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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 Healthcare Funding

President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act in a ceremony at the White House. The new law requires advance funding for the VA health-care system. "We have made the biggest commitment to veterans with the largest percent increase in the VA budget in more than 30 years" Obama said. "So we're keeping our promise to make real progress for our vets." In short the president said VA advance funding "promotes accountability at the VA, it ensures oversight by Congress ... And it ensures that veterans health care will no longer be held hostage to the annual budget battles in Washington." The president made his remarks in the East Room of the White House joined by VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and Sen. Daniel Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and the bill's sponsor.

Representatives from veterans service organizations and members of Congress who played key roles in passing the legislation were part of the crowd that witnessed the signing. "No longer will VA and the veterans in its care have to suffer from the 'check's in the mail' syndrome", American Legion National Commander Clarence Hill said. "Now the VA will know a year in advance what resources will be available to it so plans can be made accordingly. Advance appropriations will go a long way toward minimizing compromises in the delivery of the high-quality VA health care our veterans expect and deserve."

Obama thanked several members of Congress for their efforts in getting the advance funding bill passed noting that it was an example of what Democrats and Republicans can do when they join forces to do

right by our veterans. " Let me say that I take special pride in this legislation", Obama said. "Because as a senator, I was a proud co-sponsor of this legislation, I served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and in the campaign last year you all remember I had promised to pass it and today as president I'm fulfilling that promise." Obama told the audience that with the new legislation veterans medical care will be funded one year in advance. "For VA this means timely, sufficient, and predictable funding from year to year. Most of all for our veterans it will mean better access to doctors and nurses and the medical care that they need." Akaka introduced the VA advance funding bill in Congress on 12 FEB, guided it through committee hearings, and gathered 56 co-sponsors. On 13 OCT the Senate approved the legislation unanimously. [Source: American Legion Online Update 22 Oct 09]

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USCG/NOAA Personnel Locator

If you are searching for a Coast Guard/NOAA retired individual, place your personal correspondence to that individual in a sealed envelope, making sure to include how they can get in touch with you. On the outside of that envelope, address it to them with their full name and rank/rate (for military). Write your return address and attach a stamp on the envelope. Then, place that envelope

in a larger envelope and address it to: Commanding Officer (RAS), USCG Pay & Personnel Center, 444 SE Quincy Street, Topeka, KS 66683 -3591. Retiree & Annuitant Services (RAS) will complete the person's address and place it in the mail. [Source: USCG/NOAA Retiree Newsletter Oct-Dec 09]



Vietnam Memorial Wall



Repair work was under way 21 OCT at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall as a private memorial fund took over landscaping and maintenance of 13 acres from the National Park Service. Over the next two weeks, workers are restoring the flagpole's bronze finish and its decorative base with five military branch insignias. They will also restore the bronze finish for five stands that hold directories that help people find names on famous V-shaped memorial wall, which draws millions of visitors each year. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which built the memorial, also has repaired an irriga-

tion system and is reseeding and sodding the grass. Last month, the group announced plans to pay for maintenance at the site because of scarce funding from the federal government. They plan to raise more than \$1 million to care for the memorial and grounds, including \$500,000 to buy replacement granite if sections of the wall need to be replaced in the future. "Everybody has the same goal: We want it to look good," said fund spokeswoman Lisa Gough. "We want it to shine." The memorial's bronze fixtures — including the flagpole and a statue of three soldiers — will be restored for the first time since they were in-

stalled more than 25 years ago, said James Cummings, who was part of the memorial's original architecture team the project. The fund is working to raise \$100,000 to restore the statue in the next year. The bronze is worn down and has turned green on the soldiers' noses and arms, Cummings said. The weather caused some of the damage, along with the hands of many visitors. "No one expected the memorial itself would have such an impact with the culture," said Cummings. "There's a plan now to take care of it." [Source: MarineCorpsTimes Brett Zongker article 21 Oct -09]

DoD to VA Transition



An innovative, far-sighted partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) will improve the health care system for Veterans and dramatically change the way health care is delivered to all Americans, according to Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs W. Scott Gould. "The future will see VA and DoD working even closer together," said Gould, "as we fulfill the President's requirement for a single Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record that will support Veterans from their day of induction to their day of interment." Gould spoke 15 OCT at the second annual DoD "Breakthrough Convention" devoted to improving business practices in the nation's largest government

agency. Noting that VA's budget requirements are substantially affected by DoD's strategic decisions and operations, he reassured the audience that the President's proposed 2010 budget for VA addresses the issue and builds on increases Congress added to the Department's budget in the last two years. VA's 2010 budget request for \$113 billion would fund increased education benefits for post-9/11 Veterans, health care for some Veterans who were previously ineligible, more mental health and cognitive-injury services -- especially in rural areas -- and upgraded technology for data transmission and records. Gould said the long-term solution for correcting procedural delays that affect Veterans is to

redesign business processes and improve information technology. VA's new strategic plan, he said, is focused on Veterans, with whom VA has an ongoing -- sometimes, life-long -- relationship. Employees have a natural desire to achieve client satisfaction, but their ability to act on the desire can be diminished by poor systems, policies or lack of training, Gould said. VA's second-ranking executive credited Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki with providing the leadership to create an organizational culture of performance on behalf of Veterans. [Source: Stars and Stripes Tom Philpott article 17 Oct 09]



Assisting Survivors

One of the many ways the RAD assists survivors is in pre-paying fuel bills. The funds are provided by the Misawa Military Retirees Association. Your support and membership ensures that we are able to continue this worthwhile effort. Join us at the Tohoku Enlisted Club Gray Room at 1700 hours on the first Tuesday of every even month. Or you may make a cash contribution to this tax deductible veterans organization at the RAD anytime.

VA Grave Locator

The Nationwide Graveside Locator service is available on handheld devices with Internet capability. The service provides locations and driving directions to both national cemeteries and private burial grounds. "This innovative program continues VA's commitment to use the latest technology to provide veterans and their families with information they need," VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said. "It will simplify and enhance the experience of many who visit our national cemeteries." The VA introduced an Internet-based nationwide gravesite locator in 2004. It is linked to electronic burial records to help people find the cemeteries where their relatives are buried. For veterans and eligible family members buried in national cemeteries, or whose graves are marked with a government headstone, the location of the graves can be found on your personal computer

and at national cemetery kiosks.

The Web site <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL.vl> allows for searches by name and by cemetery, if the location is known. A search will provide a grave location, a link to a Google map and driving directions, and a link to the cemetery map if available. The locator includes burial records from many sources. These sources provide varied data; some searches may contain less information than others. Information on veterans buried in private cemeteries was collected for the purpose of furnishing government grave markers, and the locator does not have information available for burials prior to 1997. Erroneous information can be corrected, but there is no capability to add to the information contained in the existing record. If your

search returns incorrect information about a veteran or family member buried in a national cemetery, contact the cemetery directly to discuss your findings. To report incorrect information about a veteran buried in a private cemetery go to <https://iris.va.gov/scripts/iris.cfg/php.exe/enduser/home.php> and submit an input. Names cannot be added to the listing if a government grave marker was not furnished for the grave, or if the existing government grave marker was furnished prior to 1997. For more complete information concerning individual records, we suggest you contact the cemetery or local officials. The VA adds about 1,000 new records to the database each day. The American Battle Monuments Commission (www.abmc.gov) provides information on service mem-



bers buried in overseas cemeteries. If you cannot locate the person you are searching for, provide the following information on each individual:

- Full name, including any alternate spellings
- Date and place of birth
- Date and place of death
- State from which the individual entered active duty
- Military service branch

Most requests take approximately four weeks for a reply. Be sure to include your return mailing address, phone number or Internet e-mail address with your request and send it to: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration (41CI), Burial Location Request, 810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20420. [Source: Federal Computer week Alice Lipowicz article 19 Oct 09]

New Social Security Office In Japan

We were recently notified that Social Security has opened a new office in Japan at the US Embassy in Tokyo. All applications or changes can now be made in country through this office instead of Manila. The applications are done on an appointment basis. You can contact the office by phone at DSN 224-5000 or from off base, 03-3224-5000 and ask for the Federal Benefits Unit. Or you may email them at FBU.Tokyo@ssa.gov. There is no longer an application package as was necessary with the Manila office. All applications and changes will be handled over the phone. The office staff is bi-lingual. Ensure you have all the necessary information to answer any appropriate questions.



DFAS COLA Update 2010

Air Force retirees with a myPay online account can now download their annual account statements. Annuitant statements will be available online Dec. 14.

There will not be a cost-of-living adjustment increase for military retirees or annuitants in 2010.

COLA increases are determined each year based on the rise in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners and clerical workers. The Department of Labor calculates the change in the CPI for goods and services from the third quarter average of the previous year to the third quarter average for the current year.

Although Congress and the Administration decide how much to increase federal pay, because military retirees and annuitants do not re-

ceive pay increases but cost-of-living adjustments, they rely on the final CPI results.

Internal Revenue Service 1099R forms for retirees and annuitants will be posted Dec. Dec. 14.

Retirees who rely on the U.S. Postal Service for DFAS correspondence can expect to see their account statements soon as they are now in the mail, while tax forms will be mailed Dec. 11.

For annuitants, account statements and 1099R forms begin mailing Dec. 14.

Statements and forms are mailed to the address on file with DFAS.

Retirees with questions about account statements or tax forms should call the DFAS Contact Center at 800-321-1080. (Courtesy of DFAS)

Manila VARO and OPC



The VA Regional Office (VARO) & Outpatient Clinic (OPC), Manila is the only VA activity located in a foreign country. A VA office has been in operation in the Philippines continuously since the U.S. Veterans Bureau was opened in 1922 (except during the Japanese occupation of WW II), and it is an integral part of the United States mission to the Republic of the Philippines. The VARO is located within the U.S. Embassy Compound at 1131 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, 0930 Manila, PI 96440 Tel: 632-528-2500 or Fax: 632-523-1224. Callers within the Philippines but outside of Manila can use 1-800-1-888-5252 without any long distance charges. It is currently staffed by 8 Americans and 137 Filipinos. The Regional Office administers compensation, pension, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and education benefits to 18,600 beneficiaries. Monthly disbursement is approximately \$17.5 million to 16,600 beneficiaries. VA also administers the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) in the Philippines. About \$8 million is disbursed monthly to 18,400 SSA beneficiaries. Effective 2 JAN 09 the Department of Veterans Affairs Manila Regional Office (VA) implemented an appointment system for all visitors to their public contact section. They will no longer entertain walk-in visitors; all visitors will be required to have an appointment before they are admitted to the Embassy.

The VA OPC, Manila is a part of the VA Sierra Pacific Network (VISN 21), which also includes facilities throughout the Pacific Islands, northern California, and northern Nevada. The VA OPC, Manila consists of a stand alone ambulatory care leased facility, which is located about 2 miles south of the U.S. Embassy, where the VARO is located. The OPC offers health care services to eligible persons throughout the Philippines. The OPC provides ambulatory care to service-connected U.S. military veterans for their service-connected and non service-connected disabilities and conducts compensation and pension examinations for eligibility purposes. The criteria for care in the Philippines are different than what a veteran may receive in the United States. Veterans residing in the Philippines, veterans planning to travel to the Philippines, and VA Health Care providers should contact the Clinic Manager concerning specific eligibility criteria. Health care services are provided at the OPC by primary care staff physicians utilizing the primary care concept and by contracted specialist consultants. Most specialties are available in house or by contract Outpatient services which include general medicine; internal medicine with subspecialties in cardiology, pulmonary, renal and nephrology; psychiatry and mental health; neurology; dermatology; ENT; audiology; and orthopedics. Ancillary services

include nursing, radiology, social work, pharmacy, laboratory, prosthetics and a number of other professional and support services. Inpatient care and fee basis services are limited to treatment of service-connected conditions. The OPC is located at 2201 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City, PI 1300 Tel: 632-833-4566 or Fax 632-831-4454. Callers outside Manila but within the Philippines can reach the OPC via 1-800-1-888-8782. It is staffed by 2 Americans and 82 Filipinos.

All e-mail inquiries for the Manila VA Regional Office and the Manila VA Clinic can be sent via VA's main inquiry website at: <https://iris.va.gov>. Use the "Ask a Question" section to ask questions or submit compliments, and suggestions. It provides answers to 368 frequently asked questions. If the information you are seeking is not there you have the option of filling out an IRIS Customer Entry form which contains a section for you to type in your question. All inquiries should be responded to within five business days. If you are experiencing a medical emergency or in need of immediate crisis counseling, go to your nearest medical facility Emergency Room or call 911. This web site is not intended to provide medical diagnosis or emergency care. [Source: <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=682> Sep 09]

Happy New Year!



US Savings Bonds

The federal government is facing a lawsuit over billions in unclaimed bonds that date back to the patriotic fundraising efforts of World War II, leading to a showdown between states who say they should be given the money and a Treasury Department that claims ownership. World War II sparked an unprecedented bond buying campaign, spurred on by one of the largest advertising campaigns ever seen — a drive wrapped in dutiful pleas from celebrities, politicians and cartoon characters alike. Most American families bought at least one bond at the time and many never cashed them in — thanks in part to a 40-year maturity in the bonds. And those same "Series E" war bonds continued to be sold by the federal government until 1980. More than \$16 billion worth of the bonds are unclaimed, either lost or forgotten about with the death of the original purchasers. The state attorneys general suing the Treasury Department charge that the federal government made no effort to find those people. They want the money given to the states, who have a legal system in

place for finding the owners of unclaimed funds. "It's better for the millions of American who are the rightful owners to have it returned to the states, because the states will make a real effort to find them," said David Bishop, a partner at Kirby McInerney who is representing the states in the suit. "And if after searching for them they can't find them, the money can go to work in the communities where the bonds were purchased."

The Treasury Department counters that it indeed tries to find owners of the unclaimed bonds, and says it has a Web site (www.savingsbonds.gov/indiv/tools/tools_treasuryhunt.htm) where people can simply type in their Social Security number to see if they have one. And it points out that the money is not just laying around somewhere. "One of the misunderstandings out there is that there is a lot of cash sitting somewhere in a drawer. Money from savings bonds was used to run the daily operating expenses of the government," said Joyce Harris, with the Bureau of the Public Debt. "These are obligations of the federal govern-

ment, not the states. There is no pot of gold out there just waiting for someone to grab it." The Treasury also points out that most of the unclaimed bonds are far more recent than the original World War II era bonds. And overall, 99% of people claim their bonds. And those who don't cash them often choose to do so for tax reasons, or perhaps out of a sense of patriotism, Harris said. "Quite frankly, people are aware of the bonds," she said. "A majority, when you contact them, are aware of the bonds."

It's not like the states will get the money free of obligation, about \$55 million in the case of Montana. The states would be obligated to pay bondholders no matter if it takes them decades or longer to show up. In the meantime, though, states usually earmark the interest earned on such unclaimed money for schools or other purposes. Steve Bullock, the attorney general for Montana, said states, not the federal government, have legally been granted the right to deal with unclaimed money. "First and

foremost I think it is the right thing to do. I think it is money that should be with Montanans," Bullock said. "It's an important action to bring just to protect the state's interest. The complaint was first filed in Federal court in New Jersey in 2004 with New Jersey and North Carolina as the plaintiffs. Montana, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Missouri later joined the case. All states would benefit if the lawsuit is successful. The case will come down to constitutional arguments. Attorneys for the federal government are arguing the states don't have standing on what they see as a contract issue between the original purchasers and the Treasury Department. The states expect arguments in the case to be made later this year on a motion from the federal government to dismiss the case. [Source: Associated Press Writer Matt Gouras 18 Oct 09]

Space A Travel An Option For Retirees

Retirees who dream of climbing an Egyptian pyramid, schussing down a black diamond ski slope in Bavaria, or walking on a Hawaiian beach can make these dreams come true with space-available travel.

Typically, these dreams require a lot of money; however, Space-A travel is free with the exception of customs or federal inspection fees on some chartered commercial air service missions.

Air Mobility Command aircraft fly all over the globe and often have open passenger seats available. An AMC aircraft takes off every 90 seconds. More than 130,000 Space-A travelers take advantage of this military benefit

each year.

Retired Airmen with a retiree ID card and who are eligible to receive retired or retainer pay, fly as Category VI passengers. Since missions can be rerouted, delayed or cancelled for a variety of reasons -- weather, maintenance issues or higher priority missions -- retirees need to be flexible. They need to plan for any potential delays and added expenses for stays, especially in high-cost areas.

There are four different methods for signing up for Space-A travel: in person at the passenger terminal or remotely via telephone, fax or e-mail. Sponsors must provide their name and information on all traveling de-

pendents, and their desired destinations.

Retirees can also use the DOD-chartered airlift missions for Space-A travel, if seats are available. Although retirees cannot visit their grandchildren in Iraq or Afghanistan, they can travel to Germany if the aircraft transitions there.

If traveling overseas, retirees should know the restrictions of the host country. For example, retirees traveling to Germany are not authorized to purchase items in the base exchange, but they can go off base and shop in the local community. Status of Forces Agreements restrictions, U.S. State Department Travel Advi-

sory guidelines, the Foreign Clearance Guide and passport and visa requirements are all necessary items to research.

For more information on Space-A travel, visit the AMC travel Web site at www.amc.af.mil/amctravel <<http://lyris.dmasa.dma.mil/t/2322794/4617084/7952/0/>> .

(Courtesy of Air Force Print News)



Vet Toxic Exposure– Atsugi

The U.S. Senate committee on veteran affairs (SVAC) requested that the VA report to them on what action they were taking regarding veteran toxic exposure to veterans. One of the four specific incidents they wanted input on was the Atsugi waste incinerator operations. Michael R. Peterson, DVM, MPH, DRPH, Chief Consultant, Environmental Health Strategic Healthcare Group, Office Of Public Health & Environmental Hazards, Veterans Health Administration, Department Of Veterans Affairs on 8 OCT 09 provided the committee the following input:

Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan is located about 25 miles from Tokyo at the site of a Japanese Air Force base which the U.S. took control of in 1945. In 1985, a private waste incinerator, Shinkampo Incinerator Complex (SIC), began operations immediately southeast of the community areas of the base. The incinerator burned a variety of liquid and solid industrial waste, municipal solid waste, and construction debris. The incinerator released a plume of smoke, ash, particulate material, and fumes at ground level over the community area of the base. Complaints by residents regarding air quality led to multiple health risk assessments between 1988 and 1999. These assessments demonstrated health risks related to the incinerator plume which resulted in efforts by representatives of the United States Government to close the incinerator. This was accomplished in 2001. It is estimated that over the 15 years of operation, 18,000 adults and 8,000 children could have been exposed, with a typical exposure duration of 3 years. The non-cancer health effects of primary concern are impairment of respi-

ratory function from exposure to inhaled respiratory toxicants particularly among the resident children at the base. Permanent reduction in respiratory function can occur after several years of exposure to respiratory toxicants especially if exposure occurred before age 16. The final health risk assessment completed in 2002 by DoD noted an increased risk of cancer, above the U.S. background rate, among residents of Naval Air Facility Atsugi during incinerator operations. In 2007, Battelle Corporation was asked by the Department of the Navy to conduct a review of the various health risk assessments and recommend what, if any, population-based medical surveillance of residents of Naval Air Facility Atsugi might be warranted, as well as the parameters and expected outcomes from such screenings. Battelle published its report in JUN 08. The only recommendation from that report was that a health registry be established for residents of Naval Air Facility Atsugi. All medical surveillance recommendations were limited to the juvenile population at the base. Because all of the recommendations in this detailed report address medical surveillance of a population not within VA's statutory authority, VA has not requested information regarding this cohort.

Any Veteran who served at the Naval Air Facility Atsugi who may develop either a respiratory condition or cancer that competent medical authority ascribes to exposure at Naval Air Facility Atsugi would be eligible to submit a claim for direct service connection for the condition, provided they meet other eligibility criteria for benefits. VA will inform re-

gional offices of the Naval Air Facility Atsugi situation and alert them to the possibility of disability claims from Veterans who were stationed there. All such claims will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with evidentiary weight given to medical examinations and opinions from both private and VA physicians. In all cases, the benefit of doubt will be provided to the Veteran. VA's assessment of issues related to Naval Air Facility Atsugi continues to be coordinated through HEC and the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards and we continue to monitor study outcomes that could inform future policy decisions. For a transcript of the entire VA input to the committee which covered the a above Atsugi report, water contamination at Camp Lejeune, sodium dichromate at the Qarmat Ali Water Treatment Plant, and exposures to burn pits during the current conflicts refer to

http://veterans.senate.gov/hearings.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=b974df2c-0767-4d50-9caf-12cc16d5498.

[Source : <http://veterans.senate.gov/hearings.cfm> 8 Oct 09]





TRICARE User Fee Update- Chain E-Mail

Variations of a "Heads Up" chain e-mail message is being circulated on the internet claiming that TRICARE is in jeopardy for retirees and that TRICARE for Life deductibles and co-pays will increase up to \$6,301 the first year with future years being indexed to increase with inflation. For authenticity it cites a CBO report and implies that the Air Force Association and BG Bob Clement are in agreement with its content. This email and variations of it have been debunked by such groups as the The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) three separate times. The White House has also tried to combat the claim that efforts to overhaul health care include limiting or eliminating coverage for veterans. However, the RAD continues to receive inquiries asking what, if any truth there is to it. To answer the question, "Would health care overhaul efforts eliminate TRICARE health coverage for members of the military and military retirees?", the answer is NO. This claim in the e-mail is false. Neither Congress nor President Obama has proposed legislation to that effect. The facts are:

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office is responsible for a number of things, but drafting and proposing legislation are not among them. So contrary to what these widely forwarded e-mails claim, the CBO has not "drafted proposed legislation" that would reduce benefits for those who receive health care coverage through TRICARE or TRICARE for Life.

What the CBO did in December of last

year was present a list of 115 options to the House and Senate Committees on the Budget for "reducing (or, in some cases, increasing) federal spending on health care, altering federal health care programs, and making substantive changes to the nation's health insurance system." The CBO issues a list of such recommendations on federal spending to every Congress. The first volume of last year's list included Option No. 96, Introduce Minimum Out-of-Pocket Requirements Under TRICARE For Life.

TRICARE is the health care program that provides coverage for active members of the military, retirees, their survivors and their dependents. In 2001, that coverage was extended to Medicare-eligible military retirees and their spouses and dependents through a program called TRICARE for Life (TFL). The program provides supplemental Medicare coverage to TRICARE beneficiaries who are enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B.

According to the CBO, TFL pays "nearly all medical costs not covered by Medicare and requires few out-of-pocket fees." By limiting the amount of expenses covered by TRICARE for Life (such as not paying the first \$525 of an enrollee's cost-sharing liabilities for calendar year 2011 and limiting coverage to 50 percent of the next \$4,725 in Medicare cost sharing), the federal government could save roughly \$14 billion and \$40 billion through 2014 and 2019, respectively, according to the CBO.

The CBO report doesn't contain "a strong recommendation to eventually

eliminate" the TRICARE for Life program because "it is too expensive," as the e-mail claims. The CBO didn't advocate that Congress actually go through with any of the options it listed in its report. Instead, the agency emphasized that "in keeping with CBO's mandate to provide objective, impartial analysis, this report makes no recommendations." Accordingly, the report lists advantages and disadvantages for all of the options.

It's also false that health care overhaul bills in Congress would roll back coverage for those who benefit from the TRICARE programs. The e-mail claims that "this is true" and says that it appears on pages 77, 172, 218 and 434. There's no reference to a particular bill, but a word search of the bills fund that the word "TRICARE" does appear on pages 77, 172, 218 and 434 of "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009" (H.R.3200), which was introduced in the House in JUL 09. But nowhere on those pages, or anywhere else in the legislation, does it say that beneficiaries "would lose the Medicare for life benefit and would have to pay," or "would lose TRICARE as a total care package." Some veterans' organizations, including the American Legion, wrote letters to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in July voicing concern that the legislation could impact health care for veterans. But the House Committee on Energy and Commerce said that the bill wouldn't impact TRICARE beneficiaries.

Furthermore, there are no proposed cuts to TRICARE programs in the recently passed "Affordable Health

Care for America Act of 2009" (H.R.3962), which combines three different House health care bills into one. And there is also no language in either the Senate Finance Committee or Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee health care bills that discusses eliminating coverage under TRICARE or TRICARE for Life. In fact, section 1922 of the Senate Finance Committee bill specifically states that "...nothing in this Act shall be construed to prohibit, limit, or otherwise penalize eligible beneficiaries from receiving timely access to quality health care in any military medical treatment facility or under the TRICARE program." The e-mail also claims that "a heavy assault has begun on Veterans'/Retirees' benefits to pay for other programs our President promised during the campaign. And it is a high priority of the Obama administration." But the president has said repeatedly that he actually wants to expand coverage for veterans — not limit it. The White House has also responded to claims that health care overhaul bills would jeopardize veterans' benefits, including TRICARE and TRICARE for Life, through its Reality Check Web site www.whitehouse.gov/realitycheck. [Source: www.FastCheck.org D'Angelo Gore article 10 Nov 09] **Don't believe everything you get on the internet.**

NPRC Military Records Update

The National Personnel Records Center responds to over 1.4 million requests annually for copies of military personnel and/or medical records. Their goal is to provide timely responses in an efficient manner, so that veterans and their families obtain the information needed to qualify for benefits and entitlements. Nearly half of all requesters seek only a copy of the separation document, which is the necessary document required for veteran benefits. However, about ten percent of the requests received ask for a copy of a file. Since the 1970s, the standard procedure for replying to requests for entire files has been to provide only copies of key documents and extracts of vital information, rather than a copy of every document in a personnel and/or medical file. This approach avoids costly delays in reviewing and copying some documents -- such as leave papers, identification card applications, and clothing issuances -- that are not normally needed for benefit claim purposes. As a result, NPRC is able to respond to more requesters, faster, and at less cost to the taxpayers. Exceptions to this procedure are files more than 62 years old, US Marine Corps files, all certified legal cases,

and all requests from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In these instances, all documents are provided. This extract contains copies of all essential documents to certify entitlement to most rights and benefits associated with military service, to identify key events in a military career, and to identify significant events in health care. Personal data pertaining to third parties is redacted from the file, pursuant to Privacy Act provisions.

When only key documents and extracts are provided from the Official Military Personnel File and the Medical Record, the response package contains a copy of all separation documents and all of the following information if it is in the file:

- Military Services Dates
- Character of Service
- Promotions and Reductions
- Duty Stations and Assignments
- Foreign or Sea Service
- Military Schooling and Training
- Awards and Letters of Commendation
- Disciplinary Actions
- Last Time
- Enlistments Contracts
- Entry and Separation Physical Exams
- Immunizations

Dental Examinations
Clinical Summaries/Cover
Sheets

If, after receiving an extract of a file, a requester submits a follow-up request for additional information or documents, NPRC will automatically send copies of all the other documents in the file. Until recently this policy was not explained when responding to requesters. As of 28 SEP 09, all responses that contain file extracts include an explanation of the policy. If you have questions about this policy, they should be directed to: Tom Mills

Assistant Archivist for Regional Records Services. Thus, if a veteran/retiree needs or wants a COMPLETE copy of their military personnel record, they should submit a 2nd request which clearly states "This is a 2nd request for a complete copy -- provide copies of ALL documents." The purpose of a request should be "Benefits". The best way to submit a request is online at: <https://vetrecs.archives.gov>. [Source: www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/special-notice.html Nov 09]



Democracy Starts Here.



RETIREE DEATH

Retired Navy SCPO Greg A. Williams was killed in a vehicular accident on 30 October 2009. Greg after retiring from the Navy in June 2008 was employed with the Chenega Security and Protection Services at Shiriki. He is survived by his son Nicholas a student at Edgren High School. The Misawa Military Retirees Association presented the family with a \$500 grant from the survivor's assistance fund to help with their immediate needs.



Cold War Medal Update

U.S. Senators Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME), Jim Webb (D-VA), Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA) on 5 NOV introduced the Cold War Service Medals Act of 2009 (S.2743), bipartisan legislation to authorize the secretaries of the military departments to award Cold War Service Medals to American veterans. To date, no medal exists to honor the men and women who served and defended the United States during the Cold War. Comments from the Senators who introduced the bill were:

Senator Snowe: "From the end of World War II to dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War veterans were in the vanguard of the Nation's defenses. Although long overdue, this legislation will honor and recognize the American patriots who for nearly half-a-century defended the Nation against the advance of communist ideology in the form of the Cold War Service Medal. The commitment, motivation, and forti-

tude of these brave service members was second to none and their actions should be recognized in a long-standing military custom befitting their patriotism and service."

Senator Webb: "The millions of Americans who served in uniform in the armed forces during the Cold War, spanning more than four decades, were the living embodiment of our nation's strategy of deterrence. In their efforts to preserve peace, hundreds died during isolated armed confrontations when the Cold War flashed hot at remote locations around the world. This legislation will appropriately honor those who served in an effort that resulted in the largest single expansion in the number of democratically elected governments in world history."

Senator Lincoln: "America's Cold War veterans deserve every honor we can bestow upon them for their hard work and dedication to keeping our nation safe. The Cold War Ser-

vice Medal would allow military service members, veterans, and their families to receive the recognition and honor they rightfully deserve. I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure our veterans receive the support and care they and their families need. It's the least we can do as a grateful nation.

Senator Landrieu: "For 46 years, we were engaged in a worldwide battle against communism. During that time, there were countless heroes, who served in our nation's Armed Forces and played a critical role in America's triumph. These men and women, who sacrificed so much for so many, deserve to be awarded the Cold War Service Medal in recognition of their faithful service to their country and tireless defense of freedom around the world."

Specifically, the Cold War Service Medal Act of 2009 would allow the Defense Department to issue a Cold War Service Medal to any honorably

discharged veteran who served on active duty for not less than two years or was deployed for thirty days or more during the period from 2 SEP 45 to 26 DEC 91. In the case of those veterans who are now deceased, the medal could be issued to their family or representative, as determined by the Defense Department. The bill would also express the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense should expedite the design of the medal and expedite the establishment and implementation mechanisms to facilitate the issuance of the Cold War Service Medal. The award of the Cold War Service Medal is supported by the American Cold War Veterans, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other veterans' services organizations. [Source: Sen. Blanche Lincoln News release 5 Nov 09]

Retroactive Stop-Loss Pay—New

Current/former AF members who had an approved Date of Separation (DOS) or retirement date between 11 Sep 01 and 30 Sep 09 and were involuntarily retained on active duty past their DOS or retirement date as a result of stop loss may be eligible to receive a retroactive stop loss payment of \$500 per month. Legally designated representatives of deceased/incapacitated claimants may file on behalf of claimant.

This benefit is payable to current and former Armed Forces members,

including reserve component members, who at any time from 11 September 2001 to 30 September 2009, had an approved separation or retirement date and were involuntarily held in service beyond this date as a direct result of stop-loss. Eligible individuals should print and complete DD Form 2944, Claim for Retroactive Stop Loss Payment from the AFPC website at

www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/stoploss and submit claim with applicable documentation. Claimants

who were on active duty at the time they were affected by stop-loss submit applications to AFPC via commercial fax: 210 565-4599/DSN 665-4599, or scan/email to afpc.dpsos.stoploss@randolph.af.mil, or mail to AFPC/DPSOS (Stop-Loss Section), 550 C Street West Suite 3, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4713.

Claimants who served in the Air Reserve Component at the time they were affected by stop-loss are directed to contact ARPC at 1-800-

525-0102/DSN 926-6528 or visit their website www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/stoploss (For Active Duty) <https://arpc.afrc.af.mil/vpc-GR/> (for Reserve/Guard). Call the Total Force Service Center 1-800-525-0102 for more information.

Pandemic Influenza

The 2009 H1N1 is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. Initially detected in people in the United States in April 2009, this virus is spreading from person to person worldwide.

This virus is also referred to as "swine flu" because many of the genes in this virus were very similar to influenza virus that normally occurs in pigs (swine) in North America. Further studies have shown this new virus contains genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes.

The 2009 H1N1 virus is contagious and is spread mainly through coughing and sneezing by people infected with the flu. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), symp-

toms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. Some people may even have vomiting and diarrhea.

If you have flu-like symptoms, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people, except to seek medical care. The CDC recommends treatment with antiviral medication for certain patient population at risk for complications of influenza listed below.

- Children younger than 5 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- Persons with the following conditions: Chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension, hematological (including sickle cell disease), neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)
- Immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by

HIV

- Persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin

People at high risk for developing flu-related complications should seek medical evaluation within 24 hours of symptom onset either by PCM appointment or the Urgent Care Center. If you have further questions, please contact your PCM.

People also need to seek medical care if they develop any of the following symptoms:

- Difficulty Breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with a fever and worse cough
- Fever and a rash

The following contact precautions are highly recommended to prevent spread of the virus:

- Wash your hands often and well with soap and water or alcohol based cleaner
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid close contact with sick people

(Courtesy Maj Banks, 35 MDG/SGM)



Colorectal Cancer Screening

Don't Be That **GUY...or...GIRL.....!!!!**

Who have not had your Colorectal Cancer Screening done. **Screening and Early Detection** can prevent Colorectal Cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cancer killer. Both men and women get colorectal cancer. It often starts with no symptoms. That's why screening is so important. Screening helps find precancerous polyps, so that they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening can also

find colorectal cancer early, when treatment is most effective. There are several different ways to screen for colorectal cancer, (i.e. colonoscopy, fecal occult blood, barium enema, sigmoidoscopy). Your PCM will assist you in deciding which option is best for you.

If you are a man or woman between the ages of 51-80, you are at risk for developing colorectal cancer. To put your mind at ease, the 35 MDG is asking that all men and women within this age range to visit their PCM to set up

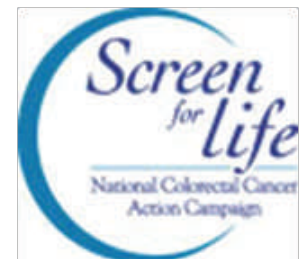
an appointment for a colorectal cancer screening.

To make an appointment, call the central appointment line at 226 - 6111/6349 from 0700-1600, Monday - Friday.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your PCM.

Colorectal Cancer Screening Saves Lives

(Courtesy Maj Banks, 35 MDG/SGM)



35th FW/CVR
Unit 5021
APO AP 96319-5021
Phone: 011-81-176-77-4428/5675
DSN: (315) 226-4428/5675



35th Fighter Wing
Misawa Air Base, Japan

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[HTTP://MISAWARAO.ORG](http://MISAWARAO.ORG)



Lodging Front Desk: 222-0282 / 0284 (reservations)
Command Post: 226-9899
Law Enforcement: 226-3600
Emergency Room: Non-Urgent- 226-6647
Emergency- 911 / Off Base 53-911

Medical/Dental Appointments- - -

Medical: 226-6111

Dental: 226-6700

AAFES General Manager: 616-3780

Commissary Officer: 226-3823

Anthony's Pizza: 616-6300

Pizza Hut: 616-5000

Clothing Sales: 616-8709

Fitness Center: 226-3982

Library: 226-4083

Misawa Clubs- - -

Enlisted: 616-1889

Officer: 616-1891

Base Theater: 616-8701

Taxi- - -

Official: 226-3328

Non-Official (Kichi Cab): 616-5438

Weather Forecast: 226-3064

Note: When dialing from off base, local area, dial 66-xxxx instead of 222/616-xxxx, and 77-xxxx instead of 226-xxxx.

Outside local area add 0176.

MISCELLANEOUS NUMBERS

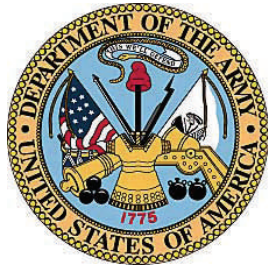
Still Serving!

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, 0176-77-4735. Japanese Nationals requiring assistance, who may have limited English language skills, contact MSgt (Ret) Joe Roginski, 616-3566 or from off base, 0176-66-3566.

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.

RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE
35 FW/CVR
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APO AP 96319-5021
OFFICIAL MAIL

MPS

TO: