



Afterburner

NEWS FOR USAF RETIRED PERSONNEL

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MAY 2004

Law brings Concurrent Retirement Disability Pay; changes CRSC

The 2004 National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 108-136) will benefit as many as 200,000 disabled military retirees in two ways.

As part of the Act, what is now called Concurrent Retirement Disability Payments (CRDP) starting Jan. 1, 2004, will phase out the VA disability offset to military retired pay over the next 10 years.

CRDP is applicable to all retirees with 20 years of service who have a VA-rated, service-connected disability of 50 percent or higher. Disability retirees with less than 20 years of service and retirees who have combined their military and civil service times to qualify for a civil service retirement are not eligible for CRDP.

Second, under the Law, the recently enacted Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) benefit was expanded to include all combat or operations related disabilities that have been service-connected by the VA at 10 percent or higher. Previously, the only veterans eligible for this benefit were those whose combat related disabilities were rated 60 percent or higher or those rated at 10 percent with disabilities caused by wounds for which a Purple Heart Medal was awarded.

Additionally, under the new criteria, National Guard and Reserve applicants must be 60 years of age with 20 years of creditable service, and eligible to receive retired pay (retirees who have combined their military and civil service times to qualify for a civil service retirement are not eligible for CRSC).

Payments of CRSC are paid at the rate of VA disability compensation paid to a single veteran for whatever combined percentage of disability is determined by the veteran's service to be combat or operationally-related.

Military retired veterans must apply to their service for CRSC payments and there is no phase-in period for this tax-free benefit.

Military retired veterans rated 50 percent and higher who are either not eligible for or do not apply for CRSC payments will see their retired offset phased out automatically. No application is required.

Special Note: Just hours before the **Afterburner** was mailed to the printer, the Disability Division received guidance from the Office of the Secretary of Defense which addresses members' enemployability and Special Monthly Compensation. Procedures are being developed in coordination with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and additional information will be forthcoming.

(See Disability Pay on page 5)

Veterans Benefit Act of 2003 affects some surviving spouses

A recently passed law may provide income for thousands of unknowing surviving spouses of military retirees and other veterans.

Public Law 108-183, the Veterans Benefit Act of 2003 signed into law by President Bush on Dec. 16, allowed survivors of members who died of service-connected causes to retain Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) if they remarry after attaining age 57. Previously, surviving spouses lost this entitlement if they remarried at any age. The only provision to regain the benefit was if the latter marriage ended in death or divorce.

Also, those who have already remarried (and were age 57 or older when they did so) have until Dec. 16, 2004 to apply for reinstatement of their DIC benefits. The current entitlement is \$967 a month.

The application form is VA Form 21-686c, which is available on the web at <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/21-686c.pdf>.

So far, this law has received little publicity and some surviving spouses of Air Force retirees may be eligible for this benefit. In addition, readers who know of individuals who may be eligible should inform them of this new law. Those eligible should apply as soon as possible.

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Need information? Check more than a single source

Calls and letters resulting from an Editor's Notebook column I distributed a few months ago via the electronic Air Force Retiree News Service (AFRNS) and which ran in the January issue of the **Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel**, caused me some mental anguish.

The column titled: "**Afterburner** – Do you still need it?" asked readers to tell me if they no longer needed the printed version because they could access it on the Internet or receive two copies as a two-retiree family. Thousands responded correctly and asked me to cancel their printed version. I'm still working on that.

On the other hand, many who read the message in the **Afterburner** interpreted it as meaning they had to let me know if they still wanted to receive the printed version. Now, I'm getting extra proofing help to ensure I'm actually saying what I think I am.

What bothered me was **not** that some of them said they prefer to receive the printed version, but there were those who indicated – and these same words prevailed in many of the letters – "I depend on the **Afterburner** for all my retiree information and I just can't get by without it."

It makes no difference whether it's a retiree or just the average Joe; anyone who depends on one source for all their information on a given subject will come up short.

Editor's Notebook

By
Bill
Turner



We all need to take advantage of what's available and that includes computers. Seriously folks, most of you really aren't "too old to learn something new." I know that from the many E-mails I get from retired members who are in their 80s and 90s.

If it's a money thing, remember that companies make computers in all price ranges and even the stripped down model will serve most of us well for our E-mail and internet surfing needs. In addition, most libraries now have them for use, often with no charge.

On a recent 10 day vacation, I checked my E-mail in three different libraries in three different states. I've also used computers in motels where I've stayed. Again, no charge.

But if a computer is simply too costly, too complicated and so stressful it makes you break out in hives, there are other ways you can pick up needed information. There are dozens of military-related organizations that print monthly publications covering all aspects of retired life, including not only absolutely essential information, but nice to know information as well.

These organizations are so much more than my one-deep operation. They have large staffs that not only tell you what's happening in Congress but actually lobby your elected officials on your behalf, something that I can't do.

Which organization should you join? Your call. I belong to three of them because not all have the same slant at the same time. I've belonged to one of them for 30 plus consecutive years, but membership in two others depends on how I feel when my membership expires. Combined, they cost me about \$60 a year.

I can't and wouldn't try to tell which is best for you, but I have linked a number of their web sites from my web page. Please go to www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire and click on links to determine if one or more of them might be to your liking.

Not only do they have fine publications, but many have electronic legislative updates disseminated weekly or even more often as topics heat up.

It may surprise you that some of them offer the legislative update E-mail services even if you don't join. Though not promoting one over another, I do suggest joining one or more of them. The more members an organization has, the more clout it has when "storming the hill" as I've heard it referred.

If you are reading between the lines, you'll get the message that the **Afterburner** is under constant scrutiny as to its effectiveness versus what it costs to print and distribute three times a year.

To make it more clear, you should know that either another postal increase or budget cut could very well mean the end of the printed version of the **Afterburner** or at least a reduction in the number of issues.

Now is a good time to decide, like your eggs and money, you don't want to have all your information in the same basket.



AFTERBURNER

NEWS FOR USAF RETIRED PERSONNEL

The **Afterburner** is authorized by Air Force Instruction 36-3106. It is published in January, May and September 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 elsewhere in this issue.

TRICARE Uniform Formulary final rule published

The Uniform Formulary's final rule was published April 1, 2004, according to the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA). This was in accordance with the requirement established in the fiscal year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 701, "Pharmacy Benefits Program."

The final rule, effective May 3, 2004, establishes the process for determining the formulary status for prescription drugs into one of three cost-share tiers, based upon their relative clinical and cost effectiveness.

"The Uniform Formulary will bring consistency and standardized formulary management to our \$4 billion pharmacy benefit," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "The new tiered cost-share structure encourages a more cost-effective use of the benefit while also providing beneficiaries with continued access to the medications they need."

Once the new structure is fully implemented, prescription drugs on the current Military Health System (MHS) formulary will be categorized as generic, formulary (brand-name), or non-formulary. Prescription drugs will be evaluated based on their relative clinical and cost effectiveness when compared with other drugs in the same therapeutic class.

TMA officials said the Uniform Formulary final rule does not change the TRICARE prescription drug benefit. The benefit includes the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved drugs and medicines that by U.S. law require a physician's or other authorized provider's prescription. It does not include prescription drugs used in medical treatments or procedures which are expressly excluded from the TRICARE benefit by statute or regulation. The list of

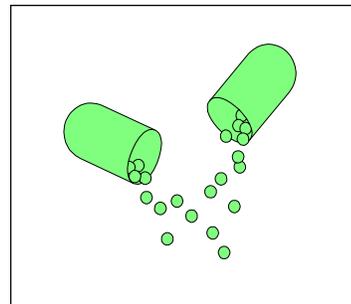
prescription drugs categorized as non-formulary will be published when the final determinations are made.

"The military treatment facility (MTF) remains the best value for all users of the TRICARE pharmacy program," said Col. William Davies, director, DoD Pharmacy Programs. "By having prescriptions filled at the MTF, TRICARE beneficiaries eliminate their out-of-pocket costs."

In the future, prescriptions filled by the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy will cost \$3 for up to a 90-day supply of a generic medication, \$9 for up to a 90-day supply of a brand-name formulary medication, and \$22 for up to a 90-day supply of a non-formulary medication.

Prescriptions filled using a retail network pharmacy will cost \$3 for up to a 30-day supply of a generic medication, \$9 for a 30-day supply of a brand-name formulary medication, and \$22 for up to a 30-day supply of a non-formulary medication.

Beneficiaries choosing to fill prescriptions using a non-network pharmacy will pay either \$9 or 20 percent of the total cost of the prescription, whichever amount is greater, for both generic and brand-name formulary medications; and \$22 or 20 percent, whichever amount is greater, for up to a 30-day supply of non-formulary medications. Applicable deductibles for non-network pharmacy use must first be met.



GAO upholds TRICARE pharmacy award to Express Scripts Inc.

The General Accounting Office has upheld the award of the TRICARE Retail Pharmacy Contract (TRRX) to Express Scripts Inc. (ESI) of Maryland Heights, Mo., according to a recent Department of Defense announcement.

The TRRX contract is for a pharmacy benefits manager to provide a nationwide network of retail pharmacies to fill prescriptions for TRICARE beneficiaries in the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The GAO review was prompted by protests filed by four of the losing bidders: ACS State Healthcare LLC, PharmaCare Government Services Inc., PBGA LLC, and Humana Military Healthcare Services Inc.

Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, noted his pleasure with the GAO's decision and said the DoD is looking forward to continuing to work with Express Scripts on the transition

of this important healthcare benefit to a new and innovative contract.

The new contract is designed to improve service and satisfaction for TRICARE beneficiaries and substantially reduce the cost of the benefit to the American taxpayer. DoD will implement the new contract in 2004 as a key part of the transformation of the military health system.

The TRRX contract was awarded to ESI on Sept. 26, 2003. The total value of the contract, which does not include the cost of prescriptions paid with government funds, is estimated at \$245,439,268 for the period of performance, including the 6-month base period and five 1-year option periods. The transition to the new retail pharmacy contract began Oct. 1, 2003, with the turnover of responsibility for delivery of retail pharmacy services occurring nationwide April 1, 2004.

The contract was competitively procured with seven offers received, and the TRICARE Management Activity, Aurora, Colo., is the contracting activity. ESI was previously awarded a contract in September 2002, to provide a worldwide full-service mail order pharmacy program to the 8.9 million Military Health System beneficiaries.

Congress authorizes Korean Defense Service Medal

Criteria for the award and procedures to claim entitlement to the Korean Defense Service Medal, authorized by Congress in February, have been announced.

The new medal, said a Pentagon spokeswoman, is America's way "of recognizing the tremendous accomplishments of service members who served in Korea from July 28, 1954 to a future undetermined date."

To qualify for the medal, service members must have served in support of the defense of the Republic of Korea. The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the Republic of Korea, and the contiguous water out to 12 nautical miles and all air spaces above the land and water areas.

Service members must have been assigned, attached or mobilized to units operating in the area of eligibility and have been physically deployed in the area of eligibility for 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days or meet one of the following criteria:

Have been engaged in actual combat during an armed engagement, regardless of the time in the area of eligibility;

Was wounded or injured in the line of duty and required medical evacuation from the area of eligibility; and

Participated as a regularly assigned air crew member flying sorties into, out of, within or over the area of eligibility in support of military operations. Each day that one or more sorties were flown in accordance with these criteria counts as one day toward the 30 or 60-day requirement.

Personnel who served in operations and exercises conducted in the area of eligibility are considered eligible for the award as long as the basic time criteria is met. Due to the extensive time period for medal eligibility, the noncon-

secutive service period for eligibility remains cumulative throughout the entire period.

The military may award the medal posthumously. Only one award of the medal is authorized for any individual.

According to DoD, more than 40,000 service members have been on South Korean land or adjacent waters each year since the July 1953 cease-fire establishing the DMZ.

Retired members and veterans who meet the eligibility (or the next of kin in the case of those now deceased) must request the award from the National Personnel Records Center (www.archives.gov) in St. Louis. The address is:

NPRC
9700 Page Avenue
St. Louis MO 63132-5100

Requests should include documents clearly proving service and dates in Korea, such as TDY/PCS orders, performance reports, letters of evaluation, flight records, decoration citation, record review RIP, medical documents, or DD form 214 (discharge form). Questions should be addressed to, and only to, the NPRC Customer Service Center at (314) 801-0800.

Once entitlement has been verified, NPRC will update the KDSM to the DD Form 214, certificate of release or discharge from active duty, and then authorize HQ AFPC, Randolph AFB, TX, to issue a medal. Based on the expected large number of individuals applying, this may take quite awhile.

The KDSM should also be available for purchase at Army and Air Force Exchange Service Clothing Sales facilities in three to six months.

Thunderbird Team announces remaining 2004 air show demonstration schedule

Following is the schedule for the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, known as the Thunderbirds, for the remainder of 2004:

May - 1 and 2, Millville, N.J.; 8 and 9, Lake City, Fla.; 15 and 16, Dover AFB, Del.; 22, Charleston AFB, S.C.; 23, Langley AFB, Va.; 29 and 30, Moffett Field, Calif.

June - 2, USAF Academy, Colo.; 5-6, Maxwell AFB, Ala.; 12-13, Hill AFB, Utah; 19-20, North Kingstown ANGB, RI; 26 and 27, Janesville, Wisc.

July - 3 and 4, Kansas City, Mo.; 10 and 11, Binghamton, N.Y.; 17 and 18, Cold Lake, Alberta; 24 and 25, Fairchild AFB, Wash.; 28, Cheyenne, Wyo.; 31, Greenfield, Ind.

August - 1, Greenfield, Ind.; 14 and 15, Westover ARB, Mass.; 18, Atlantic City, N.J.; 21 and 22, Offutt AFB, Neb.; 28 and 29, Toledo, Ohio.

September - 4, Ellsworth AFB, S.D.; 11, Andersen Air Base, Guam; 15, Kadena AB, Japan; 17, Kunsan AB, South Korea; 19, Osan AB, South Korea; 25 and 26, Hyakuri AB, Japan; 30, Misawa AB, Japan.

October - 3, Hamamatsu AB, Japan; 9 and 10, Redding, Calif.; 16 and 17, Houston; 23 and 24, El Paso, Texas; 30 and 31, Lafayette, La.

November - 6, Camden, S.C.; 7, Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C.; 13 and 14, Nellis AFB, Nev.

The above information was current as of late April. Since show schedules are subject to change, members of the retirement community should confirm a performance before traveling a long distance.

This can be done by checking the web site at <http://www.nellis.af.mil/thunderbirds>. For additional information on open house events and other activities, call the base public affairs office where the event is planned or the local chamber of commerce at civilian locations.

Many Retiree Activities Offices need volunteer assistance

Got a minute?

If you do, please read on. If you have more time, say a few hours a week, here's how you can put it to good use.

Certainly, there are many agencies and people who can use your help and at the top of the list are your fellow members of the retiree community.

A few hours each week or even once a month at the nearest base retiree activities office could make a world of difference.

One comment we hear often is "I don't know enough about retiree matters to help others." To that, we say three things: You might be surprised at how much you remember; you get the training you need; and the RAO director never puts you in a position where you have to supply "expert" information involving such complicated matters as legal and financial services. In those and other areas, you simply refer people to the experts who are most qualified to help.

Please remember, also, that it's not just a retiree thing. Quite a few spouses, and a few widows, are devoting a lot of time to making life a little easier for the retiree community.

Following is a list of bases needing your help and a way to contact that base:

Andrews AFB, Md. – Contact retired SMSgt John Neves, (301) 981-2726; E-mail, 89aw.rao@andrews.af.mil

Arnold AFB, Tullahoma, Tenn. – Contact SMSgt. Mark Echols, (931) 454-6351; E-mail Mark.echols@arnold.af.mil

Barksdale AFB, La., Bossier City, La. – Contact retired Col. Steve DePyssler at (866) 544-2412; E-mail rao@barksdale.af.mil

Bolling AFB, D.C. – Contact retired Col. John Moser at (202) 767-5255; E-mail reatact@bolling.af.mil

Brooks City Base, San Antonio, Texas – Contact retired CMSgt Fred Dickinson at (210) 536-2116/6418; E-mail Fred.Dickinson@Brooks.af.mil

Cannon AFB, N.M. – Call (505) 784-4679; E-mail Richard.Robertson@cannon.af.mil

Charleston AFB, S.C. – Call (843) 963-2228; E-mail Raymond.Borelli@charleston.af.mil

Columbus AFB, Miss. – Call retired SMSgt Bill Maddox at (662) 434-3120; E-mail William.Maddox@columbus.af.mil

Holloman AFB, N.M. - Call (505) 475-3140

Little Rock AFB, Ark. – Contact retired CWO John Heffernan at (501) 987-6095, E-mail John.Heffernan@littlerock.af.mil

Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Ala. – Contact retired CMSgt Norm Hall at (334) 953-6725; E-mail retireeactivities@maxwell.af.mil

McChord AFB, Wash. – Call (253) 982-3214/5235; E-mail retaffairs@mcchord.af.mil

Mountain Home AFB, ID – Call (208) 828-4879 or E-mail carl.olsen@mountainhome.af.mil

Offutt AFB – Omaha, Neb. – Contact Jim Goeltz at (402) 294-4566/2590; E-mail james.goeltz@offutt.af.mil

Seymour-Johnson AFB, N.C. – Call (919) 722-1119; E-mail charles.gray@seymourjohnson.af.mil

Tinker AFB, Oklahoma City, Okla. – Call Charles Lindley at (405) 739-2795; E-mail Charles.Lindley@tinker.af.mil



Disability Pay

(Continued from page 1)

For 2004, CRDP qualifying retirees should see their retired pay increase by the following flat amounts: For 100 percent disabled, \$750; 90 percent, \$500; 80 percent, \$350; 70 percent, \$250; 60 percent, \$125; 50 percent, \$100. Defense Finance and Accounting Service officials pointed out that the CRDP pay cannot exceed gross retired pay. For example, a retiree who is rated at 100 percent but whose gross retired pay is only \$631 will only have \$631 restored.

The remaining retired pay offsets will then be phased out over the following nine years. In 2005, retirees would get back another 10 percent of the remaining offset; in 2006, 20 percent; in 2007, 30 percent of the remaining offset and so on. By January 2014, retirees will be entitled to full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA

disability compensation.

Retirees who qualify for both CRSC and CRDP must make a choice. DFAS will pay the retiree the higher dollar entitlement, but because of tax considerations, this may not be the best for the retired member. DoD is developing an election process and instructions will be published later.

In the latest CRSC developments, officials in the Air Force Personnel Center's Disability Division said that the Services had agreed on a new DoD form to be used to apply for CRSC; however, DoD still has not released the form for public use.

In the meantime, the form currently authorized for use by those under the original criteria of 60 percent combat related disabilities/10 percent combat related with a Purple Heart, may also be used by those retired members who meet the expanded criteria, a minimum of a VA rated 10 percent combat disability that is combat related.

WPS TRICARE for Life contract simplifies claims processing

All beneficiaries who are eligible for TRICARE For Life, including those under age 65 and dual-eligible for TRICARE and Medicare, will soon receive a letter from Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS), the new TRICARE For Life claims processor.

The phase in for WPS as the new centralized claims processor for all TRICARE regions started April 1. Included are approximately 1.7 million TRICARE For Life beneficiaries in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoan Islands and the North Mariana Islands.

The introductory letter contains contact information and frequently asked questions on TRICARE For Life, WPS and the automated claims processing system which services all TRICARE For Life beneficiaries.

TRICARE officials said the new contract integrates the services previously provided by each of the regional managed care support contractors, providing a single source for claims processing, customer service and administrative claims services. The WPS TRICARE For Life (WPS TFL) contract is part of the Department of Defense's next generation of contracts and is designed to optimize the delivery of claims and associated customer services.

"The new single claims processing vehicle will deliver customer-friendly service and improve beneficiaries' satisfaction," said Rear Admiral Richard A. Mayo, deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity. "We will employ commercial best practices and an effective management approach to provide the necessary services through this world-class claims processing system."

TFL claims processing is currently in a state of transi-

tion. The outgoing regional claims processor will continue to process claims for services beneficiaries receive until WPS TFL is implemented in their state.

Because the Medicare program is administered on a state-by-state basis, WPS TFL will be implemented by state. In cases when parts of a state are included under two separate regions, WPS TFL will be implemented when the largest part of a state is scheduled to be implemented.

For example, Idaho falls under Region 7/8 (Central) and Northern Idaho falls under Region 11; all of Idaho will be phased in with Region 7/8 (Central). A complete list of states' phase in dates will soon be available on <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

On the above implementation dates, beneficiaries who are under age 65 and are eligible for both Medicare and TRICARE due to disability or end-stage renal disease will no longer need to directly file claims to a managed care support contractor. All claims filed with Medicare for these dual-eligible beneficiaries will go to WPS TFL.

WPS has agreements with each Medicare carrier allowing Medicare to directly submit claims to WPS TFL once implemented in the state. If the provider currently submits claims electronically on the beneficiary's behalf to Medicare, Medicare will now submit this claim directly to WPS TFL. Beneficiaries will receive an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) from WPS TFL once processing has been completed.

Once implemented in a region, beneficiaries may call WPS TFL, (866) 773-0404 or TDD (866) 773-0405 for information and/or claims processing assistance.

Certificates of Creditable Coverage help those losing TRICARE eligibility

The Department of Defense Military Health System has begun automatically issuing a Certificate of Creditable Coverage to any former uniformed services sponsor or family member who loses eligibility for health care benefits under TRICARE. The new procedure started Feb. 1.

In the military retiree community, this affects those individuals who lose eligibility because of divorce or a dependent child reaching age 21 (23 for full-time students).

For persons no longer eligible for TRICARE, the certificate serves as proof of previous health care coverage and limits the time another health care plan may exclude them from participating in a health care plan due to a preexisting medical condition.

The Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (DSO), as custodian of the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), will mail a certificate for the

sponsor or family member within 5 to 10 days after eligibility has been lost. As long as a current address is on file in DEERS, members may expect to receive the certificate within 30 days.

Sponsors or family members needing to expedite receipt of a certificate may mail or fax a request to the DSO. The request should include the sponsor's name and Social Security number, name of family member(s) for whom the certificate is needed, reason for the urgent request, name and address of the person or organization where the certificate should be sent, and finally, signature of the requester.

The request may be faxed to the DSO at (831) 655-8317 or mailed to Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (DSO), Attn: Certificate of Creditable Coverage, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955-6771.

Sponsors or family members who have questions regarding the certificate may contact the DSO at (800) 538-9552, or TTY/TDD at (866) 363-2883. Additional information is also available on the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/certificate/index.cfm.

DFAS online pay system improves over 4-year period;

but retired population slow to join

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service's (DFAS) online pay account information system, *myPay*, recently celebrated four successful and expansive years.

Although successful overall, it's still unknown by the majority of the retiree population which includes both retired members and surviving spouses receiving money under the Survivor Benefit Plan. DFAS officials point out that as of March 1, 2004, figures show 445,732 retirees with customized personal identification numbers (PINs), which is only 20.4 percent of the total military retiree population. Among annuitants, just under 11,000, or 4 percent, have tried *myPay*.

By service retirees, the figures are about the same across the board, ranging from 17.8 percent for the Army to 22.6 percent for the Air Force, and by annuitants from 3.8 percent for the Army to 4.4 percent for the Marine Corps.

DFAS officials are working to increase the total *myPay* participants, but especially to spread the word among the retired and annuitant populations.

The system has many benefits and, as background, DFAS officials noted that on Feb. 26, 2000, *myPay*, formerly known as Employee/Member Self Service (E/MSS), was brought online as both an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and Internet/Web-based system. The electronic system, which allows customers to access and control their pay account information, is available to all military members, military retirees and annuitants, and Department of Defense civilian employees.

Customers can view, print and save their leave and earnings statements, make adjustments to federal and state tax withholdings and update bank account and electronic transfers, all online, by accessing *myPay* at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

Retired and annuitant pay recipients, who have not yet discovered the benefits of *myPay*, may get more details and request a PIN by visiting <http://www.dfas.mil>.

DFAS officials noted that in October 2002, the electronic pay program took a giant leap, creating an extensive system with more features. As it improved, DFAS continued

to gain more and more customers. In May 2003, civilians from Army non-appropriated funds and in September 2003 civilian employees with Department of Energy were added.

Today, *myPay* has more than 2.6 million members with customized PINs. Throughout the past four years, 13 major options have been added with countless enhancements. In January 2004, there were nearly 11 million pay statement views with more than 4.3 million W-2 statement views. In addition, there were a total of 249,000 transactions submitted through *myPay* and more than 1.7 million pay inquiries.

More features to come - DFAS continues to look for opportunities to improve *myPay* and is planning to add the ability for service members to manage allotments and purchase savings bonds. This is expected in late summer.

Security and Privacy - *myPay* combines a 128-bit encryption software (strong encryption) and Secure Socket Layers (SSL) technology with the user's social security number, PIN, and use of a secure web address or DoD-specific telephone number to safeguard information from unauthorized access. This combination prevents information from being retrieved by outside sources while information is being transmitted. Once a user gets a PIN, *myPay* can be accessed nearly any time, anywhere.

DFAS changes pay statements to help reduce identity theft

Leave and Earning Statements for all service members and Defense Department civilians, and paychecks for military retirees now have more protection over identity theft.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service has dropped the first five digits of a person's social security number from all pay statements and checks to guard against identity theft.

"The changes apply to everyone," said Patrick T. Shine, acting director Defense Finance and Accounting Service. Reports of identity theft have substantially increased in recent years, according to the Federal Trade Commission, which monitors the issue.

This change is to be for all hard copy leave and earning statements. This does not apply to electronic copies of statements found on *myPay*, the online system for access and control of customers' personal pay information (<https://mypay.dfas.mil>).

Five years ago, the number of complaints to the FTC was roughly 23,400. By 2001, the rate had more than tripled to about 86,200. Based on figures released in January 2004, the number of complaints of identity theft nearly topped 215,000 for 2003. The Social Security Administration also has taken the same step of eliminating the first five social security numbers on the millions of checks it issues.

September Afterburner slips to October

In every household, it's sometimes necessary to shift money around to take care of emergency situations that suddenly crop up. The military is no exception.

Because of some unexpected shortfalls, funds intended for the September **Afterburner** postage must be redirected to a more critical area to ensure enough money to last to the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 30. The next issue of the **Afterburner** will go into the mail system in mid-October.

Officials extend family-member stateside Space-A Travel test

The one-year test to expand space-available travel privileges to family members of active-duty and retired service members traveling within the continental United States

Patriot Express restructuring affects DoD Space-A travel

Fiscal realities and limited use have led U.S. Transportation Command to restructure Patriot Express.

Patriot Express is the military's chartered commercial air service for transporting service members on permanent-change-of-station orders and their families to and from overseas locations.

It has also been used by many military retirees with family members to travel to overseas destinations on a Space Available basis.

The Patriot Express system has four contracted U.S. gateway international airports: Atlanta-Hartsfield, Baltimore-Washington, Los Angeles and Seattle-Tacoma, and four passenger reservation centers, or PRCs, in Germany, Japan, Hawaii and the continental United States.

Beginning next fiscal year through fiscal 2008, the restructure will lead to fewer flights and leave only one gateway, at BWI.

Information on Space-A travel is available at <http://public.amc.af.mil/SPACEA/spacea.htm>.



has been extended until further notice, according to Air Mobility Command's air transportation division officials.

The extension will allow the test to continue while office of the secretary of defense officials complete their evaluation of the test, wrote Lt. Col. Darcy Lilley, chief of the division's passenger policy branch, in a recent message.

Under the space-A test phase, the family members of active-duty and retired service members are able to travel space-A aboard military flights when accompanied by their sponsors, said John Lundeby, of the passenger policy branch. He said the test does not apply to "gray-area retirees" — Guard and Reserve Airmen who are retired but are not yet eligible for retired pay and benefits.

"Prior to the test, regulations prohibited family members from flying space-available within the CONUS," said Mr. Lundeby. "This privilege was available only to active-duty and retired military people. During the test period, dependents can accompany them."

Additional space-A travel and signup information is available through the passenger policy branch Web site at <http://public.amc.af.mil/SPACEA/spacea.htm>. A list of passenger terminals and phone numbers can be found there.

New Bavarian resort sets September opening

As the days seem warmer and brighter, do you find your thoughts turning more to vacations and travel? Perhaps the Bavarian Alps come to mind.

That being the case, you might just want to curb your desire to wander just a little longer to take advantage of the Sept. 15 opening of the new Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch, Germany.

The Armed Forces Recreation Center (AFRC) Europe is accepting reservations now for the recreation and leisure area which will boast a 330-room resort hotel including a conference center, three restaurants, entertainment game rooms, indoor pool and wellness club.

The resort will also include a nine-hole Alpine golf course, Hausberg Sport Lodge and Vacation Village Campground. The Hausberg Lodge has undergone a massive renovation to accommodate the increased number of guests visiting Garmisch.

The Edelweiss is the newest joint services resort hotel centrally managed by the Army's Community and Family Support Center (CFSC). The other CFSC resort hotels are the Hale Koa in Honolulu, Hawaii; Shades of Green in Orlando, Fla., and Dragon Hill Lodge in Seoul, Korea.

The new \$60 million resort is the result of the consolidation of the AFRC Europe hotel facilities in Garmisch and Chiemsee. The construction has been financed with a

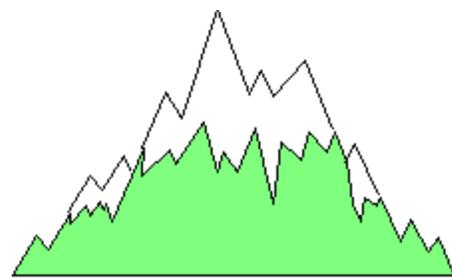
commercial loan (no tax dollars), which is a first for the U.S. military.

You can get a "sneak peak" of the new era of AFRC Europe by visiting the www.afrcurope.com

website for information on current AFRC Europe opportunities, their special R&R program and several new pages on Edelweiss Lodge and Resort. These pages have been created to give online visitors a glimpse of the resort hotel's interior design, project scope and resort portfolio. You can also join a mailing list to receive information via E-mail.

Between now and the Edelweiss opening, AFRC Europe will continue to provide vacation opportunities. The General Patton Hotel, Vacation Village and Campground and Hausberg Lodge are open and welcome you to visit Garmisch.

To make your reservations or to find out more about the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, go to the web site mentioned above or call the AFRC Europe Vacation Planning Center at 011-49-8821-72981.



2005 BRAC criteria focus on military value

Military value will be the focus for the final selection criteria to be used in the 2005 base realignment and closure (BRAC) rounds.

That value represents the ability of the installation to contribute to DoD future mission capabilities and operational readiness, said Philip Grone, principal assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, in a recent interview with American Forces Radio and Television Service. In fact, four of the eight guiding principles are centered on military value.

The final selection criteria are also based on factors such as potential costs and savings, community support and environmental considerations, Grone said. However, he added, "ultimately, the secretary must base his recommendations principally on how it contributes to our current and future mission capabilities, how it contributes to military value, how it supports the force."

The selection criteria for the upcoming BRAC round were finalized and published Feb. 12 in the Federal Register, a publication that fulfills the legal requirements to publish items such as proposed rules and notices, among other documents, for public comment.

Grone said Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld approved the final selection criteria after an earlier public comment period for the draft version. The BRAC timetable also called for sending the draft and final criteria to defense congressional committees. Congress has 30 days to carry out any disapproval action on the criteria.

More review work continues in coming months on items such as a force structure plan and infrastructure inventory. The secretary makes final recommendations on base

realignment and closures to an independent commission in May 2005.

The commission's nine members will review the secretary's BRAC recommendations before making their own recommendations to the president by September 2005. The president then either approves or rejects the commission's recommendation before sending them to Congress in November 2005. Congress has 45 legislative days to enact a joint resolution rejecting the recommendations or they become binding.

In addition to eliminating waste at bases in the United States, Grone said the department will also look at overseas assets through a global posture review. "The important part about the global review is to look at all of our infrastructure and to look carefully at how they are positioned to support the mission, and to assess whether or not we can make changes — not just where the wars of the 20th century ended, but where we need to realign and reposition our assets to deter, or where necessary, defeat any potential adversary in the 21st century," he explained.

Although he emphasized there are no specific goals on the number of bases the department plans to close, he indicated past studies have estimated there to be roughly a 23 percent excess capacity across DoD. However, he said, "That doesn't translate into a number of bases that we might close or realign."

Grone said that installations affected by a closure and realignment recommendation must begin to implement the closure or realignment within the first two years in which the recommendation becomes law. All closure and realignment activity must be completed within six years.

Officials stress need to update DEERS

Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) officials emphasized this week the importance of updating records when personal eligibility information changes, and noted several ways changes may be made.

Eligibility changes include changes in military career status and family status such as marriage, divorce, birth and adoption. Beneficiaries may update their DEERS address, telephone number, and e-mail address through several methods:

* DEERS Web site at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/address/index.jsp>. It's quick and easy and the best time to update is during non-peak hours.

* Visit a local personnel office that has a uniformed service ID card facility. To locate the nearest ID card facility, visit www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/. Call ahead for hours of operation and for instructions to update a record for someone who is housebound.

* Fax address changes to 1 (831) 655-8317.

* Call the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (DSO) Telephone Center at 1 (800) 538-9552 or for the Deaf (TTY/TDD): 1-866-363-2883. Hours of operation are 6 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (Pacific time), Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

* Mail the changed information to the DSO, ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, California 93955-6771.

Updating Information other than addresses: Beneficiaries need to provide important pieces of documentation, such as marriage, birth, or death certificates; DD 214s; DD 1172s; etc. Beneficiaries should contact the nearest military ID card facility to find out what documents are needed.

Once beneficiaries have the necessary documents, they can present them at the ID card facility or send a letter or fax to the DSO at the address and number noted above.

Unremarried former spouses should note that they are now listed in DEERS under their own Social Security number and not that of the sponsor.

AFTERBURNER

News Briefs

Part
B

Self
check
out

Enlisted Village offers help to widows

Although Air Force Enlisted Village officials take great pride in having had the opportunity to provide a home to more than 1,500 enlisted wid-

ows since 1975, the biggest challenge is still ahead.

That's according to Ken Hair, marketing director, who noted that efforts now are aimed at making contact with enlisted widows who need help, but who aren't aware of the services they provide.

Enlisted widows who are 55 years or older and receive retirement benefits may be eligible for the Air Force Enlisted Village, formerly called the Air Force Enlisted Widows Home. Hair also said that low income Air Force enlisted widows may be eligible for rent subsidy and, in some cases, there is no waiting period.

In addition to its two independent living facilities, Bob Hope Village and Teresa Village, an Assisted Living Facility is planned to open on the BHV campus in 2005. The Air Force Enlisted Village is located in the Florida panhandle, one mile south of Eglin AFB in the Fort Walton Beach area.

For more information, write to Air Force Enlisted Village, 92 Sunset Lane, Shalimar, FL 32579-1000; call toll free (800) 258-1413, or in Florida, (850) 651-3766. The E-mail address is afef@afenlistedfoundation.org and there is more information and photographs on the Internet at www.afenlistedwidows.org.

Self-checkouts, coupon verification system arrives in some commissaries

Commissaries in Virginia, California and Texas are the first to receive self-checkout lanes and an automated coupon verification checkout system.

The self-checkouts first appeared in the Langley Air Force Base, Va., commissary, and have since been installed at the Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and McClellan, Calif., commissaries. Commissaries on Vogelweh and Ramstein Air Bases, Germany, are slated to get them soon.

Self-checkouts are for customers with a few items who scan and bag their own groceries. An attendant monitors the lanes, checks shoppers' ID cards and provides assistance when needed. The system weighs the bags to ensure scanning is done correctly.

Method of payment – credit, debit or cash – is nearly the same as regular checkout lanes. Self-checkouts also have the capability to scan coupons although the attendant has to check expiration dates.

Coupon processing in the five commissaries receiving

self-checkouts is becoming more convenient thanks to a scanner software upgrade that validates coupon purchases.

The upgrade will eventually be implemented in all checkouts in all commissaries.

Retired Almanac available

Now in its 27th year, the Retired Military Almanac is a 256-page guide designed to keep members of the military retiree community up to date on key topics of interest.

It contains detailed information on recently passed legislation, including the newly enacted Concurrent Disability Payment Program (formerly known as Concurrent Receipt), enhancements to the Combat Related Special Compensation Program, and changes to the Survivor Benefit Plan.

Also included are lengthy sections on military health care, including TRICARE and TRICARE for Life; as well as information on veterans benefits (including a completely updated list of VA facilities); Space-Available lodging and travel; and many other topics directly affecting retirees and their families.

Order directly from the publisher for \$12 (includes postage) by sending a check or money order to Uniformed Services Almanac, Inc., PO Box 4144-AB, Falls Church, VA 22044, or if ordering by credit card, call toll-free (888) 872-9698. You can also order secure online: www.militaryalmanac.com.

Agencies work to identify Part B penalty relief eligibles

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is working with the Department of Defense and the Social Security Administration to identify all beneficiaries who are affected by new legislation that would prevent (or remove) penalties if they didn't enroll in Medicare Part B when they first became eligible at age 65.

This was a provision of Section 625 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003: Waiver of Part B Late Enrollment Penalty for Certain Military Retirees; Special Enrollment Period.

Members of the military retired community who have Medicare Part A but are not enrolled in Medicare Part B may enroll in Part B without a premium surcharge during a special enrollment period that will be announced on the TRICARE web site: www.tricare.osd.mil. Though the start date is not known, it will continue through Dec. 31, 2004.

Those eligible individuals entitled to Medicare Part B between January 2001-December 2004 and are paying more than \$66.60 a month for Medicare Part B will see their premiums reduced to \$66.60 beginning January 2004 and refunds will be made for any excess premiums paid. The premium reduction and refund will be done automatically.

AF study reveals apparent cancer, Agent Orange exposure association

A new analysis of cancer incidence among Air Force veterans of the Vietnam War found increased risks of prostate cancer and melanoma in those who sprayed Agent Orange and other herbicides, according to an article that will be published in the February edition of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

The article, written by members of the Air Force Health Study on Operation Ranch Hand, indicates that a statistical adjustment for years served in Southeast Asia (SEA) reveals increased risks of prostate cancer, melanoma and cancer at any anatomical site among those with the highest dioxin exposure. Previous results of the Study's research had found no consistent evidence that Agent Orange is related to cancer.

The National Academy of Sciences will review this study along with many other studies on herbicide and dioxin exposure to make a report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The study included veterans of Operation Ranch Hand, the unit responsible for the aerial spraying of Agent Orange and other herbicides in Vietnam, and compared them to Air Force veterans who served in SEA during the war but did not spray herbicides.

The study included two parts: external contrasts with the national population and internal contrasts with adjustments for years served in the SEA region. In both parts, researchers defined cancer as specified by the Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) section of the National Cancer Institute.

Contrasts with the national population revealed increased risks of melanoma in Ranch Hand veterans and an in-

creased risk of prostate cancer in Ranch Hand and comparison veterans. The significantly increased standardized incidence ratios ranged from 1.46 to 2.33. The elevated risks could be partly due to increased case finding as a result of extensive screening at the periodic Air Force Health Study physical examinations.

The study also found a significant decrease in cancer of the digestive system in the Ranch Hand group and a significant decrease in cancer of the urinary and lymphopoeitic systems in the comparison group. No significant increase in the risk of death from cancer was found in either the Ranch Hand or the comparison group when compared to national rates.

The second part of the study contrasted Ranch Hands in high, low and background dioxin exposure categories with Comparisons. Years in SEA confounded the analysis. Following standard statistical procedures, investigators stratified by this confounding variable. Among those who served no more than two years in SEA, Ranch Hand veterans with the highest dioxin levels were found to exhibit an increased risk of cancer at any anatomical site, prostate and melanoma.

The relative risk for "any site cancer" in the high dioxin category was 2.02 with a 95 percent confidence interval of 1.03 to 3.95. Increases in the risk of prostate cancer and melanoma were higher but based on small numbers, and the confidence intervals were wide. Of 65 "any site cancers" in the Ranch Hand group, 21 were of the prostate and 11 were melanoma.

Dioxin exposures of members of the Ranch Hand unit were probably greater than those experienced by the average Vietnam veteran.

For more information, contact the Air Force Surgeon General's Office at (202) 767-4797 or access the Ranch Hand Study web site at: <http://www.brooks.af.mil/AFRL/HED/hedb/afhs/afhs.shtml>.

SBP notes

Children are eligible for SBP payments as long as they are under age 18, or under age 22 if a full-time student in an accredited school.

A child who is disabled and incapable of self-support remains eligible for life or as long as disabled and unmarried if the disability occurred before age 18 (or before age 22 if a full-time student).

Marriage at any age terminates a child's SBP eligibility.

A child acquired after retirement may be covered under SBP if no eligible children existed at the time of retirement and requested within one year of acquiring the child.

A child acquired after retirement is automatically covered if child coverage was taken at retirement.

In elections of spouse and child coverage, as contingent beneficiaries, children receive SBP payments only in the event the spouse subsequently dies, or remarries before attaining age 55.

Important telephone numbers

The toll-free numbers below are staffed by experts who can help beneficiaries find out about certain medical information. These new telephone numbers greatly expand TRICARE's communications efforts.

- * Mail-Order Pharmacy (866) 363-8667
- * TRICARE- For-Life (888) DoD-LIFE (888-363-5433)
- * Senior Pharmacy Program 1 (877) 363-6377
- * Retiree Dental Plan 1 (888) 838-8737

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.

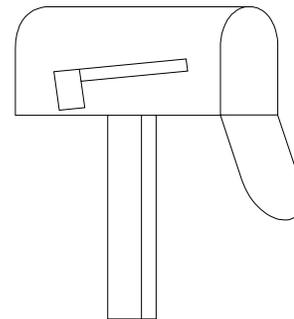
It's important to send the change of address to the correct location to ensure the change is made in a timely manner. Please note that the London, KY address below is a contractor that films the written request as a computer image and transmits it to DFAS.

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
550 C STREET WEST STE 11
RANDOLPH AFB TX 78150-4713

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