

# BUGLE BLASTS

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This Newsletter is dedicated to serving and former members of the Armed Forces of the United States and to their families and friends.

*Do what's right, no matter what the cost. It always costs. Do what's right anyway.*

## Editor/Publisher/s Notes – Mike Berger

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## VA May Pick Up More Medical Travel Costs – source [military.com](http://military.com)

The Department of Veterans Affairs may soon reimburse veterans for the travel expenses for receiving care at a VA medical center outside their region as an alternative to paying for local but more expensive private providers. The VA is considering the rule changes to try and curb the rising costs associated with sending veterans to private providers, which the GAO says climbed from \$3 billion in 2008 to nearly \$4.5 billion last year. The rule change would only authorize reimbursement if it is more cost-effective but equal to what they'd get by being referred to a private medical provider closer to home.

In part the VA medical centers are incurring higher costs for fee-based private medical providers to keep the veteran from paying out of his own pocket for travel costs to another VA hospital. Under current rules a VA medical center may only cover travel reimbursement for veterans with at least a 30 percent service-connected disability rating or an annual income below a specific level.

"Officials . . . told us they often send veterans who are not eligible for travel reimbursement to fee basis providers instead of referring them to other VAMCs that can provide the care because VA cannot compensate them for their travel

to another VA facility," the GAO reviewers said.

The hospitals are not even allowed to consider the cost effectiveness of paying veterans' travel costs in order to keep their care within VA facilities. In one example cited by the GAO, the VA Medical Center in Biloxi, MS. has at times incurred additional costs of between \$30,000 and \$40,000 to refer a cardiac patient to a private, fee-basis provider in the region because the veteran did not qualify for reimbursement if he traveled to the Houston VAMC.

At other times, VA regional hospitals will refer veterans to private providers to make sure the veteran is seen within the wait-times set by VA. The Alexandria, VA [?], VA Medical Center often refers veterans to fee-basis specialists in audiology, cardiology and ophthalmology. The problem is that the VA has not tracked how long it takes for veterans to be seen by the private providers, so the agency does not really know if the goals are being met, according to the GAO.

VA, in its response to the findings, said its business office is already at work building a national wait-time indicator for measuring the performance of fee-based providers, and expects to have it completed in September.

## Wainwright Hall at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Privatized – source various

Wainwright Hall recently became the latest Army lodging to be privatized and restored. The Hall is a two-story, 108-year-old brick structure that was opened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, renovated through a Lend Lease (US) Public Partnerships with the developer, and InterContinental Hotels Group, the lodging operator. It cost about \$4 million to bring Wainwright Hall up to modern-day standards (energy-saving heating, ventilation, air conditioning and lighting systems and controls).

The facility provides temporary lodging for soldiers and their families when they change duty stations while waiting for their new housing to become available; is used by soldiers on TDY for short-term training so they don't need to find a place off-post, and can also be used by authorized installation visitors. Officials say the process is more effective and efficient.

“Catch 22” - room rates have jumped from \$80 per night to \$150 with no change in the physical plant.

## Beer and Mosquito Bites – source [wgntv.com](http://wgntv.com)

A cold beer on a hot day could put you at risk for mosquito bites. A report in “Smithsonian Magazine” found one 12 oz beer could make you 20% more likely to be bitten.

Researchers believe alcohol increases the amount of ethanol excreted in sweat, and increases body temperature. Consider yourself warned.

## Calendar and Upcoming Events

### August 2013

- 1– Raspberry Cream Pie Day
- 4 – U.S. Coast Guard Day
- 5 – National Fried Chicken Day
- 14/15– V.J. Day (World War II)
- 26 – Women’s Equality Day
- 29 – More Herbs, Less Salt Day



### September 2013

- 2– Labor Day
- 4 – Rosh Hashhanah begins
- 11 – 9/11 Remembrance
- 13 – Yom Kippur
- 17 - Constitution Day
- 20 – POW/MIA Recognition Day

### **Soldiers on motorcycles might be most effective in Afghanistan – source Stars and Stripes**

In the past decade the U.S. has spent \$45 billion on armored vehicles designed to protect troops against the roadside bombs, which cost the enemy next to nothing to build and emplace. It seems counter-intuitive, but some experts think a safer and more effective way to take on the bad guys might be to ditch heavy armor in favor of a lighter, faster mode of transport. Many say that in places like Afghanistan, motorcycles would be a cheaper, safer and more effective vehicle for operations than slow-moving armored personnel carriers.

It's not a new concept. In 1916, Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing used Harley-Davidsons with machine guns mounted on sidecars during his hunt for revolutionary Pancho Villa along the border with Mexico. The War Department fielded 60,000 more Harleys in World Wars I and II, and Kawasaki motorcycles are still used by the Air Force and Marine Corps today for air field surveys, convoy control and reconnaissance. However, the U.S. hasn't sent motorcycles to its troops in Iraq or Afghanistan.

In contrast, the Taliban routinely uses two-wheelers to mount attacks on Afghan and foreign forces. The insurgents' machines might be ancient, low-powered and poorly maintained but their expert riders know their way around the goat tracks and dirt roads that cut across mountain ranges and snake through valleys all over the country.

As the Afghan War winds down, the U.S. Army is looking at lessons learned and planning for future conflicts where the enemy might employ the same tactics used by the Taliban.

### **Separate combat training for men, women? – source Washington Times**

The military is looking at ways to modify its training for women to help them qualify for direct ground combat roles in the infantry, tanks and special operations. Senior officers revealed the new effort at a hearing of the House Armed Services subcommittee on personnel.

The armed services have pledged that their standards for ground combat and commando operations will be the same for men and women. But now commanders are raising the possibility of a two-tiered training system.

The idea was presented by **Rep. Niki Tsongas**. "To put in place a training regimen that is ill-suited to maximizing the success of women is not really the outcome any of us want to see," she said. Army **Lt. Gen. Howard Bromberg**, deputy chief of staff for personnel, agreed. "We are looking at that, and we're not looking at it just for the integration of women," Gen. Bromberg testified. "We're looking at it for the total soldier, because just as you have a 110-pound male who may lack some type of physiological capability or physical capability, he or she may both need to be trained differently. We're trying to expand our understanding of how we train."

**Lt. Gen. Robert Milstead Jr.**, deputy Marine Corps commandant for manpower, put forward a pitch for gender-

Motorcycles could be an option for those building a force for such a future conflict, according to LTC Jonathan Larsen, a battalion commander with the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii. Larsen was one of the last officers to command U.S. Army motorcycles, which were used for reconnaissance during training at Fort Irwin's National Training Center. "It was a way to insert a small team with a very small signature," Larsen recalled, adding that motorcycles were used by the 101st Airborne Division for reconnaissance in the Gulf War. "I can think of a lot of uses (for motorcycles) but the person designing the force would have to make a decision about taking the risk of having someone exposed and using speed for protection versus the much more methodical approach of the heavy vehicle."

Any plans for future conflicts must consider that the U.S. has spent a lot of money on up-armored Humvees, Mine Resistant Armor Protected vehicles and V-hulled Strykers, and those vehicles are still preferred in many situations. "Vast amounts of resources spent on MRAPs might have been avoided by (different) strategic, operational (or) tactical choices (such as patrolling with motorcycles)," said David Johnson, of the Center for Advanced Defense Studies in Washington, D.C. In Iraq, for example, special operators often patrolled in beat up taxis instead of armored vehicles, he said. "They (unarmored vehicles) were very effective in avoiding ambushes," Johnson said but added that they wouldn't be a good fit for operations such as "presence" patrols or large scale logistical efforts.

segregated boot camp. "I think an excellent example of what you're talking about is our gender-separated boot camp, we don't start teaching the [occupations] there. Our boot camp is about the transformation of individuals, men and women, from being a civilian to being a United States Marine. We have it separated for that reason, because we feel that this transformation, it goes on a separate track. It needs to be handled different. They need to be nurtured different. They just need different steps as they go. They end up in the same place, the United States Marines."

The Marine Corps has charged to the front of the women-in-combat issue by asking female officer volunteers to try to complete the officer combat qualification course at the base in Quantico, VA. Women are expected to perform the same tasks as men. All six women who have entered the course have dropped out due to injury or failure to complete the course.

[We all knew it would come to this. When will they ever learn? I've been told there is or was a picture on the wall of the Florida National Guard Adjutant General's office. It depicted rows of white crosses on a green hillside with the caption: "If only I had trained them harder."]

I use a lot of space focusing on uniforms and particularly camouflage uniforms. It is a huge waste of money to have so many variants and needs to be talked about – see the next two items.

### **Military Spends Big to Get Camouflage Right – source rollcall.com**

Beginning in 2000, the military services began a process that has led to a proliferation of different camouflage uniforms. In most cases, the services each sought new uniforms to improve utility, fit and durability. Many of the uniforms are imbued with substances that repel insects and reflect infrared sensors. Many are also flame resistant, an important characteristic in light of the threat of improvised explosive devices.

In 2000, the commandant of the Marine Corps directed the development and fielding of a new Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform, according to the Government Accountability Office. It cost \$319,000 to develop and was fielded beginning in June 2002. By all accounts, the Marine Corps has been pleased with the choice.

By contrast, the Army began development of its new uniform in 2003, but enjoyed far less success. “Under the decision authority of the Chief of Staff, the new uniform included requirements to improve visual or near-infrared capabilities, to improve morale, and to provide a universal camouflage pattern with acceptable levels of performance in woodland, desert, and urban terrains,” the GAO wrote in its 2012 report. Development cost \$3.2 million — 10 times more than the Marine Corps version — and it began fielding in 2005.

But by 2009, serious issues became apparent. Based on concerns from soldiers in Afghanistan, lawmakers directed

the Pentagon to take immediate action to provide a camouflage pattern that was more suited to Afghanistan. “In response, the Army developed the Operation Enduring Freedom Camouflage Pattern (OCP) to address current camouflage requirements and initiated a study of camouflage for future uniforms,” the GAO reported. The new development cost \$3.4 million and began fielding in 2010. The GAO said that as part of its study of camouflage, the Army is reviewing three color variations — desert, woodland and transitional — as future uniform options. The study also will identify one camouflage pattern for protective gear that blends well with all three uniforms.

This new initiative could cost as much as \$7 million through 2017. Congressional aides indicated the Army could unveil its results soon. “If the Army chooses a new camouflage uniform, officials estimate that it may cost up to \$4 billion over five years to replace its uniform and related protective gear,” the GAO stated.

The Air Force launched its development of a uniform in 2002 at a cost of \$3.2 million. It began fielding the uniform in 2007. In 2006, the Navy approved a new desert and woodland uniform concept. In 2009, the chief of naval operations received approval from Special Operations Command to use camouflage patterns, developed by Naval Special Warfare Command, for the Navy’s new Type II desert and Type III woodland uniforms.

### **Should Armed Services Have a Common Combat Camouflage? – source rollcall.com**

Lawmakers in the House and Senate want to push the services to agree on a common combat camouflage uniform. The move is being considered because the services now field 10 different types of camouflage uniforms, and the Army is considering yet again replacing what it is using.

Consolidating the number of uniforms would affect almost all of the 2.2 million personnel in the active and part-time armed forces, and could save up to a quarter of a billion dollars, according to proponents. But it also could alienate many uniformed troops and be a blow to the morale of the different services.

Those proposing the change insist that it’s not necessary for the four combat services to have 10 different types of combat uniforms. They point out that the Navy’s “aquafuge” and Air Force’s “airmen’s battle uniform” can’t be worn in Afghanistan, because wearing such uniforms in Afghanistan would make those troops vulnerable.

“Look, I would love for each of the services to be able to have their own camouflage uniform if that’s what they feel it needed,” said Illinois Democratic **Rep. Tammy Duckworth**, who co-sponsored the amendment to the House Armed Services panel’s policy bill that called for a common camouflage combat uniform. “But when you have a camouflage uniform that can’t be used, can’t be worn in combat ... I just think we can’t afford that right now. ” Duckworth and Illinois Democrat **Bill Enyart**, the other co-

sponsor, calculated their push would resonate in a climate of diminished defense resources. The Army could save more than \$80 million, according to a highly critical GAO report from 2012, which noted, “The military services’ fragmented approach for acquiring uniforms has not ensured the development of joint criteria for new uniforms or achieved cost efficiency,” and, “the services have not pursued opportunities to seek to reduce clothing costs, such as by collaborating on uniform inventory costs.”

It may not be big money in the context of a more than \$600 billion defense bill — but Enyart said all four services could ultimately save a total of \$250 million by going to one combat uniform — but for the textile companies that make the uniforms, it’s big business, one senior congressional aide noted.

Some outside experts and former generals insist, however, that the symbolism of reining in potentially wasteful spending is outweighed by something more important — the boost to pride and morale generated by distinctive uniforms.

Duckworth said poorly spent money at any level should be addressed. “It struck me as ridiculous when you are comparing it [spending on camouflage uniforms] to the fact that we’re being asked to look at raising Tricare copays, and we’re looking at pushing modernization of the National Guard and Reserves equipment ... further to the right,” she said. “We can’t blow this much money on uniforms.”

**Report: Little Given Back by 6 Veterans Charities – source Military.com**

Six national vet groups are among a list of the top 50 worst charities in the U.S., according to The Tampa Bay Times ([www.tampabay.com/americas-worst-charities/](http://www.tampabay.com/americas-worst-charities/)), which compiled the rankings for an investigative reporting project. The charities were put on the list because only a small portion of the donations went toward those in need. Some charities provided as little as 2 percent back to the earnings they collected. The vast majority of the roughly \$1 billion contributed by Americans went to the corporations in the business of making the phone calls and collecting donations.

"[The] real beneficiaries are the charity founders themselves and the for-profit companies they pay to run boiler rooms that dial for dollars," the paper said, for which its reporters reviewed thousands of charities and charted their finances going back a decade.

Vet charities named are the **National Veterans Service Fund**, Darien, CT; **Vietnow National Headquarters**, Rockford, IL.; **The Veterans Fund**, Treverton, PA; **Veterans Assistance Foundation**, Tomah, WI; **Circle of Friends for American Veterans**, Falls Church, VA ; and **Our American Veterans**, Fort Valley, GA.

Altogether the charities brought in more than \$130 million over the years they've operated, with the lion's share of the money going to the founders and the firms that solicit the contributions. National Veterans Service Fund, No. 8 on the list, pulled in \$70.2 million. They paid the solicitors \$36.9 million, but spent just \$5.5 million in cash aid to those in need, the paper reports. Vietnow, a 20-year-old organization intended to help veterans and their families. They raised about \$18 million of which nearly \$16 million went to the solicitors, about \$2.2 million to the charity, and just over \$527,000 in cash aid to individuals over that time, about \$32,000 per year.

The Veterans Fund was founded 15 years ago as a way to

raise money to bring entertainment to hospitalized vets, according to the paper. In the last 10 years, the charity raised more than \$15 million, but paid the fund-raising companies 82 cents for every dollar raised. About \$1 million went toward salaries at the charity, including an annual salary of \$40,000 to the owner. In the end, just 2 percent of the money raised went to the charity's cause. Veterans Assistance Foundation, according to the paper, does spend about one half of the \$2.5 million a year it raises to provide temporary housing and job training vets. But it ends up on the list because while it gets half of its revenue through a federal government grant, it has also shelled out \$11 million to for-profit solicitation companies over the last 10 years.

Circle of Friends began in 1993 as a charity providing shelter for some 70 veterans, but the paper says the founder went in a different direction by focusing on raising awareness about homeless veterans rather than actually housing them. It has raised nearly \$8 million over the years, paying \$5.7 million to solicitors, with \$2.7 going into the charity and \$510,000 in cash aid to the veterans. Our American Veterans raised about \$2.6 million to help needy vets between 2003 and 2009, paying \$2.3 million to the solicitors, about \$318,000 to the charity itself, and just over \$60,000 in cash aid to those veterans, the paper reports.

In 2009, while faced with lawsuits by two states and hit with more than \$100,000 in penalties, founder Sydney Young shut down Our American Veterans only to set up a new charity, American's Helping Veterans Corp., operating from the same address in Georgia. Like Young's previous charity, American's Helping Veterans Corps claimed it would be raising money for veterans, but of the \$420,000 the Tampa paper found it raked in during 2010, 80 cents of each dollar went to solicitors, while Young and his wife were paid a combined \$31,000.

**New Kind of Emergency Room May Not be TRICARE Authorized – source Army ECHOES**

TRICARE beneficiaries may have noticed new kinds of "Emergency Centers" popping up in their area. It may seem like a tempting health care option but, free-standing emergency rooms (ER) that are not affiliated with a hospital may not be TRICARE authorized. If a provider, such as a free-standing ER, is not authorized then TRICARE is prohibited from paying it "facility fees." That can leave a beneficiary stuck with a big bill. Beneficiaries need to "know before you go." Check a free-standing ER's TRICARE status – before emergency care is needed.

TRICARE defines an emergency department as an organized, hospital-based facility available 24 hours a day providing emergency services to patients who need

immediate medical attention. Emergency department affiliated with a hospital are most likely TRICARE-authorized providers. Beneficiaries who seek care at a free-standing ER need to ask if the facility is affiliated with a hospital-based emergency department. If it isn't, the beneficiary will need to make a decision about getting care elsewhere or being responsible for the facility charges.

Beneficiaries can check if a provider is TRICARE-authorized by calling their regional contractor. Contact information for regional contractors is available at [www.tricare.mil/contactus](http://www.tricare.mil/contactus).

All TRICARE network providers are also searchable at [www.tricare.mil/findaprovider](http://www.tricare.mil/findaprovider).

**Vet Toxic Exposure ~ Gagetown – source Boston.com**

Two U.S. Representatives want VA to help vets who fear they may have been exposed to dangerous herbicides at a Canadian military base. Democrats **Rep. Peter Welch**, of Vermont, and **Mike Michaud**, of Maine, re-introduced a bill that would establish a voluntary registry of U.S. veterans who served at the Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick. In 2007, the Canadian government

acknowledged that Agent Orange and other herbicides were tested at Gagetown and began paying settlements to Canadian vets. Members of the Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Rhode Island National Guard and reserves trained at Gagetown. While U.S. vets trained there after the testing period, many are still concerned they were exposed to toxic levels of herbicides.

**VA Performance – source The Blog: Kayla Williams**

It seems to be human nature to complain when something goes wrong but not praise success -- and the adage "If it bleeds, it leads" still seems to hold sway in most newsrooms. That's also true when it comes to the modern VA - we hear much more about what goes wrong than what is working. VA certainly has room to improve, but I worry the relentlessly-negative coverage could deter vets from seeking the care and benefits they deserve. I've previously written about the disability claims backlog at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) offers many benefits that make it a total system of care. I encourage veterans to use VHA, even though individual VA Medical Centers may vary fairly significantly, and some are struggling. Independent assessments have shown that VA outperforms Medicare and other systems. Today, I'd like to call attention to some great things VA does that many people may not know about.

**1. Prosthetics** - There's nowhere else I'd want to go for a prosthetic device: "America's veterans receive the best prosthetic care in the world." VA works with veterans to get them what is required to do the types of activities they want to do. For example, VA provides one of my friends with three legs: a regular leg for everyday use and two different specialty legs for use while doing CrossFit and running. In a review of civilian health insurance plans, over half did not specifically mention prosthetics; of those plans that covered, many had caps (often of \$5,000 or less). The X2, provided to veterans by VA, costs \$30,000. In addition to prosthetic devices, VA will also cover automobile adaptive equipment and provides a clothing allowance since prosthetics can cause clothing to wear out faster.

**UCMJ Applicable to Retirees – source Army Echoes**

Have you ever heard a retiree say, "They can't touch me now; I've retired."? Fortunately, for the sake of military justice, this is not true when it comes to retirees who violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) while they were on active duty or in a retired status.

Under Article 2 of the UCMJ, the Armed Forces maintain court-martial jurisdiction over retired personnel. Army Regulation 27-10, Military Justice, states "Retired members of a regular component of the Armed Forces who are entitled to pay are subject to the provisions of the UCMJ . . . and may be tried by court-martial for violations of the UCMJ that occurred while they were on active duty or while in a retired status."

**Firms Paying Back Millions on Military Auto Loans – source military.com**

Minnesota-based **U.S. Bank** and its marketing partner, **Dealer Financial Services** of Lexington, KY, agreed to pay back \$6.5M to more than 50,000 servicemembers who hit with hidden fees on auto loans from January 2010 until now.

The average payment will be about \$100, and servicemembers will not be required to take any action to receive the reimbursement. U.S. Bank and DFS will provide the money as an account credit or as a check in the mail.

The firms agreed to end deceptive marketing and lending practices targeting military personnel in which they failed to

**2. Service dogs** - VA covers veterinary care for the service dogs of blind and hearing-impaired veterans.

**3. Transportation** - Vets may be eligible for mileage reimbursements or have certain kinds of transportation (ambulance, wheelchair, etc.) paid for when it is considered necessary for travel to receive VA services.

**4. Rural health care** - Many vets live in remote areas and face challenges accessing care; VA is pursuing methods to better serve them, including opening new Community-Based Outpatient Clinics and sending mobile medical units and Vet Centers into many communities to make it easier for vets to get routine care and counseling. In addition, VA is expanding telemedicine technologies, eliminating the need for many veterans to travel long distances for routine visits.

**5. Free care for OIF/OEF veterans** - All OIF/OEF/OND veterans get five years of free health care after they leave active duty. Beyond that, the tiered priority system can be confusing to many, but it's important to remember that all eligible veterans can use VA for care, though some (for example, those in higher income brackets without any service-connected disability) may have copayments.

At various points in my life, I've had no health insurance, civilian health insurance, and military health insurance and have used military medical care and VA medical care. None of these systems has been perfect - I've gotten both good and bad care in every type of setting. Yet I've seen the most negative coverage of the VA. Veterans, advocates, and all citizens should certainly continue urging for continual improvement at VA. But rather than only sharing bad news when it pops up, we should also spread the success stories about what VA is getting right and urge veterans to seek the care and benefits they have earned.

Department of the Army policy, however, does limit these trials to cases where extraordinary circumstances are present. The Army normally declines to prosecute retired Soldiers unless their crimes have clear ties to the military, or are clearly service discrediting. If necessary to facilitate courts-martial action, retired Soldiers may be ordered to active duty. The regulation adds that "Retired Reserve Component Soldiers are subject to recall to active duty for the investigation of UCMJ offenses they are alleged to have committed while in a Title 10 duty status, for trial by court-martial, or for proceedings under UCMJ, Article 15." Forfeitures imposed under the UCMJ, Article 15 may even be applied against retired pay.

disclose all the fees charged in the companies' Military Installment Loans and Educational Services (MILES), loan program. The companies also misrepresented the true cost and coverage of add-on products they financed with the loans. MILES required servicemembers to repay auto loans using a military allotment. U.S. Bank did not disclose a monthly processing fee or make clear participants needed to make two payments a month. DFS understated the cost of optional add-on products. As part of the agreement, U.S. Bank apologized for its deceptive practices.

### **DOD Self-Service Logon – source Army Echoes**

The DoD Self-Service Logon (DS Logon) is a relatively new, secure, self-service logon ID that allows DOD and VA members and affiliates to access numerous government websites using a single username and password. Besides the convenience of needing only one username and password to access these websites, DS Logon provides a high level of authentication that goes beyond simple username/passwords used by most websites. This allows government agencies to provide real-time, personalized information to users. A DS Logon is also useful in situations where Common Access Card (CAC) authentication is not available or the member does not have a CAC like most Retirees. Currently, the following groups of people can obtain a DS Logon: Service Members (Active Duty, Guard/Reservists, Retirees); Veterans; Spouses (including Surviving Spouses); and Eligible Family Members (18 and over).

Users must be enrolled in DEERS to obtain a DS Logon account. There are two types of DS Logon accounts: a basic account and a premium account. The main difference is:

- The basic account can be obtained online without verification of your identity, but it does not provide access to personal information in VA or DOD systems. The main advantage of a basic account is that it enables you to upgrade more quickly to a premium account when you go in person to a VA Regional Office or a TRICARE Service Center.
- The premium account allows users to access websites that contain their personal information. This logon can be used across DOD and VA applications such as the eBenefits portal; TRICARE Online (TOL) portals; Beneficiary Web

### **TRICARE Shingles Coverage – source TRICARE Website**

TRICARE covers the shingles vaccine, Zostavax, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Zostavax is recommended for beneficiaries 60 and older. You may receive the shingles vaccine at no cost from your doctor's office or at a participating TRICARE retail network pharmacy. If you get the vaccine from your provider, you may have to pay copayments or cost shares for the office visit or other services received during the office visit. Before getting the vaccine at a pharmacy, you should call the pharmacy first to:

- Verify the days and times you can come in for a vaccine.
- See if there are any restrictions.

### **Tricare Pharmacy APPs – source Army Echoes**

TRICARE beneficiaries have new pharmacy options available by using TRICARE pharmacy contractor Express Script's enhanced mobile application. The new additions let beneficiaries use their smartphones to safely and securely manage their TRICARE pharmacy benefit. The updated app includes medication reminders and an account registration tool. The reminder feature gives beneficiaries the option to set up daily alerts to make sure they take their medications as prescribed and don't skip a dose. The account registration feature lets beneficiaries create their ESI accounts right on their smart phones. The Express Rx mobile app gives beneficiaries access to their prescription information anytime, anywhere.

Enrollment (BWE); MilConnect: Transferability of Education Benefits; Health Net Federal Services; Humana Military; MyTricare.com; and TRICARE-overseas.com, to name a few. It will be the primary method of single sign-on for all DOD and VA web authentication in the not-too-distant future, and for the Army, will replace the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) login.

To obtain a DS Logon account: visit the "DS Logon – My Access Center," <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dsaccess/>. A basic account can be established immediately on this site as may upgrading to a premium account. The quickest and most convenient method of obtaining a premium account is to complete the "remote proofing process" on this site. This involves using a secure ID that users may already have, such as a Social Security Number, and answering three basic, personal questions. CAC holders may upgrade their accounts immediately using their CAC. Individuals who do not have a CAC and who cannot complete the remote proofing process for some reason may request an activation code from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) if they have a myPay account established at DFAS.

Users who cannot complete any of these preferred processes may obtain a DS Logon premium account by visiting a VA Regional Office or a TRICARE Service Center. Many RAPIDS offices (military ID card offices) can also provide DS Logon accounts. Check in advance with whatever office you're visiting to make sure they have the capability.

- Make sure the pharmacy has the vaccine you need as some, such as shingles, may be in short supply.
- Make sure a pharmacist gives the vaccines and not a provider from an in-pharmacy clinic to avoid potential cost shares or copayments.

A Note for TRICARE For Life Beneficiaries: If you get the shingles vaccine from your provider, it is covered under the TRICARE medical benefit as a preventive service. Because the cost-sharing waiver for preventive services does not apply when using TRICARE For Life, you will be responsible to pay the TRICARE cost share after you've met your annual deductible.

The Express Rx app and mobile-optimized website allow beneficiaries to register for TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery and change current prescriptions over to home delivery. They can also order home delivery refills and check order status. Another feature lets beneficiaries look up information on their current prescriptions. For GPS-enabled smart phones, the app can direct beneficiaries to the nearest network retail pharmacy. Smartphone users can download the app for free by going to [www.express-scripts.com/mobile](http://www.express-scripts.com/mobile) or using services like the Apple App Store or Android Marketplace. The mobile-optimized pharmacy website is accessible at <http://m.esrx.com>.

### Ticks – source US Army Public Health Command

High grass creates an ideal habitat for hungry ticks, and also provides the potential to cause Ticks can thrive in long grasses, according to Ellen Stromdahl, an entomologist with the U.S. Army Public Health Command. Stromdahl also manages the Department of Defense's Human Tick Test Kit Program. Although most ticks are not infected with human disease, she said, some ticks in the United States can carry Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and viral diseases. Infected ticks have to attach to a person and remain on that individual for one to three days in order to transmit most diseases, Stromdahl said. One of the first things people can do to prevent a tick bite, she said, is to recognize tick habitat, and avoid it. "Ticks stay in -- or on the edge of -- shady, brushy areas," Stromdahl said. "You can find them in tall grass -- especially in wooded areas. They need layered shade and moist air

Stromdahl recommends the use of insect repellent to prevent tick bites. "For maximum protection, use DEET repellent on your skin, and permethrin repellent on your clothing," she said. "Permethrin-treated clothing is the best defense against tick bites. When ticks touch the treated fabric, they try to get away as quickly as possible. If they stay on the treated fabric, they die." Permethrin clothing spray can be found in hunting sections of stores, Stromdahl said, and permethrin-treated clothing is available from major outdoor clothing suppliers. Another step to preventing tick bites involves checking belongings, she said. "If you have

been in tick habitat, leave your shoes outside and don't leave your clothes near your bed," Stromdahl said. "You'll be giving ticks the whole night to find you. Ticks may survive on clothes in the washing machine, but a hot cycle in the dryer will kill ticks."

Army preventive medicine experts say that prompt removal of a tick is one way to reduce the risk of disease transmission. Following are recommended guidelines when removing a tick:

- Remove the tick with tweezers.
- Do not burn it or use soap, gasoline, Vaseline or other chemicals.
- Once the tick is removed, thoroughly cleanse the bite with alcohol and apply antibiotic ointment to the bite.

Most tick bites will cause irritation and itching immediately, but this does not indicate disease transmission. Ticks that have been removed from people should be saved for identification and testing; military personnel and DOD civilians should place the tick in a jar or zip-lock bag, and take it to the local military medical treatment facility. The facility will forward the tick to the U.S. Army Public Health Command. The Command will identify the tick and then perform disease testing of the insect through the DOD Human Tick Test Kit Program. The results will be reported to the submitting military treatment facility and test results -- negative and positive -- will be reported within a week.

### PTSD-stricken veterans may be at higher risk for heart disease – source LA Times

Experts expect 400,000 or more U.S. vets of Afghanistan and Iraq will suffer from PTSD at some point. A new study suggests they'll have more to worry about than a debilitating psychiatric condition.

In research published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, scientists studying a group of male twins who served in the military during the Vietnam era - 1964 to 1975 - found a diagnosis of PTSD more than doubled the likelihood that they would go on to develop heart disease. It wasn't just that vets with PTSD smoked more and exercised less, though they did. The researchers controlled for those and other well-established influences on cardiovascular health.

By conducting the research in twins, the scientists were also able to rule out the possibility that genetics, upbringing or environmental factors in childhood might be major contributors to the link between PTSD and heart disease. The men belong to the Vietnam Era Twin Registry - a research pool of about 7,000 pairs of twins, all male veterans. It was created by DoD in the late 1980s to investigate the effects of exposure to Agent Orange, but the registry has since been used by epidemiologists to study a variety of mental and physical conditions.

In the latest study, researchers at Emory University in Atlanta used a variety of criteria to select 281 twin pairs from the registry. Some had been to Vietnam and saw combat, others had never left the U.S. All 562 men had been assessed for PTSD in 1992; 137 of them were found to have it, most commonly stemming from the war, though in some

cases from other types of trauma. None had reported having heart disease when they joined the registry between 1987 and 1992. Starting in 2002, the researchers began assessing the men for heart disease. They finished in 2010.

Among the men with PTSD, 22.6% had suffered a heart attack, undergone a heart procedure, spent at least a night in the hospital for heart trouble - compared with 8.9% of men without the anxiety disorder. Sophisticated scans showed the men with PTSD also had less blood flow to heart tissue. The researchers compared 117 pairs of twins in which one brother had the disorder and the other did not. They found 22% of the men with PTSD had heart disease, compared with only 12.8% of their twin brothers.

Being related and sharing genetic material and usually upbringing narrowed the gap only slightly. Genetics were found to play no role because the gap was the same whether the brothers were identical twins or fraternal. In addition, there was no significant difference in the rates of obesity, hypertension, diabetes or high cholesterol - all major risk factors for heart disease - between men with PTSD and men without it.

Something else has to be driving the relationship between PTSD and heart disease, said Dr. Viola Vaccarino, the epidemiologist who headed the study. "People with PTSD are known to have higher levels of stress hormones," she said. "The repeated activation of the stress system may have adverse effects on the cardiovascular system. We think that's a major mechanism," she said.

### Veterans win mixed ruling on exposure to chemicals – source [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

Military veterans exposed to chemicals during secret weapons testing are entitled to up-to-date government information about possible health hazards but can't get government-funded health care outside the VA system, a federal judge has ruled.

The decision was a limited victory for veterans' organizations, who had argued that the VA health care system is overburdened and inadequate for the needs of those vets, and that the government should pay their private medical bills.

The judge said the government is shielded from such lawsuits because it has established the VA system to treat veterans, along with a special [Court of Appeals](#) to hear complaints of substandard or withheld care.

The veterans "have not shown that the care is inadequate or that they are unable to address any inadequacies through the (VA) system," he said.

That's not good enough, said a lawyer for the plaintiffs, who include Vietnam Veterans of America, Swords to Plowshares, other organizations and individual veterans. "The VA system is a rationed system," he said, noting that those affected by the ruling may be in the tens of thousands.

### VA Appeals – source [St. Petersburg \(Florida\) Sun Sentinel](#)

A federal judge lashed VA for denying veterans certain due-process rights while seeking benefits. He also threatened penalties against the agency, saying "it seems that sanctions may be needed to motivate VA in the future. The unwarranted denial of benefits means real-world consequences to veterans," wrote **S. Jay Plager**, a U.S. circuit judge and veteran of the Navy. "Promises of hypothetical relief do not pay for food or provide needed medical care." By design, VA is supposed to be veteran-friendly. Officers considering veterans' claims are expected to point out documents they might be missing and help them receive any money they are entitled to, including disability payments and pensions. But in 2011, VA instituted a new rule: Stop giving veterans a hand through the bureaucracy if their appeals are not in the region where they originally filed the claim. In other words, a veteran from New Jersey who appeals a denial in St. Petersburg may not get help from an agency appeals judge.

When veterans advocates challenged the rule, VA promised the court it would stop enforcing it immediately.

### Did you know?

**Pharmacy.** Although Costco is a 'membership' type store, you do NOT have to be a member to buy prescriptions there, as it is selling a federally regulated substance. You just tell them at the door that you wish to use the pharmacy and they will let you in. You may find their prices are lower than elsewhere.

He said no decision has been made on an appeal, but "we're going to try to keep fighting on the issue as best we can." He was pleased, though, at the ruling since DoD and VA had previously denied any such obligation.

The U.S began testing chemical weapons on consenting service members at the end of WWI and expanded the practice during WWII, when more than 60,000 vets were used as subjects. At least 4,000 were exposed to mustard gas and a chemical weapon called Lewisite. Cold War-era testing included psychiatric drugs, such as LSD. About 7,800 soldiers were exposed to chemical and biological substances at Edgewood Arsenal, MD from 1955 to 1975. The [Pentagon](#) said it then stopped testing chemical weapons on live subjects.

The testing agencies said they obtained consent from each participant. But the judge, in a previous ruling, said government officials had acknowledged that they did not provide full information to all participants about the chemicals and their possible effects. Under binding government regulations, the judge said, "the Army has an ongoing duty ... to provide test subjects with newly acquired information that may affect their well-being."

But it did not. In 2012, a whistle-blower inside the agency tipped off attorneys for the veterans advocates that VA was still using the rule, which led to Plager's order. "That's a pretty big deal for the court to come in and sanction a government agency," said Matthew Hill, an Orlando attorney on the board of the National Organization for Veterans' Advocates, or NOVA, which challenged the VA.

VA did not respond to an interview request, but issued a statement. "The Department of Justice represents VA in this matter, and our counsel's office is working with them to ensure an appropriate response to the court's order."

It is unclear exactly how many veterans were affected by the rule, where they appealed their claims and whether they lost their benefits because they were denied due process. The VA keeps all of that information. More than 1 million veterans are waiting for decisions on their claims or appeals nationally, the VA reports. More veterans are waiting on the St. Petersburg office, which handles Florida claims, than any other in the country.



### VA Fraud Waste & Abuse – source Washington Post

**Washington DC** — In June, a Congressional committee published a 157-page report alleging a government contractor used questionable behavior to win federal contracts that could be worth more than \$500 million. The worst part: While the contractor's methods smell bad, some of his actions appear to be in line with the letter of the law.

At a hearing, **Rep. Tammy Duckworth** (D-IL) scorched witness **Braulio Castillo** in an epic denunciation of his use of military disability status to gain status as a service-disabled veteran and win set-aside contracts. "Your foot hurt - your left foot?" the Illinois Democrat asked the witness, president and CEO of Strong Castle, Inc. whose claim to disability status was based on "an ankle injury he suffered in 1984 at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School."

According to a the report from the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Castillo's one year at the prep school is his only connection to military service.

### And finally - - - -

#### Did you know? - source Los Angeles Times

Marine Gen. John F. Kelly works in a fortress-like headquarters near the Miami airport. Starting this fall, he will live in Casa Sur, an elegant home with a pool and gardens on one of the area's swankiest streets. The five-bedroom residence, across from the Biltmore Golf Course, is provided rent-free to Kelly as head of U.S. Southern Command, which oversees military operations in the Caribbean Latin America. The cost to taxpayers? \$160,000 a year, plus \$402,000 for renovations and security improvements now underway.

Casa Sur is one of hundreds of high-end homes, villas and mansions where senior generals and admirals are billeted, according to a Pentagon report prepared for Congress last month but not publicly released.

Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, Air Force four-star who commands NATO, gets a 15,000-square-foot, 19th century chateau in Belgium. Lt. Gen. Steven A. Hummer, head of Marine Forces Reserve, enjoys a 19th century plantation house in New Orleans listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Th JCS and their deputies inhabit historic quarters in and around Washington — all staffed with chefs, drivers, gardeners and security teams.

The perks for top brass are under increasing scrutiny in Congress at a time when budget reductions and the sequester have forced the Pentagon to cut services, close facilities, cancel training and missions, and furlough 680,000 civilians. In the annual appropriation for military construction approved in June, lawmakers criticized the Pentagon for the "excessive cost" of maintaining "large and aging" homes and for the "apparent unwillingness on the part of the services to seek less expensive alternatives." All active-duty military personnel and their families receive free housing on bases or allowances to defray the cost of renting or buying in nearby communities. It costs the Pentagon \$1.5 billion a year.

Generals and admirals say they need large houses with high security — as well as cooks and gardeners — because they often host visiting dignitaries or preside at ceremonial

After dropping out of the West Point system the report indicates he quarterbacked a college football team in southern California after the injury occurred. The report also noted that Castillo described his injuries to VA during his business certification process as, "crosses that I bear due to my service to our great country. I would do it again to protect this great country."

"You may not have broken any laws," Duckworth said, "but you certainly broke the trust of this great nation. You broke the trust of veterans."

[An Iraq War veteran, Rep. Duckworth served as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot and suffered severe combat wounds, losing both of her legs and damaging her right arm. She was the first female double amputee from the war. She continues to serve as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Illinois Army National Guard.]

events. Keeping pricey properties makes fiscal sense, they argue, because the Pentagon either already owns them or would waste money finding a suitable rental every time a senior officer is moved to a new command. Yet changes are underway.

Some senior officers have quarters so expensive they violate the rules. Three officers assigned to the NATO naval base in Naples have homes that exceed allowable expenses for their jobs. One, the commander of Submarine Group 8, occupies Villa de Lorio, a 6,600-square-foot villa in Naples leased for \$172,000 a year. But Navy policy says only officers in "high-risk billets" can have high-cost leases — and a submarine group commander on the Mediterranean doesn't qualify. As a result, the lease will be terminated, but not until next May, "when the current occupant's tour is over." The current commander is Rear Adm. Robert Burke.

Leases also will be canceled next year for Villa Anna, home to commander Navy Region Europe, and Villa Maria, residence for the operations director of Allied Joint Force Command. The Pentagon also will give up Villa Nike, a 12,000-square-foot residence in Naples, because of "water damage, structural concerns and an aging electrical system" that has driven maintenance costs up to \$220,000 a year.

Adm. Bruce W. Clingan, commander of all U.S. naval forces in Europe, will relocate to Villa Capri, a smaller residence nearby, while the Navy decides whether to spend as much as \$3 million to renovate Villa Nike. But that still leaves hundreds of high-priced homes in the inventory, many of them at bases clustered in and around Washington.

At Ft. Myer, on a bluff in Virginia overlooking Washington, a row of stately red brick Victorians is reserved for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the chiefs of staff of the Army and Air Force and other senior officers. The sequester has forced cancellation of Tuesday swim lessons at the Ft. Myer Officers Club pool, and other base facilities have been closed one day a week. But otherwise the budget cuts have not pinched much yet, said a base spokeswoman.