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Retiree Activities Office Newsletter

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Articles appearing in this newsletter are compiled from local sources, newsletters received by the RAD, and from other military sources. Information has been edited and reprinted for the benefit of our retiree population. Our appreciation is extended to those agencies and newsletter sources.

VA Announces Online Claims Applications

The Department of Veterans Affairs will now accept online applications from veterans, survivors and other claimants for various benefits without the additional requirement of submitting a signed paper copy of the application.

People can now file initial applications for disability compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits online. VA will process applications received through its online application Web site, VONAPP, without the claimant's signature. The electronic application will be sufficient authentication of the claimant's application for benefits. Normal development procedures and rules of

evidence will still apply to all VONAPP applications.

VONAPP, found at www.va.gov/onlineapps.htm <<http://mercury.afnews.af.mil/t/1879968/4617084/233/0/>>, is a Web-based system that benefits both internal and external users. Veterans, survivors and other claimants seeking compensation, pension, education, or vocational rehabilitation benefits can apply electronically without the constraints of location, postage cost, and time delays in mail delivery.

Officials announced that VONAPP reduces the number of incomplete applications received by VA, decreasing the need for additional

development by VA claims processors. The online application also provides a link to apply for VA health care benefits and much more.

More than 3.7 million veterans and beneficiaries receive compensation and pension benefits from VA, and approximately 523,000 students receive education benefits. Approximately 90,000 disabled veterans participate in VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program.

For more information about VA benefits, go to VA's Web site at www.va.gov <<http://mercury.afnews.af.mil/t/1879968/4617084/234/0/>> or call the toll-free number (800) 827-1000. (Courtesy of VA)

VA Offers New Online Resource Service

The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering a new online service, My HealtheVet, which is a gateway to veteran health benefits and services.

It provides access to: trusted health information; links to federal and VA benefits and resources; the Personal Health Journal; and online VA prescription refill service.

In the future, MHV registrants will be able to view appointments, co-pay balances, and key portions of their VA medical records online.

My HealtheVet is a powerful tool to help veterans better understand and

manage their health, according to VA officials.

The Web site also features a section called "Learn About" which provides resources on a variety of topics such as computers, the Internet, phishing scams and telephone scams. Health information from A to Z plus medical dictionaries, an encyclopedia, journals, and more will be available soon.

To visit the My HealtheVet site, go to www.myhealth.va.gov/ <<http://www.myhealth.va.gov/>>.



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Welcome Colonel Tellez, 35th Medical Group Commander



The Misawa Retirees welcome Colonel Guillermo Tellez and wife Kristy to our Northern Japan community. Col. Tellez arrives from Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii where he was the 15th Aeromedical-Dental Squadron Commander and Assistant Surgical and Clinical Professor, Department of Otolaryngology-Head/Neck Surgery. His prior assignments had him at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany as the Chief, Division of Surgery and in Washington DC as Chief Consultant, Otolaryngology-Head/Neck Surgery to the Air Force Surgeon

General. We hope his busy calendar will allow him to practice his specialty while here, Ears-Noses-Throat (ENT) We look forward to his involvement with the retirees and his

continued support of our programs.

Welcome to Misawa Sir



Farewell To Col. Armour 35th MDG Commander



The retiree community here at Misawa sends our sincere appreciation and best wishes to our outgoing Medical Group Commander, Colonel Mary Armour and husband John. Over the past two years we have been blessed with her leadership and her compassionate involvement in the treatment of Misawa retirees. Colonel Armour will be missed by us all and we hope that her new assignment in San Antonio as the Vice Commander, AFMOA

brings her as much happiness and rewards as she has given to our Northern Japan community. God Bless you and Thanks once more for everything you have done.

SAYONARA



SSA International Agreements

In today's global environment people often relocate from one country to another, either permanently or on a limited time basis. This presents challenges to businesses, governments, and individuals seeking to ensure future benefits or having to deal with taxation authorities in multiple countries. To that end, the Social Security Administration has signed treaties, often referred to as Totalization Agreements, with other social insurance programs in various foreign countries. Overall, these agreements serve two main purposes.

First, they eliminate dual Social Security taxation, the situation that occurs when a worker from one country works in another country and is required to pay Social Security taxes to both countries on the same earnings. Second, the agreements help fill gaps in benefit protection for workers who have divided their careers between the United States and another country. Normally, non-resident aliens of foreign countries without a Totalization Agreement are taxed by the U.S. at a rate of 30% on all income derived in the U.S. To ensure

payment the tax is normally withheld at source from payments forwarded to a SSA beneficiary overseas. The following countries with effective dates have signed Totalization agreements with the SSA:

Australia (October 1, 2002)
Austria (November 1, 1991)
Belgium (July 1, 1984)
Canada (August 1, 1984)
Chile (December 1, 2001)
Finland (November 1, 1992)
France (July 1, 1988)
Germany (December 1, 1979)

Greece (September 1, 1994)
Ireland (September 1, 1993)
Italy (November 1, 1978)
Japan (October 1, 2005)
Luxembourg (November 1, 1993)
Netherlands (November 1, 1990)
Norway (July 1, 1984)
Portugal (August 1, 1989)
South Korea (April 1, 2001)
Spain (April 1, 1988)
Sweden (January 1, 1987)
Switzerland (November 1, 1980)
United Kingdom (January 1, 1985)
[Source: Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia | Jul 08]



Veteran's Benefits Expiration Dates

Many of your benefits have an expiration date. Below are a few important federal ones to remember so you don't lose out. Most veterans are not aware, that their benefits can expire. For more detailed information of these programs go to <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/veterans-benefit-expiration-dates> or: www.va.gov:

Education, Training, and Employment Programs: 10 years from date of last discharge or release from active duty.

Veterans Education Assistance Program (VEAP): 10 years from last discharge or release from active duty.

Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR): 14 years from the date of eligibility for the program, or until released from the Selected Reserve or National Guard. (Some extensions available if activated.)

Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP): No time limit, while remaining in the same level of the Ready Reserve.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VocRehab): Generally, 12 years of separation from service or within 12 years of being awarded service-connected VA disability compensation.

VA Insurance Programs:

Servicemembers' Group Life Insur-

ance (SGLI): Coverage ends 120 days after separation or Can be extended up to 1 year for totally disabled veterans.

Family Group Life Insurance (FGLI): Coverage ends 120 days after separation or Can be extended up to 1 year for totally disabled veterans after separation.

Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI): Within 120 days of separation.

Service Disables Veterans Insurance (SDVI): Within 2 years from the date of being notified of service-connected status.

Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI): Must apply before age 70

Veterans Health Care Administration

(VHA) PROGRAMS:

Veterans Health care: No Time Limit

Combat Veterans Health Care: 5 years from release from active duty.

Dental Treatment: Within 90 days of separation.

VA Pension And Compensation Programs:

Disability Compensation: No Time Limit.

Disability Pension: No Time Limit.

VA Home Loan Guaranty Program: No Time Limit.

[Source: CFVI Newsletter Jun 08]

Veterans History Project Allows People To Share Experiences

The Veterans History Project collects and preserves the remembrances of American war veterans and civilian workers who supported them. These collections of first-hand accounts are archived in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for use by researchers and to serve as an inspiration for generations to come.

The program is designed to preserve the legacies of America's aging veterans who are dying at the rate of about 1,500 a day.

"Getting these oral histories now is important, because once they are gone, their stories are gone forever," said Steve Hollingshead from the Department of Veterans Affairs' Media Services Division.

The project collects remembrances of veterans who served in World War I, World War II, the Cold War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War (1990-1995), or Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts (2001-present). Citizen civilians who actively supported war efforts (such as war industry workers, USO workers, flight instructors,

medical volunteers, defense contractors, etc.) are also invited to share their valuable stories.

Interviews taped through the program go on file at the Library of Congress, where they are available for researchers, and the veteran gets a personal DVD copy, Mr. Hollingshead explained.

But while the program initially focused on older veterans, Mr. Hollingshead said, he is increasingly seeing veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan participating in the project.

The younger veterans' stories are different from those of earlier generations, Mr. Hollingshead said. They served in different wars, carrying out different missions and applying different kinds of warfare. Their wounds are different today, with traumatic brain injuries and amputations more prevalent than in the past.

But despite these differences, Mr. Hollingshead said, he sees a common thread among the veterans he interviews. Whether they served in World War I or Operation Iraqi Freedom, or

in some conflict in between, all recognize that "they were there, fighting for their country," he said.

"All of them love their country and are here for all the right reasons," Mr. Hollingshead said. "The patriotism you see in these people is just phenomenal."

All Americans, including students and grandchildren, can participate in documenting the lives of the nation's war veterans, Mr. Hollingshead said.

The history project relies on volunteers throughout the nation to collect veterans' stories on behalf of the Library of Congress. These stories are made available to researchers and the general public, both at the library in Washington and via the VHP Web site at

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-home.html>.

The U.S. Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000. The authorizing legislation (Public Law 106-380), sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton and Steny

Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives, and Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate, received unanimous support and was signed into law by President Clinton in October 2000. (Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service, contrib-



Library of Congress

Compensation Panel Recommends TRICARE Changes

The Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation has recommended fee changes to TRICARE, the military's health care system.

The recommendations would mostly affect retirees and will not affect active-duty servicemembers or their dependents, retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Jan D. "Denny" Eakle, the director of the study, said in a Pentagon briefing Aug. 5.

"Retiree fees ought to relate to how much the plan is worth," she said. "The ... higher-value plans should have higher premiums associated with them."

The panel believes fees need to be fair to all retired military members, General Eakle said. "They ought to reflect how much income an individual has, so that if they make more money and are therefore better able to pay for a system, they should do so," she said.

One problem is the fee structure for Tricare has not changed in 13 years. "When TRICARE started out in 1995, military members, retirees were charged \$230 per individual, \$460 per family," she said. "Today in 2008, they're charged

\$230 per individual, \$460 per family."

In 1995, servicemembers paid 27 percent of their health care cost. Today that share is less than 12 percent.

Over-65 military retirees -- those using the "TRICARE for Life" program -- have been paying the Medicare Part B program fee of 25 percent, but this is due to rise.

"Essentially what this says to you is that we are asking our older retirees, who are in fact the least likely to hold jobs and therefore have the lowest incomes, to pay the most for their system," General Eakle said.

But TRICARE for Life is a much more generous program than TRICARE Prime. "We believe we need to get some parity between our older and our younger retirees," General Eakle said.

The panel wants to redress some of this imbalance. "We believe that the under-65 retirees should begin paying 40 percent of the Medicare Part B premium using the same fee structure that is laid

on by the Medicare system," General Eakle said, adding that this should bring the system into a semblance of parity.

"In addition, we believe that the under-65 retirees ... who elect to use TRICARE Standard and Extra need to pay a small fee for that," she said. "And we would suggest to the department that that fee be set at 15 percent of the Medicare Part B. We think the family rate should be set at double the individual rate and that the premium increase needs to be phased in over four years."

Other recommendations include using the Medicare deductible rate -- \$135 per person in 2008 -- for TRICARE. The panel also recommended to the department that all co-pays and co-insurance for any preventive service be provided at no cost to all members and retirees who have access to TRICARE.

The final panel recommendation to the Department of Defense is to establish an open enrollment period for TRICARE, General Eakle said. (Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service)



GI Bill Increase

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that the Montgomery GI Bill will soon be increased by 20% -- a total increase of nearly \$220 a month over last year's rate. The increased full-time student

payment rate of \$1,321 multiplied by the 36-month brings the GI Bill total payout to over \$47,500. If you are GI Bill eligible and have benefits remaining, you get this increase no matter when you became eligible or begin using it.

This is increase that will help pay college costs until the new GI Bill goes into effect in AUG 09. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 11 Jul 08]



Snail Mail

Those of you receiving this newsletter through the postal service may not be receiving full benefit of our DECA and AAFES pages. If you have an email account, please

let us know and you can receive this information about two ~ three weeks sooner. Just send a s h o r t m e s s a g e t o rao@misawa.af.mil.





Legal Residency

What follows is aimed at active duty military personnel who are covered under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) of 2003. As to whether their nonmilitary spouses and dependent children get the same protections; one must look at state law. Most states allow the family members to maintain the same state of legal residence as the military spouse, but do not assume this to be so. Check with a legal assistance office. Under the Act (formerly known as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940), a military member's state of legal residence (Home State) does not change every time they are transferred. If one is a legal resident of Ohio when one comes on full time active duty, that person stays an Ohio citizen so long as they are on active duty, even if they spend 20 years on active duty and never step foot in Ohio during the who period. This means they stay a legal resident of their home state for such things as their driver's license, car registration, income taxes, personal property taxes, and voting. Even if a service member no longer has any form of address in their home state, the member stays a legal resident. In some counties, for voting purposes, if you no longer have a physical address there the county makes your address the local courthouse. This is contrary to what happens to the average civilian or retiree who gets transferred or moves to another state since, by operation of law, they become a citizen/legal resident of the new state.

Another effect of the Act is that a military member may obtain a state drivers license and/or register his or

her car in the state in which he or she is assigned under orders. Under the Act doing either or both of these things does not automatically make one a legal resident of the state one is assigned to. You probably know someone who has kept a state's plates on their car after transferring to another state even though they are a legal resident of a third state. The danger is a person who keeps the plates or license of the host state they had been residing in after they transfer. Doing so could be used by the host state to argue you now owe them income taxes since keeping your license with them after you left the state shows that you are now a legal resident of that state. It could also lead to a traffic citation and fine. Remember, your registration and license can only be from your home state or where you are currently stationed/residing pursuant to military orders.

If a military member wants to become a legal resident of the state they are physically present in due to PCS orders, they may do so by avowing that, for the foreseeable future, he or she desires to make that state their legal residence for the rest of their life. Thus, you must have both physical presence and the intent at the same time in order to make this change. You must also actually be living there for more than just a few weeks. If one decides to change their legal residence, one would do certain things to reflect this change to the rest of the world. DEFINITE INDICATORS are where one votes and where one files their state income tax returns as to one's military pay if the home state has a tax. Even if a return

is not required, it is frequently a good idea to file a return and have a paperwork trail reaffirming your state of legal residence/home state. MAYBE INDICATORS are your driver's license and vehicle registrations. Some states, such as Florida, have a written affidavit one can file at the local courthouse that attests to a person becoming a legal resident of that state. If one does that, get a few certified copies from the court clerk of the newly filed affidavit and send one copy to your old home state with your income tax return for that year so they will know why you have quit filing with them.

Legal residence or Home State is not to be confused with "Home of Record" which is a purely military term. Usually they are one in the same but "Home of Record" cannot be changed during one's enlistment. The main purpose of "Home of Record" is that it sets the limit the distance the government is willing to pay to move you when you get off of active duty. Retirees, however, get to move anywhere in the country when they retire compliments of the military. Retirees do not get the protections of the Act and must file taxes and do everything else that the state they are living in requires. Having said that, anyone who is, or has been in the military, should check with their state of residence to see if under state law they are entitled to any perks. Most states give military, veterans, retirees, and in some cases their family members some sort of special treatment when it comes to taxes and licenses. This is particularly true for wounded, disabled, or deceased personnel. Many states exempt all or part of a

military pension from state income tax. Every state has its own "state" veterans affairs office which can provide such information. Do not confuse it with the local federal Department of Veterans Affairs office, which is a separate entity.

The SCRA covers other matters. The major areas the SCRA covers include the stay of legal actions, rent, installment contracts, mortgages, liens, assignment, leases, life insurance, taxes and public lands, powers of attorney, professional liability protection, health insurance reinstatement, guarantee of residency for military personnel, and business or trade obligations. To review the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act of 2003 refer to <http://www.servicemembers.gov/scratext.htm> and http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/legal_assistance/cp/scratext.pdf. Some useful web sites containing Summaries and "How To" Guides are:

<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/lamp/downloads/SCRAguide.pdf>.

http://www.justice.gov/usao/az/rights/Servicemembers_Civil_Relief_Act.pdf.

<http://www.abanet.org/family/military/scracijudgesguidecklist.pdf>.

<http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/content.php?qrylvl=3&lvlid=1&lvlfolder=yes&lvl2id=11&lvl2folder=yes>

[Source: Cdr Wayne Johnson, JAGC, USN (Ret) MAY 2008 wayneljohnson@hotmail.com]

Afterburner

The News for USAF Retired Personnel, Afterburner, is now only available electronically. If you do not

have internet capability, contact the Retiree Activities Office and we will print a copy for you. You will need to

stop by the RAD to do this. We can make exceptions to this policy for those unable to travel due to medical

conditions or for far outlying areas. Contact the RAD for details on your situation.

Panel Recommends Changes To Military Retirement

A panel looking at military compensation has recommended dramatic changes in the military retirement system.

The recommendations are part of the second volume put out by members of the 10th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation.

The first volume, released in March, looked at cash compensation. Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Jan D. "Denny" Eakle was director of the panel, and she briefed the press during a Pentagon news conference Aug. 5.

General Eakle said critics of the current military retirement system say it is not equitable, it is not flexible and it is not efficient.

"There is a perception that the system we have today is inequitable because only 15 percent of all enlisted personnel and less than half of officers will ever receive anything in the system," she said.

Reserve-component personnel also believe the current system discriminates against them, especially at a time when reserve forces are being called on more, she said.

The retirement proposal would offer a defined benefit, defined contributions, "gate" pays and separation pays.

The defined benefit would be 2.5 percent of the average basic pay for the highest 36 months of the individual's career multiplied by the number of years of service, with servicemembers vested at 10 years of service. Payments to retirees would begin at age 60 for those with less than 20 years of service and at age 57 for those with 20 years of service or more. Servicemembers could opt for an immediate annuity, but the payout would follow the Federal Employee

Retirement System methodology; a 5 percent penalty per year for early withdrawal.

The defined contribution portion would be an automatic government-funded Thrift Savings Plan. Servicemembers would not have to match any government payment. The government would not put any money in for the first year, but would put in 2 percent of base pay for two years of service, 3 percent for three and four years of service, and 5 percent for five and more years of service. Again, this would be vested after 10 years of service.

The military also would make "gate pays" to servicemembers who reach specific years of service. These would vary by years of service and skills, General Eakle said.

"This is a payment made for achieving a particular year of service," she explained. "And within the services, they would have the flexibility to vary this by year of service as well as by skill. That way, they could begin to shape the skills by dragging people further into their career by offering them an incentive."

Finally, the system would include separation pay to servicemembers that would also vary by years of service and skills.

"The separation payments would be made available by the service to members that they wished to entice to leave," General Eakle said. This would be a permanent tool services would have available, she added.

The panel used a Rand Corporation computer model to test the recommendations, but General Eakle said the panel members would like a large-scale test in the Defense

Department.

"Therefore, the recommendation of this QRMC is that the Department of Defense conduct a multi-year test of this system," General Eakle said. "The way the test would work is this: All four services would be asked to identify some skills that have different types of retention patterns -- some that stay not very long, some that stay longer periods of time -- and ones they wish to influence."

The test would offer people in those skills in the first eight years of service an opportunity to volunteer.

"If someone was selected for the test, they would be paid all of the TSP that they should have earned up until that point, and it will be put in their TSP account for them," she said. "The program's vesting rules would in fact apply to all those individuals. So should they achieve 10 years of service while they are in the test, they would fully own it."

At the end of the test period, people who are in the new system who wish to revert to the original retirement system would be allowed to do so, she said.

Any change in the retirement system would require action by Congress. DOD officials said they will carefully examine the panel's recommendations and then decide if they should move forward. The study will take at least six to 12 months, so any decision would be made by the next administration, DOD officials added. (Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service)





Troops To Teachers

About 60 servicemembers preparing to retire or separate from the military got the word loud and clear during a recent Transition Assistance Program workshop here: If Uncle Sam can't have you anymore, the public school system would love to have you.

School districts around the country are desperate for the maturity and experience troops have gained through military service, said retired Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Robert Henry, who coordinates the Troops to Teachers Program for Maryland and the District of Columbia.

The Defense Department launched the Troops to Teachers program in 1994 to attract departing military members into teaching positions in low-income and underprivileged school districts. Fourteen years later, the program has placed more than 11,000 former troops into public schools nationwide, Petty Officer Henry told the group. Almost half the program's teachers work in high schools, 30 percent in middle schools and about 20 percent in elementary schools. More than 80 percent of them are men, compared to about 25 percent of traditional teachers.

To qualify for the program, a candidate needs a bachelor's degree and teacher certification that the Troops to Teachers program can

help finance, Petty Officer Henry said.

He called the Troops to Teachers program a great opportunity for former servicemembers who enjoy working with young people and want to continue serving their communities. Former troops are prime candidates for teaching jobs -- particularly in math, the sciences and special education -- because they bring a unique quality to their classrooms.

"They have real-world experience, and they bring a level of maturity, along with good communications skills," he said. "Most have a sense of service and want to continue to give back to the community.

"But beyond that," he continued, "troops bring a sense of commitment to mission accomplishment. For them, failure is not an option. There's a kind of mentality they bring to the job that means they will do whatever they need to do to get something done and to do it right."

Participants in the program say military service gave them the skills they needed for the job: discipline, patience and a readiness to face challenges. They also report a personal satisfaction that comes with working with young people, Petty Officer Henry said.

Seventy-five percent of TTT teach-

ers were still teaching five years after going through the program, Petty Officer Henry said. After 10 years, 60 percent were still involved in education, as teachers or administrators.

Retired Lt. Col. Ernie Jackson is among them. He returned to his hometown of Port Jervis, N.Y., in 2000 to teach fifth grade and special education. The retired Army infantry officer said he found the Troops to Teachers program to be a good way to transition into the education field.

Colonel Jackson said he drew on his 20 years of military experience as he moved into the classroom, tapping into the management skills the Army taught him, along with the ability to work under pressure and deal with people. He said he applied the Army's way of training troops, emphasizing group dynamics and team building -- "skills you need in life, but that you can't get on the Internet or on a cell phone."

The colonel said that as he rose through the education ranks, becoming a vice principal, then a principal, he got the satisfaction from his interactions with his students.

"You change kids' lives," he said. "It's a great opportunity to make a difference in a young person's life. And there's a tremendous amount of gratification that comes with

that."

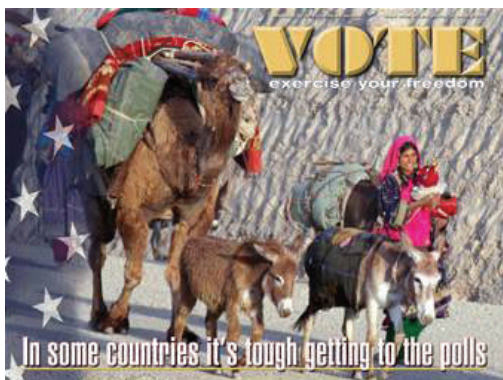
Now a principal who hires teachers, Colonel Jackson said he seeks out former servicemembers through the Troops to Teachers program.

"Having time in the military gives them a definite edge in my book," he said. "I find there are a lot of parallels between teaching and the military. We need servicemen and women to become teachers."

Colonel Jackson is not alone in praising the Troops to Teachers program. School districts rave about the teachers they recruited through the program, Petty Officer Henry told the Fort Meade troops. Ninety percent of principals report that TTT teachers are more effective than traditional teachers, particularly in classroom management and student discipline. Eighty-nine percent of principals said TTT teachers have a greater impact than other teachers with equal teaching experience on student achievement.

"The school districts that have us all want more of us," Petty Officer Henry told students at the Fort Meade transition workshop. "It's a great opportunity to build on the military skills and experience you have built, and to use them in a meaningful way as you begin a new career."

For more information on the Troops to Teachers Program, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/troops/index.html>.



No Excuses We Have Absentee Ballot Applications, Come See Us!

Registering With The Embassy, How And Why?

An American citizen residing in Tokyo with his family recently inquired about registering his residence and travel outside the United States. Millions of Americans live/travel abroad every year and encounter no major difficulties. However, U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency.

When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your foreign travel, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By registering your trip, you help the embassy or consulate locate you when you might need their help the most. Registration is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning.

U.S. consular officers assist Americans who encounter serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties. Although consular officers cannot act as your legal counsel or representative, they can provide the names of local attorneys and doctors, provide loans to destitute Americans, and provide information about dangerous conditions affecting your overseas travel or residence.

Consular officers also perform non-emergency services, helping Americans with absentee voting, selective service registration, receiving federal benefits, and filing U.S. tax forms. Consular officers can notarize documents, issue passports, and register American children born abroad. Most embassies and consulates have web sites with more information; please visit the following

website for a complete list: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>

Travel registration is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country, and is easily accomplished online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>

In order to officially register your travel outside the United States, first you will create an account by clicking on the "Create an Account" link and following the instructions provided on the following website: <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

The account creation allows you to select a username and password so that you can access your travel data at any time. The account will also contain your personal information so that it can be saved and used again whenever you travel abroad. The personal information section will include basic information about yourself, and also for an emergency contact that is not traveling with you.

After you have created an account, you will view your profile and add trips or overseas residences to register with a specific US Embassy or Consulate. Click on the "Add Trip" button or "Add Overseas Residence" buttons to add this information. Follow through the pages, and complete as much information as you have available. There are very few required fields, but thorough information enables the US Embassy to help you more efficiently if needed. You will receive a confirmation email to ensure that you are registered correctly.

Registration through the website is NOT considered proof of U.S. citizenship. If you apply for American Citizen Services from the embassy or consulate while overseas, you will be asked by the consular staff to provide proof of U.S. citizenship, such as a U.S. passport or

American birth certificate.

Please note that, in accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release information about those registered without their express written authorization. The U.S. Department of State is committed

to ensuring that any personal information received by our overseas embassies and consulates pursuant to the registration process, whether in person or otherwise, is safeguarded against unauthorized disclosure.

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If your family needs to reach you because of an emergency, they can pass a message to you through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, which can be contacted from within the United States at 1-888-407-4747 (toll free), and from overseas at 202-501-4444. The Office of Overseas Citizens Services will contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country in which you are traveling in order to pass the message to you.

The U.S. State Department also advises leaving a detailed itinerary and copies of your passport biographical-data page with a friend or relative in the United States. For more tips about how to travel safely overseas, please review the following website:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html#register





Medical, Temporary Retirees Now Eligible For CRSC Payments

Former Airmen receiving military retired pay who served less than 20 years may now be eligible to receive Air Force Combat-Related Special Compensation.

CRSC is part of a legislative initiative designed to restore a veteran's military retirement pay that has been reduced by Veterans' Affairs compensation of at least 10 percent when the veteran's disabilities are combat-related.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law Jan. 28, expanded eligibility requirements for the CRSC program to include Medical Chapter 61, Temporary Early Retirement Act and Temporary Disabled Retirement List retirees.

"Prior to this change, retirees had to have 20 years of active-duty service or be retired at age 60 from the Guard or Reserve," said Mr. Rick Castro, Air Force CRSC

program manager. "If you didn't have 20 years you weren't eligible; however, with the NDAA expansion, if you are medically retired, either permanently or temporarily and you have VA payments that reduce your retirement pay, you are eligible to apply for CRSC."

For example, a Operation Desert Storm veteran who was injured and subsequently medically retired at 14 years of service, who received a 30-percent disability rating from the VA, should apply; it may be the key to receiving additional tax-free money to which the veteran is entitled.

"That said, let our experts make the call," Mr. Castro said. "That way if you do not qualify and something in the law or Department of Defense CRSC policy changes in the future that could affect the prior decision, like the 2008 NDAA, we will already have a claim and documentation, and can

reassess a claim based on the new eligibility factors."

In determining eligibility, retired members should answer the following questions:

- Am I receiving retired pay?
- Do I have a compensable VA disability of 10 percent or higher?
- Is my retired pay reduced by VA disability payments?

"If you answered 'yes' to those questions and have not submitted your CRSC claim, you should do so," Mr. Castro said. "The money is tax-free and could help pay medical expenses or improve your quality of life."

Although CRSC specifically addresses "combat-related" disabilities incurred from armed conflict, retirees who developed disabilities from other than combat may also be eligible. Disabilities caused by exposure to Agent Orange, combat

training, aircrew duties, simulated war exercises, parachuting and munitions demolition potentially qualify for compensation under this program.

The CRSC team needs copies of a retiree's Department of Defense Form 214 or retirement order, any VA rating decisions addressing the disabilities being claimed, and any other available documentation.

Note that CRSC is different from automatic Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay. CRDP is also designed to restore military retired pay that has been offset by VA compensation of 50 percent or more; however, there is no combat-related requirement for CRDP.

For more information and claim forms, visit the AFPC Public Web site at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/> <<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>>, and click on "Former Airmen Information." You can also get more information through the 24-hour Air Force Contact Center at (800) 616-3775.

POW/MIA Retreat Ceremony 2008

The Air Force Sergeants Chapter 1552 here at Misawa sponsored this year's POW/MIA Retreat Ceremony. It was a cloudy and rather crisp autumn day for the retreat but the retirees proudly stood in formation along with flights from the Navy and Air Force. Col. Altobelli, 35th OG/CC, provided comments in honoring our missing in action. Along with Command Chief Price and the Honor Guard a Memorial wreath was laid at the Risner Circle Memorial. We had great participation from our retiree community and we want to thank those who came out and supported our formation. A special thanks to MSgt Kelly Winston and SMSgt Glen Klomp, AFSA President, for putting the ceremony together and making it happen.



113 Years Of Service And Support

As the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) readies to mark 113 years of service and support to America's military, the command's mission remains basically the same: provide quality goods and services at competitively low prices and generate earnings to support Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs.

Established July 25, 1895, when the War Department issued General Order number 46 directing post commanders to establish an exchange at every post where practicable, AAFES continues to deliver a comprehensive and customer-focused benefit to troops and their families at installations throughout America, Europe, the Pacific and Middle East.

In addition to its flagship main base and post exchange facilities (aka PXs and BXs), modern AAFES operations now include convenience stores, car care centers, military clothing sales stores, fast food restaurants, retail concession services such as flower shops and gift stores, vending, telecommunications support and a wide variety of personal services through more than 3,100 facilities in 30 countries, five US territories and 49 states. The scope of current operations goes well beyond the conventional offerings the War Department might have envisioned in the late 1800's as AAFES even operates bakeries, water bottling activities and provides 24,000 meals a day to troops' sons and daughters at 92 Department of Defense Schools in nine countries.

Just like the merchants who supplied provisions to America's troops in the late 19th century, AAFES associates continue to live and work alongside those they serve. In fact, more than 350

associates are currently deployed to Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, actively delivering a slice of Americana to troops through 85 BX/PX operations, 75 phone centers and 197 fast food restaurants scattered throughout the Middle East.

Closer to home, the largest and most senior exchange service is focused on energizing outreach efforts to communicate the value, benefit and capabilities it brings to the military community. Recognizing the pivotal role National Guard and Reserve troops are playing as they transition from a strategic force to an operational force, AAFES is specifically reaching out to "Citizen Soldiers" families to ensure they understand the value of their exchange benefit not only downrange, but also on the installation, online or over the phone.

"AAFES' commitment to America's troops has never been stronger," said AAFES' Senior Enlisted Advisor Chief Master Sgt. Bryan Eaton. "Whether at their home station, deployed overseas, providing support in the wake of a natural disaster, or even in the hospital, AAFES is there."

Keeping in the spirit of exceptional service and support, BXs and PXs and the Exchange Online Store are inviting authorized customers to "celebrate the savings" beginning Friday, July 25. Exchange shoppers who stop by CONUS exchanges on AAFES' 113th birthday can score a \$100 AAFES gift card with purchase of a Sharp 37" LCD HDTV or pick up a Zvue "Spirit" MP3 player, preloaded with 15 patriotic themed songs, for the special buy price of \$31.13. Additionally, AAFES exchanges across the globe will feature a variety of local special incentives such as

coupons or gift cards. Authorized shoppers can contact their nearest BX/PX for specific details as contest and promotions will vary from location to location (contact information is available under the "store locator" link at www.aafes.com <<http://www.aafes.com>>). More money saving deals will also be available at www.aafes.com <<http://www.aafes.com>> , through July 31, including black diamond solitaire earrings discounted more than 45 percent and \$150 off an Apple i7" MacBook.

Since its establishment in 1895, AAFES has been involved in 14 major contingencies (to include the Spanish-American War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, the Balkans and Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom) and several dozen humanitarian and disaster relief contingencies.

AAFES is a joint command of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, and is directed by a Board of Directors who is responsible to the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force through the Service Chiefs of Staff. AAFES has the dual mission of providing authorized patrons with articles of merchandise and services and of generating non-appropriated fund earnings as a supplemental source of funding for military Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs.

To find out more about AAFES' history and mission or to view recent press releases please visit our Web site at <http://www.aafes.com/pa/default.asp> <<http://www.aafes.com/pa/default.asp>> .



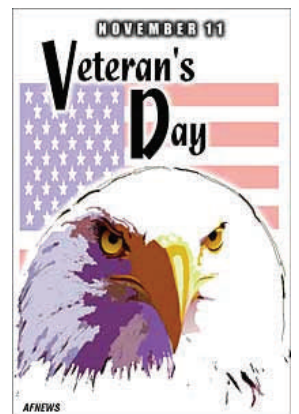
Retiree Appreciation Day 2008

We celebrated our Retiree Appreciation Day again this year on 20 September, Saturday, with a breakfast at the Mutsu Officers Club and a cake cutting and prize give-a-ways at the AAFES main entrance. The 35th FSS provided a delicious breakfast for about 85 retirees and guests. Col. Craig, 35th FW/CV was in attendance and provided the opening remarks. We were honored to have with us this year several Japanese widows from out of the area who came from Sendai, Sapporo and Aomori just to be with us for the day. We presented them with flowers donated by the AAFES Floral Shop Vendor. Tickets were drawn for DeCA gift certificates complements of WEBCO. After a brief social hour we all adjourned to the BX Mall for the cake cutting ceremony and words from Col. Stilwell, 35th FW/CC. Afterwards there was two hours of drawings for gifts and gift cards donated by the USA Federal Credit Union and AAFES. Spending the day with us were volunteers from the Medical Group who provided blood pressure checks, glaucoma checks, and information on TRICARE and other health services available to the retirees. As you can see below it was a great event with a great turn out. The FSS and AAFES did a tremendous job this year in putting it all together and making it most memorable. Our special thanks to Maj Sollami, 35th FSS/CC, Ms. Miyako Sugiyama, our favorite caterer, Ms. Iosefo, AAFES General Manager, Ms. Powell, AAFES Sales and Merchandise Manager, Mr. Melillo, Food Court Manager, and Mr. Roginski and his wife Chiseko for bringing their Lomi-Lomi message and hula ladies to the festivities along with the proceeds from donations they received for massages. Thanks to all who participated and gave of their time on the weekend. We look forward to next years event and hope that more of you can find time to be with us. You're missing out on a day meant for you!



Air Force Birthday Luncheon For Retirees

The retirees here at Misawa were again honored for their service at the 2nd Annual AF Birthday Luncheon at the Grissom Dining Facility on Thursday, 18 September 2008. The staff at the Grissom again out did themselves and provided a superb luncheon with all the trimmings and atmosphere to go with it. The theme was Basic Training and the slide presentation brought back many memories for all of us and certainly generated a lot of discussion and stories. We again want to express our sincere appreciation to the Grissom folks for all their hard work in putting it all together, SSgt Escobar led the way and did a fantastic job in making us all very proud to be retired military. Special thanks to the Honor Guard and Focus 5/6 for picking up the check.



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35th Fighter Wing
Misawa Air Base, Japan

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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Lodging Front Desk: 222-1182
Command Post: 226-9899
Law Enforcement: 226-3600
Emergency Room: Non-Urgent- 226-6647
Emergency- 911 / Off Base 53-1911
Medical/Dental Appointments- - -
Medical: 226-6111
Dental: 226-6700
AAFES General Manager: 222-7410
Commissary Officer: 226-3482
Anthony's Pizza: 222-6300
Pizza Hut: 222-5000
Clothing Sales: 222-8709
Fitness Center: 226-3982
Library: 226-3068
Misawa Clubs- - -
Enlisted: 222-9514
Officer: 226-2016
Base Theater: 222-8700
Taxi- - -
Official: 226-3328
Non-Official (Kichi Cab): 222-5438
Weather Forecast: 226-3064
Note: When dialing from off base, local area, dial 63-xxxx instead of 222-xxxx, and 64-xxxx instead of 226-xxxx. Outside local area add 0176.

MISCELLANEOUS NUMBERS

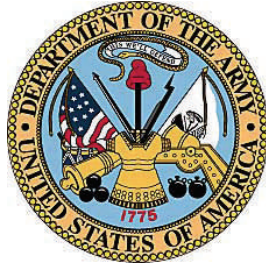
Still Serving!

The Misawa Air Base Retiree Activities Office is an official activity organized in accordance with AFI 36-3106. The office is here to assist retirees from all military services in the Tohoku and Hokkaido regions of Japan. We can provide assistance in pay, taxes, social security, and personal/casualty affairs as well as many other matters the retiree may need help with. We provide a focal point for retirees and/or their survivors with questions/concerns and work closely with the active duty community. Through the office and the activities of the Misawa Military Retirees Association we are able to provide assistance to indigent widows in the area with fuel, food and living expenses. The office is supplied and equipped through organizational funding, while being staffed entirely by volunteers.

The office is open Tuesday through Friday from 0900 through 1500 hours. We are located in room 210, Bldg 653. If you are unable to contact the RAO in an emergency, you may contact the Casualty Assistance Representative in the Airman & Family Readiness Center, 226-4735 or from off base, 64-4735. Japanese Nationals requiring assistance, who may have limited English language skills, contact MSgt (Ret) Joe Roginski, 222-7090 or from off base, 63-7090.

Misawa Military Retirees Association meets bi-monthly on the first Tuesday, of even months, at 1700 hours, in the Tohoku Enlisted Club's Gray Room. All military retirees regardless of service affiliation are welcome as members. We are your voice to the active duty community and help to support the many retiree programs on the base. We also provide assistance in emergencies to retirees and surviving spouses in times of need. Come out and help support our efforts.





SERVING THE RETIRED MILITARY COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN JAPAN



This publication is written, edited and published by the Misawa Air Base Retiree Activities Office, for the retired community in northern Japan. The information or comments herein do not necessarily represent the position or opinion of the DOD, USAF or the 35 FW. While every effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the information herein, no absolute guarantee of accuracy can be given nor should be assumed.

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