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Tax-free compensation available under CRSC program

The increase in applications for the Combat Related Special Compensation pay, which officials expected to take place when the benefit was expanded to include all combat or related disabilities rated as service-connected by the Department of Veterans Affairs at 10 percent or higher, has just not happened.

The CRSC staff in the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), thinking the lack of participation may be because many retired members have still not heard about the program or perhaps are confusing the CRSC criteria with that of Concurrent Retirement Disability Payments (CRDP), are making an all out effort to spread the word. When in doubt – apply. It may very well be the key to receiving additional tax-free money.

The CRSC Branch has processed more than 11,800 applications with an approval rate of 66 percent, but this number of applications is just a drop in the bucket compared to the number that might be eligible. That figure probably ranges between 50,000 and 100,000.

The same officials note that CRSC is awarded to active duty military retirees with 20 years or more active duty or Reservists and Air Guardsmen who have retired at age 60 and who have a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability which may be combat related.

Although CRSC specifically addresses “combat-related” disabilities, retirees who developed disabilities from other than actual combat may be eligible. Disabilities due to exposure to Agent Orange, combat training, simulated war

exercises, parachuting and munitions demolition, along with all other types of hazardous service, are all examples that may be compensated.

Officials point out that eligible retirees may also receive Individual Unemployability (IU) payments and increased CRSC adjusted for dependents which were not provided

(See Tax-free on page 5)

HHS Dept. announces 2005 Medicare premium increase

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has announced the Medicare premium amounts to be paid by Medicare beneficiaries in 2005.

The new premiums reflect general growth in health care costs, higher payments to physicians and Medicare Advantage coordinated care health plans under the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA), and building trust fund reserves.

The monthly premium paid by beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Part B, which covers physician services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, durable medical equipment and other items, will be \$78.20, an increase of \$11.60 over the \$66.60 premium in 2004.

Medicare deductibles and premiums are updated annually in accordance with formulas set by law. By law, the federal government picks up about 75 percent of the cost of Part B benefits and the Part B premium covers the remaining 25 percent. About three-fourths of the 2005 increase is due to additional costs for Part B, and almost one-fourth for building the reserve fund.

Retiree can have TRICARE Prime premiums deducted from pay

Uniform Health Care beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE Prime can now choose to have premiums taken from their retired pay as an allotment. There are no provisions at this time for annuitants to have premiums deducted.

These allotments are being phased in between August and November. All transactions will be handled by the three TRICARE regional representatives. Go to page 5 for your regional contact information.

This option went into effect in August for the West region, September for the North and is set for October for the South with the first pay deductions starting the following month.

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Traveling down memory lane via basic training photographs

By Bill Turner
Editor, Afterburner

Many years have gone by since those basic training days, but I still remember them most vividly. Most of you probably do, also. To steal a line from Dickens, they were the best of times; they were the worst of times.

For me, it was Flight 776 at Lackland AFB, Texas, from Sept. 6, 1955 to early January, 1956, a period that took in some of the hottest days in the history of mankind only to see a blue norther arrive in November to send the temperature plummeting.

Actually, that flight made up mostly of kids from North Carolina, Texas, Iowa and a few from Illinois and Missouri, left me behind as I entered the hospital in early November and spent three weeks there recuperating from pneumonia. To be honest, I felt pretty good after the first week but I was kept around another two weeks for daily doctor checks and to be used buffing the floors at the old Lackland hospital.

After that, I finished training with another flight, the number of which I can't remember. Though I've been in contact with only a few of my fellow trainees over the years, I can still remember the names of many of them and picture their faces like yesterday.

And, certainly, I remember the names and faces of the tactical instructors of both flights. I didn't appreciate what they were doing at the time, but they both can take credit

for making an Air Force member out of at least one 17-year-old kid.

For other basic trainees, it was Parks AFB, Calif.; Samson AFB, NY, Amarillo and Sheppard AFBs in Texas and maybe some other make-shift areas that served as a basic training ground as the Air Force geared up for Korea.

Now, the next best thing to being there is just around the corner as Lackland AFB's Technical Sgt. Tracy L. English, 37th Training Wing historian, has taken on the monumental task of creating a database of basic military training (BMT) flight photographs. He needs your help.

If you have a good copy of your BMT flight picture (you probably don't want to send the original) mail it to:

37TRW/HO
1650 Carswell Ave
Lackland AFB TX 78236

If you prefer and have the capability, send a scanned photo to 37trw.ho@lackland.af.mil.

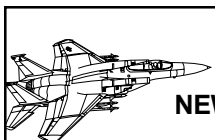
Submitted photos should be well identified with year, squadron and flight. Eventually, the photographs will be located at: www.lackland.af.mil/home/ under the tab "About Lackland."

Photographs of other basic military training activities may also be submitted to add to the current 1,000 plus photographs in Sergeant English's possession.

The historian recently got approval for an internal server in his office where he will post the pictures to link to the Lackland public site. Again, identify photographs as completely as possible.

Editor's Notebook

By
Bill
Turner



AFTERBURNER

NEWS FOR USAF RETIRED PERSONNEL

The **Afterburner** is authorized by Air Force Instruction 36-3106. It is published in February, June and October by the Retiree Services Branch. Distribution: individuals entitled to Air Force retired pay; unremarried surviving spouses of retirees (automatically if they are receiving an annuity under Survivor Benefit Plan and/or the Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan, or the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan); unremarried nonannuitant surviving spouses of deceased Air Force members who were entitled to receive retired pay, may receive the **Afterburner** by requesting it from the address below. The **Afterburner** is not sent to former spouses nor to retirees of other services. Additional copies are not available. The **Afterburner** address:

HQ AFPC/DPPTR
550 C Street W Ste 11
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713

E-mail address is afpc.retiree@randolph.af.mil, and the phone number is (210) 565-2126. The **Afterburner** is available on the Internet at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire/>. Retirees may write to the Co-chairmen of the Air Force Retiree Council by using the office symbol, HQ AFPC/CCU, at the address above. To change your address to receive the **Afterburner** and other official correspondence, see the procedures on page 12 of this issue.

Speak out in November

After wading through all the material directed at each party, many of you are not only undecided about who to vote for, but may have decided not to vote at all. If you fall into that category, please reconsider.

This time, don't leave it to the other guys. It's time now to sort through the negative stuff that's being tossed about and try to see the positive in each candidate (and that includes not only the presidency, but other elections as well).

Do your own research so that when you finally do put that X in the block, you've made the best decision you can.

Make your vote count.

Test proves successful; AF symbol becomes official

The Air Force symbol is now official, four years after the Service first applied for trademark protection. "I'm proud our symbol is now an official part of our heritage," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper.

"It represents our storied past and links our 21st Century Air Force to our core values and capabilities."

The decision to designate it as the official symbol of the Air Force demonstrates the service's conviction to preserving the symbol's integrity and should ease concerns that the symbol is temporary or remains a test. Trademark protection designates the symbol as exclusive property of the Air Force and gives the service authority to control and enforce its use.

A team of lawyers, public affairs officers, artists and historians are working to expand guidance and standards for the use of the symbol. An official Air Force Instruction is scheduled for release in fiscal 2005. In the meantime, the intent is to expand use of the symbol today and protect it for the future. Use must be consistent with applicable Air Force instructions and symbol guidelines which, along with examples of the symbol, are posted at www.af.mil/library/symbol/.

When Air Force officials began testing the symbol in 2001, it appeared on a limited number of base entry signs and water towers and a small number of aircraft and vehicles. Acceptance during the test was so widespread

that in 2002, 90 percent of Airmen surveyed thought the symbol was already official.

"Since then, I've seen Airmen wear it, drive it, eat it, carry it, embroider it and even brand it," said Maj. René Stockwell, of the Air Force public affairs national outreach and communications division, who manages the symbol trademark licensing program.

The service is licensing use of the symbol on a variety of commercial goods, from candy and furniture to tires and jewelry, which allows Airmen to display their service pride while off duty.

On duty, the symbol is featured on optional military tie tacs, the proposed utility uniform and gray boots, and the Air Force lightweight blue jacket and is being showcased in Air Force marketing campaigns.



Air Force Officials work to transform personnel, pay services

Personnel and pay officials are working together to transform the way the Air Force delivers these services to customers by offering an "e-business" approach to Internet users.

People who have Internet access will have more control over making routine personnel and pay transactions, at any time, as opposed to traveling to a nearby base and waiting for service in an office, said officials from the Air Force director of personnel's staff.

They understand there are likely to be apprehensive feelings associated with change, and that many retirees don't have access to computers or the Internet.

For retirees who do not have access to the Internet, the Air Force will keep and expand its contact center to handle inquiries and requests over the phone.

The Air Force Customer Service Contact Center offers all customers a single toll-free number to call for all personnel- and pay-related issues

Offices at the various bases will still provide personal customer service, but with somewhat reduced manning because of the efficiencies expected from the transformation process, said officials.

As a part of the transformation effort, an Air Force team is conducting focus groups at various bases. Focus group members, who will be selected by officials at the bases the team visits, will be asked such questions as:

- * Do they own a personal computer, and have Internet access?
- * What personnel or pay business do they now conduct in person at the base?
- * What concerns do they have about personnel and pay service delivery via the Web?
- * What concerns do they have about personnel and pay service delivery via the contact center?

Officials urge all retirees to participate with the focus groups as their input will help shape future personnel and pay services and operations.



Air Force pharmacies implement new formulary guidelines

Air Force pharmacies will no longer distribute some high-use, but expensive medications. This was outlined in a memorandum recently sent out to all Air Force pharmacies by Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Joseph E. Kelley, assistant surgeon general for health-care operations.

"It's no secret that (fiscal 2004) has been an extremely challenging budget year for the Air Force Medical Service," General Kelley said in the memo. "In addition to being faced with more expensive drugs coming to market this year, there has been an 8 percent price increase in the approximately 150 high-use medications contained on the (Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs) contract list."

To assist in meeting the medical service fiscal parameters, changes will be made in dispensing nonsedating antihistamines, some arthritis medications and insulin.

General Kelley said he believes the implementation of these formulary guidelines present sound clinical options with a very minimal impact of patient care.

For patients requesting refills on the medications being deleted, a 30-day supply will be provided to allow them



enough time to obtain a new prescription for another medication.

For patients seeking medications not contained on the pharmacy formulary, two options exist, he said.

First, the TRICARE mail-order pharmacy will mail up to a three-month supply of medication directly to the patient's home for a small co-pay — \$3 or \$9 depending on generic or brand-name medication. Second, the (retail) managed care

support contract pharmacies provide up to a 30-day supply of medication for a \$3 or \$9 co-pay.

"Both of these options provide a broader range of medications than normally found at the MTF pharmacy," he said. "When you consider the combination of the MTF pharmacy, TRICARE mail-order pharmacy and retail network pharmacies, patients are ensured they can receive a wide variety of medications."

Patients who have questions regarding their pharmacy benefit can contact their local pharmacy.

Some survivors face deadline for restored DIC benefit

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants to ensure that surviving spouses of deceased veterans are aware of an approaching deadline that may affect entitlement to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits.

The "Veterans Benefits Act of 2003" restored entitlement to DIC and related home loan and education benefits for surviving spouses who remarry on or after their 57th birthdays. Despite the fact that letters have been sent to those thought affected, VA officials are concerned that some surviving spouses may not be aware of this change in law, or may overlook this benefit if their subsequent marriages have not ended.

Generally, VA pays DIC to the surviving spouses of military service members who die while on active duty, and to surviving spouses of veterans whose death resulted from service-related causes.

The basic monthly rate is \$967 and is increased if the surviving spouse has dependents, is housebound, or meets criteria common to those who need a home aide. There are additional payments for dependent children. Parents who were dependent upon the service member's income also may qualify for DIC.

Under previous law, surviving spouses who remarried were not eligible for DIC unless their marriages ended. At that time they could apply for reinstatement of benefits.

Under the new law, surviving spouses who remarried after

age 57 and before Dec. 16, 2003, have a limited time to apply for restoration of DIC.

They have one year from the date the new law was enacted (Dec. 16, 2003) to apply for restoration of benefits. If VA receives the application later than Dec. 15, 2004, restoration of DIC must be denied.

The one-year application period does not apply to other surviving spouses whose remarriage on or after attaining age 57 followed enactment of the law.

For more information on restoration of DIC, call VA's toll free number at 1-800-827-1000 or visit the nearest VA regional office. Office locations can be found in the blue pages of local telephone directories.

People who are hearing impaired should call VA at 1-800-829-4833 by use of a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD).

AF Village I expands residency eligibility

Officials of the Air Force Village Foundation have announced a change in its eligibility requirements.

Air Force Village I has now opened its doors to all honorably separated officers and certain family members. Eligibility includes honorably separated officers of all uniformed services and their spouses, widow(er)s, and elderly family members who are 62 and older.

TRICARE sets Nov. 1 regional contractor transition date

With the scheduled move Nov. 1 of Arkansas, the remaining part of Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas (except for the far western part of the state) to the TRICARE South Region, the transition to the three regional contractors will be complete.

On Aug. 1, TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, eastern Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee transitioned to the South Region.

Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc., will provide beneficiaries information on enrollment, procedures for filing claims and contacts for assistance in the South Region.

Humana has worked with the DOD as a TRICARE regional managed care support contractor since 1996. Under the next generation of TRICARE contracts, Humana will provide health-care services and support to about 2.86 million beneficiaries in the new TRICARE South Region. Beneficiaries in the South Region may access health-care information by calling Humana at (800) 444-5445 or online at <http://www.humana-military.com/>.

The West Region transition was completed earlier, starting with Oregon, Washington and northern Idaho on June 1. The Regional Contractor is TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp, <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/west/default.cfm> or call toll free 1 (888) 874-9378.

The second of the three-phase West Region transition took place July 1, when beneficiaries in California, Hawaii and Alaska will become part of TRICARE West. The

final phase of this new expanded West Region was Oct. 1 and included beneficiaries located in Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming and Central Texas.

The TRICARE Northern Region project was completed Sept. 1 with the transition of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia.

The transition in that area started June 1 with Illinois, Indiana, portions of Iowa (Rock Island Arsenal area), Kentucky, Michigan, portions of Missouri (St. Louis area), North Carolina, Ohio, portions of Tennessee (Ft. Campbell area), southern Virginia, western West Virginia and Wisconsin being moved.

Health Net Federal Services Inc. (Health Net), a government operations division of Health Net Inc., based in Sacramento, Calif., will provide healthcare services and support to the 2.85 million beneficiaries in the North Region. They may access healthcare information by contacting Health Net at (877) TRICARE, (877) 874-2273, or <http://www.healthnetfederalservices.com>.

For information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, beneficiaries may access the following Web sites: TRICARE online at <http://www.tricareonline.com> for healthcare information or the TRICARE Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

Tax-free compensation

(Continued from page 1)

in the original provision.

Veterans receiving VA compensation, even those already receiving CRDP, should send in all documentation which addresses how the disability came about and let the CRSC staff determine if the disabilities qualify for the program. Retired members may not receive CRDP and CRSC concurrently but because CRSC is non taxable, it may be more beneficial. Those eligible for both can determine on an annual basis which is best since what is best in the beginning may not be later as CRDP is phased in over a 10-year period.

Send documents to Disability Division (CRSC) 550 C Street West, Suite 6, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4708.

Appropriate supporting documentation includes, but is not limited to the following:

* Department of Defense Form 214, Certificate of Release from Active Duty.

* Air Force Form 356, Findings and Recommended Disposition of USAF Physical Evaluation Board.

* Retirement orders.

* Purple Heart citation and orders.

* Any documentation indicating combat-related findings.

* Assignment or temporary duty orders.

* Medical records.

* Any VA disability rating decisions made within the last year.

For more information, retirees should call the CRSC Branch at (210) 565-1600 or call toll free the AFPC Contact Center at toll free 1 (866) 229-7074. Information and applications are available at base military personnel flights or online at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc/>.

Air Force applicants can print and send the application and any supporting documentation to the address listed above. Contact the Air Force CRSC website at: www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/disability/CRSC/CRSCnew.htm.

CAP gives retirees opportunity to continue supporting country

With a much higher awareness of the need for homeland security and the potential threats that now exist, Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is playing a role in homeland security and is looking for senior members to join the effort.

That's the word from Robin Hunt, CAP chief of membership development, who noted that since the organization was created a week before Pearl Harbor, the organization has come full-circle as it prepares to play a vital role once again in homeland security through the new initiatives being established.

In the early days, CAP was assigned to the War Department under the Army Air Corps. Now, the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force is a force multiplier in critical homeland security efforts, Hunt said.

Members have excellent air/ground observation and communications assets at their disposal to provide aerial reconnaissance, photography and transportation, disaster and damage assessment, and other jobs. Most recently, CAP members have participated in a number of major exercises and missions.

Hunt revealed that in the next year, CAP will be upgrading to glass cockpits, digital image transmission via satellite, hyper spectral imaging capability to enhance search and rescue and homeland security, and acquiring a larger aircraft, the Gippsland GA-8 "AirVan."

Over the past five years, CAP has averaged more than 32,000 flying hours per year of reconnaissance and support to counter drug missions for the government's fight against narco-terrorism. All CAP members participating

in counter drug activities must pass Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE) background screening.

CAP performs missions for several federal government agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Justice, Transportation, Treasury and Agriculture, the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Coast Guard; Federal Aviation Administration, Bureau of Immigration and BICE, U.S. Forest Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and state and local law enforcement.

Assets include more than 61,000 volunteers—36,000 adult members and more than 25,000 cadet members—in more than 1,700 communities across the nation.

CAP also possesses a command and control structure that reaches to the local community and supports the Air Force Rescue and Coordination Center and Air Force National Security Emergency Preparedness Agency control centers.

Hunt noted that the organization is always in need of individuals to perform missions, mentor to young people, and help lead the organization into the exciting future that CAP officials anticipate.

Members of the retiree community who would like more information about joining can find out the name and phone number of the squadrons in their area by going to www.cap.gov. Children of retirees who want to know more about CAP's Cadet Program, open to youth age 12-18, can also get information at this site.

Civil Service retirement may affect Concurrent Disability Pay

An entry on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service web site answers the question asked by many retired members wanting to know if they qualify for Concurrent Disability Pay (CDP) although they waived their military retirement pay.

The answer, according to DFAS officials, depends on the situation. If you have combined your military time with your civil service time in order to qualify for a Civil Service retirement, you are not eligible for CDP.

On the other hand, if you combined your military time with your civil service time in order to enhance your civil service retirement, you may be eligible for CDP.

Officials point out, however, that those who are eligible will have to coordinate with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to reverse the waiver of retired pay. It's important to note that by doing this, the retired member may incur a debt to the government resulting from an overpayment. Any decision to change the status of retired pay should be carefully considered.

The CDP law is applicable to retirees who have a VA-rated, service-connected disability of 50 percent or greater. Anyone who retired for disability rather than under the regular retirement law must have at least 20 years of ser-

vice. Answers to other frequently asked questions are provided at <http://www.dfas.mil/money/retired/cdpfaq.htm>.

The DFAS toll free number is 1 (800) 321-1080.

VA reaches out to veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its efforts to reach veterans of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure they are aware of benefits they have earned.

Personal letters have been sent to more than 150,000 veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom who have recently separated from the military.

In partnership with state and local government benefits counselors and veterans service organization representatives, VA annually briefs about 200,000 service members around the world before discharge to help prepare them for civilian transition and VA benefits.

It operates benefits offices at 133 military installations to help service members with conditions arising during service prepare to begin receiving VA compensation promptly after discharge.

SSA firms Medicare Part B penalty waiver procedures

Uniformed services health care beneficiaries entitled to Medicare Part A, but not enrolled in Part B were automatically enrolled Sept. 1. That's the gist of a letter distributed by the Social Security Administration in mid-September.

A separate letter went to people who enrolled in Part B since Jan. 1, 2001 and who have been paying the late enrollment penalty.

This is the result of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA), which has a provision that directly impacts certain Medicare-TRICARE dual-eligible beneficiaries. It eliminates the Medicare Part B surcharge for uniformed services beneficiaries who were subject to a higher premium (currently paying more than \$66.60 a month) for enrolling in Part B during the years 2001 to 2004.

Under the MMA, Medicare Part B premiums are reduced for these beneficiaries to the regular monthly premium rate and beneficiaries will be reimbursed for any surcharges paid in 2004. These refunds will be provided in Social Security retirement checks.

The Part B monthly premium (\$66.60) will automatically be deducted from Social Security retirement checks starting Sept. 1, or if beneficiaries do not receive a Social Security check, they will be billed the appropriate amount. The SSA notice included a form that gives beneficiaries the option to change their Medicare Part B effective date or decline enrollment. Anyone who refuses Part B is ineligible for TRICARE benefits.

Beneficiaries will have 60 days after the date of the no-

tice to complete and return the form if they choose to change the effective date or decline Part B enrollment.

Those who elect an earlier start date will have to pay the past months' premium amount in a lump sum, but they'll also be able to file Medicare claims for qualifying health care expenses incurred in those months.

Beneficiaries who notify SSA that they are selecting an earlier month in 2004 as the start date for their Part B enrollment and would find it hard to pay the past months' premium amount in a lump sum have an option.

They should take the completed form and the SSA letter to a local Social Security office (if they live in the United States, Canada or Mexico) or United States Foreign Service Post for processing and ask about alternative payment options.

In addition to the SSA letter, affected beneficiaries were to receive a letter from the Department of Defense (DoD) explaining that, by law, beneficiaries who are entitled to Medicare Part A, whether based on age, disability, or end-stage renal disease, must be enrolled in Medicare Part B to retain TRICARE eligibility. Dual-eligible active duty family members are not required to purchase Medicare Part B until their active duty sponsor retires.

If beneficiaries have questions about enrolling in Medicare Part B, they may call SSA toll free, at 1-800-772-1213 or visit any Social Security office.

For general information about TRICARE benefits, beneficiaries may call Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS) TRICARE for Life at 1-866-773-0404 or visit the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil.

DoD aids electronic health records system initiative

The Defense Department will share its expertise using electronic health care records as part of a government initiative that aims to establish and link such a system nationwide by the end of the decade.

Making electronic record-keeping part of the public health care system would improve medical care and save money, according to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson.

Across-the-board implementation of health information technology could save the nation about \$130 billion a year in health costs and use of electronic medical records likely would improve the nation's correct medical treatment rate.

In April, President Bush directed DoD, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of Personnel Management to examine how they'd advance health information technology for public use nationwide in 10 years.

Thompson said he'd soon appoint a leadership panel to estimate the costs and benefits of implementing health in-

formation technology nationwide. That panel, he noted, would report back to him in October.

DoD will join with the Department of Veterans Affairs and HHS, explained Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, in developing "usable standards" for public-sector application of electronic storage and movement of medical information.

DoD, through its vast health care system that includes contracted civilian-sourced providers as part of the TRICARE system, also would "encourage the use of health information technology and health information exchange" across the private sector, Winkenwerder noted.

Winkenwerder pointed out, DoD is contributing its knowledge to develop a national electronic bio-surveillance system.

It's logical, he noted, for DoD to share its computer expertise in developing a national electronic health records system. "After all, the Internet did, in fact start at the Department of Defense," he said.

Edelweiss Lodge and Resort accepting reservations

The Armed Forces Recreation Center's newest resort, the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, located in the Bavarian Alps, is now open and accepting reservations.

In the weeks before the mid-September opening during which time about \$1 million worth of construction was taking place, a team of empowered staff members was trained on how to give optimal customer service.

"We want to make sure that all service members are aware of the unique experience that Edelweiss Lodge and Resort will offer," said Sales Director, Terry Hodges.

"Our world-class recreation programs, diverse choices in dining and atmosphere and other adventures that only the Alps can offer, hold a unique vacation experience for everyone.

The resort's web site notes that the area surrounding the resort provides an atmosphere ripe with promise and possibilities. Tours to nearby Munich, Innsbruck and Venice in a luxury tour bus are available. Also, visitors can enjoy classic mountain activities like skiing, hiking, and biking.

Service members, DOD civilians, retirees and their families can reserve their chance to see AFRC's newest resort, Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, with the new online reservation system at www.afrc europe.com or by calling the Vacation Planning Center at CIV 49-8821-729127 or DSN 440-2850.



Advance Space A lodging gets better with policy change

Reservations up to 30 days in advance are possible under a new change in the Air Force Space A Lodging policy.

Art Myers, Director of Air Force Services, announced the change recently while addressing members of the Air Force Retiree Council during their annual meeting at Randolph AFB, Texas. He explained that the policy change, long backed by the Council, is effective immediately.

Lodging managers at each base may accept and confirm reservations for Priority 2 (Space A) up to 30 days in advance of the arrival date, for up to three-night accommodations, space permitting based on actual and projected occupancy.

When projected occupancy is 86 percent or greater, managers may make reservations up to three days in advance; when 85 percent or less, up to seven days in advance; when 80 percent or less, up to two weeks in advance; when 65 percent or less, up to 30 days in advance.

Local managers have the option to extend these windows if the opportunity exists based on seasonal occupancy.

Mr. Myers told the Council members and explained in a policy letter sent to the services directors of all major commands that Priority 1 customers will not "bump" Priority 2 customers with confirmed reservations, nor will they bump them once they are assigned quarters for a specific period of time. An exception to this would be in times of contingency, emergency, or when the installation commander determines higher priority exists.

Members of the retiree community should note that installation commanders may establish a policy limiting the number of days Space A guests may stay in on-base lodging to no more than 30 days a year.

This changes the current policy of only accepting Space A reservations 24 hours in advance in effect since December 1995. Prior to then, it was necessary for individuals hoping for Space A lodging to show at the lodging office at 6 p.m. on the day accommodations were desired and then hope for the best.

Vacation at Vandenberg offers low cost entertainment, dining

Looking for a relatively low cost vacation while staying stateside or perhaps visiting if you're one of many retired members currently residing in foreign countries?

Sheila Carroll says she has just the place in California, especially during the upcoming holiday seasons. Ms. Carroll, the lodging manager at Vandenberg AFB, explained that the time is right during November and December time frame, occupancy is low, the weather is great, and you can book 30 days ahead of time.

Vandenberg AFB is situated on the central coast of California within easy reach of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, the Danish town of Solvang, Santa Monica, Malibu, Hearst Castle, miles of pristine beaches, great shopping and lots of big name theme parks.

She also said there are many recreational and entertainment resources on base: golf course, bowling, adventure trips, swimming pool, fine dining and entertainment at the club. According to Ms. Carroll, retirees may eat all meals in the military dining facility.

For more information: Lodging@Vandenberg.af.mil or call (805) 606-1844 (commercial) or 276-1844 (DSN).

(Travel wisely)**Shades of Green reopens Walt Disney World doors to military**

More military members and their families can exclaim "I'm going to Disney World," thanks to the recent expansion of the Shades of Green Armed Forces Recreation Center on Walt Disney World Resort.

With the expansion, the Shades of Green has more than doubled in size with the addition of 299 rooms to the previous 287, plus a 500-seat ballroom, two new restaurants, and a second heated swimming pool. The upgraded complex also better accommodates buses that shuttle guests around Disney's property, separate from the flow of traffic near the hotel's check-in area.

Shades of Green is adjacent to Disney's Palm Golf Course, home of the PGA Tour's FUNAI Classic, and just outside the gates of Mickey Mouse's famous house. Another one of Disney's five championship 18-hole golf courses and a nine-hole executive layout are within walking distance.

The hotel features two lighted tennis courts, hot tub, children's pool and play area, lounge and sports bar, banquet accommodations, gift shops, video arcade, laundry facilities, fitness center and automated teller machines.

Guests are provided transportation to all Walt Disney World attractions and early entry into select venues inside

the Magic Kingdom. Epcot, Disney-MGM Studios and Disney's Animal Kingdom Theme Park are just minutes away.

Self-supporting and operated with non-appropriated funds, Shades of Green is reserved for active duty and retired members of the uniformed services, Reserves and National Guard, as well as active and retired Department of Defense civilians and their families.

Affordability, a term often lost on visitors to Disney World, is the main attraction to Shades of Green. Room rates are based on rank and range from \$70 to \$225 per night for a standard room and \$82 to \$119 for a poolside room.

For room reservations at Shades of Green, call 888-593-2242 or fax to 407-824-3665. The hotel's direct number is 407-824-3400 and fax is 407-824-3460. An online reservation system is coming soon.

Reservations are accepted up to one year in advance. Six to eight months in advance normally are required to secure a room. Holidays and long weekends tend to get booked a full year in advance.

For a closer look at the Shades of Green, visit the web site at <http://www.armymwr.com/shades/index.html>.

7,000 people say okay to electronic Afterburner

Responding to a recommendation on how to save money, more than 7,000 members of the Air Force retiree community have opted for an electronic only version of the **Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel**.

Most of those responding in letters and E-mail messages to the editor said they were very satisfied with being able to read the text or .pdf versions of the publication posted on the Internet at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire>.

Quite a few simply cut out one copy because they were a two-retiree family. Still others indicated they got sufficient information via the electronic AFRNS and other military related publications.

While the 7,000 is a small percentage of the readership, it is a step in the right direction in cutting costs, especially in the postage area which makes up most of the budget.

As it stands now, plans are to continue to mail the printed version to all individuals eligible to receive it except, as previously noted, those who have agreed to cancel.

Officials note there are probably many **Afterburner** readers who didn't see the previous article or who may have changed their mind and feel they now can get by

without it.

Retiree families who fall into either category and received a printed copy this time are encouraged to send an E-mail with **Cancel Afterburner** in the subject line to the editor. In the text area, show your full name, address, and last four of your SSAN. The E-mail address is afpc.retiree@randolph.af.mil.

If you don't feel comfortable with that, send your request with SSAN in an envelope via the U.S. Postal System to:

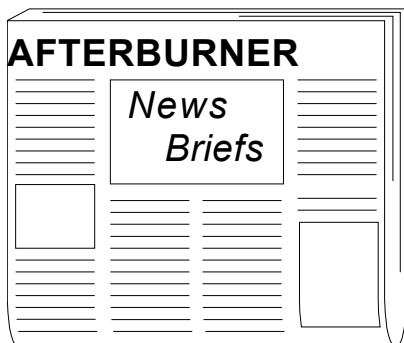
HQ AFPC/DPPTR
550 C Street W Ste 11
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713

Mark "Cancel Afterburner" on the outside of the envelope.

Those of you who haven't yet subscribed to the AFRNS are encouraged to do so. That's how the current 42,000 plus subscribers are notified when the **Afterburner** is posted on the internet with a link to it.

They also receive information of interest several times weekly via that service.

It's one of those computer-to-computer procedures. Using the account to which you want to subscribe, go to <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire> and click on "Retiree News" and then on "How to Subscribe."



World War II Memorial now open

Its was a long time coming, 59 years after the war, but the World War II Memorial, dedicated to the nation's World War II veterans, is now open.

Two 43-foot arches welcome visitors to a bronze-and-granite memorial plaza. The arches serve as north and south entries to the plaza, and within each arch are four bronze eagles that hold a suspended victory laurel.

A 17-foot granite pillar adorned with bronze oak and wheat wreaths, symbolic of the nation's industrial and agricultural strength, represents each state and territory from that period. The 56 pillars celebrate unprecedented national unity.

In the center of the pillars stands a rainbow reflecting pool with fountains and a wall with 4,000 sculpted, gold-plated stars. The stars commemorate the 400,000 American soldiers who died in the war and the 16 million who served and supported the war effort from home, she added.

The memorial, which cost \$170 million to build and was officially dedicated May 29 during the Memorial Day weekend, culminates an 11-year effort to honor America's World War II generation.

Air Force dedicates memorial

Soaring 270 feet into the sky over America's capital, three stainless-steel spires forming an equilateral triangle will memorialize the U.S. Air Force.

When an annuitant dies

When a Survivor Benefit Plan annuitant dies, notify the Defense Finance and Accounting Service immediately. The address and phone number are on page 12.

Include the annuitant's and the retired member's SSN on any written correspondence to DFAS. If death notification is by telephone, have readily available the SSN of the deceased annuitant and retired member, the annuitant's date of death and the name, address and telephone number of the next of kin or contact.

Also specify who will send a copy of the death certificate.

Publication month changes

The **Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel**, in the future will be printed and distributed three times a year but in February, June and October.

Previously, the publication was disseminated a month earlier. The change in the publication month was necessitated by a funding problem causing the September 2004 issue to slip to October.

To return to the regular schedule would mean having to fund four issues in the same fiscal year which would have caused an even greater problem.

The groundbreaking ceremony and site dedication for the Air Force Memorial was Sept. 15, in Arlington, Va.

The memorial site lies in a parking lot of the current Navy Annex Federal Office Building south of the Pentagon and next to Arlington National Cemetery. From this point, people can look over the top of the Pentagon and across the Potomac River to see the national capital.

The array of arcs against the sky will evoke a modern image of flight by jet and space vehicles. At the same time, it will enshrine the past in permanent remembrance of the pioneers of flight who came before and pay homage to those of the future. The three spires will represent the core values: integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do.

The spires will be asymmetrical and of uneven height so that the view of the memorial changes from every angle. Each spire will be illuminated.

The Air Force Memorial Foundation is still accepting donations. To make a tax-exempt contribution, or to learn more about the memorial, visit www.airforcememorial.org.

Commissary shoppers can again use printed internet coupons

Commissaries are again accepting computer-generated Internet coupons with a couple of requirements to guard against fraud.

To be acceptable, coupons must have a bar code that store checkouts can scan and they cannot be for free product. Photocopied or facsimile-generated coupons remain unacceptable.

DeCA and other grocery retailers had stopped accepting home-printed coupons in September 2003 as an interim measure.

The agency's web site, www.commissaries.com, will re-establish links to internet grocery coupon sites for the convenience of commissary shoppers.

Exchanges may keep separate HQs under streamlining plan

The military services may retain their separate exchange-system headquarters as part of a reorganization plan being developed by a special DoD-appointed task force.

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles J. Wax, a former commander of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), heads the Unified Exchange Task Force that was formed in May 2003 to affect change across the worldwide military exchange system.

AAFES, with headquarters in Dallas; the Navy Exchange, with headquarters in Virginia Beach, Va.; and the Marine Corps Exchange, with headquarters in Quantico, Va., combine for more than \$10 billion in annual worldwide sales. Two-thirds of exchange profit, Wax pointed out, is earmarked to fund the services' morale, welfare and recreation programs.

The task force, Wax noted, initially thought to combine the services' separate exchange headquarters into one as part of proposed money-saving initiatives. That step, he said, probably won't be necessary; instead, the organizations' finance and accounting, human resources, information and technology, logistics and non-retail procurement systems will be consolidated to produce savings. Private-sector retailers, he observed, performed a series of similar mergers of business practices over the last 10 years.

Consolidation of business practices across the military exchange system, Wax said, will make exchange operations more cost-efficient and be transparent to customers.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz' guidance to the task force was to not close exchange stores to realize savings, Wax said, noting some customers may mistakenly believe that DoD is attempting to get out of the retail business.

Addressing the view that exchange operations could be contracted out to other retailers, Wax said such an action is unlikely, since it would "fundamentally" alter the character of the exchange benefit. He noted private-sector-run exchanges would likely be required to channel two-thirds of their profits into military MWR programs. "Your stockholders are probably not (going to be) thrilled" by such a business arrangement, he noted.

Exchange-system reorganization recommendations should be completed by March, officials say. Following a legislative review cycle, measures to streamline exchanges could be implemented during 2006.

The availability of stateside and overseas exchange stores and their contributions to MWR programs, Wax said, is a long-standing military tradition that enhances the quality of life of service members, retirees, and their families.

How to recognize and avoid crook's 'phishing' net

by 1st Lt. Daniel Vaillant
81st Training Wing
Staff Judge Advocate Office

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. (AFPN) — Fishing is an activity enjoyed by many people, but "phishing" is angling of another sort.

"Phishing" is an internet e-mail scam that tricks individuals into revealing personal information, including Social Security numbers, bank account numbers and passwords.

Typically, the e-mails involve Web sites with familiar logos and companies, like Citibank or PayPal. The Web sites are replicas, and once internet users enter, they are often urged to "confirm" information that was supposedly lost or misplaced. After users provide the information, their identity is compromised and money starts disappearing.

To protect themselves, internet users need to first recognize the e-mail as a scam. There are several indicators:

- * The e-mail asks for personal information. Legitimate businesses do not request such information through e-mails. Banks and credit card companies

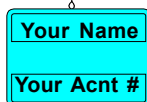
do not need people to provide that information; they already have it.

- * The e-mail does not address the recipient by name.
- * The e-mail does not reference a partial account number.
- * The e-mail warns that accounts will be closed unless the user reconfirms his or her information immediately.
- * The e-mail warns the user he or she has been the victim of fraud.
- * The e-mail contains spelling or grammatical errors.

Other ways to protect personal information include:

- * Contacting the business and verifying the message is genuine.
- * Adopting a general rule not to send personal information over the internet unless the user made contact first.
- * Contacting legitimate businesses that are being victimized to put them on alert.

For more information on how to protect personal information, visit the Federal Trade Commission web site at www.ftc.gov/ftc/consumer.htm.



How to change your correspondence address

The Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel, is mailed to Air Force retirees and Survivor Benefit Plan annuitants using correspondence addresses supplied by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Cleveland Center (DFAS-CL).

Addresses of non annuitant surviving spouses of Air Force retirees are maintained in a separate data base explained below.

Retirees – Those members in receipt of or entitled to retired pay, including retirees whose pay (part or all), comes from the VA or from Civil Service (because of combined federal service), should send their change of address to:

DFAS
U. S. Military Retirement Pay
P.O. Box 7130
London, KY 40742-7130
Phone: 1 (800)321-1080 or
FAX: 1(800)469-6559

Include your Social Security number and sign your request when mailing or FAXing.

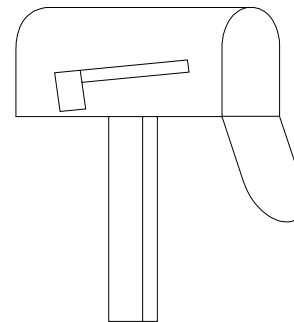
It's important to send the change of address to the correct location to ensure the change is made in a timely manner. Please note that the London, KY address below is a contractor that films the written request as a computer image and transmits it to the Cleveland pay center.

SBP/RSFPP annuitants –

Those surviving spouses who are in receipt of or entitled to a Survivor Benefit Plan/Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan annuity (this includes surviving spouses of retirees who were enrolled in SBP but who are receiving DIC in lieu of the SBP, must send a change of address to:

DFAS
U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
P.O. Box 7131
London, KY 40742-7131
Phone: 1(800)321-1080 or
FAX: 1(800)982-8459

If mailing or FAXing, include your Social Security number and that of the sponsor and sign your request.



Non-SBP/RSFPP annuitants

— Surviving spouses of retirees who were not enrolled in either the Survivor Benefit Plan/Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan (but who may or may not be receiving a DIC pension from the VA), and who are currently receiving the **Afterburner** in their own name, should mail the new address and include the sponsor's retired grade and SSN to:

HQ AFPC/DPPTTR
550 C Street West Ste 11
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713

Surviving spouses in this category who are not receiving the **Afterburner** in their own name may request to be placed on the list by sending a letter of request to the same address.

DO NOT use this portion as a Change of Address form. See information above for the correct change of address procedures. Anything else will only delay matters.

HQ AFPC/DPPTTR
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