is “at least as likely as not” due to exposure to toxic chemicals. In simply terms, this means that there is a 50% subjective probability that the medical condition was caused by exposure to Lejeune’s contaminated water. In other words if half the evidence supports the contaminated wells were the cause of the disease, the veteran wins.

Filing a VA disability compensation claim is a legal process. Although there’s nothing to prevent VA doctors from writing nexus opinions, there is a possibility that VA doctors would be unwilling to risk criticism from VA management by writing a nexus opinion that results in a successful disability claim against the government. Thus veterans often need to nexus seek opinions from other sources to support their claims. Since doctors normally charge a fee for reviewing a veteran’s service and medical history, A Marine veteran of Camp Lejeune with terminal cancer and unemployed may not have the financial resources to pay for a nexus opinion. An alternative may be medical doctors employed by city and county health departments. For example, the City of Philadelphia has an excellent Department of Public Health that local residents have access to even if they have no health insurance or money to pay for services.

Info on writing nexus opinions and the VA disability process is available on line from the College of William and Mary’s Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Benefits Clinic. The mission of the clinic is to provide current and former military service members with knowledge of and assistance with pursuing available disability benefits resulting from their military service. The Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Benefits Clinic provides an excellent series of videos on the veteran’s disability claim process, including the critical nexus opinion. Check out: <http://law.wm.edu/academics/programs/jd/electives/clinics/veterans/For%20Veterans/youtube/index.php> [Source: Veterans Today | Robert O’Dowd | Jul 3, 2014 ++]

Vet Cremains Update 23 ► 15 Laid to Rest in Salisbury, North Carolina,

With the help of the Missing in America Project, the remains of 15 Veterans were interred at Salisbury National Cemetery, Salisbury, North Carolina, with full military honors, June 14, 2014. The Rowan County Honor Guard and the North Carolina National Guard escorted the remains during what was the cemetery’s first Missing in America ceremony, with the theme: “Gone, but not forgotten.” The 15 soldiers, sailors,

airmen and Marines served during World War II, Vietnam and Korea –all received full military honors during the ceremony.



Refer to <https://www.flickr.com/photos/100118667@N08/sets/72157645262517063/> to view the Flickr gallery of the event. Those 15 Veterans were:

- Technician 5th Grade James Robert Liverman Jr., 1919-1996, U.S. Army, World War II
- Yeoman 2nd Class Donald William Newman, 1921-2012, U.S. Navy, World War II
- Motor Machinist's Mate 2nd Class, Petty Officer Frederick William Tims Jr., 1922-2012, U.S. Navy, World War II
- Spc. 4th Class Terry Wayne Oaks, 1958-2010, U.S. Army
- Spc. 4th Class Fars Ruble Strickland, 1938-2012, U.S. Army
- Cpl. Lonnie Cecil Wilborn, 1929-2012, U.S. Army, Korea
- Pfc. Harry Lee Battle Jr., 1948-2008, U.S. Army, Vietnam
- Pfc. James D. Boone Jr., 1927-2011, U.S. Army, World War II
- Pfc. Leroy Lightfoot, 1924-2005, U.S. Army, World War II
- Pfc. Emanuel Dion Robertson, 1960-2009, U.S. Army
- Seaman Apprentice Walter Eugene Visage, 1938-2008, U.S. Navy
- Pfc. and Seaman Apprentice Phillip Diaz, 1956-2012, U.S. Army and U.S. Navy
- Pvt. Valerie Jean Nobles, 1954-1999, U.S. Marine Corps
- Pvt. William Tony Plemmons, 1923-2007, U.S. Army, World War II
- Airman Michael Jay Zimmerman, 1954-2004, U.S. Air Force, Vietnam

The purpose of the MIA Project is to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations. This they do provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes. The task is executed through the combined, cooperative efforts of members of the American Legion, other volunteer service and veteran organizations, local Funeral Homes, State Funeral Commissions, State and National Veterans Administration Agencies, and the State and National Veterans Cemetery Administrations. Local, state and national laws are followed in the identification, claiming process and proper interment of the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans. Their Progress to Date:

- Total Funeral Homes Visited - 1,610
- Cremains Found - 8,863
- Veterans Cremains Identified - 2,241
- Veterans Interred - 2,042

[Source: Vantage Point & <http://www.miap.us> Jul 2014 ++]

Vet Charity Watch Update 46 ► \$24.6M Settlement in DVNF Case

A direct-mail fundraising company that sent solicitations on behalf of a disabled veterans' charity but took in most of the money raised will pay \$9.7 million in damages and the charity will re-organize its board and reform its practices as part of a \$24.6 million settlement, the office of state Attorney General's Eric Schneiderman said. Besides the damages, the settlement calls for Quadriga Art direct-mail company to forgive \$13.8 million still owed to it by the charity and pay \$800,000 to the state for costs and fees. Convergence Direct Marketing, which Schneiderman's office said also played a role in the fundraising, will pay \$300,000 in damages. The \$10 million in damages from the two direct-mail vendors is slated to go to efforts to help disabled veterans including spinal cord research.

Quadriga and Convergence designed direct-mail fundraising appeals for the charity, which was founded in late 2007, and raised more than \$116 million. The mailings included material that was false or misleading, such as stories about veterans the charity hadn't helped. The direct-mail vendors had an agreement with the Washington, D.C. based charity in which the vendors assumed the cost of the donation campaigns and were paid by the money that came in. Schneiderman's investigation found that the Disabled Veterans National Foundation (DVNF) board had little experience with direct-mail fundraising and performed very little oversight of Quadriga's and Convergence's operations, including the relationships and financial arrangements among various company executives and board members. The investigation showcased "some of the most troublesome features" of direct-mail fundraising. "Taking advantage of a popular cause and what was an unsophisticated start-up charity, these direct-mail companies used cleverly designed but misleading mailers to raise tens of millions of dollars in donations from generous Americans, nearly all of which went to the fundraisers and their agents, and left the charity nearly \$14 million in debt.

None of the parties admitted any wrongdoing. As the charity's part of the settlement, its board members will step down and new ones will be brought on, and it has to stop using false or misleading fundraising materials and create an independent audit committee. The charity, which in recent months appointed a new chief executive officer, said it "welcomed" the agreement. "This is a very significant and positive step for the Disabled Veterans National Foundation that will enable us to improve the services we deliver and increase transparency with our loyal donors," CEO Joseph VanFonda said. Quadriga CEO Mark Schulhof said his company "made mistakes" in using "a fundraising strategy that outpaced the charity's programs and services." "We mailed too much, and too quickly, for a young charity," he said. The company said it is instituting practices including presenting the risks and costs of any campaigns to a charity's board and providing an annual report of a campaign's performance. [Source: AP | Deepti Hajela | Jul 1, 2014 ++]

Congressional Gold Medal Update 04 ► President Approves 4

The president has signed legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Doolittle Raiders, American Fighter Aces, the Allied Armies' Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives unit --- better known as the "Monuments Men" --- and to Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regiment. The Congressional Gold Medal is

the nation's highest civilian honor, and is often awarded long after the recipient's mission was accomplished.

- **Doolittle Raiders** -- Named after their leader, Col. Jimmy Doolittle, their bombing raid over Tokyo four months after Pearl Harbor provided a critical morale boost for the American public, proved to the Japanese they weren't invulnerable to American attack, and forced their military to shift vital resources to homeland defense. Only four of the original 80 raiders are still alive.
- **American Fighter Aces** -- More than 60,000 U.S. military fighter pilots have taken to the air since World War I, yet less than 1,500 earned the coveted title of fighter ace for shooting down five or more enemy aircraft. The last American air aces were during Vietnam, and due to the evolving nature of warfare, there may not be another.
- **The Monuments Men** (and women) were artistic and architectural experts charged with the task of protecting Europe's cultural treasures in the midst of World War II. They followed soldiers into battle to preserve churches from the devastation of war, and to track down art stolen by the Nazis and return them to rightful owners. Six members of the Monuments Men are still living.
- **65th Infantry Regiment** -- Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regiment, nicknamed the Borinqueneers, were formed and served courageously during the time of a segregated military during World War I and World War II, and they later served with distinction in Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan

[Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly Jun 14, 2014 ++]

OBIT | Tom Richards ► 18 Jun 2014

Retired Marine Lt. Col. Tom Richards received the Navy Cross, but he was most proud of the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal that he received as an enlisted Marine, said his wife, Diane Richards. “The Good Conduct Medal was something about which he was extremely proud because, I think, in his mind, it represented all the values and the ideals of a Marine,” she said. Tom died on June 18 of cancer. He spent much of his life after the Marine Corps working with the Legion of Valor, an organization for recipients of the Medal of Honor and service crosses. He also worked tirelessly to uncover people who falsely claimed to have received military awards. He felt fakers disrespected those who actually served their country — both living and dead, Diane said. “Tom was a very honest, straightforward and truthful man — a man of high integrity,” she said. “The concept of misrepresenting one’s self would be a violation of his values.”



Tom Richards

Tom found his calling in life when he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1967, Diane said. Although he didn't necessarily agree with the political reasons for the Vietnam War, Tom still felt obliged to serve his country. "When he got into the Marine Corps, that just struck him and it lighted the path for the rest of his life," she said. "He was devoted and dedicated to the values of the Marine Corps, the camaraderie of the Marine Corps — certainly the history of the Marine Corps." In addition to being an infantryman, Tom was also a renaissance man with a passion for military history, Diane said. He went on to earn a bachelor's and master's degree in history and a Master of Business Administration. "Tom was a lifelong learner," she said. "He constantly read on a variety of topics to continuously improve himself."

On June 5, 1969, Tom was a corporal with 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines in Vietnam when his platoon was attacked by a much larger number of enemy fighters. During the battle, he repeatedly risked his life by running through enemy fire to get ammunition for a machine gun. Although wounded by grenade shrapnel, he refused to be evacuated. At a key point in the fight, Tom manned a machine gun to hold the enemy at bay long enough for his fellow Marines to repulse the attack. He was credited with killing eight enemy soldiers and preventing his unit's defensive perimeter from collapsing. His bravery earned him the military's second highest honor. Tom was later selected for Officer Candidate School. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1995.

Later in life, Tom became an advocate for valor award recipients — and an adversary to those who lied about receiving military decorations. In 2009, he talked to Marine Corps Times about how he had discovered about 40 members of the Marine Corps Association Directory were listed as recipients of awards they had not earned, including the Medal of Honor. At the time, the association's directory listed about 80,000 members. "It just occurred to me: What if there are people in here who are claiming fraudulent Medals of Honor and service crosses?" he told Marine Corps Times for the 2009 story. Doug Sterner, curator of the Military Times Hall of Valor, became close friends with Tom. The two worked together for years to out military fakers. "Anything that had to do with the service crosses, Tom was on top of," Sterner said. "The guy was unbelievable. He was a workhorse."

After Tom moved to Virginia, he and Sterner would meet at a pub in Alexandria. "I have a lot of good memories of just sitting there, visiting with him in Murphy's Pub," Sterner said. "Of course, in later years, Tom looked so much like Bill O'Reilly that we had a lot of people there sitting there drinking with us in Murphy's Pub that thought they were drinking with Bill O'Reilly." [Source: NavyTimes | Jeff Schogol | Jun 27, 2014 ++]

OBIT | Louis Zamperini ► 2 Jul 2014

Louis Zamperini, an Olympic runner who as an airman during World War II crashed into the Pacific, was listed as dead and then spent 47 days adrift in a life raft before being captured by the Japanese and enduring a harsh imprisonment, died on 2 JUL in Los Angeles. He was 97. A statement released by his family said he had had pneumonia. His remarkable story of survival during the war gained new attention in 2010 with the publication of a vivid biography by Laura Hillenbrand, "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption." It rose to No. 1 on the New York Times best-seller list. The story is to be retold in a film adaptation of the book directed by Angelina Jolie and scheduled to be released in December. Jack O'Connell plays Zamperini.



Louis Zamperini, center, with Don Lash of Indiana, left, and Thomas Deckard of Indiana at Olympic tryouts in 1936 and winning the mile run in the Pacific Coast Conference Track and Field meet in Seattle in 1939.

Louis Silvie Zamperini was born on Jan. 26, 1917, in Olean, N.Y., a son of Italian immigrants. His family moved to Torrance in 1920. Louis was a fighter before he was a runner, according to a biography released by the University of Southern California. His father taught him how to box so he could defend himself against bullies who taunted him because he could not speak English. Pete Zamperini, an older brother, encouraged him to try out for the track team at Torrance High School. There he set the national high school record in the mile at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in 1934; his record time of 4 minutes 21.2 seconds would last for 20 years. His schoolboy exploits earned him a scholarship to U.S.C. Two years later, in the 5,000-meter Olympic trials at Randalls Island in New York, he finished in a dead heat with Don Lash, the world-record holder, which qualified him for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin as a teenager.

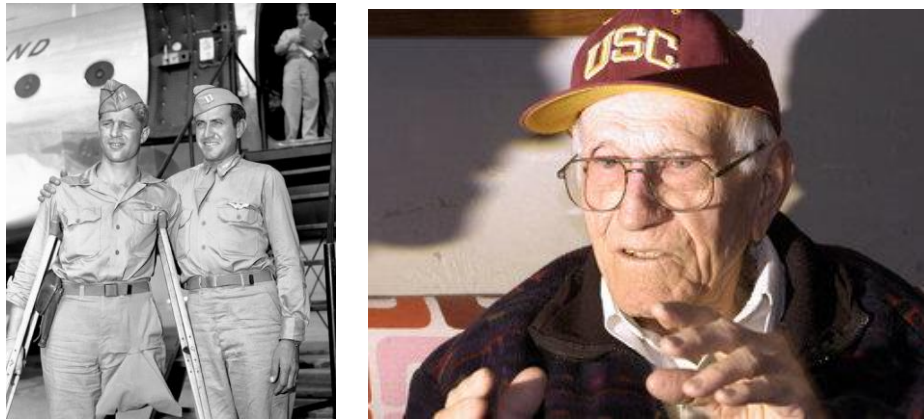
In Berlin he competed in the 5,000-meter race, finishing eighth (Lash finished 13th), though Zamperini had a good finishing kick. During those Games he stood with other athletes near Hitler's box and wanted a photograph of the Nazi leader. "I was pretty naïve about world politics," Mr. Zamperini said in an interview with *The New York Times*, "and I thought he looked funny, like something out of a Laurel and Hardy film, especially the way he stamped his feet and slapped his thighs." Because he was not close enough, he asked one of Hitler's entourage to take Hitler's picture for him. "It was the skinny guy," Zamperini said, referring to Joseph Goebbels, the minister of propaganda. He did briefly meet Hitler, who shook his hand and said, "Ah, you're the boy with the fast finish." Two years later, in 1938, Mr. Zamperini set a national collegiate mile record of 4:08.3, which stood for 15 years. He graduated from U.S.C. in 1940, and not long after that, he was fighting for the Allies in World War II.

Zamperini was in his early 20s and a track star at the University of Southern California when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps shortly after the United States entered the war in 1941. He was a bombardier in a B-24 that was flying a rescue mission on May 27, 1943, when his plane, named the Green Hornet, malfunctioned and fell into the sea. Sharing a life raft, Lieutenant Zamperini and two other crash survivors — the co-pilot, Second Lt. Russell Phillips, and the tail gunner, Sgt. Francis McNamara — fought off hunger, thirst, heat, storms and sharks while trying to avoid being shot by Japanese planes. They subsisted on rainwater and the few fish they could catch. Zamperini, who was 5-foot-9, went from 125 pounds to 75 pounds.

In June 1943, Anthony and Louise Zamperini, at home in Torrance, Calif., received the following message regarding their son: "In grateful memory of First Lieutenant Louis S. Zamperini, A.S. No. 0-663341, who died in the service of his country in the Central Pacific Area" The message continued: "He

stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die that freedom might live, and grow, and increase its blessings. Freedom lives, and through it, he lives — in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men.” It was signed, “Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States.” Unknown to the military, he and the others were still adrift at sea, though Sergeant McNamara had died after 33 days. Zamperini and Phillips were eventually captured by the Japanese.

Then came more suffering as the men were shuttled from one prison to another. For a time he was in the brutal hands of Mutsuhiro Watanabe, a camp sergeant who was later classified as a war criminal but evaded prosecution. “I could take the beatings and the physical punishment,” Mhe said, “but it was the attempt to destroy your dignity, to make you a nonentity that was the hardest thing to bear.” Zamperini said his athletic training had helped him withstand the torment. “For one thing, you have to learn self-discipline if you are going to succeed as an athlete,” he said. “For another thing, you have to have confidence in yourself and believe that no matter what you’re faced with, you can deal with it — that you just can’t give up. And then there’s the aspect of staying in shape. And humor helped a lot, even in the gravest times.” In 1945, at the war’s end, he was liberated along with hundreds of other prisoners of war at the Naoetsu camp, northwest of Tokyo. “Though he was still sick, wasted and weak, he glowed with euphoria such as he had never experienced,” Ms. Hillenbrand wrote.



Capt. Louis Zamperini, right, and Capt. Fred Garrett at Hamilton Field, Calif., after their release from a Japanese prisoner of war camp in 1945 and a photo taken in 2003

When he returned to the United States after the war and his ordeals at sea and as a prisoner, he fell into alcoholism and nearly ended up divorced from his wife, Cynthia. They remained married, however, for a total of 54 years until her death in 2001. His survivors include a son, Luke; a daughter, Cynthia Garris, and a grandchild. Zamperini straightened out his life, he said, after hearing a sermon preached by Billy Graham. For years afterward, he worked in commercial real estate and remained physically active into his 90s, skiing, running, mountain climbing and skateboarding. He was prominent on the lecture circuit. He also returned to Japan as a missionary and went back again to run a leg of the Olympic torch relay at the 1998 Winter Games in Nagano. The route took him past Naoetsu, a snowy, mountainous region where he had been imprisoned.

Zamperini wrote two memoirs, both titled “Devil at My Heels,” the first published in 1956 and written with Helen Itriss, and the second in 2003 with David Rensin. Past efforts to make Mr. Zamperini’s story into a movie failed. In the 1950s, Tony Curtis wanted to play the role. In the late ’90s, Nicolas Cage expressed interest. Despite his two autobiographies, Ms. Hillenbrand thought more could be done with the story. In an email she wrote: “Louie’s story was well told, but as an autobiography it was limited to Louie’s point of view. No one had approached Louie’s story as a biography, incorporating numerous points of view. “I

began interviewing Louie's fellow airmen, POWs, Japanese camp officials and home front friends and family, and went through their diaries, memoirs and letters. What I found was a fascinating untold story.”
[Source: New York Times | Ira Berkow | July 3, 2014 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 156 ► Private Security Contractors Pros & Cons

How does a six-figure, tax-free job overseas sound? It's well known throughout the military that what you earn while in uniform is nothing compared to what you could be earning working overseas for a private security contractor, otherwise known as a private military contractor. Although major combat operations have ended in Iraq and are about to end in Afghanistan, the need for these security contractors throughout the world will always exist. Many veterans separating from the military are interested in working for a Private Security Contractor (PSC) overseas. But before you apply, you should know a little bit about what you're getting into.

Private security contractors made headlines for both good and bad reasons during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. But even with the bad news the founder of Transition Veterans Steven Maieli speaks with many veterans today who still have great interest in working for one of the many firms offering jobs throughout the world. He took an interest in working as a private security contractor himself and after separating from the Air Force security forces in 2003, took a hard look at Combat Support Associates (CSA), which had a contract in Kuwait at the time. Being single, 23 years old and initially returning home to live with mom and dad, Maieli found the salary CSA was willing to pay quite enticing, so he sat in on a phone interview with a couple of military friends. In the end, Maieli decided not to take the CSA offer, but as part of his research for <http://www.transitioningveteran.com/> blog, he did want to learn more about these companies. Some background on the pluses and minuses:

- **Salary:** The annual pay offered by some of these companies can go well over \$100,000. That sounds fantastic — especially when you consider most of it will be tax-free while you're actually working overseas. But don't think earning this kind of salary will be a walk in the park.
- **Work schedule:** For the most part, you will not have a regular 9-to-5 schedule with weekends off. Back when I was listening to the CSA pitch, we heard about 12-hour shifts, six days on, one day off, and a one-year contract. Those conditions are not unusual.
- **Living quarters:** CSA offered condo-type living quarters, but the problem for me was the location — off base. Pulling security for the living quarters was a Kuwaiti force, not our own guys. Some security contractors work on U.S. installations, but it's quite possible that you might work, and live, off base.
- **Environment:** Don't expect a tropical resort; you could be anywhere in the world. And it's quite likely that you could be working in a volatile region.
- **Vacation and other benefits.** CSA was offering a four-week vacation and a free flight to Europe for R&R. But when it came time to head back home, I would have been expected to pay my own way. But you should expect such jobs to offer some sort of vacation, as well as health and life insurance.
- **Rules of engagement:** In 2007, Congress amended the Uniform Code of Military Justice to allow U.S. civilians working for the U.S. military in Iraq, Afghanistan or other “contingency operation” areas to be subject to the UCMJ. Previously, contractors were subject to the UCMJ only in times of declared wars.

Make no mistake, working for a private security contractor has its perks and can get you started on the right foot after the military. Just be aware that the high salary could come at a cost, since the job could put you back in an austere combat zone. If being a private security contractor is what you choose to do, make sure to ask plenty of questions to gain a better understanding and be well-prepared to take on a new challenge that will most definitely not be your run-of-the-mill desk job. [Source: MilitaryTimes Tactical Veteran | Steven Maieli | Jul 8, 2014 ++]

Retiree Appreciation Days ► As of 10 Jul 2014

Retiree Appreciation Days (RADs) are designed with you in mind. They're a great source of the latest information for retirees and Family members in your area. RADs vary from installation to installation, but, in general, they provide an opportunity to renew acquaintances, listen to guest speakers, renew ID Cards, get medical checkups, and various other services. Some RADs include special events such as dinners or golf tournaments. Due to budget constraints, some RADs may be cancelled or rescheduled. Also, scheduled appearances of DFAS representatives may not be possible. If you plan to travel long distances to attend a RAD, before traveling, you should call the sponsoring RSO to ensure the RAD will held as scheduled and, if applicable, whether or not DFAS reps will be available. The current schedule is provided in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, **“Retiree Activity\ Appreciation Days (RAD) Schedule”**. For more information call the phone numbers of the Retirement Services Officer (RSO) sponsoring the RAD as indicated in the attachment. An up-to-date RAD list is always available online at <http://www.hostmtb.org/RADLIST-2014.html>. [Source: RAD List Manager | Milton Bell | Jul 10, 2014 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► 15 Jul thru 15 Sep 2015

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program **employment workshops** are available in conjunction with hundreds of their hiring fairs. These workshops are designed to help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date in the below list. **To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering for the hiring fairs which are shown below for the next 8 weeks.** For more information about the USCC Hiring Our Heroes Program, Military Spouse Program, Transition Assistance, GE Employment Workshops, Resume Engine, etc. visit the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s website at <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/hiringourheroes/events>.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
• Tuesday, July 15, 2014:	Atlanta, GA
• Thursday, July 17, 2014:	Springfield, VA
• Thursday, July 17, 2014:	Tucson, AZ
• Saturday, July 19, 2014:	Greater New York City/Meadowlands, NJ - A Part of NBC4's Health & Fitness Expo
• Tuesday, July 22, 2014:	Southfield, MI
• Wednesday, July 23, 2014:	Costa Mesa, CA

- Thursday, July 24, 2014: Quad Cities, IA
- Monday, July 28, 2014: Lakehurst, NJ
- Wednesday, July 30, 2014: Chicago, IL
- Wednesday, July 30, 2014: Butler, PA
- Friday, August 1, 2014: Lakehurst, NJ
- Tuesday, August 5, 2014: Gulfport/Biloxi, MS
- Tuesday, August 5, 2014: North Platte, NE
- Wednesday, August 6, 2014: Sioux Falls, SD
- Thursday, August 7, 2014: Little Rock, AR
- Thursday, August 7, 2014: El Paso, TX
- Thursday, August 7, 2014: Minneapolis, MN
- Friday, August 8, 2014: Peoria, IL
- Saturday, August 9, 2014: Marquette, MI
- Tuesday, August 12, 2014: Fresno, CA
- Wednesday, August 13, 2014: Ft. Bragg, NC
- Thursday, August 14, 2014: Farmingdale, NY
- Tuesday, August 19, 2014: Camp Lejeune, NC - Military Spouse Networking Reception
- Wednesday, August 20, 2014: Camp Lejeune, NC - Military Spouse Hiring Fair
- Wednesday, August 20, 2014: Ft. Sill, OK
- Thursday, August 21, 2014: Ft. Gordon, GA
- Tuesday, August 26, 2014: Ft. Polk, LA - Military Spouse Networking Reception
- Tuesday, August 26, 2014: Charlotte, NC - Transition and Benefits Career Fair, A Part of the 96th Annual American Legion National Convention
- Wednesday, August 27, 2014: Ft. Polk, LA - Military Spouse Opportunity Fair
- Thursday, August 28, 2014: Kaneohe Bay, HI
- Thursday, August 28, 2014: Tampa, FL
- Saturday, September 6, 2014: Grand Rapids, MI
- Saturday, September 6, 2014: Sacramento, CA
- Tuesday, September 9, 2014: Montgomery, AL
- Wednesday, September 10, 2014: Reading, PA
- Thursday, September 11, 2014: Bakersfield, CA
- Thursday, September 11, 2014: Columbus, GA

[Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Assn 27 Jun 2014 ++]

Vietnam Vets [09] ► Richter~Ruediger

Ruediger Richter barely recognizes himself in the yellowed military photograph hanging in his den — one of the best-known images of the Vietnam War. A sinewy GI stands in the middle of the frame, staring into the distance; behind him, another soldier looks down at the body of a comrade, wrapped in a poncho. The photo, enshrined in the National Archives, came to be known as "The Agony of War." Richter is the man at the center, though he does not look the same. Partly, it's because of age — he was 25 years old when the photo was taken, and he is now 73, with two grandchildren. Partly, it's because of war's ravages — months after the photo was taken, he was shot in the head, and he spent years coping with anger, alcohol, addiction to pain medications, post-traumatic stress. But Richter himself will tell you that he does not resemble the man in the picture because he is no longer the man in the picture. "I was a killer then," Richter said on his

front porch, the wife who helped save his life by his side, birds chirping in trees rustled by the breeze. "I have made my peace here."



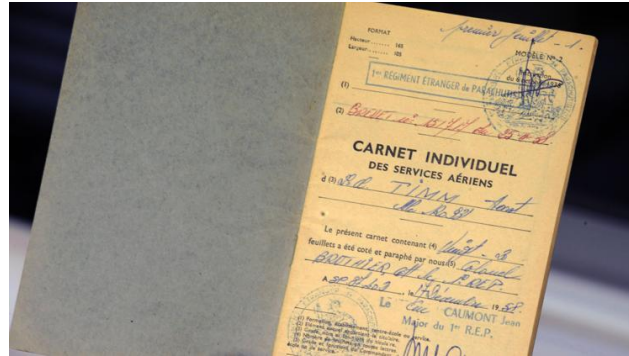
On Aug. 14, 1966, Richter's job was clearing a landing zone in South Vietnam so helicopters could evacuate the wounded and dead after a mortar attack hit his unit. Watching the scene unfold from a safe spot, Army paratrooper and photographer Paul Epley ignored an order to stay down to make the photo, which was used in newspapers and magazines worldwide after it was transmitted by The Associated Press. "Climbing up the rocks, I saw the image coming together. I chased the light and caught it at the decisive moment," said Epley, now retired and living in the woods of southern Virginia after a career as a commercial photographer and, later, a veterans' service officer. In the photo, Richter looks skyward with his mouth open and his arms raised slightly. Sgt. Daniel E. Spencer Jr. of Bend, Oregon, looks down mournfully at the body of PFC Daryl Raymond Corfman of Sycamore, Ohio; Spencer also was killed in action, in 1968. The scene is shrouded in smoke.

People have attached a range of emotions and attributes to the photo through the decades: Richter was praying, he was questioning God, perhaps calling upon angels. Richter dismisses those interpretations with a profanity. "I was looking at a helicopter," he said. "That picture is genius because you see the smoke behind me," he added. "It was a red smoke grenade I threw." The story of how he came to be in that place at that time is an extraordinary one. Born in Berlin in February 1941, when Hitler's Nazi troops already had been marauding across Europe for years, Richter's earliest memories are of bodies outside bombed-out bunkers and bright flares dropped by Allied bombers.

"We called them Christmas trees. They were beautiful," he said. "You could hear the sirens going off all over Berlin." Richter said when the war ended in 1945 and the Allies sliced the city into sectors, he was fortunate enough to live in the American district, where GIs were a soft touch for a young German boy begging for food. With few options in Berlin, Richter said, he joined the German merchant marine at age 14. That three-year stint ended when his ship docked in Calais, France, where he and other sailors were arrested after a bar fight.

"They put us in a dungeon with water dropping down, just like in a movie. There was just a little window with bars," he said. After three days in lockup, a judge gave the penniless Richter a choice: Stay in prison or join the French Foreign Legion, which was battling rebels in French-controlled North Africa. He was too young to join legally at age 17, Richter said, so he was given a new name — Horst Timm — and allowed to enlist. Richter does not know how many men he killed with the Legion, or how many night-long marches he made through Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. But after five years, he left the Legion and regained his true name. An aunt and uncle living in Columbus suggested he come to America to restart his

life, so he did in 1964. Richter grew bored with his job constructing helicopter landing pads, so he enlisted in the Army in 1965. According to his military file obtained from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, he shipped out to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and landed in Vietnam in June 1966 with the 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade.



Ruediger Richter's yellowed papers from the French Foreign Legion dated 1958, bear the name "Horst Timm," which he was forced to use as an alternate identity because he was too young to enlist in the Legion.

Richter became an aide to Col. Michael "Iron Mike" Healy, he said, and Healy — who went on to play a major role as a commander in Vietnam — was just outside the frame when Epley snapped the shutter. The moment captured, Richter kept going. He transferred to a reconnaissance unit. The war finally came to an end for him on March 25, 1967, when a bullet hit him on the left side of his face. The slug destroyed his upper palate — an injury that still makes it difficult for him to speak. It shattered his teeth, left him blind and deaf on the right side. As he was evacuated aboard an Army chopper, Richter used a fork and a ballpoint pen to make his own tracheotomy just to keep breathing; the scar is still there. "I hate war. I hate guns because they are the root of all the bad things in the world," said Richter, who won two Bronze Star medals for heroism and other awards that he has since thrown away. "People come up and say things like, 'You're a hero.' I hate that. It makes me mad. I did my job." But when the job was done, the effects lingered.



These 1966 photos show Richter, then 25, holding a can of food and on patrol in the South Vietnamese jungle in the northeast of what is now called Ho Chi Minh City

Today, after about a dozen reconstructive surgeries at Walter Reed hospital, Richter's appearance is pretty typical for a man his age, save for scars that are mostly hidden by glasses. He avoids wartime buddies and military reunions — he didn't go to North Carolina for a battalion dinner held Friday during a reunion of the 173rd Airborne — and doesn't like to talk about his experience in Vietnam. In 2012, when the AP was preparing to publish "Vietnam: The Real War" — a book that would include "The Agony of War" — a former comrade said Richter rarely spoke with anyone. But Richter agreed to talk this spring partly because of his long-ago friendship with AP war correspondent Henri Huet, killed when a helicopter was shot down over Laos in 1971. The story he tells is distressingly familiar. He came back from Vietnam mad at everything and everyone; he didn't like his appearance, didn't like how he sounded after the injury, didn't like the way he was screamed at by war protesters as he arrived home. Out of the military on disability after attaining the rank of sergeant, Richter and his first wife moved to Pensacola, Florida, where Richter spent his days taking too many pain pills, drinking too much alcohol and fishing on the city pier. His marriage collapsed; desperately in need of a new start, he returned to Germany.

It was there, in 1978, that he met Martina, who was free only because her father dug a tunnel under the Berlin Wall to rescue her and her mother after the Soviet clampdown. Richter had a harder time feeding his addiction to prescription drugs in Germany than in the Florida Panhandle, but his life was still a swirl of fury and awful memories. Martina made the difference, he said. "I didn't accept the way he was," she said. "If I was going to stay he had to change." He beat his addictions, and the two married on Aug. 25, 1982. They have since had two sons, half-brothers to the three boys from their previous marriages. Richter couldn't work because of being on disability, but the Veterans Administration benefits kept coming and the exchange rates were good. The couple built a home in Berlin and then another in rural Bavaria before moving to an isolated farm south of Budapest, Hungary. "We were always looking to get away from people," said Martina. "We had four horses, two sheep, 30 chickens, four ducks, 17 cats and 14 dogs. It was a dream."

They returned eventually to Berlin but Richter said it became tougher to get medical care for himself and his family following U.S. troop reductions in Europe at the Cold War's end, so he and Martina returned to the United States in 2007. The next year, they bought the rural patch where they now live, miles outside of Columbus. Richter doesn't want the exact location given or his photo taken. He wants to remain anonymous, and mostly avoids his neighbors. They don't know the story of the old hippie, with his ponytail, beard and earring. Richter finally sought help after he found himself unable to breathe during a session of online computer gaming, a passion of the couple. He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Today, medication helps Richter sleep and tamps down the dreams of guns and battle and death. Two of Richter's sons served in the military, and one fought in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Richter has few mementos of his own military service. Among them are three photos on his den wall, put there by Martina. One photo shows the handsome young man in his French Foreign Legion uniform; another is Richter in his U.S. Army uniform. The third is the original, black-and-white print of "The Agony of War." Richter said the famous photograph means little to him. It was but a split second along a road to hell and back. "Just a moment in time," he said. [Source: Associated Press | Jay Reeves & Randy Herschaft | 21 Jun 2014 ++]

WWII VETS 67 ► Dormaier-William

When William Dormaier joined the Army in 1943, he was 35 years old and just married. He quickly made sergeant and the men in his unit called him "Pops." It's not likely all of those young men still are alive, because Pops celebrated his 106th birthday on 17 APR. Daryl Boggs of the Richland County Veterans Service Commission is sure Dormaier is the oldest living veteran in Richland County, perhaps even Ohio

for that matter. He is nearly deaf, and is blind in one eye. Dormaier isn't up to doing interviews these days, but his grandson, Robert Dormaier, knows all the stories and wants to share them.



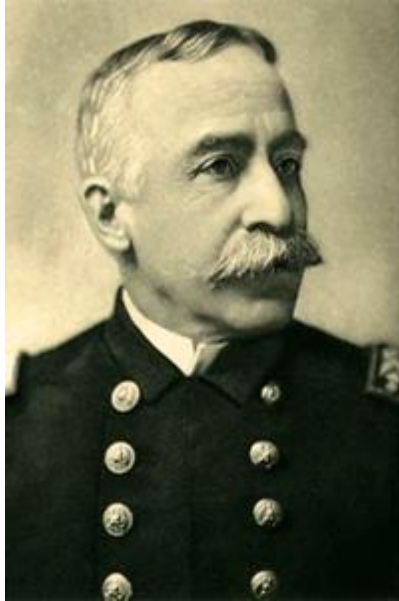
William J. Dormaier, 106 today and on Feb. 13, 1943 in Los Angeles

In a News Journal interview in 2009, Dormaier said he was born in Kent, Ohio, and worked at the Firestone Co. before selling pictures and frames door-to-door. That job brought him to Mansfield in 1928. He was driving a brand new Chevrolet that cost him \$250. He started work young, shredding nuts and bolts for 10 cents an hour, or \$5 a week for 50 hours of work. He worked for Mansfield Tire for 28 years and then washed cars at a Mansfield dealership and kept up the grounds at Westbrook Country Club for years after that. He said he simply wanted to stay busy. Teddy Roosevelt was president when Dormaier was born. He arrived four years before the Titanic sank and nine years before America entered World War I. He was considered a bit too old for a young man's war, but the Army finally accepted him in January 1943. He married his wife, Jayne, in March 1943 just before he was assigned to serve in Europe.

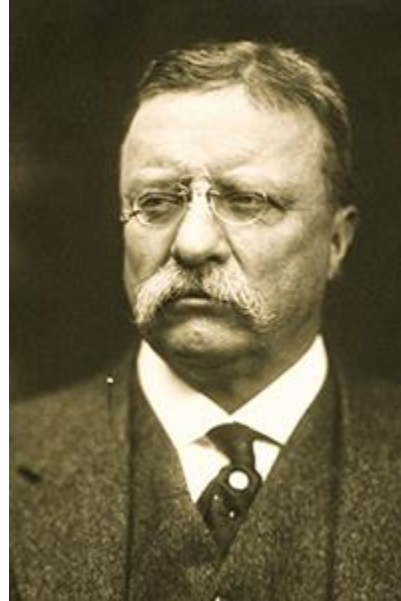
He quickly made sergeant and was assigned to Battery A of the 226th Searchlight Battalion. He ran searchlights for anti-aircraft gunners and learned how to use a .50-caliber machine gun during attacks. Not long after D-Day, his unit was in France. He soon discovered that enemy planes would use the beams of his searchlights to pinpoint their bombs. At least once those bombs nearly scored a hit, landing just a few feet away from Dormaier's foxhole. He toured Paris after its liberation. His guide was a man who would later rise high in politics in India. Dormaier found that out years later when he saw his guide's photo while reading a newspaper in a barbershop. At one point in Germany, he was only 100 miles from his father's home town, but he never got there before the war ended. He was transferred to a unit that specialized in tire maintenance. His pre-war job at Mansfield Tire may have caused that to happen.

His unit sailed to the Pacific, via the Panama Canal, and wound up in the Philippines. "That place was flattened, and there was nothing left for us to do," he said. So he came home to be discharged and finally be with Jayne after a long separation. Robert Dormaier said his grandfather only recently applied for medical care from the Veterans Administration. He is hoping that his grandfather has a chance to tour the new VA facility on Trimble Road as a birthday present. Boggs also hopes the Richland County Veterans Service Commission can add to that celebration. Not all veterans wait until they are nearly 106 to apply for veterans benefits. [Source: Ohio's News Journal | Ron Simon | 22 Apr 2014 ++]

America's Most Beloved Vets ► Spanish-American War



George Dewey



Theodore Roosevelt

- Following his victory at the Battle of Manila Bay, George Dewey became a national hero – and the only person given the rank of Admiral of the Navy.
- The explorer and conservationist Theodore Roosevelt led his Rough Riders cavalry in a bold charge up San Juan Hill, and assumed the presidency after William McKinley's assassination.

State Veteran's Benefits & Discounts ► Alabama 2014

The state of Alabama provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below. To obtain information on these plus discounts listed on the Military and Veterans Discount Center (MCVDC) website, refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Vet State Benefits & Discounts – AL**” for an overview of the below benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each of the below benefits refer to <http://militaryandveteransdiscounts.com/location/alabama.html> & <http://www.va.state.al.us/default.aspx>.

- Financial Assistance Benefits
- Employment Benefits
- Veterans Business Benefits
- Education Benefits
- Other State Veteran Benefits
- Discounts

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/alabama-state-veterans-benefits.html?comp=7000022835803&rank=2> Jul 2014 ++]

*** Vet Legislation ***



CBO Budget Recommendations ► **Options to Reduce Military Costs**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a report on June 30, 2014, which outlines options to reduce military costs. Among the suggestions offered (and the estimated reduction in outlays from 2014-2023) in the report, were:

- Cap Increases in Basic Pay for Military Service Members (\$25 billion)
- Replace Some Military Personnel With Civilian Employees (\$19 billion)
- Increase TRICARE Cost Sharing for Retirees (\$20 billion to \$71 billion)
- Eliminate Concurrent Receipt for Disabled Veterans (\$108 billion)

The report's specific recommendations to increase TRICARE costs for retirees include:

- Modifying TRICARE enrollment fees, deductibles and copayments for working-age Military Retirees
- Making working-age retirees ineligible for TRICARE Prime.
- Introducing minimum out-of-pocket requirements under TRICARE for Life

To read the full Approaches to Reducing Federal Spending on Military Pay and Benefits report refer to <http://naus.informz.net/z/cjUucD9taT00MTQyMDgwJnA9MSZ1PTEwMDEyMDAyNDkmbGk9MjM3NDk3Mjk/index.html>.

NAUS Note: Most of the above suggestions/recommendations target retirees. When will CBO get over trying to save money by taking from the pockets of retirees who were promised and earned these benefits? These are the types of attacks that NAUS fights on a daily basis. Your continued support of our efforts is greatly appreciated.

[Source: NAUS Weekly Update Jul 11, 2014 ++]

VA Suicide Prevention Update 21 ► **Clay Hunt House Bill**

House lawmakers on 10 JUL introduced legislation they say would improve suicide prevention at the Veterans Affairs Department and bring together former service members needing help. Named for a former

Marine who died by suicide in 2011 despite actively engaging in treatment, therapy and outreach, the **Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act** would require VA to submit to yearly evaluations of its suicide and mental health programs, team with the National Guard to improve care for members and establish a peer support outreach program for veterans. It also would require the Defense Department to establish a review process for troops who received unfavorable discharges possibly because of behavioral problems related to traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder.

The legislation is similar to a Senate bill introduced in March by John Walsh (D-MT) whose bill also would ensure mental health care professionals in VA and DoD receive special training to identify at-risk veterans. It also would increase the number of mental health professionals in VA by repaying school loans of psychiatrists who agree to work for the department. Hunt's mother, Susan Selke, in Washington to testify on veterans suicide before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said the legislation would have helped her son, who struggled with the mounds of paperwork and the bureaucratic processes at VA while waiting months for care. "All veterans, but especially those struggling with invisible injuries, should not have to go through red tape to get the mental health care they need and very much deserve. They should not have to jump through hoops to get an appointment," Selke said.

The House bill, sponsored by Reps. Jeff Miller (R-FL), Tim Walz, (D-MN), and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) would "change thousands of lives for the better," said Paul Rieckhoff, founder and CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "Our friends are dying and they are dying right now. In the past few months, we've heard a lot of rhetoric. ... It's time for action," Rieckhoff said. Miller expressed optimism that his House colleagues would approve the legislation and added that Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, was aware of the bill in addition to the Senate companion legislation. "Unfortunately, suicides are happening at a frightening pace. The system has to change and if they won't change it, the Congress will," Miller said. The Congressional Budget Office is reviewing the proposed legislation to determine its cost. [Source: NavyTimes | Patricia Kime | Jul 10, 2014 ++]

Legislative Goals Update 02 ► Congress' Immediate To-Do List

Congress returned from its July Fourth vacation to a long list of high-profile, unfinished defense business and a short legislative calendar before the November elections. The new Veterans Affairs Department reform bill, the annual defense appropriation bill, the annual defense authorization bill, and funding for military construction and VA operations for fiscal 2015 are all on lawmakers' immediate to-do list — in between more briefings on the situation in Iraq and other overseas threats. But Congress is scheduled to be in session only 28 days before breaking in August, and likely will return for only a week or two in the September/October time frame before the November midterm elections. That 28-day total also includes 10 Mondays and Fridays, days which at best feature a light schedule of work under normal circumstances. Here's a look at what might and might not get completed before the late-fall lame-duck session:

VA Reforms

Spurred by the ongoing controversies in the department, VA reform legislation has the best chance of any defense or veterans measure to pass quickly in July. The legislation would expand private-care options for veterans who face lengthy waits to see VA doctors or live in rural areas, and make it easier to fire underperforming VA executives. Leaders in the House and Senate have expressed support for the idea, and members of a conference committee met before the July Fourth break to begin finalizing the bill. Cost

appears to be the only major stumbling block left. A Congressional Budget Office estimate in early June said the expanded care could require up to \$50 billion a year in new spending, but Senate supporters have called that a ridiculous overestimate. Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Veteran's Affairs Committee, has said that representatives on the conference committee will push for spending offsets to prevent the bill from adding to the federal budget deficit. To do that, he said new, more accurate spending estimates are needed, which could slow the process. But Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman, has promised that delay won't drag on for weeks. He originally predicted the measure would be finished before 1 JUL, and is now vowing to get it to President Obama's desk in early July.

Defense authorization bill

The House has already approved its version of the annual defense policy bill, and members of the Senate Armed Services Committee are hopeful they can bring their draft to the Senate floor in the next few weeks. Whether that means they can reconcile differences in the two measures before the end of the fiscal year is another issue. Both versions reject Pentagon plans to overhaul Tricare fees, trim the commissary benefit and reduce housing allowances. The House draft offers moral support — but no hard mandate — for a 1.8 percent basic pay raise next year, while the Senate agrees with the 1 percent pay increase preferred by the White House. Both measures would preserve the Air Force's A-10 fleet, but differ in how they would pay for it. Before the chambers can talk about negotiating differences, the full Senate must pass its version. Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV), the Senate majority leader, still has not scheduled floor debate on the measure as of 8 JUL, although the Senate Armed Services Committee has been pushing for it since late May. Committee chairmen Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) and his House counterpart, Rep. Buck McKeon (R-CA) have expressed optimism about finishing the legislation before Oct. 1, a rare occurrence even outside an election year. The short time frame remaining will make that nearly impossible.

Appropriations bills

Still, the defense authorization bill has a better chance of being completed than the accompanying defense appropriations bill. The House already has approved a \$570 billion defense spending plan, but the Senate Appropriations Committee won't mark up its version until July 17. That will leave just a few legislative days to get the measure to the Senate floor, an unlikely rush for a budget bill. In addition, the White House on June 26 sent its first draft of the proposed overseas contingency budget for fiscal 2015, totaling nearly \$66 billion. Lawmakers have just begun digging into that request, which includes \$1.5 billion in aid to Iraq and its neighbors "to promote internal stability" in the region. Meanwhile, the VA appropriations bills are in the same legislative limbo. The House approved a \$158 billion spending plan for the department in April, but a similar budget proposal is stalled in the Senate. Despite early work on the measures, most Hill staffers assume that finalizing the appropriations bills will be part of the lame-duck session, with an eye toward the new lawmakers coming into office in 2015.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane | Jul 8. 2014 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure~Lejeune Update 45 ► S.2542 & H.R.4993

Two North Carolina congressional leaders introduced legislation 27 JUN they say will help people exposed to contaminated water near a closed Asheville factory and a Marines Corp base. Sen. Kay Hagan (S.2542) and U.S Rep. G.K. Butterfield (H.R.4993) said their measure would pre-empt states from limiting the timeframe in which damages can be recovered for injuries in pollution lawsuits. The federal legislation is in response to a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that halted an Asheville lawsuit. The ruling also is

being used by the federal government to try to stop a lawsuit involving contaminated water at Camp Lejeune. "Those who release harmful substances into the environment have a responsibility to clean up contamination and address any suffering they have caused," Butterfield said. "This bill protects federal Superfund law as we know it, holds polluters accountable, and defends the rights of communities in North Carolina and across the country." Superfund is the name given to the environmental program established to address abandoned hazardous waste sites.



Citing a state law barring any lawsuit brought more than 10 years after any alleged contamination occurred, the Supreme Court ruled Asheville residents couldn't sue nearby electroplating business CTS Corp. for contamination that ended in the 1980s. U.S. Justice Department attorneys then asked a federal appeals court to dismiss a lawsuit blaming contaminated tap water at Camp Lejeune, citing the Asheville ruling. Hagan said the Supreme Court's ruling "delivered a major blow to the service members and families affected by the water contamination at Camp Lejeune and the CTS site, making it nearly impossible for these victims to seek justice under the law." Earlier this month, North Carolina legislators changed the state law. Lawmakers say the 10-year period shouldn't be interpreted as barring personal-injury cases involving certain groundwater contamination. Gov. Pat McCrory signed the law last week, but the General Assembly gave final legislative approval Thursday to update the new law that clarified time limits for filing personal injury lawsuits in state courts.

Legislators said more clarification was needed to show that the 10-year "statute of repose" wasn't intended to apply to lawsuits alleging tainted groundwater ultimately made people sick. The update also says the product liability cases aren't affected. This updated bill now goes to McCrory.

[Source: The Associated Press | June 28, 2014++]

Vet Bills Submitted to 113th Congress ► As of 13 JUL 2014

For a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the veteran community introduced in the 113th Congress refer to this 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 of 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 the most effective way to let your Congressional representatives know your wants and dislikes. Members of Congress are the most receptive and open to suggestions from their constituents. The key to increasing cosponsorship support 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 your legislator's phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making at <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d111/sponlst.html>. Refer to http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong_schedule.html for dates that you can access them on their home turf.

Tentative 2014 Legislative Schedule 113th Congress, 2nd Session: The below list identifies the remaining expected non-legislative periods (days that the Senate *will not* be in session)

Date	Action	Note
Aug 4 - Sep 5	State Work Period	Labor Day- Sep 1
Target Adjournment Date	TBD	

FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF VETERAN RELATED LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE SINCE THE LAST BULLETIN WAS PUBLISHED:

- **H.R.5022 : Enhanced Dental Care for Veterans Act of 2014.** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve dental health care for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Vargas, Juan [CA-51] (introduced 7/8/2014)
- **H.R.5032 : VA Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Assistance Publication.** To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and publish an action plan for improving the vocational rehabilitation services and assistance provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Maloney, Sean Patrick [NY-18] (introduced 7/9/2014) Related Bills: S.1586
- **H.R.5042 : VA Medical Facility Construction Project Pilot Program.** A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary enters into partnership agreements with non-Federal entities for the construction of major medical facility projects. Sponsor: Rep McNerney, Jerry [CA-9] (introduced 7/9/2014)
- **H.R.5045 : Veteran Entrepreneur Job Creation.** A bill to increase access to capital for veteran entrepreneurs to help create jobs. Sponsor: Rep Peters, Gary C. [MI-14] (introduced 7/9/2014)
- **H.R.5047 : Non-Alteration of VA Wait Times and Available Health Care.** A bill to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from altering available health care and wait times for appointments for health care for certain veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Peters, Gary C. [MI-14] (introduced 7/9/2014)
- **H.R.5048 : VA Mental Health Disorder Care Improvement.** To expand and improve care provided to veterans and members of the Armed Forces with mental health disorders or at risk of suicide, to review the terms or characterization of the discharge or separation of certain individuals from the Armed Forces, to require a pilot program on loan repayment for psychiatrists who agree to serve in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Peters, Gary C. [MI-14] (introduced 7/9/2014)
- **H.R.5054 : Establish VA Office of Whistleblower and Patient Protection.** A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs an Office of Whistleblower and Patient Protection. Sponsor: Rep Kirkpatrick, Ann [AZ-1] (introduced 7/10/2014)
- **H.R.5059 : Mental Health Care & Suicide Prevention Program Annual Evaluations.** A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for the conduct of annual evaluations of mental health care and suicide prevention programs of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, to review the terms or characterization of the discharge or separation of certain individuals from the Armed Forces, to require a pilot program

on loan repayment for psychiatrists who agree to serve in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Walz, Timothy J. [MN-1] (introduced 7/10/2014)

- H.R.5088 : **Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Class Actions.** To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish procedures for class actions at the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick [FL-18] (introduced 7/11/2014)
- **Senate Bills** - None

[Source: <http://www.loc.gov> & <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills> Jul 13, 2014 ++]

* Military *



Navy Nuclear Power Program ► Safety and Reliability Concerns

Fighting back at repeated budget cuts to its nuclear power budget requests, two of the US Navy's top leaders warned Congress on 7 JUL that the cuts can't go on. "This approach is no longer sustainable," wrote Adm. Jon Greenert, chief of naval operations, and Adm. John Richardson, commander of Naval Reactors (NR), the entity responsible for all aspects of the Navy's nuclear power program. They sent the letter to chairmen and ranking members of multiple House and Senate committees. "The persistent cuts have put NR in the position of being unable to provide for a safe and reliable nuclear fleet, design and test the reactor plant for the Ohio Replacement Program, and safely and responsibly manage aging infrastructure and the facilities for processing naval spent nuclear fuel," Greenert and Richardson wrote.



Adms. Jon Greenert, left, and John Richardson

At issue are more proposed cuts to NR’s portion of the National Nuclear Security Administration’s (NNSA) 2015 budget request. NNSA’s budget includes naval reactors, nuclear weapons activities and defense nuclear nonproliferation. Over the past four years, Greenert and Richardson wrote, Congress has funded the account a total of \$450 million below the budget requests. Another cut this year of \$162 million would bring the total cuts to more than \$600 million. “These shortfalls have resulted in delaying the construction of needed facilities, effectively halting research and development, and deferring procurement of equipment needed to address emergent fleet issues,” Greenert and Richardson wrote. As reported out June 20 by the House Appropriations Committee, the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2015 cuts the total NNSA request by \$296 million, to \$11.4 billion. NR’s portion is \$1.2 billion, \$162 million below the budget request.

While not calling out the 2015 budget request, the House Appropriations Committee, in its June report accompanying the bill, said it “remains concerned about the high year-to-year increases that NR is using for its programmatic planning basis in future years. In order to carry out its plans, NR’s out-year budgets would need to grow dramatically, an unlikely scenario considering the current fiscal environment.” The committee directs NR to conduct a multi-year review of requirements “to better understand how funding levels below its five-year projections might impact its long-term strategies.”

But Greenert’s spokesman, Capt. Danny Hernandez, noted that, “with further cuts we can’t continue to sustain fleet support and new programs at the same time.” The submarines and aircraft carriers of the nuclear-powered fleet, he said, continue to be safe despite being funded below stated needs. “Rest assured, today’s nuclear fleet is operating safely and reliably,” he said. Copies of the letter were sent to the chairman and ranking members of the House Appropriations and Armed Services committees, the House Energy and Water Appropriations and Defense Appropriations subcommittees, and the Senate Appropriations and Armed Services committees. [Source: Defense News | Christopher P. Cavas | July 9, 2014 ++]

Navy Decommissioning Plan 2015 ► Farewell to the Frigates.

By October 2015, the fleet will be devoid of frigates for the first time in more than 70 years, according to the Navy’s latest decommissioning plan. The Navy plans to retire all of the remaining frigates, as well as five ships and two subs, during fiscal year 2015, the service announced 1 JUL. The last Oliver Hazard Perry –class frigate scheduled to be decommissioned is the Kauffman, set to leave the fleet Sept. 21, 2015. After that, the battle force will be without a frigate class for the first time since 1943, according to fleet composition records kept by Naval History and Heritage Command.

Most of the frigates are to be sold to foreign navies. The only technical exception to frigate retirements is “Old Ironsides”: The USS Constitution, rated as a frigate when it was launched in 1797, remains in commission and does not count toward the Navy’s force levels. Along with the frigates, the ship inactivation plan announced 1 JUL said the minesweeper Defender, the attack submarines La Jolla and Norfolk, and the amphibious assault ship Peleliu will be inactivated next year. The replenishment ship Rainier and two research vessels also will be inactivated, as will the survey ship Sumner. The fiscal 2015 inactivation schedule, according to NAVADMIN 152/14 is:

- Oct. 1, 2014: Minesweeper Defender, dismantling; research vessel Melville, foreign military sale.
- Dec. 1: Attack submarine La Jolla, conversion to moored training ship.
- Dec. 15: Attack submarine Norfolk, dismantling.
- Dec. 31: Research vessel Knorr, foreign military sale.
- Jan. 14, 2015: Frigate McClusky, foreign military sale.
- Jan 30: Frigate Elrod, foreign military sale.
- March 31: Amphibious assault ship Peleliu, out of commission/in reserve; frigates Ingraham (dismantling), Vandegrift (foreign military sale) and Rodney M. Davis (foreign military sale).
- May 8: Frigate Taylor, foreign military sale.
- May 22: Frigate Samuel B. Roberts, dismantling.
- Aug. 5: Frigate Gary, foreign military sale.
- Aug. 14: Frigate Simpson, foreign military sale.
- Sept. 21: Frigate Kauffman, foreign military sale.
- Sept. 30: Replenishment ship Rainier, out of commission/in reserve.

The missions conducted by the frigate fleet will pass to the littoral combat ship, a platform that will be up to the task once the mission packages are ironed out, said a retired frigate CO. “LCS will bring additional capabilities that frigates never had,” said retired Capt. Rick Hoffman, who commanded the frigate De Wert. “And it’s true that it has limited anti-surface capabilities in a conventional sense, but when you look at the threat, they are more than adequate.” The problem, Hoffman said, is that the gap between the frigate retirements and the LCS introduction will leave some missions without enough ships, like the counternarcotics patrols in U.S. Southern Command. [Source: NavyTimes | David Larter | Jul 14 2014 ++]

Navy Tablet ► Computer Pilot Program Begins in Fall at RTC

It may be 2014, but fleet sailors know it takes way too long to get onto a shipboard computer. Waits are often like the doctor’s office — or a Soviet breadline. A few wake up in middle of the night to use the computer to get their work done or write home. Officials recognize that this computer shortage hurts sailors’ capacity to manage their careers, family life and education — actions that have become increasingly dependent on the kind of high-quality, frequent Web access that’s so fickle in the fleet. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (AW/NAC) Mike Stevens is pushing forward with what he thinks is the solution: putting a tablet computer in every sailor’s hand. The off-the-shelf devices could allow you to complete your training or work, correspond with your friends or study for online courses without the long computer lines that make that make sea duty more frustrating. “When you are looking at using touchpad and wireless technology, this is, I believe, a very significant step forward in our sailors’ ability to move forward and access information,” Stevens told Navy Times.



Stevens is the driving force behind a pilot starting this fall involving 200 sailors in the foremost attempt toward the ultimate goal: issuing each sailor an iPad, Android-powered tablet or other device that can connect to shipboard networks — a vision MCPON wants to reach within five years. The upcoming pilot to be held at boot camp will test three different types of devices, to be chosen shortly based on cost, security and connectivity, with an eye toward expanded issuance, officials said. The fleet has been left behind by the speed of technological innovation, and many top officials believe it's time to catch up. "All a person has to do is go to any command and they'll see the ratio of computers to people is not favorable to our sailors," said Stevens, who estimated in a June 23 phone interview that there's one computer for every five sailors on a destroyer, for example. From Navy Knowledge Online to the Bureau of Naval Personnel Online, sailors need a lot of time connected to get their work done. "When we look at the volume of information we're pushing out to our sailors and the totality of the requirements we're putting on them, and compare that to what their reality is to access and complete it — I think there's a disconnect," Stevens said.

The logical first place to test the devices is at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Illinois, where the Navy often issues recruits items and can track their use closely. This fall, two divisions of recruits, or roughly 200 sailors, will be issued new tablets and begin tapping away during boot camp training and instruction sessions. Whether the pilot starts in September or October depends on the contracting process now underway. Recruits will test at least two types of tabletlike devices, which have yet to be chosen. "We haven't really decided on the tablet, per se. That's going to be decided through contracting," said Capt. Heedong Choi, director of strategy and plans at Navy Service Training Command, in a June 24 phone interview. Choi is working with RTC to implement the test. The devices will be chosen based on user-friendly features and embedded security. It's likely that many tablets will qualify, with some modifications, including popular options like the Samsung Galaxy, Amazon Kindle Fire, Google Nexus, Microsoft Surface Pro or Apple iPad. All are capable of being used for email, slideshow viewing and podcast listening, and can connect wirelessly to a network. "We'll be testing probably at least two types of devices," Choi said. "As with all [Defense Department] contracting, we can't necessarily specify the device, we can only put the requirements on what the device should be based on our research, and the contractors will meet those requirements." Choi says they expect they'll know which device later this summer. In the meantime, they're working on what to test. [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | Jun 30, 2014 ++]

Landmines ► **Major U.S. Policy Change**

A major change in U.S. policy on landmines should not affect the mines in the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Korea. On 27 JUN, the National Security Council announced that the U.S. government will neither acquire new landmines nor replace existing stockpiles. The U.S. also will pursue technological alternatives to landmines so that it can eventually join the Ottawa Convention, under which landmines are banned. In the meantime, the U.S. military has enough landmines in its stockpiles to last 15 to 20 years, a senior defense official said 27 JUN.

For years, the U.S. government has resisted efforts to ban landmines outright, citing a need for them to deter North Korea from crossing the DMZ into South Korea. While the U.S. government is changing its policy on landmines, it remains committed to defending South Korea, NSC spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden said. "The situation on the Korean Peninsula presents unique challenges," Hayden said in an email to Military Times. "Any changes to our landmine policy with respect to the Korean peninsula would be made

only after close consultation with our South Korean ally.” Hayden reiterated that the U.S. government is looking into safer technologies so that it eventually will no longer have to use landmines. “As we are still actively investigating potential technological alternatives, we do not have more specific details at this time,” she said. “We are also, through our modeling and simulation effort, exploring alternative warfighting methods.”

One technological solution would be to perfect the kill switches on mines that render them inert after a certain period of time, said retired Army Maj. Gen. Robert Scales, former commandant of the Army War College. Right now, the kill switches fail on 1 percent to 2 percent of mines, but that numbers goes up to 3 percent or 4 percent in mountainous terrain, where the mines often hit the ground at an angle. “The problem with that is it’s very, very expensive,” Scales said. “We have millions — I don’t know how many millions — of artillery and rocket rounds in storage with this old technology. God only knows what it would take to do that.” Another solution would be to stop using mines altogether by fitting rockets, artillery and mortar rounds with a guidance system — essentially turning them into smart bombs, he said. One challenge with that approach is that artillery rounds come out of the tube with such force that a guidance system would likely be damaged. If the U.S. abandons the use of landmines entirely, it will be giving up a key tool for conventional wars, Scales said. Scattering landmines in front of approaching tanks would channel them into kill zones, where they can be destroyed by rockets fitted with cluster munitions. “You literally obliterate them,” he said. “Everything dies — and you can do it within five seconds. No other munition in the world can do that. You can’t do that with regular artillery.”

On Friday, Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, issued a statement calling the effort to replace landmines with new technology “an expensive solution in search of a nonexistent problem.” “Once again, the President makes an end-run around Congress and demonstrates his willingness to place politics above the advice of our military leaders,” McKeon said. “His announcement today is perfect for a feel-good press release but bad for the security of our men and women in uniform. “Irresponsible land mine use by other countries has come at a high humanitarian price, but America isn’t part of that problem. Indeed, we do more than any other country to clean up these irresponsible weapons,” McKeon said, noting that Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, “has long declared the responsible land mines we use are an ‘important tool in the arsenal of the Armed Forces of the United States.’ ” McKeon said President Obama “owes our military an explanation for ignoring their advice and putting them at risk — all for a Friday morning press release.” [Source: NavyTimes | Jeff Schogol | Jun 27, 2014 ++]

Amphibious Assaults ► **Full-Frontal Attempts a Thing of the Past**

World War II-style full-frontal amphibious assaults are relegated to the annals of history, a top Marine general told reporters 26 JUN in Washington. In the future, Marines will conduct amphibious invasions by setting ashore and massing in areas that are not hotly contested before assaulting towards enemy forces over land, said Lt. Gen. Kenneth Glueck, the deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration Command at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va. “The intent is not to go force on force,” Glueck said. “The intent is to find the seams and gaps. We are not going into the teeth of the enemy. We will go where they are not – where they are weak.”

Some of the most violent battles at Iwo Jima, Tarawa or Inchon, Korea, come to mind when considering Marine amphibious landings. Thousands died establishing beach heads during those assaults. But today, the

difficulties of taking a contested beach are compounded by advances in missile technology; missiles can strike not just the Marines storming ashore, but also the ships from which they launch. The wide proliferation of cheap but deadly systems has forced amphibious ships out as much as 100 miles from the beach. Glueck acknowledged the challenges posed by relying on Navy ship-to-shore connectors, which have limited speed and capacity. Only two of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) 1.1, now under development as a replacement for the Amphibious Assault Vehicle, will be able to fit on a Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC), he said. Marine officials are working to make more space on the next generation LCAC, officially called the Ship-to-Shore Connector, so that it can carry three or four ACVs.



Marines of a 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit run on the beach during an amphibious assault demonstration in 2009.

Critics of the ACV have cited its inability to swim ashore under its own power and the slow speed of an LCAC traveling 100 miles over open water as reasons to scrap the ACV and focus on a platform that would be light enough to airlift ashore. Two retired Marine infantry officers turned industry armor experts recently authored a paper arguing in favor of that, but Glueck says rotary airlift has never been used to move vehicles; tactically, that is not being considered. For now, distance, water speed and cargo space remain barriers to quickly massing forces ashore. For that reason, the service will use advanced “high-speed – low signature” forces as part of its new Expeditionary Force 21 doctrine to maneuver ashore and secure a non-contested or lightly-contested area for the follow on forces to land and aggregate for battle. EF-21 aims to preposition gear near flash points and quickly aggregate scalable forces — ranging in size from a company to a Marine Expeditionary Force — to move ashore.

The idea of landing uncontested and assaulting over land is not without precedent, Glueck said. It was done on Tinian in the Pacific during WWII. There Japanese forces had heavily fortified the island’s southern beaches, where they believed Marines would land. Instead, Marines were able to traverse barrier reefs on the opposing side of the island. By putting ashore on the north end and flanking the enemy, they secured the island with little contest. Landing where enemy forces are lightest will also allow for minimal risk to some of the Navy’s more vulnerable ship-to-shore connectors like the joint high speed vessel. The catamaran is capable of traveling 40 miles per hour, which is significantly faster than 24 miles per hour for amphibious transport dock ships. But catamarans are constructed with a light aluminum hull that some critics have said makes them vulnerable to enemy fire. While the Marine Corps continues to bet much of its future on amphibious landings, they will bear little resemblance to those in the past. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | James K. Sanborn | Jun 30, 2014 ++]

USS Zumwalt (DDG-1000) Update 02 ► Fueling Preps

Bath Iron Works is getting ready to bring fuel aboard the Navy's biggest destroyer in preparation for firing up some of the world's largest marine turbines this summer. Shipbuilders will be working methodically in the coming weeks to bring JP-5 military-grade jet fuel aboard the ship and flush the systems before lighting off the turbines and activating the ship's high-tech electrical systems. It's a complicated process for the first-in-class Zumwalt. "Because it's the lead ship, we're doing everything in a very deliberate and painstakingly accurate and detailed way," shipyard spokesman Jim DeMartini said. Those turbines — similar to units in the Boeing 777 — won't propel the ship. They'll provide the grunt for generators that produce electricity that drives the ship.



The Navy's stealthy Zumwalt destroyer anchored at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine

Around the world, there are other electric-drive warships. But this is the first time the U.S. Navy has built a surface combatant using electric propulsion since a line of destroyer escorts in the 1940s. For now, the Zumwalt remains a work in progress. On a recent day, shipbuilders worked throughout the 610-foot-long vessel, testing various systems using land-based electricity. There were wires dangling, false ceilings, and tools and portable equipment throughout the interior. Rolls-Royce modified its Boeing 777 turbo fan engines, each of them enclosed with an automated fire suppression system deep in the belly of the ship. Banks of high-voltage electrical switches and voltage converters lend the appearance of a power plant. "It's the heart of the ship," said shipyard program manager Todd Estes, who served as an engineering chief aboard a Spruance-class destroyer before leaving the Navy.

The ship itself will boast plenty of new technologies: an angular shape to reduce radar signature; a gun with rocket-propelled projectiles; new radar and sonar systems; missile launchers that deflect explosions outward; heavy use of automation; and a new hull shape. All told, there are 2.3 million feet of electric cabling and 1,300 automated valves aboard the ship, Estes said. The ship also has tremendous electrical capabilities. The two main generators, along with two auxiliary units, can produce 78 megawatts, enough electricity for about 10,000 homes. All the power can be diverted to where it's needed, ship propulsion, or weapons or radar. Down the road, there's enough juice to operate an electromagnetic rail gun, a futuristic weapon designed to fire projectiles at hypersonic speeds, said Norman Friedman, author of books including "U.S. Destroyers and Illustrated Design History" and the U.S. Naval Institute's "Guide to World Naval Weapon Systems." Such a system could be a game-changer in the future, Friedman said. "The thing that sold electric drive was the promise of electric weapons like the rail gun," he said. [Source: AP | David Sharp | Jun 29, 2014 ++]

Medal of Honor Citations ► Terry, Seymour W WWII



*The President of the United States in the name of The Congress
takes pleasure in presenting the
Medal of Honor Posthumously
To*

Terry, Seymour W

Rank and organization: Captain, U.S. Army, Company B, 382d Infantry, 96th Infantry Division

Place and date: Zebra Hill, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, 11 May 1945

Entered service at: Little Rock, Ark May 1943

Born: December 11, 1918 at Little Rock, Ark

Citation

1st Lt. Terry was leading an attack against heavily defended Zebra Hill when devastating fire from 5 pillboxes halted the advance. He braved the hail of bullets to secure satchel charges and white phosphorus grenades, and then ran 30 yards directly at the enemy with an ignited charge to the first stronghold, demolished it, and moved on to the other pillboxes, bombarding them with his grenades and calmly cutting down their defenders with rifle fire as they attempted to escape. When he had finished this job by sealing the 4 pillboxes with explosives, he had killed 20 Japanese and destroyed 3 machineguns. The advance was again held up by an intense grenade barrage which inflicted several casualties. Locating the source of enemy fire in trenches on the reverse slope of the hill, 1st Lt. Terry, burdened by 6 satchel charges launched a 1-man assault. He wrecked the enemy's defenses by throwing explosives into their positions and himself accounted for 10 of the 20 hostile troops killed when his men overran the area. Pressing forward again toward a nearby ridge, his 2 assault platoons were stopped by slashing machinegun and mortar fire. He fearlessly ran across 100 yards of fire-swept terrain to join the support platoon and urge it on in a flanking maneuver. This thrust, too, was halted by stubborn resistance. 1st Lt. Terry began another 1 -man drive, hurling grenades upon the strongly entrenched defenders until they fled in confusion, leaving 5 dead behind them. Inspired by this bold action, the support platoon charged the retreating enemy and annihilated them. Soon afterward, while organizing his company to repulse a possible counterattack, the gallant company commander was mortally wounded by the burst of an enemy mortar shell. By his indomitable fighting spirit, brilliant leadership, and unwavering courage in the face of tremendous odds, 1st Lt. Terry made possible the accomplishment of his unit's mission and set an example of heroism in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.

/S/HARRY S. TRUMAN



Terry joined the Army from his birth city of Little Rock, Arkansas in 1943 and by May 11, 1945 was serving as a first lieutenant in Company B, 382nd Infantry Regiment, 96th Infantry Division. On that day, in a fight for "Zebra Hill" during the Battle of Okinawa, Terry repeatedly assaulted the Japanese forces alone, despite heavy enemy fire, and encouraged his fellow soldiers in their attack. He was severely wounded by a Japanese mortar, and died of his injuries two days later. For his actions during the battle, he was promoted to captain and, on March 6, 1946, awarded the Medal of Honor.

Terry was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity from the fraternity's first chapter at the University of Arkansas. Terry, aged 26 at his death, was buried at Roselawn Memorial Park in his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas. [Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seymour_Terry and <http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/wwII-t-z.html> Jul 2014 ++]

*** Military History ***





Dangerous Moonlight by Nicolas Trudgian

The Luftwaffe's night-fighting campaign began in July 1940 when an RAF Whitley bomber fell to the guns of an Me110 flown by Werner Streib of the new, dedicated night-fighting unit NJG1. Their further successes led to other units being formed, but NJG1 always remained the most feared night force. Equipped with the latest radar technology enabling a form of night vision, NJG1 caused terrible losses to the RAF's bomber aircraft and crews. The four highest-scoring night fighters were Werner Streib whose total was 65, Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein with 83, Helmut Lent on 102, and the greatest of them all, Heinz Wolfgang Schnauffer, who achieved 121. Another 'Experte' was Martin Drewes who took command of III/NJG 1 in March 1944. It is his aircraft that is depicted in this painting.

On the bright, moonlit night of 30th March 1944 more than 800 RAF bombers set off to raid Nuremberg. Martin Drewes, flying his Me110G, scrambled to meet them and was able to spot the first of his targets without using radar as it was silhouetted against the silvery clouds. He attacked the Lancaster, from the Australian 467 Squadron, using his 'Schräge-Musik' upward firing guns and went on to shoot down a further two bombers before returning to base. By dawn, 96 RAF aircraft had been shot down, which was the greatest loss suffered by Bomber Command on any one night in the entire war. By the end of the hostilities, NJG1 had achieved a sobering total of 2311 victories, making them by far the most potent night fighter unit. [Source: <http://www.aviationarthangar.com/avarthadamob.html> Jul 2014 ++]

National WWI Museum Update 01 ► Renault FT17 Tank

The gunner could barely make out the driver's shout. He couldn't see much ahead, either. The noise of the FT17's engine a foot behind him, the clanking of the treads just outside their "boite de sardines" and, oh yes, the hellish shelling by the Germans on the French infantry following the tank made hearing nearly impossible. And now a rattle upon his turret's steel plate. The sergeant swiveled the turret desperately looking for the machine gun's flashes amid the smoke. He ripped off his chain-mail mask with slitted goggles. To hell with bullet splash, he had to see! A blaze of muzzle fire to the right! The mitrailleuse! He screamed for the driver to brake so he could get a stable shot at the machine gun. "Arrete le char!" But the tank still crept forward. Stop the tank, he shouted again, just as the artillery diminished — the poilu scrambling through the wire were too close to the German trenches now. Accompanied by a kick in the driver's back, he got the message through. The tank shuddered to a stop, and the sergeant turned the turret more to the right, trying to find the machine gun nest again. "Il, il, il!" He had found them, but the tank was settling, sliding on the muddy decline of a shell hole. He frantically worked the elevation of his stubby cannon, waited for a blast of smoke to pass, then saw le Bosch, now trying to pull back their hot-barreled weapon. He jerked the trigger to his 37 mm gun. The explosion of his shot rang the little steel box protecting his upper body like a malevolent bell. Before the sergeant could get his eye back to his tube sight, another explosion, much louder, engulfed the French tank, and it died, sliding still into its half-opened grave.



A Renault FT-17 Light Tank at the Fort George G. Meade Museum at Fort Meade, Maryland

Of the many hundreds of reasons to visit the National World War I Museum, the best might be the Renault FT17, with its mortal wound. Readers or viewers may imagine their own versions of its last combat, as this writer has done. Now that the centennial of the beginning of the war is about to roll over us, it's time to take a closer look. Doran Cart, senior curator of the museum, believes this is the only example of the French-built machines in the United States, noting that there are only three battle-damaged FT17s known to exist. The little French tank was not the first of its breed, but it's surely the most direct ancestor of the armored monsters that have left their tracks across battlefields for 98 years. It also is linked to many of the famous American names of the next great war: George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur. And, of course, a British one, Winston Churchill. Of World War I's many innovations meant to kill one's fellow man, such as the airplane, the machine gun and the submarine, the tank probably was the most original concept — excepting a 1487 drawing by Leonardo da Vinci of a circular, cannoned war machine and a dismissed British idea for a steam-powered land ram, with guns and scythes, that came up in 1855, late in the Crimean War.

The Brits revisited the idea when the fighting on the Western Front settled into stalemated trench warfare, in which waves of soldiers were ordered to throw themselves across no man's land through barbed

wire and massed artillery fire only to be met by Maxims, Mausers and “potato-masher” grenades. In their 1916 attack near the Somme River, for horrible example, the British lost 20,000 on the first day, plus 60 percent of their officers. Although first thought of as “land ships,” the term “tank” has stuck from the days of early and secret development by the British navy. To confuse German spies, the machines were referred to as “mobile water tanks.” Why the navy? By 1915, Churchill was first lord of the admiralty and a member of the Committee of Imperial Defense. It heard a proposal for a massive, tractor-pushed roller behind which troops might advance. The concept went nowhere with the army, but Churchill thought there was something to the idea of a machine that could break through the trenches or at least carry attacking troops through the hail of fire. It was completely out of his bailiwick of battleships and submarines, of course, but that was Churchill. Continuous-tracked machines, already invented, clearly worked better than wheeled vehicles in the conditions of no man’s land.

The British built their machines about 26 feet long with a rhomboid shape to crawl over trenches; it took four men just to drive the thing. After trials, the government ordered 150 of the Mark I monsters, nicknamed “Mother.” No wonder the Germans were caught unaware. The machines were shipped to France in two versions: “Male,” equipped with long 6-pound naval cannon sticking out of each side (which had a tendency to ram into the mud) plus three machine guns, and “Female,” with five machine guns. The first 49 rolled out, often at 1 mph, on Sept. 15, 1916, late in the nearly five-month Somme Offensive. Their particular action, the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, showed they weren’t battle-ready. Many broke down, and only nine reached the German trenches. The French, who were developing their own versions of these secret weapons, were appalled that the Brits hadn’t waited until more machines were available for greater shock value. The element of surprise was lost. The British command, however, had thought it couldn’t hold anything back at a critical juncture when the Russians were making their own big attack on the Eastern Front. Although the Somme was a bloody failure, Field Marshal Douglas Haig ordered a thousand more of the machines.

The French initially expended their energy arguing over the best design for an armored vehicle — some in the army wanted a bigger machine. But two longer contraptions were clearly failures in the spring 1917 Nivelle Offensive, beaten by long-range artillery or unable to cross the German trenches. The British, meanwhile, improved Mother. The Mark IV needed only two men to drive, and the steel was thickened to foil armor-piercing bullets. They also came out with a faster medium tank called the Mark A, called the Whippet, with a static turret bristling with machine gun barrels. But it is Renault’s FT, that little fellow sitting under Liberty Memorial, that most consider the first modern tank, primarily for its first 360-degree-rotating gun turret. The machine’s basic layout has gone unchanged y — until the late 1970s with the Israelis’ Merkava, which puts the engine in front to absorb the killing head-on round and increase crew survivability. The Renault brothers churned out more than 3,500 FTs, many of which would be used by the Americans and even the British. They had fewer breakdowns, because the company dropped in truck engines with four speeds, Cart said. So the tanks came complete with speedometers that went up to 10 mph — the machines made only half that at best — and the gas tank took them 30 miles. Some were equipped with machine guns, others the 37 mm gun. The crammed-in crew peered through camouflaged slits in the riveted steel or the telescope that sighted the guns. A little porthole in the turret allowed the commander to fire his revolver in case a foe climbed on the outside, Cart noted. While the rest of the world adapted to the word “tank” from the Brits, the French call their machine “char” (from cart or chariot) to this day.

In World War II, German generals would become famous for blitzkrieg tactics with fast-moving armored columns and giant tanks such as the Panther and Tiger, but in the first world war they weren’t much interested until late in the game. Back in 1911, in fact, a young Austro-Hungarian lieutenant had designed an armored, tracked vehicle with rotating, machine-gun-equipped turret, but he could not get anywhere with a hidebound army bureaucracy. Otherwise, Gunther Burstyn would be known today as the

grandfather of armored forces. No, the Germans spent more effort on anti-tank weapons, to considerable success. Even during the Allies' decisive 1918 offensive of Amiens, nearly three-quarters of the attacking tanks were wiped out in the first four days. While the Germans were happy to recycle and paint iron crosses on many captured French and English machines, only a handful of the German machines were built — the A7V, which looks like something Jabba the Hutt might drive in "Star Wars." Three A7V crews were surprised to find an equal number of British Mark IVs at Villers-Bretonneux, and the world was given its first tank battle on April 24, 1918. The Brits' machines were hit and withdrew. After May 31, 1918, Capitaine Aubert described the action near Hamel: "We were subjected to heavy machine gun fire directed particularly against the slits and port holes. The hammer of bullets against the armor, accompanied by flash, showed us the general direction of the fire. Many bullets struck the gun shield and made traversing difficult. But we swung the turret and there was the machine gun, not more than 50 yards away. It took five rounds to put it out, and the tracks completed the work." In July 1918, the French amassed nearly 400 tanks for the Battles of Marne and Soissons, in which they recaptured most of the territory lost to recent German offensives. Once the American divisions began pouring off the troop ships, the generals on both sides knew the war would soon be over.

The museum's tank, numbered 867, shows off its gaping scar left by a German 77 mm artillery shell, which left shrapnel balls and shards in the vehicle's interior. The tank probably supported American doughboys during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the last weeks of the war. The fate of the crew is unknown, but researchers are still on the case. Cart points out the damage to the rear of the tank. The "duck tail" of the vehicle, designed to help keep it from being stuck in trenches, was blown off. The tail one sees at the museum came from another machine. Just yards away is a German 77 field gun, probably like what killed 867. "He probably hit him as he was going by," Cart said. "If it had been a high-explosive shell, we wouldn't be here talking about it. It'd be gone." The FT17 or its copies ended up around the world; four recently were found in a Kabul, Afghanistan, scrapyard. The tanks were used in many conflicts, such as the Russian civil war, the Polish-Soviet conflict, the Chinese and Spanish civil wars. Although the FT17 was horribly obsolete when the next world war with Germany began in 1940, France still had more than 500 on the line. And even the Nazi army used them as radio tanks, Cart said.

The American Expeditionary Force was equipped with the Renaults. One of its first commanders was a cavalry officer named George Patton. Earlier, in 1916, the lieutenant led the first motorized attack in U.S. military history, taking a few men in Dodge Touring cars to a Mexican ranch where they found and gunned down three of Pancho Villa's men. Villa was a wanted Mexican revolutionary. Impressed by the young "bandit shooter," Gen. John Pershing sent him to France in the advance party when America entered the conflict. Setting up the first U.S. tank school, the fast-rising Lt. Col. Patton commanded a brigade of FTs at the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in September 1918. Later that month, his machines supported U.S. forces in the Meuse-Argonne, where he was wounded in the leg. Back in the States, another up-and-coming lieutenant colonel named Dwight Eisenhower was running Camp Colt, training tank crews on the old battlefields of Gettysburg, Pa., with a Renault. You can see their postage at the museum, one envelope showing a bristling black cat atop a machine, with the logo: "Treat 'Em Rough."

The U.S. Army used the French design to build nearly a thousand exact copies, named the M1917. The American tankers got their orders to embark for Europe, but the armistice was signed the next month, so they saw no action. After the war, Patton, who would write the Army manual for tank warfare, and Eisenhower became friends. The War Department decreed that tanks should support the infantry and not be an independent striking force, and both men left for less dead-end assignments. The U.S. Army did not give up its cavalry, to which Patton eventually returned. Some believed as British Maj. Gen. Sir Louis Jackson did— he called the tank "a freak. The circumstances that called it into existence were exceptional and not likely to recur. If they did, they could be dealt with by other means." Others, like Army Chief Douglas

MacArthur, noted that the mobility of the horse in war had not changed in a thousand years; the mechanized army was the future. Still, he used cavalry, led by an unhappy Patton, and six M1917s, to violently disburse the Bonus Marchers on Washington in 1932. World War II, of course, saw massive formations of bigger and bigger tanks rolling across France, North Africa, Russia and France again. Today's 60-ton-plus main battle behemoths can move 10 times as fast as the FT17, cover 10 times more ground, carry high-tech armor and throw shells to the horizon with laser accuracy. Whether the drone age will force new thinking about tanks on the battlefield is today's question, however.

According to museum research, the French machine was recovered by the U.S. 2nd Battalion, Air Service Mechanics (who were being used to repair and salvage tanks instead of airplanes). During the Meuse-Argonne battles, a company had been sent to Varennes to an improvised tank park. Because soldiers from the unit scratched their names on the inside of the driver compartment's doors, we know that one was Jonathan Mulford Ashwell, who lived at 1627 Washington St. in Kansas City. The reason the unusable tank was shipped to the United States was for a July 1919 bond drive. It was soon added to the vast collections of San Francisco's M.H. de Young Museum, then displaying just about everything. The tank changed hands several times between western car museums and collectors until the Hayes Otoupalik Collection sold it to the Kansas City museum in 2007. We can assume that at one stop the owners took off the tracks, because they're on backward. "We're not taking them off to put them on right," Cart said, noting that the tank, with its worn camouflage and slightly weary lean, is exactly as they got it, except for the authentic pick and shovel on the hulls. Cart revealed a little secret. In examining their treasured relic, they found a chunk of mud, French soil, still stuck to the machine. "After all that time, all that movement, it's still there." And in that mud was something the tank rolled over. A cartridge from those days when the ground shook and brave men fell in the wire. C'est la guerre. [Source: The Kansas City Star | Darryl Levings | May 25, 2014 ++]

Military History ► **Saipan "Smith vs. Smith" Rift**

Even after seven decades, Wilfred "Spike" Mailloux won't talk about surviving a bloody World War II battle unless longtime friend John Sidur is by his side. It was Sidur who found the severely wounded Mailloux hours after both survived Japan's largest mass suicide attack in the Pacific. The pre-dawn assault launched 70 years ago 7 JUL on the Japan-held island of Saipan nearly wiped out two former New York National Guard battalions fighting alongside U.S. Marines. "He found me in the mud," Mailloux recounted during a visit to the New York State Military Museum to attend a presentation on the battle's 70th anniversary.



Mailloux and Sidur are among the dwindling ranks of WWII veterans of the Army's 27th Infantry Division, which endured some of the bloodiest fighting in the Pacific, only to have its reputation besmirched by a volatile Marine general in one of the war's biggest controversies. In the Mariana Islands, 1,400 miles south of Tokyo, Saipan was sought by the Americans as a base for bombing raids against Japan. U.S. forces landed on Saipan on June 15, 1944, with two Marine divisions, the 2nd and the 4th, making the initial beach assaults and losing some 2,000 men on the first day alone. A few days later, the inexperienced 27th Division joined the fight. A New York National Guard outfit activated in October 1940, the "Appleknockers" still retained a sizable Empire State contingent among its ranks after two years of garrison duty in Hawaii.

The commander of the ground forces at Saipan was Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith, dubbed "Howling Mad" for his volcanic temper. A week into the battle, Smith relieved the 27th's commander, Maj. Gen. Ralph Smith (no relation), after the division lagged behind the Marine units operating on its flanks. The Marine commander not only blasted the 27th's leadership, but he also openly criticized its soldiers in front of war correspondents, who later reported on the rift that became known as "Smith vs. Smith."

Arthur Robinson, 92, of Saratoga Springs knew nothing of the Army versus Marine flap brewing on Saipan. As an infantryman in the 27th's 105th Infantry Regiment, he was concentrating on staying alive. On July 3, he was wounded in both thighs by machine gun fire. Robinson endured a 10-mile ride in a Jeep to a field hospital, with the driver opting to travel on railroad tracks because the road was mined. On July 7, after three weeks of fighting, two battalions of the 105th Regiment were positioned across a plain along Saipan's western shore. With the island's 30,000 defenders down to a few thousand starving, ill-equipped soldiers and sailors, Japanese commanders ordered one last charge. The battalions' 1,100 soldiers bore the brunt of what became known as the banzai attack. U.S. military officials later said 3,000 Japanese charged the American lines, though others put the estimate closer to 5,000. Many of the attackers were armed with samurai swords and bayonets tied to poles. "I was scared as hell," said Mailloux, then a 20-year-old corporal from Cohoes, a mill town north of Albany. "When you hear that screaming — 'banzai' — who wouldn't be?"



World War II veteran Arthur Robinson poses May 8 at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs and points out his image in a 1940 photo of his Army unit.

The 105th's positions were overrun. Firing their rifles until they ran out of ammunition and their machine guns until the barrels overheated, the Americans fell back as the attack became a running street brawl. They set up a second perimeter along the beach and, with their backs to the water, fought for hours

before the attackers were all but annihilated. When it was over, some 4,300 enemy dead were found on the battlefield, about half of them in front of the 105th's positions. The regiment saw 406 killed and 512 wounded. Mailloux was stabbed in the thigh by a Japanese officer wielding a long knife. Unable to move, he lay in a ditch for hours before Sidur, a 26-year-old sergeant also from Cohoes, found him bleeding in a muddy ditch. "I didn't know who it was," Sidur said. "I just thought, 'Boy, he looks familiar.'"

More than 3,000 Americans died in the land battle for Saipan, about a third of them 27th Division soldiers. Among the dead were scores of New Yorkers, including more than two dozen from Albany-area factory towns. Three members of the 105th killed in the July 7 attack were awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously, including Col. William O'Brien and Sgt. Thomas Baker, both from Troy. Holland Smith declared Saipan secure on July 9, though the 27th remained on the island for weeks. Survivors of the banzai attack were still recovering from their wounds when they learned of Smith's comments lambasting their division. For many, an intense dislike of the Marine commander and leathernecks in general would last a lifetime. But not for Mailloux, who prefers to remember how the two branches of the service teamed up to defeat a determined foe. "The Marines were Americans and we were Americans," he said before tears cut off his words. [Source: Associated Press | Chris Carola | Jul 7, 2014 ++]

D-Day ► **Operation Neptune | Landing Craft Role**

To the Army 70 years ago, the beaches of Normandy had code names like Omaha and Utah. But to the sailors whose job it was to take those soldiers to battle under withering fire again and again in landing craft, it was simply "The Far Shore." The searing experience of June 6, 1944, is now part of the Navy's DNA. "When friends ask me what I do for a living, I ask them if they ever saw the movie 'Saving Private Ryan' about the D-Day landings in France," said Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (SW/AW) Jason Davis, a utility landing craft craftmaster at the Little Creek, Virginia-based Assault Craft Unit 2 — today's landing craft operators. "It's our direct heritage," he said. Not since the Korean War and the Inchon landings have the Navy's assault boats and landing craft attempted to put Americans ashore on hostile beaches. But if that call came, it would be Davis and his crew of 12 who operate the 134-long landing craft utility boats.



A landing craft under the command of Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (SW/AW) Jason Davis makes a high-speed approach during training operations off the beach at Little Creek, Va.

Davis is the craftmaster — essentially the CO of one of the Navy’s utility landing craft, which is operated by two assault craft units, one on each coast, with detachments forward-deployed overseas. Operating mostly out of the well decks of amphibious ships, Navy LCUs can operate independently for up to 10 days — with their own messing and berthing areas. Fully loaded, they can carry two tanks or 350 troops ashore. It was the ancestors of these LCUs, nearly 3,500 strong and manned by several thousand sailors, that massed off Normandy’s beaches and ran multiple trips to shore, taking in fresh troops and returning with the wounded. At the end of the day, 36 large landing craft, similar to Davis’ LCU, and 98 smaller landing craft were lost to enemy fire — along with 624 sailors, according to the Navy’s official after-action report of Operation Neptune, as the Navy called its part of the D-Day operations.



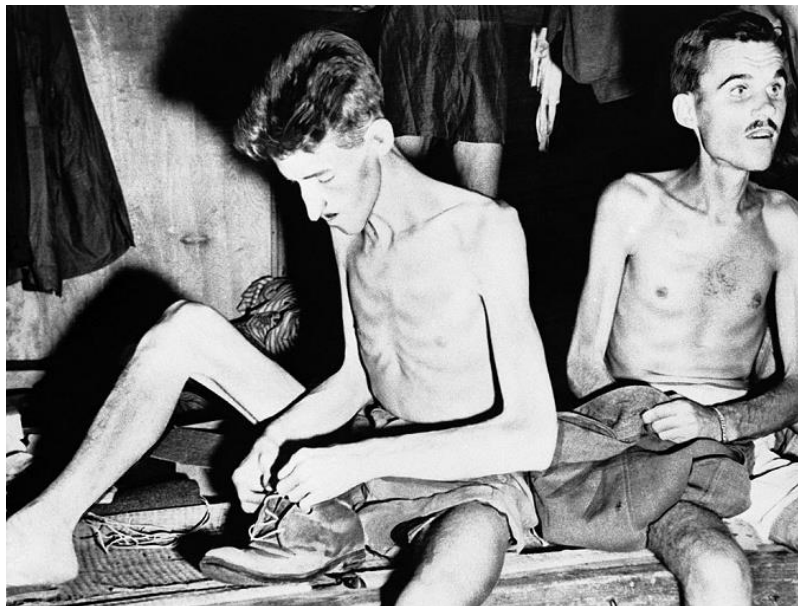
Soldiers wade ashore onto Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, after arriving in a landing craft, vehicle, personnel, or LCVP.

Lt. Cmdr. Max Miller, who chronicled the campaign, spent time with small boat crews and their coxswains and wrote that the Navy’s D-Day memorial should be a statue of a landing craft and the sailors who drove it. He referred to that sailor as the “American small-boat boy.” “He, as much as anybody, won that lengthy battle for the storm-stricken Normandy beachhead,” Miller wrote. The sailor’s uniform, Miller wrote, was “devoid of what customarily goes for Navy regulation.” And the boats he drove were “grimy both inside and outside, with a hull bearing the bumps of many batterings and with some bullet holes.” The job of the crews was to beach their landing craft as quickly as possible, get men and ammunition offloaded and head back out to sea in under three minutes — before the German gunners could zero in. All too often, the Germans or the waves of the English Channel would claim these small boats and their crews. “The sea off the beachhead contains dead sailors long after the beachhead officially was declared secure, days and days after,” Miller wrote in his book, “The Far Shore.” The lucky ones managed to get picked up by other landing craft when their boats were sunk. Others simply disappeared. “The sea is different from land,” Miller wrote. “The sea sometimes never does tell.” [Source: NavyTimes | Mark D. Faram | Jun 04, 2014 ++]



'Assault Wave Cox'n,' a 1944 painting by Dwight C. Shepler, honors the sailors charged with steering landing craft onto contested shores

WWII PostWar Events ► **Freed Allied POWs near Yokohama Sep 1945**



Gaunt and emaciated, but happy at their release from Japanese captivity, two Allied prisoners pack their meager belongings, after being freed near Yokohama, Japan, on September 11, 1945, by men of an American mercy squadron of the U.S. Navy.

Military History Anniversaries ▶ 16 Jul thru 15 Aug

Significant events in U.S. Military History are listed in the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**Military History Anniversaries 16 Jul thru 15 Aug**”.

Spanish American War Images 51 ▶



A black and white photo taken in 1898 of a company in Tampa in the Spanish American War. Only four men survived from this company.

WWI in Photos 107 ▶ **Belgian Soldiers in Boulogne, France 1914**



Belgian soldiers with their bicycles in Boulogne, France, 1914. Belgium asserted neutrality from the start of the conflict, but provided a route into France that the German army coveted, so Germany declared it would "treat her as an enemy", if Belgium did not allow German troops free passage.

Faces of WAR (WWII) ► Patton & Doolittle Reviewing Troops



Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle (R) with Gen. George S. Patton saluting as they review troops after landing at airfield Los Angeles 1945

*** Health Care ***



Health Care Reform Update 56 ► Medicaid Impact on Low Income Vets

Getting healthcare is a real problem for many low income veterans & their families needing medical if:

- They are under age 65,
- Don't live near a VAMC, and are not service connected, and
- Their state is one of those 25 states that did not expand MEDICAID under the affordable health care act (Obamacare).

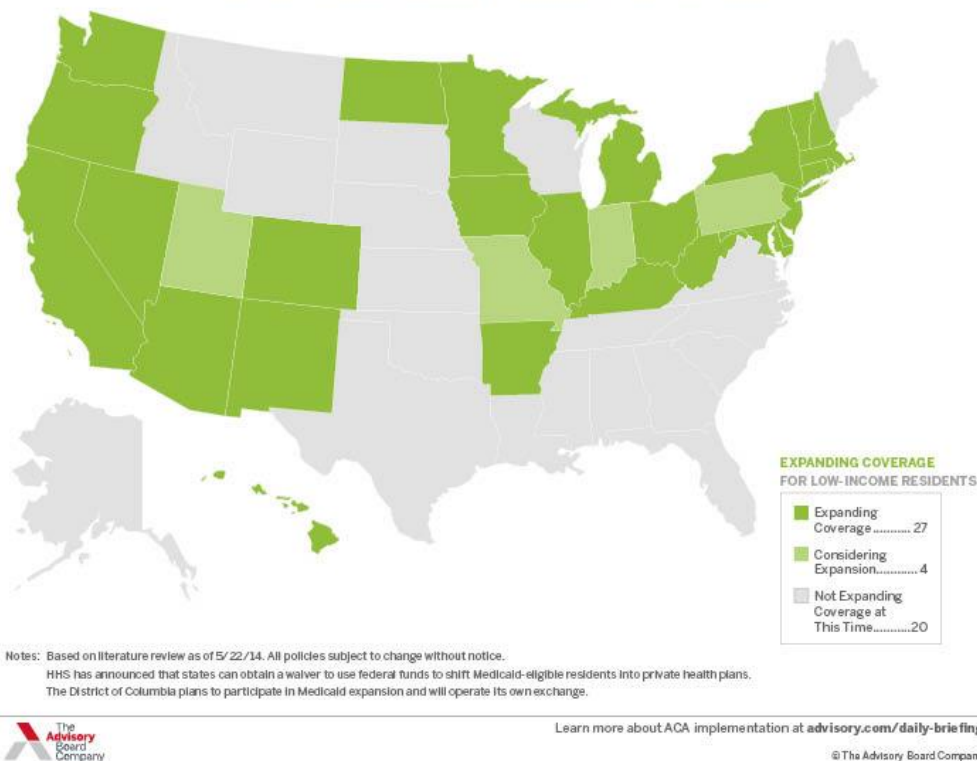
Also, some of the VA backlog for healthcare appointments is caused by veterans without healthcare, living in these 25 states, now trying to get into the VA healthcare system. Texas and Florida still have the highest uninsured rates in the nation.

Analysis of the 2008–2010 American Community Survey (ACS) indicates that 535,000 uninsured veterans and 174,000 uninsured spouses of veterans—or four in 10 uninsured veterans and one in four uninsured spouses—have incomes below 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and could qualify for Medicaid or new subsidies for coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Most of these uninsured—414,000 veterans and 113,000 spouses—have incomes below 100 percent of FPL guidelines (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/14poverty.cfm>) and will therefore only have new coverage options under the ACA if their state expands Medicaid. However, fewer than half live in states in which the governor supports their state participating in the expansion, while the majority live in states that have chosen not to expand Medicaid or have not yet decided whether to expand. The extent to which uninsured veterans and their family members with incomes below the FPL will have access to new coverage options under the ACA will depend on whether they live in a state that adopts the Medicaid expansion

The authors of the ACA didn't foresee this outcome, which was made possible by a Supreme Court ruling in 2012 giving states the right to opt out of Medicaid expansion. Twenty-five states didn't take up the Obamacare Medicaid expansion at the beginning of this year and the results speak for themselves: A new survey shows more than one-third of their lowest-income residents remain uninsured, a rate virtually unchanged from last year, even as millions gained coverage elsewhere. Nationwide, the share of Americans 19 to 64 years old without health insurance fell from 20 percent to 10 percent, as 9.5 million people got covered by Medicaid or private health insurance, according to a poll of Obamacare enrollees published Thursday by the Commonwealth Fund. Among adults who earn less than poverty wages in states that didn't expand Medicaid, the uninsured rate is 36 percent, a decline of two percentage points (termed not statistically significant) from last year. That compares to a dramatic drop from 28 percent to 17 percent in states that expanded Medicaid.

The debate over the Medicaid expansion remains arguably the most consequential unresolved matter related to the Affordable Care Act, as the refusal by Republican governors and state legislatures to accept federal dollars to provide health care to poor people is having real effects on the ground. The law was originally designed to make Medicaid available to anyone who earns less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$15,282 this year for a single person. The law also lets individuals who make between the poverty level of \$11,490 to four times that amount get tax credits to cut the cost of private health insurance. But anyone who makes less than that -- or even nothing -- gets no assistance if they live in Texas, Florida, Louisiana or the other states shown below didn't expand the program.

Where the States Stand on Medicaid Expansion
 26 states, DC, Expanding Medicaid—May 22, 2014



[Source: Veteran Issues & Huff Post | Dan Ceduskey & Jeffrey Young | Jul 12, 2014 ++]

TRICARE Genetic Test Coverage ► 40 of 100 to be Restored

The Defense Health Agency, relying on medical laboratory experts and existing authority to conduct medical “demonstrations,” will restore Tricare coverage this month for up to 40 genetic tests used in patient care. Many of these laboratory-developed tests -- also called molecular pathology tests -- are viewed as medically necessary. But Tricare had stopped reimbursing for more than 100 such tests in January 2013, believing it lacked authority to pay for them when such tests are ordered by civilian physicians delivering care through Tricare provider networks. Military treatment facilities have continued to order and pay for such tests routinely, which created a startling disparity of coverage between military direct care and purchased care contracts. Senior DHA officials acknowledged the coverage gap last February and vowed to close it.

The first step to do so will occur 18 JUL when “30 to 40” genetic tests, those “most commonly performed” across U.S. medicine, will become reimbursable again under Tricare, as part of a three-year medical demonstration project, said Army Maj. Gen. Richard W. Thomas, chief medical officer and director of healthcare operations for DHA. Among genetic tests to be restored to Tricare coverage is one that determines if a woman who is pregnant, or desires to become pregnant, carries a genetic marker for cystic fibrosis. That marker would indicate increased risk that a newborn would have CF. Tricare stopped paying for this and many more laboratory-developed tests (LDTs) after the American Medical Association

changed its procedural codes for such lab work and clarified that these tests are “medical devices.” Tricare, in turn, concluded that under current support contracts it cannot pay for medical devices if not certified as safe and effective by the Federal Drug Administration. Because the FDA doesn’t review or approve genetic tests, Tricare officials decided they had to stop coverage.

Civilian physicians continued to order such tests but after December 2012 Tricare quietly began denying payments. For a time, many impacted laboratories absorbed the costs. But for some of the more costly tests ordered, Tricare patients began receiving unexpected bills. In a phone interview, Thomas explained that DHA earlier this year formed its own panel of experts, the Joint Lab Working Group, and began conducting its own review of safety and effectiveness of genetic tests. It used forensic science and other criteria to screen LDTs. One factor was whether major health insurance companies covered the tests, Thomas said. Restored Tricare coverage for up to 40 LDTs will occur under what DHA calls its Non-FDA-Approved Laboratory Test Demonstration Project, described in the June 18 Federal Register. A full list of genetic testing to be approved for Tricare hasn’t been released yet. But coverage will be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2013, Thomas explained, so laboratories and patients will be able to apply for reimbursements of newly-cleared tests that they had paid for back to that date. DHA already has reimbursed impacted laboratories \$3.5 million, mostly for prenatal CF testing the last 18 months.

During the demonstration, DHA would like to see Congress pass legislation to give it permanent genetic test review authority. The Senate Armed Services Committee’s version of the fiscal 2015 defense authorization bill contains such language, so it could be enacted into law by year’s end. Besides closing its coverage gap, DHA plans to use the demonstration to better manage for military medicine the recent “explosion” in genetic testing, Thomas said. It will seek to hold down costs by using military labs with genetic testing capability when possible. Such labs now operate at military medical centers in Texas, Mississippi and Washington states. DHA also wants to impose more “discipline and clarity” on use of such testing, whether by military health care providers or network civilian doctors. “We’ve got to be flexible enough in our system that we can address these tests and certainly offer them, as appropriate, if they have proven clinical merit, are efficacious and safe,” Thomas said.

Prenatal cystic fibrosis testing is a good example. For now, DHA will extend coverage, acknowledging that such tests are recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). But during the demonstration, military patient outcomes will be studied to determine if CF testing provides real medical benefits or simply adds to the cost of care. DHA officials had argued earlier this year that awareness that a fetus is at higher risk of cystic fibrosis usually has no impact on management of labor, delivery or neonatal care. Also, they noted, that at birth infants are tested for a host of health conditions immediately, including for CF.

Thomas described guidelines from ACOG as “deliberately opaque” on the benefits of prenatal CF screening. Yet because ACOG strongly recommends such screening, CF tests have become a “standard of practice” though not yet “a standard of care,” Thomas said. Karen Ruedisueli, a health care advocate for National Military Family Association, said NFMA is pleased to see Tricare restore coverage of some genetic tests, particularly prenatal cystic fibrosis screening, which represents the “bulk of genetic test denials” by Tricare since early 2013. But NMFA, she said, wants to learn why the DHA panel did not clear for restored Tricare coverage more than 60 other genetic tests. “That over half of those tests will continue to be denied coverage is concerning,” Ruedisueli said. “Because it’s our understanding the vast majority of those tests are covered by commercial insurance carriers as well as by other government plans.” [Source: Stars & Stripes | Tom Philpott | Jul 10, 2014 ++

Traumatic Brain Injury Update 38 ► Concussion Related Sleep Problems

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) has released new clinical recommendations and support tools to assist in the identification and treatment of a sleep disturbance occurring in patients after a concussion (mild traumatic brain injury or mTBI). The suite of products assists health care providers in the identification of a sleep problem and provides recommendations for its treatment. "Sleep disorders are common after a person sustains a concussion," said Army Col. Sidney Hinds, II, M.D., DVBIC's national director. "The prompt identification and treatment of sleep disorders are an important part of the recovery process for concussion. Sleep is critical to the brain's healing and recovery processes. Research shows that if sleep is regular and adequate, restorative processes are promoted." Since 2000, more than 300,000 U.S. service members have sustained a traumatic brain injury.

Common sleep disorders associated with TBI include insomnia, circadian rhythm sleep wake disorder and obstructive sleep apnea. Insomnia is the most common sleep disturbance after concussion. The new Management of Sleep Disturbances following Acute Concussion/Mild TBI Clinical Recommendations suite is composed of clinical recommendations, a clinical support tool, a provider education slide deck and a patient education fact sheet. "These clinical recommendations advise that all patients with concussion symptoms should be screened for the presence of a sleep disorder," said U.S. Public Health Service Capt. Cynthia Spells, DVBIC's clinical affairs officer. "Patients should be asked if they are experiencing frequent difficulty in falling or staying asleep, excessive daytime sleepiness or unusual events during sleep. The initial step in the diagnosis of a sleep disorder includes a focused sleep assessment."

Non-pharmacological measures to treat insomnia that focus on stimulus control and good sleep hygiene are the preferred methods of treatment. Short-term use of sleep medication may be necessary in addition to these measures if they are not effective by themselves. Spells said stimulus control means controlling your environment to help promote sleep. Examples of stimulus control measures include relaxing before bedtime, going to bed only when sleepy, getting out of bed when unable to sleep, removing electronics (TV, smart phone, computer) from the bedroom and using the bedroom only for sleep and intimacy. Sleep hygiene habits include avoiding caffeine and other stimulants close to bedtime, daily physical activity but not exercising close to bedtime, arising at the same time every morning, getting natural light exposure every day, and avoiding alcohol, nicotine and large meals close to bedtime.

Spells said the new sleep disturbance clinical recommendations and support tool product suite was developed by the Department of Defense in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs and civilian medical professionals. "Although tailored for the military and VA health care systems, these recommendations may be used by civilian health care providers treating concussion associated sleep disorders," Spells said. "Many service members and veterans, especially those serving in the National Guard and Reserve, receive care from civilian health care specialists." DVBIC serves as the Department of Defense subject matter expert on TBI and manager of the TBI pathway of care. [Source: www.health.mil article Jun 26, 2014 ++]

Chronic Pain Update 02 ► Nearly Half of Combat Veterans Suffer

Nearly half of a group of infantry soldiers who had seen combat in Afghanistan have reported experiencing chronic pain and 15 percent said they recently used opioid pain relievers, according to a study released 30

JUN. Of 2,597 active-duty Army troops surveyed three months after their redeployment, 44 percent said they experienced recurring or unceasing pain after returning from Afghanistan, according to the study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine. The number of soldiers affected by chronic pain was a surprise to researchers, said Robin L. Toblin, the lead author of the study, one of the first to quantify the impact of recent wars on the prevalence of pain and narcotic use among soldiers. "War is really hard on the body," said, Toblin, who is affiliated with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. "I think that's the take-home message." But she said that researchers didn't expect that nearly half of young, otherwise healthy men who were not seeking medical treatment would suffer from chronic pain.

The percentage was far higher than an estimated 26 percent of chronic pain sufferers in a Kansas study of civilians ages 18 to 65. In that study, which looked at a group comparable to the soldiers — men aged 18 to 34 — only 15 percent reported chronic pain, Tobin said. Chronic pain is defined as pain that continues beyond the normal time expected for healing or that accompanying chronic conditions like arthritis. It is associated with the onset of changes in the central nervous system that may adversely affect well-being, cognition, level of function and quality of life, according to the Defense Department's Pain Management Task Force. Opioids, whose pharmacological effects resemble morphine or other opiates, are strong medicines that can relieve pain caused by serious injuries. Of the chronic pain sufferers, 48.3 percent reported pain duration of a year or longer. More than half — 55.6 percent reported nearly daily or a constant frequency of pain. About half — 51.2 percent — reported moderate to severe pain. The survey did not ask for the location of the pain, Tolbin said.

The troops' reported use of opioid pain relievers — 15.1 percent of all surveyed troops and 23 percent of those with chronic pain — was also far higher than the estimated civilian use of 4 percent. But that finding was less of a surprise, she Toblin said. "It's consistent Army-wide," she said. About a quarter of soldiers use opioids within a given year, she said. The findings "suggest a large unmet need for assessment, management and treatment of chronic pain and related opioid use and misuse in military personnel after combat deployments," the study authors note. In commentary accompanying the study, Lt. Col. Dr. Wayne B. Jonas, and Lt. Gen. Eric B. Schoomaker, both retired, said that the study raised concerns. "The nation's defense rests on the comprehensive fitness of its service members — mind, body and spirit. Chronic pain and use of opioids carry the risk of functional impairment of America's fighting force," they wrote.

According to a 2010 report by DOD's Pain Management Task Force, "Pain is a disease state of the nervous system and deserves the same management attention given to any other disease states." But pain management is a special challenge in military settings, the report said. "The transient nature of the military population, including both patients and providers, creates extraordinary challenges to providing continuity of care, something very important to pain management." Data for the JAMA study were collected in 2011 from an infantry brigade redeployed from Afghanistan, and most of the 2,597 survey participants were men, 18 to 24 years old, high school-educated, married and of junior enlisted rank. Nearly half - 45.4 percent - reported combat injuries. [Source: Stars and Stripes | Nancy Montgomery | Jun 30, 2014 ++]

TRICARE Region West Update 09 ► DOD Blamed for Transition Problems

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report in late June that places the blame for the problems that occurred during the transition from TriWest Healthcare Alliance to UnitedHealth Military & Veterans Services health management companies in the Tricare West Region on the Department of Defense

(DoD). UnitedHealth assumed management of the 21-state Tricare West Region in April 2013. GAO’s report found that the Tricare Management Activity (TMA) — the Pentagon’s health program administrator at the time, now called the Defense Health Agency (DHA)— failed to provide adequate guidance and oversight to UnitedHealth, resulting in customer service problems and delays in care. GAO found that while UnitedHealth seemed unprepared to meet its contract demands, TMA largely was to blame because it failed to provide UnitedHealth with an adequate plan. The report said the government also:

- Provided differing transfer guidance to the two companies, resulting in problems with records transfers.
- Perceived it was unable to interfere and keep UnitedHealth accountable until the company actually began to miss performance goals.
- Felt obligated to give UnitedHealth a \$10 million transition payment without regard to the company’s performance, missing an opportunity, “either positive or negative,” to encourage better performance.

The GAO said that future contract transfers could prevent these sorts of problems by improving communication among all parties and better oversight and guidance. Pentagon officials asserted that the failure to transfer records between the companies was a result of UnitedHealth’s inability to develop an adequate network of doctors that caused delays in care. [Source: TREA Washington NEWS for the ENLISTED 30 Jun 2014 ++]

PTSD Update 170 ► Neurofeedback Recovery Program

A unique new program designed by a Southeastern Arizona company, Biobalance Integrated Wellness, may revolutionize care for veterans with symptoms of neurological injury such as PTSD and TBI. The small business is implementing a new program titled: Trauma Resiliency and Integrated Neurotrainer (TRAIN) combining an established Brain Paint EEG neurofeedback system with peer recovery support Trauma Resiliency Model (TRM) methods. Tina Buck, PhD, President of Biobalance stated: “Our company plans to recruit & train a workforce of former military trained medics/corpsmen to carry out the services offered. Because these men and women are already respected by military and veterans they are better equipped to process and debrief using TRM skills. Extensive clinical research has demonstrated that neurofeedback is very effective.”

Two studies with combat veterans resulted in 100% of subjects no longer meeting criteria for diagnosis of PTSD. A researcher from Harvard Medical School analyzed non-identified data from 699 subjects with PTSD who used BrainPain software: “Progress in PTSD symptoms was rapid among the population studied. After seven sessions, 84% report improvement in their symptoms, and after twenty sessions, 93% report improvement in their symptoms. As BrainPain is effective, relatively inexpensive, and with a negligible side-effect profile, it represents an important, innovative intervention.” Dr. Buck stated: “Neurofeedback is considered a form of self-regulation: nothing comes into the brain from the outside. Technology is used to amplify, translate, and guide brainwave activity – like a mirror – so the brain can understand how to stabilize results with repetition. With BrainPain there is no need to diagnose and painful memories do not have to be recalled. Just as military and veterans train their bodies to be resilient, they also can train their brains. The model removes barriers to care: no diagnosis plus no ‘treatment’ equals no stigma.”

The vision of Biobalance is to provide their TRAIN program to all military and veterans. Their model is cost effective, evidence-based, and fit for military culture. The results are lasting and can show rapid and measurable results. The company is seeking funding from the DoD, VA, or private resource to launch their much-needed program for helping veterans with symptoms of neurological injury. Estimates suggest that 20-40% of returning veterans suffer from these terrible conditions and those effected range into the hundreds of thousands. For more information about Biobalance Integrated Wellness please visit their website at <http://www.biobalance.us>. More information on technical specifications and personal demonstrations are available upon request. [Source: PRNewswire July 3, 2014 ++]

PTSD Update 171 ► Alternative Treatments | TMS & DBS

Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are the most common psychiatric problems faced by service members and veterans. Although their effectiveness varies from person to person, medication and psychotherapy can help the majority of people. For those who don't respond to either, technology may be the answer. Merging electronics and medical science, doctors are combating cases of depression and PTSD that don't respond to traditional treatments. The most notable are transcranial magnetic stimulation and deep brain stimulation.

Seemingly straight out of a science fiction novel, transcranial magnetic stimulation uses magnets to influence cells in the brain that are responsible for psychiatric symptoms. Placed against a patient's head, an electromagnetic coil emits brief magnetic pulses that penetrate the skull and stimulate cells in specific areas of the brain. The results of TMS are mixed. But anecdotal reports show doctors who use it say they believe it to be very effective, especially with patients who have not responded to traditional treatments or can't tolerate the side effects of medications. On rare occasions, seizures may occur from TMS. Headache, scalp discomfort and twitching of facial muscles are the most common side effects.

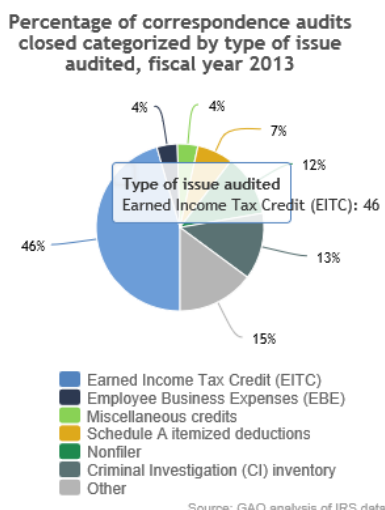
Deep brain stimulation is a bit more invasive than TMS — it's actually a surgical intervention. A small medical device is implanted in the chest that delivers electrical impulses via electrodes in the brain. This technique has been used for a variety of neurological disorders for the past two decades with the most significant results seen with patients suffering from Parkinson's disease and obsessive compulsive disorder. Only recently has DBS been studied for depression and PTSD. In fact, just this year the military announced plans to study the use of DBS in troops suffering from PTSD and other psychological problems. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has earmarked tens of millions of dollars and is collaborating with a variety of civilian and government researchers to bridge theory with practice in this area.

As might be expected, DBS is not without significant controversy and potential side effects. This neurosurgical procedure requires drilling small holes in the skull to insert the electrodes and another procedure in which the "generator" is implanted under the skin of the chest. As with any surgery, complications such as bleeding and infection can occur. It's unlikely that TMS and DBS will find their way into your doctor's office any time soon. But it's good news that researchers are thinking outside of the box when it comes to improving the lives of service members and veterans suffering from psychiatric conditions. [Source: NavyTimes |Bret A. Moore | Jul 14, 2014 ++]



IRS Audit Update 03: Unrealistic Time Frames on Correspondence Audits

Everyone fears an Internal Revenue Service audit. But many of us have been audited without realizing it. We've gotten a letter or notice from the IRS with questions about our tax returns. We get the document in our snail mail box, answer the IRS questions and our tax return is left as filed or adjusted in the way that the IRS contends is correct. This is known as a correspondence audit. Despite the fearful vision of going face-to-face with an IRS examiner over every detail of your Form 1040, correspondence audits are the most common method of reconciling filing issues. And the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, says the IRS has been doing a terrible job of carrying out these audits.



The IRS has "misled" taxpayers in audit notices by providing "unrealistic" time frames on when the agency would respond to the information it requested, according to a recent GAO report. The GAO found notices in which the IRS stated it would respond within 30 to 45 days, but instead the tax agency has "consistently taken several months to do so." As of early this year, according to GAO, the IRS' own data show that the agency had not responded in a timely manner to more than half of the correspondence taxpayers sent. The only thing worse than having to spend more time than expected, even by mail, with an IRS examiner? Waiting for a refund. The GAO found notices in which the IRS stated it would respond within 30 to 45 days, but instead the tax agency has "consistently taken several months to do so." As of early this year, according to GAO, the IRS' own data show that the agency had not responded in a timely manner to more than half of the correspondence taxpayers sent.

The only thing worse than having to spend more time than expected, even by mail, with an IRS examiner? Waiting for a refund. The GAO report says that in many cases, refunds are held up until the audit is finished. Not only is the IRS inconveniencing taxpayers, the GAO says its mismanaged correspondence audit procedure is causing more work for IRS employees. IRS tax examiners told the GAO that notices caused taxpayer frustration and generated unnecessary taxpayer calls to the agency. The bottom line is in the GAO report's title, "Better management could improve tax compliance and reduce taxpayer burden." The IRS told GAO it plans to take action on all nine of the recommendations detailed in the report, and said despite its budgetary challenges, "We have been working to improve this program." But there wasn't any indication in the report as to a timetable on when the process improvements might be put in place. So stay on the lookout for official envelopes from Uncle Sam. Answer the IRS questions. And hope for the best. [Source: Bankrate | Kay | July 8, 2014 ++]

Tax on Home Sale Update 01 ► Good Tax News | New Rules

What's the best tax break available to Jane and John Q. Public? If they're homeowners, it's selling their house. Homeowners already know the many tax breaks that Uncle Sam offers, most notably mortgage interest and property tax deductions. Well, he also has good tax news for home sellers: Most of them won't owe the Internal Revenue Service a single dime. When you sell your primary residence, you can make up to \$250,000 in profit if you're a single owner, twice that if you're married, and not owe any capital gains taxes. "Most people are not going to have a tax obligation unless their gain is huge," says Bob Trinz, tax consultant at Thomson Reuters.

Some sellers are surprised by this break, especially if they've been in their homes for a while. That's because before May 7, 1997, the only way you could avoid paying taxes on your home-sale profit was to use the money to buy another, more-expensive house within two years. Sellers age 55 or older had one other option. They could take a once-in-a-lifetime tax exemption of up to \$125,000 in profits. And in all instances, there was Form 2119 to fill out to show that you followed the rules. But when the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 became law, the home-sale tax burden eased for millions of residential taxpayers. The rollover or once-in-a-lifetime options were replaced with the current per-sale exclusion amounts. "There is some logic to this law change because most people under the prior rules didn't recognize a taxable gain, because they rolled it over into another residence," says Trinz. "The change essentially makes it easier to dispose of your residence."

If you used pre-1997 rules for residential sales, don't worry. That doesn't disqualify you from claiming the exclusion on any residential sales now. The law change applies to all sales since it took effect. Another bonus to the new rules? You don't have to buy another home with your sale proceeds. You can use the money to travel Europe in style, buy a recreational vehicle and drive across the country or get all those designer shoes you never could afford. Even better, there's no limit on the number of times you can use the home-sale exemption. In most cases, you can make tax-free profits of \$250,000, or \$500,000 depending on your filing status, every time you sell a home. Ah, but we are talking taxes here.

You did notice that phrase "in most cases," didn't you? Before you put a "for sale" sign in the yard, you need to make sure your house-sale situation is one of those "most cases." First, the property you're selling must be your principal residence. That means you live in it. This tax break doesn't apply to a house or other property that you have solely for investment purposes. In those cases, the usual capital gains rules apply.

You also must live in that principal residence for two of the five years before you sell it. This is known as the use test. It also means, practically speaking, each sale must be at least two years apart. That still leaves you room to make some money on several properties. You can sell your residence this year, pocket any gain within the tax limits and buy a new residence. Two years later, you can do the same thing, again and again, every two years. And you no longer have to worry about that pesky prior-law reporting requirement. When your gain doesn't exceed the limit, you don't have to file anything with the IRS.

However, husband and wife must pass the use test; that is, each must live in the residence for two years. But the shared use doesn't have to be while you file jointly. If you and your now-husband shared the home for 1½ years before tying the knot and then six months as newlyweds, the IRS will allow you to claim the exemption. But if he didn't move in until the wedding day, you're out of tax-exclusion luck. And while you're learning about your new spouse, make sure you find out all about his or her previous home-sale history. "The two-year eligibility rule applies to both spouses, so full home disclosure is another financial area you need to consider when getting married," says Trinz. "You need to find out what you're getting." Under this couple requirement, if either spouse sold a home and used the exclusion within two years of the sale of any jointly owned property, the couple can't claim the exclusion. That means if your new husband sold his town house a month before the wedding, then you'll have to wait two years after that property's sale date before you can dispose of your shared marital residence totally tax-free. In some cases, a couple might be able to exclude some profit from taxation, but not the full \$500,000 allowed joint filers, based on one spouse's eligibility qualifications. [Source: Bankrate | Kay Bell | Jul 7, 2014 ++]

Tax on Home Sale Update 02 ► Computing Correct Exclusion Amount.

OK, you, and your better half if you're married, met the use and ownership tests, as well as the two-year previous-sale time limit. Now it's time to do the math to avoid writing a big check to the U.S. Treasury. As a seller, you naturally focus on how much you got for your house. That is an important number, but not the only one you'll need when it comes to figuring out whether you'll owe taxes on the sale. It's your gain, or profit, that determines the size or lack of a tax bill. In fact, you can sell your house for \$1 million and still not owe Uncle Sam as long as the profit portion was not more than \$250,000 or \$500,000, depending on your tax filing status. If you can exclude all the gain, then you owe no taxes. To arrive at your gain amount, you first must establish your basis in the home.



For most people this is what you paid for the residence and all capital improvements you've made, such as adding a room or finishing a basement. Also, if you sold a residence prior to the 1997 law change and rolled the profit into the home you're now selling, you must account for that rollover amount; your basis will decrease by the amount of gain you postponed years ago. "Then you compare that basis amount to

what you get from the sale, less your commissions and other expenses. When you subtract your cost basis in the residence, this will give you the amount of gain on the sale. In most instances, sellers will find they made a nice profit, but not one large enough to trigger a tax bill. Some, however, could find their residences appreciated so much that the great sales prices they got ended up costing them at tax time. That's why it's important to accurately track anything that could affect your home's cost basis. The improvements increase your basis, so a smaller portion of the selling price would be viewed as gain. Any overage is taxed at the applicable long-term capital gains rates, which under the American Taxpayer Relief Act approved Jan. 1, 2013, is 20 percent for higher-income taxpayers, 15 percent for most individuals and, for some sellers, zero percent.

Even if you don't meet all the home-sale exclusion tests, your tax break might not be totally lost. When an owner sells a house because of special conditions, such as a change in health, employment or unforeseen circumstances, he or she is eligible for a prorated tax-free gain. In such a case, the seller first calculates the fractional amount of time that he or she met the two-year use test. For example, a single homeowner is transferred to a job in another city and sells after being in the home for only a year and a half. That would be an occupancy period of 18/24 or 0.75, the number of months lived in the home divided by 24, the number of months in the two-year occupancy requirement. By multiplying the full \$250,000 exclusion amount by 0.75, the seller would be eligible to exclude a sale gain of up to \$187,500.

Members of the military also get special home-sale consideration. Because of redeployments, soldiers often find it hard to meet the residency rule and end up owing taxes when they sell. But a law change in 2003 exempts military personnel from the two-year use requirement, for up to 10 years, letting them qualify for the full exclusion whenever they must move to fulfill service commitments. Another law change, this one beginning in 2008, takes into account the special circumstances that a homeowner faces when selling after a spouse dies. Previously, to exclude the full profit amount allowed married homeowners when they sell, the surviving spouse had to sell the property in the same tax year that the husband or wife passed away. But now, an unmarried widow or widower has up to two years to sell the home and not face taxes on up to \$500,000 in profit. So quit worrying about taxes when you put your house on the market. Chances are good that Uncle Sam won't be able to lay any claim to your hefty home-sale profit. [Source: Bankrate | Kay Bell | Jul 7, 2014 ++]

Student Loan Update 01 ► Coping with Loan Debt

President Obama recently signed a presidential memorandum directing the secretaries of the treasury and education to take action to reduce the financial burden on those with student loan debt. Programs already in place, such as the Income-Based Repayment and Pay as You Earn options, allow certain borrowers to cap their student loan payments at 10 percent of their income and receive loan forgiveness after 20-25 years in repayment. The secretary of education is now required to propose regulations expanding the access to the Pay as You Earn Plan to as many as 5 million additional borrowers. These regulations are to take effect by December 31, 2015. For more information about the president's plan to expand repayment options, visit the White House website <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/higher-education/making-college-affordable>. To learn about current repayment options, calculate your repayment under a particular plan, or learn how to apply for repayment under a different plan, visit the Federal Student Aid website <https://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/understand/plans>. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update Jul 3, 2014 ++]

Power of Attorney ► Need & Types

A Power of Attorney (POA) is a document where a person, who's called a principal, appoints an agent. The appointed agent can then do almost everything the principles could do for themselves depending on the extent authorized in the document. In other words a POA is a blank check. It's handing someone the ability to do just about anything they want in your name. Your agent can do all of the following and more on your behalf: Lend money, Borrow money, File taxes, Make business transactions, Open and close bank accounts, Apply for credit cards, etc. With very few limitations, such as making medical decisions, a POA lets your agent do practically anything in your name.

Who needs a POA? You, that's who. Everyone needs a POA, from a college freshman on. And don't make the mistake of thinking being married is the same thing. While you need a POA, you need to be careful about who you designate as your agent. Although criminal charges can be brought against someone abusing their power, you don't need that headache. Only choose someone you trust implicitly. Maybe hold on to the POA [document] and let the agent know where the papers are. It ensures you to have a POA designated in case of an emergency but provides protection from your agent turning to the dark side and draining your bank account. There are several special types of POAs you can use:

- **Durable power of attorney.** This POA continues to be in effect in the event someone becomes incapacitated. Regular POAs end when the principal is no longer able to make legal decisions, such as if they were to slip into a coma or develop dementia.
- **Limited power of attorney.** A document that gives an agent POA abilities for a limited time or only for certain purposes.
- **Medical power of attorney.** This is the POA that allows others to make medical decisions on your behalf.

You don't need to have the same agent for your medical and financial POAs. You can even name multiple agents on your durable POA or use several limited POAs to split up control of various parts of your finances so no one person has power over everything. That said, multiple POAs or a POA with shared agents can make your finances more confusing and complex. If you plan to go that route, you may want to consult with a professional first and carefully weigh the pros and cons. Agents need to be aware of an IRS regulation that could cost them a huge amount of money. The government requires POA agents to report whether their principal has money in a foreign bank account. The scary thing is this provision applies even if you don't know that someone has appointed you their POA agent, and failure to report foreign assets comes with stiff penalties. The penalties for that are pretty frightening. It's 50 percent of the amount in the account per year plus criminal penalties.

Although it may be scary to think a POA gives someone control over your finances, they remain an essential part of sound money management. In the event you are in accident or become ill, you'll want a durable POA so someone can step in and man the ship while you are out of commission. "It's important for both the agent and principal to know how powerful these documents are. The fact that they are so powerful is also the reason everyone with a job and money in the bank should have one. Without a POA, your family will need to go to court to get control of your assets, a long and stressful process, for sure. Just remember that quote from "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" when picking your agent: "Choose wisely." [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Maryalene LaPonsie | Jun 30, 2014 ++]

Debt Collection Update 07 ► Statute of Limitations

You probably know that if you owe money, the company you owe can do lots of things to try to collect it – like damaging your credit score, sending a collection agency after you, and suing you in court. But can they come after you for the rest of your life? Nothing lasts forever. Nearly all transgressions in our society have a limit beyond which those doing the pursuing have to give it up. It’s called the “statute of limitations.” While there’s nothing barring a company from attempting to collect forever, their legal remedies do expire, and those are defined by the laws in your state. To find the statute of limitations on debt, check out the chart from CreditInfoCenter.com at <http://www.creditinfocenter.com/rebuild/statuteLimitations.shtml>. You might then want to compare it with the chart from BCSalliance.com at <http://www.bcsalliance.com/debt-statutes-of-limitation-1.html>.

But just because they can’t win in court doesn’t mean they can’t sue. Nor does the statute of limitations prevent them from calling you, sending you letters or otherwise trying to get you to pay. In fact, this practice is quite common. Collection agencies and law firms routinely buy old debts for pennies on the dollar and attempt to collect them. And they’re certainly not above saying or doing just about anything to get you back on the hook. The laws regarding debt collection are tricky. For example, there are states that allow otherwise legally noncollectable debts to be reinstated if the consumer makes a payment – or even acknowledges the debt. Keep in mind that after the statute of limitations expires, unless the debt has been charged off or discharged in bankruptcy, you still owe the money. In other words, the statute of limitations doesn’t wipe out the debt, it just reduces the legal remedies available to collect it.

So if you find yourself in this situation, the smart move is to call a consumer lawyer (you can find one at the National Association of Consumer Advocates’ website at <http://www.naca.net>) and ask the attorney what to do. Do this before responding in any way to any collection notice or other contact from a collection agency. Otherwise, you might inadvertently make yourself liable for an old debt. What shows up on your credit report is determined not by state but federal law. The credit reporting agencies (Experian, TransUnion and Equifax) have to remove most negative information after seven years. Bankruptcies can remain on your report for up to 10 years, and there are some other, less common debts, like unpaid taxes and child support, that can remain on your report indefinitely. The seven-year period normally begins 180 days after the debt becomes delinquent – the day you first missed a payment. But if you start once again making payments, the debt could reappear. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Stacy Johnson | June 10, 2014 ++]

Saving Money ► Dental Care

Have you visited the dentist lately? If so, you are well aware of the hefty price tag that can accompany many services, both routine and non-routine. A cleaning, full set of X-rays and exam generally costs anywhere from \$175 to \$300. And if you’re among the millions of Americans who don’t have dental insurance, you’re paying the full amount yourself. But there are ways to receive high-quality care without spending a lot of money. Have you considered the following?

1. **Dental schools.** The lowest-cost option for those who don’t carry dental coverage is a dental school. Skeptical about the level of care you’ll receive? Don’t be. Although the procedures may be done by students, they are well-supervised by seasoned instructors. And the equipment and tools are high-caliber. But bear in mind that you’ll likely spend more time at the dental school receiving routine care because

instructors have to check the work of their students before you are released. The upside to the extra time is that your teeth and gums will receive the thorough treatment they deserve. Interested in giving a dental school a shot? The American Dental Association's website <http://www.ada.org/en/home-ada/coda/find-a-program/search-dental-programs/dds-dmd-programs> provides a comprehensive listing of locations nationwide. Also, look for dental hygienist schools for low-cost routine cleanings. You can find them at <http://www.adha.org/dental-hygiene-programs>. Here's another possibility: The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research says you may be able to sign up for a clinical trial dealing with your particular dental needs and get free or low-cost care. Go to <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov> and click on "Clinical Trials" near the top.

2. Low-cost clinics. No dental school nearby? If you have limited income, look for a dental clinic associated with a federally funded community health center in your town or county. They charge for services on a sliding scale based on income. You can find them at http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx.

3. Ask questions and be firm. If a dental school or community clinic is not an option, inquire about pricing and payment policies upfront before you visit a local provider. For instance, the dental office may give you a discount if you immediately pay the full bill. Ask about other discounts as well. Also:

- Compare prices between offices, which can vary widely. Talk to friends and read reviews to evaluate service if you're looking for a new dentist. You want a dentist with fair prices and dependable care.
- Check to see if the dentist has been disciplined by your state's dental board. The ADA provides contact information for state boards at <http://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-student-resources/dental-examinations-and-licensure-for-students/understanding-licensure/support-and-resources/state-dental-boards>.
- Be careful about accepting costly niche cosmetic services or extras you may not need, like a deep cleaning if you don't have gum disease. A good dentist won't try to talk you into a crown when a regular filling will do. Unfortunately there are dentists who try to upsell patients.
- Once you've received treatment, keep adequate records in case you receive a hefty bill after the fact for services you didn't authorize.

4. Know what your plan covers. If you're fortunate enough to have dental insurance through your workplace, be aware of what the coverage limits are. The plan may cover the entire cost of one or two basic cleanings a year, but you'll often end up having to pay half the cost of expensive procedures out-of-pocket. Also, insurance usually doesn't pay for cosmetic procedures. Since you're going to be paying for all or a big chunk of many services, that's another reason why it's important to be sure the procedure is truly needed. No insurance? You may want to look into dental discount plans, where participating dentists offer lower prices to plan members, who pay a fee every year. But be careful to choose a reputable company. Note that both TRICARE and VA offer dental programs for a fee.

5. Preventive maintenance. A simple way to keep the costs of dental care under control is by taking care of your teeth, both at home and with regular cleanings at the dentist office. That means brushing twice a day and flossing daily. It's essential for the health of both your teeth and gums. According to the ADA, 100 million Americans skip dental visits each year, "even though regular dental examinations and good oral hygiene can prevent most dental disease." So, do yourself a favor and pay a visit to the dentist. And while in the dental chair, it's also a good idea to inquire about any additional tips that will help you maintain an optimal level of care at home.

[Source: SavingMoneyNews | Allison Martin | Jun 23, 2014 ++]

Phishing Phone Scam Using Caller ID ► How It works

Scammers are using caller ID spoofing technology to impersonate the phone numbers of local businesses, neighbors and even you! Watch out for this wacky twist on the classic phishing phone scam.

How the Scam Works:

1. Your phone rings, and you look at the caller ID. You recognize the number. It may be from a local business or a neighbor down the street. But in strange twist, you might even see your own name and phone number on the caller ID screen.
2. You answer the phone, and it's a robo call. Victims have reported several different phishing scams. In one common version, a recording prompts you to verify your credit card number under the guise of lowering your interest rates.

With many people rejecting calls from unfamiliar numbers, scammers are increasingly posing as familiar businesses, government organizations or people. Scammers purchase lists of phone numbers and use spoofing technology to trick potential victims into picking up the phone. Posing as your own phone number is great for shock value and for ensuring the number isn't blocked.

What to do is a scammer calls:

- Hang up, don't press any buttons and, if you received a voice mail message, don't call the scammer back. We all like to have the last word, but returning the phone call may just give the con artist information he can use.
- Don't trust Caller ID. Scammers have technology that lets them display any number or organization name on your screen.
- Never give out any financial information. If you did not initiate the call, do not provide bank account, credit card or Social Security numbers over the phone unless you have thoroughly done your research and verified the caller.
- Trust your instincts. If something doesn't seem right to you, end the call.

Thanks to the Better Business Bureau serving Central East Texas for their reporting on this scam. [Check out their full article here](#). If you receive one of these scam calls, hang up and report it to BBB so they can warn other phone users in your area. For more information on how to be a savvy consumer, go to bbb.org. To report fraudulent activity or unscrupulous activity, call the BBB Hotline: (903)581-8373. To find out more about scams, check out BBB Scam Stopper at <http://www.bbb.org/council/bbb-scam-stopper>.
[Source: BBB Scam alert Jun 06, 2014 ++]

Credit Muling Scam ► How It works

In a scam known as "credit muling," scammers are taking advantage of cash strapped victims by fooling them into purchasing new wireless contracts. Scammers take the phones, and leave victims on the hook for monthly service fees.

How the Scam Works:

- A person approaches you about a quick, easy way to make some extra money. He or she will pay you to purchase several new wireless contracts and hand over the accompanying cell phones. Don't worry about the contract, this person assures you. You'll be able to cancel it within the allotted time, typically 15 to 30 days.
- When you try to cancel your new contract, however, you realize you've been conned. The companies require that you first give back the phone. Without it, you are now responsible for the monthly service fees for the length of the contract.

What are scammers doing with these phones? Scammers turn around and sell the brand new phones for a profit. After he or she "unlocks" a phone, so it's no longer tied to a particular wireless company, the scammer can sell it in the U.S. for hundreds of dollars or get thousands for it overseas. Like many scams, "credit muling" cons are typically targeted at those in need of money. Scammers cruise colleges and even homeless shelters in search of potential victims... but anyone can be susceptible.

What to know about "credit mule" scams:

- Read your contract. Yes, the fine print is long and tedious, but be sure you know exactly what you are committing to before you sign.
- If it sounds too good to be true... It probably is. If getting paid a couple hundred dollars just to take out a wireless contract sounds too easy, that's because it's a scam.
- Know the consequences of bad credit. Scammers frequently prey on students who may not know the consequences of bad credit. An unpaid cell phone bill will be sent to a collections agency, and this could make it hard to get a loan, a job or even housing later.

Go to <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/whoa-there-watch-out-cell-phone-credit-muling> for More Information regarding credit mules. To find out more about scams or report one, check out BBB Scam Stopper at <http://www.bbb.org/council/bbb-scam-stopper>. [Source: BBB Scam alert Jun 06, 2014 ++]

Tax Burden for Michigan Retirees ► As of Jul 2014

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. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in Michigan

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: 6% (food and prescription drugs exempt; home heating fuels are taxed at 4%)

Gasoline Tax: 57.7 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 63.4 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: \$2.00/pack of 20

Personal Income Taxes

Tax Rate Range: Flat rate of 4.25% of federal adjusted gross income with modifications; some cities impose additional income taxes. For tax year 2013 the tax rate will be 4.25%. The rate will be reduced by 0.1% each year until the tax rate is 3.95%. Beginning October 1, 2015, the rate is 3.9%. Michigan has

made numerous changes in its tax law which take effect in tax year 2012. To view them go to <http://www.michigan.gov/taxes/0,4676,7-238--260229--,00.html>

Personal Exemptions: Single – \$3,950; Married – \$7,900; Dependents – \$2,300

Standard Deduction: None

Medical/Dental Deduction: None

Federal Income Tax Deduction: None

Retirement Income Taxes: Social Security, military, federal, and state/local government pensions are exempt. Private pension income is exempt up to \$47,309 (individual filers) or \$94,618 (married filing jointly). These private pensions are reduced by the amount of any public pension deduction claimed. Taxpayers 65 or older may deduct interest, dividends, and capital gains up to \$20,000 (individual filers) or \$40,000 (married filing jointly). These deductions are reduced by any pension exemption taken. Federal and Michigan public pensions are totally exempt. Public pensions include benefits received from the federal civil service, State of Michigan public retirement systems and political subdivisions of Michigan, military retirement and Tier 2 railroad retirement. If the conditions of the plan under step one are met, then these payments are totally exempt from Michigan income tax. Michigan residents can treat the public pensions received from the following states as totally exempt: Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. Michigan residents who receive public pensions from other states are subject to the private pension exemption limits. Michigan residents who receive public pensions from states not listed above are subject to the private pension exemption limits.

Michigan recently changed how it taxes retirement benefits. These changes are for returns filed for tax year 2012. For details refer to http://www.michigan.gov/documents/taxes/Tax_Change_Summaries_-_Retirement_Exemptions_359799_7.pdf

Retired Military Pay: Not taxed. Survivor benefits are exempt if the amounts are exempt from federal income tax or classified as military compensation or military retirement pay. Military retirement benefits that pass to the spouse of a deceased member of the military are exempt. Retirement benefits passing to other beneficiaries are taxed.

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

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

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

Property Taxes

Property in Michigan is generally assessed at 50% of its true cash value. Some seniors, disabled persons, veterans, surviving spouses of veterans and farmers may be able to delay paying property taxes. It depends on the county of residence and your income level. If you own the home you live in, you may be exempt from a portion of local school taxes under the Homeowner's Principal Residence Exemption Program, formerly known as the Michigan Homestead Exemption Program. It allows homeowners an exemption from their local School Operating Millage. In accordance with Public Act 237 of 1994, homeowners that occupy their property as their principal residence may exempt up to 18 mills. A homestead property tax credit is available to homeowners or renters. The credit is based on the property tax on a homestead that is subject to local property taxes or your household income. Only those whose household income is less than \$82,650 are eligible. For information on the [homestead credit](#), call 517-334-7076. For other property tax

matters, call 517-373-0500. To view the state's property tax estimator, go to http://www.michigan.gov/taxes/0,1607,7-238-43535_43540---,00.html

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

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

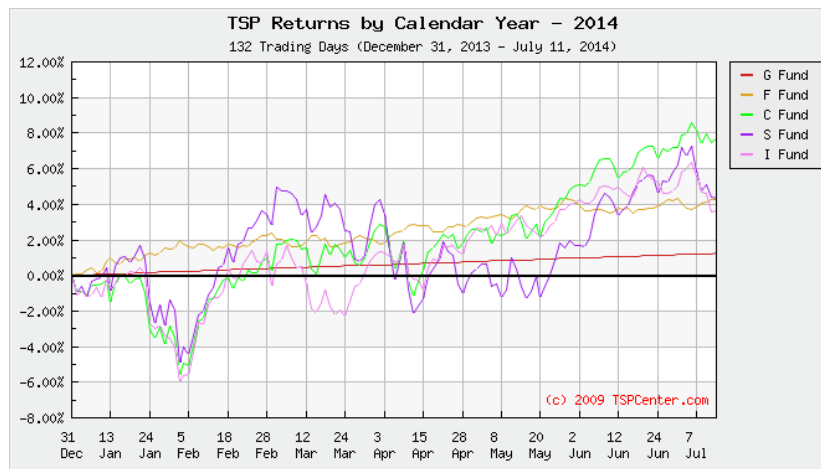
For further information, visit the Michigan Taxes web site <http://www.michigan.gov/taxes>. Seniors are invited to call a special assistance number: 800-487-7000

[Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-kansas-new-mexico#Michigan> Jul 2014 ++]

Thrift Savings Plan 2014 ▶ Share Prices + YTD Gain or Loss

TSP Share Prices for Jul 11, 2014

	Close	YTD
G Fund	\$14.4638	+1.24%
F Fund	\$16.4162	+4.28%
C Fund	\$25.7044	+7.66%
S Fund	\$35.1290	+4.33%
I Fund	\$26.5021	+3.67%
L 2050	\$14.8277	+5.40%
L 2040	\$26.0825	+5.03%
L 2030	\$24.5364	+4.59%
L 2020	\$22.6522	+3.93%
L Income	\$17.2274	+2.44%

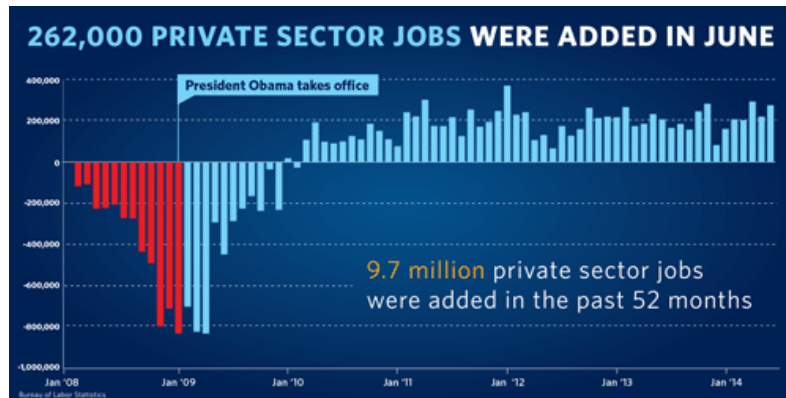


[Source: <http://tspcenter.com/tspReturns.php?view=year> Jul 13, 2014 ++]



Notes of Interest ► 1 thru 15 Jul 2014

- **Tricare TV.** To view a TRICARE TV episode of to learn “How You Can File a Claim” go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxUbsRJNv6U>.
- **Tribute to soldiers.** This is very much worth the 1:31 it takes to watch it! Check out Guinness Makes Touching Tribute to Soldiers at <http://www.ijreview.com/2014/07/154244-guinness-makes-touching-tribute-soldiers-moving-empty-chair-ad/>
- **Employment.** The Federal Government lost 40,000 more employees than it gained last year. An overwhelming majority of new hires -- four out of every five -- were from defense and security-related agencies
- **Farmers.** The USDA says the average age of an American Farmer is 58 years old.
- Convicted spy Arthur Walker dies in federal prison
- **OBIT.** Arthur Walker, a retired Navy lieutenant convicted in 1985 for his role in a spy ring, has died in prison. He was 79. He was convicted of stealing secret documents from a defense contractor and giving them to his brother, John A. Walker Jr., for delivery to the Soviet Union.
- **God Bless America.** Check out <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10203900770857211> for a nostalgic rendition of the song.
- **Employment.** Private Sector Jobs 52 month overview:



Plasma Television ► Headed to the Tech Graveyard

Plasma televisions appear to be headed to the tech graveyard, joining dinosaurs like the VCR and floppy disk. Despite being praised by sites like CNET for having the best picture quality available in a television (Samsung PNF8500), the demand for plasma televisions has dropped. According to CNN Money, plasma TV shipments plunged 16 percent globally in the first quarter of 2014 compared with a year ago. Plasma

televisions have largely been replaced by LCD TVs, which are thinner, more energy efficient and cheaper, Vox said. The death of plasma is an incredible success story for LCD technology, but it's also a sad reminder that disruption doesn't always mean the best products win: No LCD TV has ever looked as good as the best plasma TVs. Panasonic quit making plasma TVs in 2013. Samsung recently announced it is pulling the plug on plasma TVs in November, leaving LG Electronics as the last major international plasma TV manufacturer. But LG plans to halt production later this year, CNN Money said. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Krystal Steinmetz | July 7, 2014 ++]



Japan~China Dispute ► East China Sea Island Chain Ownership Issue

China's territorial dispute with Japan over a chain of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea could lead to an "explosive" confrontation, Taiwan's top diplomat in the United States warned Wednesday. "These little islands could trigger something," Lyushun Shen, ambassador of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States, said in an interview with USA TODAY. "A small collision of patrol boats could trigger a major incident. It could be explosive." Both countries claim a group of tiny, remote islands known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. Taiwan calls them Diaoyutai. The United States has not taken sides as to which country owns the islands, but it recently reiterated its mutual defense pact with Japan and has criticized China's aggressive efforts to protect the waters.

Shen said the dispute has roots in the deep animosity China still feels from the Japanese brutality and occupation it suffered during the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. China used the anniversary 7 JUL of the start of the war to raise nationalistic feelings and arouse public opinion against Japan, Shen said. "There is a 'Hate Japan' campaign going on," he said. China has provoked conflicts with several nations in the South China Sea, including Vietnam and the Philippines, over territorial rights to islands there. Shen noted Taiwan originally categorized and named the disputed islands. Japan said 9 JUL that its military scrambled fighter jets a record 340 times in the three months to June in response to feared intrusions on its airspace, as tensions grow with China. The Joint Staff of Japan Self-Defense Forces said, however, that around 70 percent of the jet launches were in response to Russian planes approaching Japanese airspace.

The communist Chinese regime has ruled the mainland since winning a civil war in 1949, when the losing nationalists fled to Taiwan and claimed to be the real Chinese government in exile. The island continues to operate as a politically independent democracy, even as it has fostered closer economic and social ties with the mainland. The communist regime in Beijing is recognized by virtually all other nations as the only legitimate government of China. Shen said he hoped continued economic, social and cultural integration of the two systems would lead to a "peaceful" political solution in the future. He noted Taiwan is visited by nearly 3 million mainland Chinese tourists each year, and marriages between island and mainland residents continue to grow. [Source: USA Today | Owen Ullmann | July 9, 2014 ++]

Pollinator Health TF Update 01 ► Murder Mystery Moving to K Street

Honeybees—pollinators that serve as the matchmakers of the floral kingdom—are dying off in droves, frightening environmentalists and scientists who fear the unfilled natural niche that collapsing bee colonies leave behind. Those concerns hit the national stage last month when President Obama launched a federal investigation to find out what is driving the decline. All of that has made the pesticide industry nervous. Environmentalists have long argued that a widely used class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, or neonics for short, are a major cause of bee die-offs. And green groups are hoping that White House attention—combined with a growing body of scientific evidence that points the finger at chemical crop treatments—will lead to an all-out ban on the pesticides. For the industry, that would be a major dent in sales. In 2009, neonics accounted for \$2.6 billion in profits industry-wide.



In an effort to protect their product, pesticide makers are loading up on high-powered lobbyists. Bayer, the largest manufacturer of neonics, has signed former House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt's firm to lobby on the issue, according to disclosure records filed at the end of June. Gephardt himself is listed as a lobbyist for the company, along with his former chief of staff, Thomas O'Donnell, and aide Sharon Daniels. Bayer also signed a contract in April with Cornerstone Government Affairs as part of its honeybee lobbying push. A Bayer spokesperson declined to comment on the message its lobbyists plan to push. But the company confirmed that it recently hired both lobbying firms, and its line on pesticides has been well-publicized. "Some critics contend that neonicotinoids may be involved in honeybee losses," Bayer's website proclaims. "However, there has been no demonstrated effect on colony health associated with neonicotinoid-based insecticides."

In addition to its honeybee lobbying, Bayer has launched a public-relations offensive. The chemical giant opened the doors to its North American Bee Care Center in North Carolina in April. And last month, Bayer hosted a reception for members of Congress in Washington to talk about its efforts to help honeybees during National Pollinator Week. Bayer isn't the only pesticides maker fixing for a fight. Syngenta, the second-largest neonic manufacturer, is registered to lobby on pesticides. A Syngenta spokesperson said the company actively discusses "the pollinator issue" with government officials. The lobbying push is backed by deep pockets. Bayer ponied up more than \$2 million for all of its lobbying efforts in the first quarter of the year, according to lobbying disclosure records. Syngenta, meanwhile, paid out \$350,000 in the same interval for total lobbying expenditures.

Environmentalists and public-health and food-safety advocates are also shelling out to make the case that pesticides are killing honeybees, but have spent considerably less cash. The Center for Food Safety, which lobbies against neonics, spent only \$10,000 total on lobbying efforts in the first quarter of the year. Friends of the Earth, an environmental group, which contends neonics are the leading cause of bee deaths, spent just under \$13,000 in the fourth quarter of last year. As long as the cause of the declines remains in

question, both sides will continue to make their case to the administration and on Capitol Hill. "This issue isn't going away, and what we're starting to see now is lobbying efforts really ramp up," Larissa Walker, the policy and campaign coordinator with the Center for Food Safety said. The Environmental Protection Agency, which is reviewing neonics, has indicated that it views the link between pesticides and honeybee deaths as far from settled science.

A five-year scientific review of the academic literature released last month reported that pollinators are "highly vulnerable" to neonics. Environmentalists seized on the study as the latest evidence that the chemicals are killing bees. Pesticide manufacturers, however, say that's simply not true, pointing instead to a host of other factors as likely reasons for a recent decline in native bee populations. One of those factors is the varroa mite, a parasite that preys on bees by drinking their blood.

Democratic Rep. Earl Blumenauer of Oregon has put forward legislation that would require EPA to halt use of the pesticides until a conclusive determination over the link between pesticides and bee health has been either established or disproved. The legislation has little chance of passing, but the European Union has already instituted a temporary, two-year ban on the use of the pesticides, and green groups are hoping the U.S. will do the same.

Meanwhile, bee declines continue at an alarming rate. Starting in 2006, commercial beekeepers in the U.S. began reporting a loss of nearly one-third of their hives during the winter. Losses last winter were lower than they have been on average during the past eight years. But scientists, beekeepers, and green groups say the rate of decline remains alarmingly high. Researchers have struggled to explain the insect epidemic, but generally cite stressors—including pesticides, parasites, poor nutrition, and genetics—as likely reasons for the decline. Pollination is essential to the survival of crops such as apples, avocados, and lemons. Last month, the White House said bee pollination produces \$15 billion worth of agricultural yields annually. "We're at a crisis point here," said Lisa Archer, the food and technology program director for Friends of the Earth. "The question now is whether we're going to listen to the alarm bells that are going off. [Source: National Journal | Clare Foran | July 2, 2014 ++]

Normandy Then & Now ► Carentan France



June 6, 1944: US Army paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division drive a captured German Kubelwagen at the junction of Rue Holgate and RN13 in the Normandy town of Carentan. Above the same junction as it appears today.

Photos That Say it All ► CR Directions



Have You Heard? ► Materialism

A veteran US congressman, palms thick with lobbyist grease, parked his brand new Porsche 911 Turbo in front of his district office, to show it off to his staff.

As he was getting out, a truck came barreling down the road, drifted right and completely tore off the driver's door. Fortunately, a cop was close enough to see the accident and pulled up behind the now door-less Porsche with his lights flashing.

Before the cop had a chance to ask any questions, the man started screaming hysterically about how his precious Porsche, which he had just purchased the day before, was completely ruined and no matter how any car body shop tried to make it new again, would never be the same.

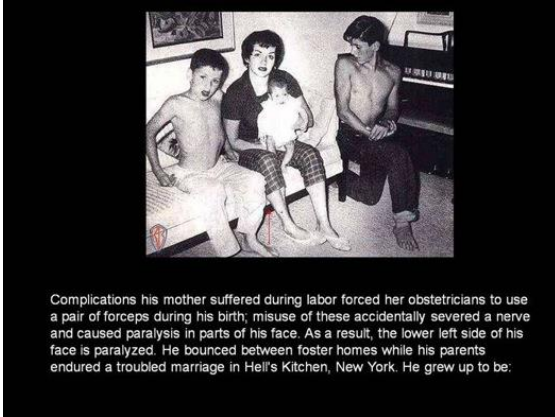
When he finally wound down from his rant, the cop shook his head in disbelief, "I can't believe how materialistic you are," he said, "You are so focused on your possessions that you neglect the most important things in life."

"How can you say such a thing?" he replied.

The cop replied, "Don't you even realize that your left arm is missing? It was severed when the truck hit you!"

"OHH, MY GOD!" screamed the young democrat. . . "My Rolex!"

They Grew Up to Be? ► Sylvester Stallone



“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”
— Winston Churchill (1874-1965) British politician, historian, writer, and artist



Interesting Ideas ► No Ice chest!



Department of the Treasury - Internal Revenue Service

Form **1040EZ** **Income Tax Return for Single and Joint Filers With No Dependents** 2013

First name and initial Every	Last name Single	First social security number
If a joint return, spouse's first name and initial		Spouse's social security number
Home address (number and street). If you have a P.O. box, see instructions. Every City in America		Apt. no. ▲ Make sure the SSN(s) above are correct.
City, town or post office, state, and ZIP code. If you lack a foreign address, also complete space below (see instructions).		Foreign country name
Foreign province/state/country		Foreign postal code

Income

Attach Form(s) W-2 here.
Enclose, but do not attach, any pay stubs.

Dear IRS -

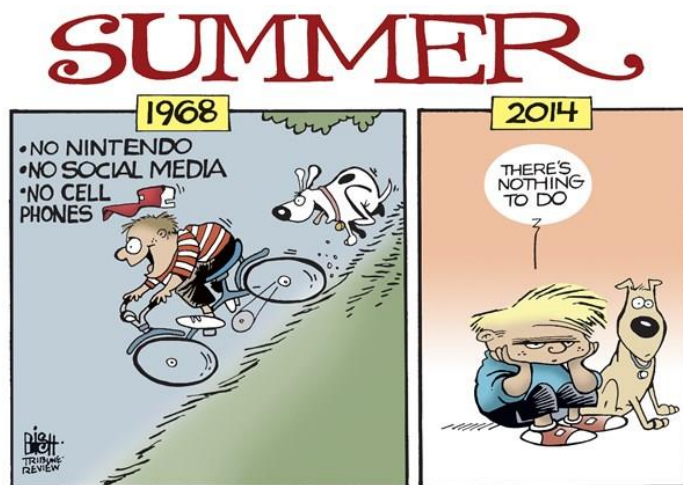
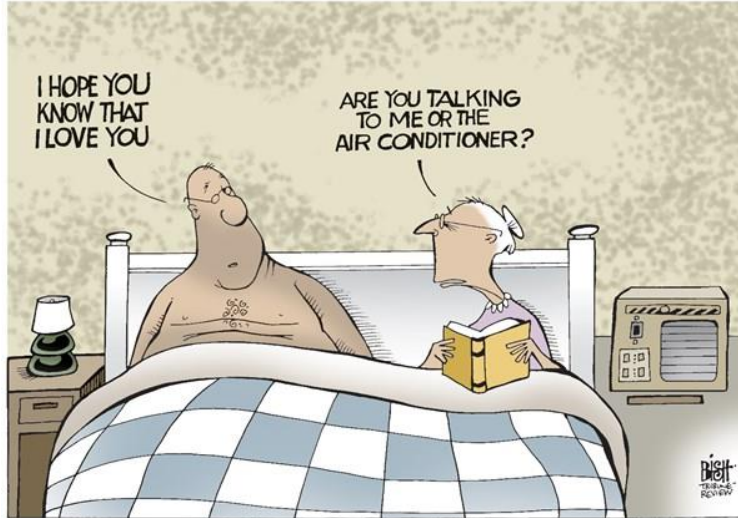
I lost the last two years of my tax information. My hard drive crashed, then I destroyed it. I didn't back it up. I will not comply with any subpoenas and will plead the 5th.

Because I learned all of that utter BULLSHIT from you. If you can do it, so can I.

LOVE, AMERICA



THIS IS MY SPOT!



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

Editor/Publisher RAO Bulletin

RAO Baguio, PSC 517 Box RCB, FPO AP 96517

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

Email: raoemo@sbcglobal.net

Bulletin Web Access: <http://www.nhc-ul.com/rao.html>, <http://www.veteransresources.org>, or <http://frabr245.org>

Office: Red Lion, 92 Glen Luna, cnr Leonard Rd & Brent Rd., Baguio City, 2400 Philippines

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