

Issue 2005-12 — December, 2005

Notices

Korea Retirees' Schedule of Events

Dec 3 - United States Military Retirees Association Korea annual membership meeting will be held at the Multi-Purpose Training Facility (MPTF) (aka South Post Theater) starting at 0930. All retirees are members and all are invited to attend.

Dec 10 - The Osan AB Challenger Club will be hosting the quarterly Retiree Appreciation Day starting at noon. Guest speaker will be 51 FW Commander Brigadier General Joseph Reynes.

Dec 13 - the Mobile RAO (aka Jack Terwiel and wife) will be at Yongsan ACS from 0900-1200 to meet with and provide support to retirees and widows in the Seoul area. They will be in the Kitchen (Room 124).

Update/Correction to Commissary On-Line

USFK/J1 Data Management has advised that the July newsletter comment on checking your Commissary totals on-line is incorrect. The article contains an RAO Comment that Commissary purchases may take up to two weeks to update your purchase totals. This is no longer correct. The Commissary purchases are recorded and available in one day. Thanks to J1-DM for catching this and advising the RAO.

As a reminder, the secure link to check your purchases is <https://pimsk.korea.army.mil> and you need to enter your social security number, last name and date of birth to login.

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

RAO Christmas Vacation

The Osan AB Retiree Activities Office will be closed for two weeks starting with Christmas. The office will reopen on Monday, January 9, 2006.

If you have urgent business that cannot wait, please call 017-477-1441 or e-mail jack@rao-osan.com for assistance.

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

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Medical Care Matters

DoD Demonstrates Global Electronic Medical Records System

The U.S. military demonstrated its new Internet-based electronic medical records system to reporters at a rollout ceremony on Nov 21 at Bethesda, Md.

"This is not just an electronic health record that's built around one hospital, or even a local community of hospitals. It moves information globally," said Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, who attended the event held at the National Naval Medical Center here.

The system is called AHLTA, and it operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Winkenwerder said, noting all medical data is secured and accessed only by authorized personnel. AHLTA – not an acronym, he said – is the system's name.

The \$1.2 billion system uses off-the-shelf technology and began phase-in across the force in January 2004, officials said. Today, it's been deployed to about 60 percent of the military; full fielding is estimated to occur around January 2007, officials said.

The system will potentially serve more than 9 million U.S. servicemembers, retirees and their families across the globe, Winkenwerder said. Future plans include sharing military medical information contained on AHLTA with the Veterans Affairs Department, Winkenwerder said.

AHLTA was tested and proven in wartime conditions, said Army Staff Sgt. Kevin M. Walker, a 32-year-old combat medic assigned to the 1st Stryker Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, at Fort Lewis, Wash. Walker used AHLTA's portable electronic medical-record-gathering device when he was in Iraq.

"I think it's a great system," said Walker, who was in Iraq from October 2004 to September 2005. "Anything that can expedite the process of giving (servicemembers) care and helping their care go on further without the paper trail is just a really exciting experience."

Walker demonstrated a field electronic medical data-collection device at the Bethesda ceremony. Servicemembers' medical data contained on a dog-tag-sized electronic information chip, Walker said, is inserted into the medic-carried, palm-sized device for processing, Walker said.

Walker said the device is user-friendly and makes it easy to update a servicemember's medical information, compared to using old-tech paper forms.

"He puts the dog tags back on, and off he goes," Walker said, noting the information is then forwarded to a main database for the doctor's review.

Widespread use of interactive electronic medical records systems like AHLTA will ultimately produce lower costs, fewer medical mistakes and better care, said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt, who attended the event with Winkenwerder.

Medical researchers can use data gathered by AHLTA and similar systems to head off outbreaks of disease, said Navy Vice Adm. Donald C. Arthur, surgeon general of the Navy, also at the ceremony.

"We're talking about the ability to aggregate those records, to put them together so that we can locate disease patterns," Arthur said.

Defense Press Service, Nov 22

New Vets Get Priority VA Care

The estimated 120,000 veterans of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan receiving medical care through the Department of Veterans Affairs are getting top priority, said Veterans Affairs secretary R. James Nicholson last week. Although the wounded veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom represent just two percent of the VA's total patient load, "it's a very important two percent because these are young people who have come back from the combat zone," Nicholson said.

As a result, the VA is "giving them priority and making sure we are taking care of their physical and mental needs" so they can continue to enjoy productive lives, he said. A computerized medical record system – one Nicholson said he hopes will serve as a model for the Defense Department and other organizations – helps eliminate hospital mix-ups and ensures more thorough patient care, he said.

Armed Forces News, Nov 18

DoD Adds Three New Classes to Its Uniform Formulary

The Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs, Dr. William Winkenwerder, approved three therapeutic classes of medications, Alpha Blockers for Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy, Calcium Channel Blockers and Ace Inhibitors to the New Uniform Formulary.

The following shows the co-pay amount for each tier and which drugs will fall on which tier:

Tier I (\$3) Tier II (\$9) Tier III (\$22)

Alpha 1 Blocker (Prostate Hypertrophy) Start Date – Feb 15, 2005

Tier I - Cardura, Hytrin

Tier II - Uroxatral

Tier III - Flomax

Calcium Channel Blockers Start Date – Mar 15, 2006

Tier I - Adalat CC, Procardia XL, Nimotol

Tier II - Sular

Tier III - Norvasc, DynaCirc, DynaCirc Cr, Cardene, Cardene SR

Calcium Channel Blockers (cont) Start Date – Mar 15, 2006

Tier I - Calan, Calan SR, Isoptin, Isoptin SR

Tier III - Verelan, Verelan PM, Covera HS

Calcium Channel Blockers (cont) Start Date – Mar 15, 2006

Tier I - Cardizem, Cardizem SR, Cardize CD, Dilacor XR, Cartiz XT, Tiazac, Taztia XT

Tier III Cardizem LA

Ace Inhibitor/Diuretic (Blood Pressure) Start Date – Feb 15, 2006

Tier I - Benaqepiril/HCTZ, Captopril/HCTZ, Enalapril/HCTZ, Folsinopril/HCTZ, Lisinopril/HCTZ

Tier III - Accuretic, Uniretic

Ace Inhibitor (Blood Pressure) Start Date – Feb 15, 2006

Tier I - Lotensin, Lotensin HCT, Capoten, Capozide Monopril, Monopril HCT, Prinivil, Prinzide, Vasotec, Vasoretic

Tier II - Mavik

Tier III - Aceon, Accupril, Altace, Univas

The Beneficiary Advisory Panel (BAP) whose membership includes representatives, including NAUS' former Legislative Counsel Charles Partridge, have participated in the review process of this and the last two rounds of review. The BAP did have concern that one Ace Inhibitor, Altace, was to be added to Tier III.

The BAP sent their concerns back to the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutic Committee who reassessed their initial decision and found that this drug, while medically necessary for some beneficiaries, it is no more clinically effective than the generic drugs on Tier I or Mavik on Tier II.

For those beneficiaries who find that Altace, or any drug assigned to Tier III to be their only option, can establish medical necessity and obtain the drug at the \$9 cost share. To find more information on the process, please go to:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/medical-nonformulary.cfm>.

NAUS Weekly Update, Nov 10

TRICARE Officials Encourage Educated Decisions on Medicare

Part D

*RAO Comment: Emphasis in following article added by RAO. See **Director's Corner** article for details.*

The window for signing up for Medicare's new prescription drug plan opened Nov 15, but TRICARE Management Activity officials encourage eligible beneficiaries to weigh the facts before deciding whether to sign on to the plan.

Coverage under the new prescription drug plan, called Medicare Part D, begins Jan. 1 and is open to anyone already enrolled in Medicare. The plan represents the first time Medicare has offered prescription drug coverage for its estimated 42 million beneficiaries. TRICARE officials estimate that about 1.7 million of the 9.2 million TRICARE beneficiaries are eligible to enroll in the new plan, but emphasize that it's not the most prudent choice for everyone.

In most cases, *there's no added value for TRICARE beneficiaries to buy the new Medicare prescription drug coverage*, officials said. TRICARE generally pays as much or more than a standard Medicare prescription plan, they said. Unlike many non-DoD Medicare beneficiaries, those under TRICARE already have what officials call a "robust" pharmacy benefit. It charges no monthly premiums and requires minimal co-payments for drugs received through the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy and retail network. In addition, there's no cost for prescription drugs received at military treatment facilities, officials noted.

The one group of eligible TRICARE beneficiaries who may benefit from the new Medicare Plan D are those with limited incomes and assets, officials said. This includes beneficiaries who qualify for Medicaid.

The new Medicare Part D drug plan options will vary by location, officials said, and *beneficiaries living overseas aren't eligible*.

The best way for TRICARE-Medicare beneficiaries to determine if the new plan is best for them is to evaluate a variety of

factors involved. These include monthly premiums, deductibles, co-payments and drug coverage of several prescription drug plans, including the TRICARE pharmacy program, officials said.

To help eligible TRICARE beneficiaries make this decision, TRICARE and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have teamed up to provide Medicare Part D educational and enrollment information. This information is posted on the **TRICARE** and **Medicare** Web sites or by calling (800) MEDICARE (633-4227).

The enrollment period for the prescription drug coverage plan continues through May 15. After that, eligible beneficiaries will have an annual window between Nov. 15 and Dec. 31 to sign up.

Defense Press Service, Nov 16

No Across-the-Board Review of PTSD Cases - Secretary Nicholson

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will not review the files of 72,000 veterans currently receiving disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder, the Department's secretary announced today.

On May 19, 2005, VA's Inspector General reported on an examination of the files of a sample of 2,100 randomly selected veterans with disability ratings for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The IG cited insufficient documentation in the files and a dramatic increase in veterans filing for disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder since 1999.

"We have now just completed our own careful review of those 2,100 files cited in the IG's report," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "The problems with these files appear to be administrative in nature, such as missing documents, and not fraud."

"In the absence of evidence of fraud, we're not going to put our veterans through the anxiety of a widespread review of their disability claims," Nicholson said. "Instead, we're going to improve our training for VA personnel who handle disability claims and toughen administrative oversight."

"Not all combat wounds are caused by bullets and shrapnel," Nicholson added. "We have a commitment to ensure veterans with PTSD receive compassionate, world-class health care and appropriate disability compensation determinations."

NAUS Special Update, Nov 10

Pay Matters

Congress Passes VA COLA

The House and Senate this week finished work on the VA appropriations. Included was the 4.1 percent COLA increase in Disability Pay. Look for your increases in January paychecks.

NAUS Weekly Update, Nov 22

Postal Rates Going Up

The cost of mailing a letter will increase to 39 cents on Jan. 8.

The Postal Service's board of governors approved the two-cent increase in first-class postal rates late Monday. It is the first increase since June 2002.

The cost of mailing a postcard will increase a penny, to 24 cents, as part of the roughly 5.4 percent, across-the-board hike in most rates and fees.

The increase fulfills a requirement, passed by Congress in 2003, that the Postal Service establish a \$3.1 billion escrow account. Congress is to determine later how to spend that money. The Postal Service said without the mandate it would not have had to raise rates next year.

The Postal Service has more than \$69 billion in annual revenue.

The list of all rate changes is as follows:

- First-class letter, one ounce, up 2 cents to 39 cents.
- First-class letter, two ounces, up 3 cents to 63 cents.
- Post card up 1 cent to 24 cents.
- Priority Mail, one pound, up 20 cents to \$4.05.
- Express Mail, 8 ounces, up 75 cents to \$14.40.
- Express Mail, 2 pounds, up 95 cents to \$18.80.
- Certified mail up 10 cents to \$2.40.
- Delivery confirmation (priority) up 5 cents to 50 cents.
- Delivery confirmation (first-class parcels) up 5 cents to 60 cents.
- Return receipt (original signature) up 10 cents to \$1.85.
- Return receipt (electronic) up 5 cents to \$1.35.
- Money orders up 5 cents to 95 cents.

Various Sources

2006 Military Construction and Veterans Department Bill Approved

While defense appropriations remains to be completed, House and Senate lawmakers approved the fiscal 2006 Military Construction and Veterans Department appropriations bill Friday, Nov. 18.

The construction and veterans appropriations conference report provides \$82.6 billion for veterans' health care, military construction, housing and related agencies. It sets aside \$70 billion for the Veterans Affairs Department, including \$37 billion for benefits and compensation, \$31.8 billion for discretionary programs and \$1.3 billion in emergency funding for medical services.

Designating \$1.3 billion as "emergency funding," means that the President must declare an emergency in the veterans' healthcare system before it can be spent. The conference deal also includes, however, a provision that requires the administration to provide quarterly reports on workloads and costs.

The report includes increases in some priority items, including veterans' mental health programs, treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and funding for Gulf War Illness research.

In addition, the report contains \$412 million for medical and prosthetic research to treat returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan who have lost limbs in combat.

The conference report also includes \$6.2 billion for military construction projects, \$867 million above the president's request. And it funds family housing at \$4 billion – \$1.8 billion for family housing and construction improvements, and \$2.2 billion for operation and maintenance on existing units.

Conferees also agreed to spend \$1.5 billion to implement the 2005 round of base closures, funding it at \$380 million below the president's request.

NAUS Weekly Update, Nov 22

Funding for Veteran Entrepreneurs

The FY 2006 Science-State-Justice-Commerce spending bill, which cleared the House earlier this month, provides \$1.5 million for the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, also known as The Veterans Corporation.

The corporation helps veterans, including service-disabled veterans, with the tools they need to start and expand small businesses by providing access to entrepreneurial education and training, mentoring and counseling, capital and business networking services.

NAUS Weekly Update, Nov 22

DFAS Officials See myPay Getting Even Better

While planners and programmers are working on future myPay enhancements, Defense Finance and Accounting Service

officials are making an all out effort to inform retired members and annuitants of the program's current benefits.

myPay is an automated system that puts the pay recipient in control of processing certain discretionary pay data items without using paper forms. They can also get pay statements, tax forms and information.

myPay users, according to DFAS officials, have discovered the ease and convenience of monitoring their pay accounts online, as well as changing tax withholding information, starting or stopping allotments and updating bank information for direct deposit of their monthly pay.

Users of myPay can also access their IRS 1099-R forms online weeks before receiving them in the mail, giving them a jump on completing their IRS tax forms (and getting their refunds quicker).

A number of improvements are being worked, with the finishing touches being put on a feature that will permit retirees and annuitants to receive e-mail confirmation of the changes they make to their pay account when using myPay. This feature will be launched next year.

Officials emphasize that DFAS is committed to providing access to information and management using the latest in online security. myPay has always met or exceeded industry-standard security measures to protect user's privacy and, in fact, identity theft protection is greater for myPay users than for those who rely on "snail mail" to transact their financial business," officials said. "That's why 3,422,536 DFAS customers, from active duty military to National Guard, retirees and annuitants are current myPay users."

The latest security enhancement available to myPay users is the ability to change their login identification (ID) along with their personal identification number (PIN). This allows users accessing the system to use their own unique (and easily remembered) login information without relying on their Social Security number to enter myPay.

Users can make these changes by logging into myPay and clicking on Personal Settings Page. Links for changing PINs and Login ID are provided.

myPay can be reached at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>.
AF Retiree News, Nov 23

Legislation Matters

(RAO Comment: *As noted in Pay Matters, the House and Senate approved one military-related appropriations bill. Now Congress is on two-week Thanksgiving holiday, so no further legislative actions can be expected before about mid-December. Of the items listed below, only the BRAC was enacted and that happened automatically because Congress didn't do anything when the President sent it to them. Remember that Senate approval of legislation, or House approval of legislation, is not the final approval. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives must approve legislation, and because the two bodies frequently "approve" quite different provisions, a Conference Committee is convened with members of both the Senate and the House to hammer out the differences and arrive at a final piece of legislation.*)

Talks on Finalizing Defense Spending Bill Put Off

Appropriators have resolved most of their differences in the fiscal 2006 Defense appropriations bill during closed-door meetings but have not set a meeting to craft the final conference report, leaving Defense funding issues unresolved nearly two months into the new fiscal year.

With lawmakers expected to leave soon for Thanksgiving, it appears likely the talks will be shelved until after the recess, much to the consternation of Pentagon officials, who are concerned military accounts will run dry.

The House Thursday extended its continuing resolution to Dec. 17, buying both the military and Congress some time to resolve the spending bill.

News of the Force (Page 2), Nov 21

Senate Approves SBP, Disability Fixes

An expected Senate battle over Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) fixes never materialized this week, as Armed Services Committee Chairman John Warner (R-VA) reconsidered his previous position, endorsed Sen. Bill Nelson's (D-FL) SBP amendment, and urged his Republican colleagues to do the same.

Within minutes, the Senate approved the amendment to the FY2006 Defense Authorization Bill (S. 1042) by an overwhelming vote of 93-5. The only dissenting votes were cast by Senators Wayne Allard (R-CO), Tom Coburn (R-OK), Jim DeMint (R-SC), Jeff Sessions (R-AL), and George Voinovich (R-OH).

Nelson's amendment would end the unfair deduction of VA survivor benefits from military SBP annuities, effective Oct. 1, 2005. It also would implement 30-year, paid-up SBP coverage as of Oct. 1, 2005 (instead of Oct. 1, 2008 under current law).

Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) had no opposition to his amendment that would provide full, concurrent receipt (retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005) to otherwise qualifying disabled retirees who have been rated "unemployable" by the VA. His amendment was approved by voice vote, without dissent.

As this was being written, Senate leaders hoped to finish action on the defense bill by Thursday's close of business. The next step will be for House and Senate leaders to appoint a conference committee to resolve differences between the Senate bill and the earlier version passed by the House (H.R. 1815) last May. The House bill is silent on SBP, and it wouldn't implement full concurrent receipt for unemployables until 2009.

MOAA Legislative Update, Nov 10

Senate Votes to Reverse Medicare, TRICARE Cuts

Earlier this week, the Senate voted to approve its budget reconciliation package (S. 1932) – a combination of spending cuts and benefits improvements.

One key provision in the package would reverse a scheduled 4.4% reduction in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors now scheduled for January. Instead, the Senate bill would substitute a 1% payment increase.

MOAA believes this change is essential. Thousands of military beneficiaries already have difficulty finding doctors who will accept TRICARE patients.

Medicare and TRICARE already are among the lowest-paying insurance programs in the country, and any further cuts would only prompt more providers to turn away military and elderly patients.

Doctor participation is an even greater problem for TRICARE than for Medicare, because low payment rates are compounded by TRICARE-unique administrative requirements and lower patient volume. That's particularly true for Guard and Reserve families, retirees, and survivors who live in areas where there isn't a large military population.

The Senate-approved package also would defer implementation of an annual \$1,500 cap on Medicare payments for physical therapy that would otherwise take effect in 2006.

Like the payment-cut formula, the therapy cap was enacted several years ago as a budget-cutting measure, but implementation has been deferred in each of the last two years in recognition that it would impose undue penalties on stroke victims and others who need extended physical therapy.

The Senate action is a positive step, but it's only a start. The House budget plan envisions letting the payment cuts take effect.

MOAA Legislative Update, Nov 4

BRAC Deadline Expires; DoD to Begin Closures, Realignment

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations for reshaping the Defense Department's infrastructure and force structure officially took effect at 12:01 a. m. Nov. 9 after Congress allowed them to pass into law at the mandated Nov. 8 deadline.

The nine-member BRAC panel delivered its final report to President Bush Sept. 8, and he, in turn, sent it to Congress for legislative review Sept. 15. Congress had 45 legislative days, until Nov 9, to accept or reject the report in its entirety. However, it

was not authorized to make any changes to the final report.

By statute, the Defense Department now has until Sept. 15, 2007 – two years from the date President Bush sent Congress the BRAC commission's final report – to begin closing and realigning the installations as called for in the report. The process must be completed by Sep. 15, 2011, DoD officials explained.

The 2005 BRAC recommendations represent the most aggressive BRAC ever proposed, affecting more than 800 installations, officials said.

The four previous BRAC rounds – in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 – resulted in 97 major closures, 55 major realignments and 235 minor actions, according to DoD figures. Overall, closing and realigning these installations saved taxpayers around \$18 billion though fiscal 2001 and a further \$7 billion per year since, officials said.

BRAC 2005 is being called an important milestone in restructuring DoD's domestic base structure to improve efficiency and operational capabilities. It also supports plans to move thousands of U. S. forces currently serving overseas to within the United States as part of DoD's new global positioning strategy, officials said.

After months of study, installation visits and public hearings around the country, the nine-member BRAC panel approved 86 percent of DoD's original BRAC recommendations – 119 with no change and another 45 with amendments, the panel noted. The panel also rejected 13 recommendations, significantly modified another 13, and made five additional closure or realignment recommendations on its own initiative.

Of DoD's 33 major closure recommendations, the panel approved 21, recommended seven bases be realigned rather than closed, and rejected five recommendations outright. In addition, the commission recommended closing rather than realigning another installation, for a total of 22 major closures.

Many of the transformational recommendations in the report, particularly those to establish joint Operations, will present significant challenges as they are implemented, officials acknowledged.

Detailed business plans will be developed for every BRAC recommendation, laying out what actions are required to implement them, when they will occur, and what resources are needed to put them into effect, officials said. That was supposed to have taken place by Nov. 15.

Meanwhile, DoD is poised to begin working with civilian employees and communities to be affected by the BRAC decisions. DoD has a long and successful history of helping its civilian workers impacted by base closings, officials noted. This includes programs that promote placement, training, retraining and transition to new positions.

Since 1989, DoD has reduced its civilian work force by 428,400 people, with less than 10 percent of those reductions through involuntary separations, officials said. DoD's Priority Placement Program, which officials call the centerpiece of DoD's Civilian Assistance and Re-employment programs, gives defense employees placement priority at other DoD facilities.

DoD's Office of Economic Adjustment will take the lead for the federal government in helping communities affected by base closures and realignments, working cooperatively with the President's Economic Adjustment Committee, officials said.

AF Retiree News, Nov 19

TRICARE Tax Free Premiums

The chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs has joined in as a co-sponsor of the bill to help federal civilian and military retirees to pay for their health insurance premiums. The bill (S. 484) would allow federal and military retirees to use pre-tax dollars to pay supplemental premiums for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, and TRICARE, the military health insurance program. The legislation would also grant a tax deduction to those who purchase TRICARE. According to the non-partisan Congressional Research Service, the legislation Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) is co-sponsoring would save a 60-year-old veteran, who is not married, anywhere from \$150 to \$377 per year, depending on income level. A 60-year-old married veteran would save anywhere from \$350 to \$880 a year.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) began offering such "premium conversion" savings to executive branch employees five years ago. The following year, in 2001, Congress extended the tax benefit to legislative branch workers. Experts say the

average federal employee now saves over \$400 by paying their share of health insurance premiums with pretax dollars. The Senate bill has 49 co-sponsors and is now before the Senate Finance Committee. A similar bill in the House of Representatives (H.R. 994) has 276 co-sponsors. [Source: **Military Report, 8 Nov 05**]

RAO Baguio Bulletin Update, Nov 15

(RAO Comment: *If enacted, this does not apply to Medicare Part B premiums that retirees pay to obtain TRICARE for Life. That may be the next problem that needs to be addressed.*)

Community Matters

Supporting Document Requirements for Ration Control Card

The retiree web site at <http://www.rao-osan.com> has a listing of retirees privileges. Included under Ration Control is a list of supporting documents to obtain a ration card. Previously, the listing was carried as a document on the retiree web site. To ensure that you have the most current information, it is now linked to the USFK/J1-Data Management information at

http://www.korea.army.mil/org/j1/dmgt/required_doc.html.

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

Red Fridays

Very soon, you will see a great many people wearing Red every Friday.

The reason? Americans who support our troops used to be called the "silent majority." We are no longer silent, and are voicing our love for God, country and home in record-breaking numbers.

We are not organized, boisterous or over-bearing. We get no liberal media coverage on TV, to reflect our message or our opinions.

Many Americans, like you, me and all our friends, simply want to recognize that the vast majority of America supports our troops. Our idea of showing solidarity and support for our troops with dignity and respect starts this Friday – and continues each and every Friday until the troops all come home, sending a deafening message that every red-blooded American who supports our men and women afar will wear something red.

By word of mouth, press, TV – let's make the United States on every Friday a sea of red much like a homecoming football game in the bleachers. If everyone who loves this country will share this with acquaintances, co-workers, friends and family, it will not be long before the U.S. is covered in red and it will let our troops know the once "silent" majority is on their side more than ever, certainly more than the media lets on.

The first thing a soldier says when asked, "What can we do to make things better for you?" is: "We need your support and your prayers."

Let's get the word out and lead with class and dignity – by example – and wear some red every Friday.

Their blood runs red, so wear red! May God help America to become one nation, under God.

News of the Force (Page 1), Nov 16

Zombies Boost New Sober Variant

Anti-virus and e-mail security companies have warned Internet users about a new variant of the Sober worm that was flooding e-mail servers around the world, with help from zombie machines infected by earlier editions of the same worm.

Sober.AG is the latest in a long line of mass e-mail worms. It appeared Monday, after machines infected with older variants began spamming out the new version in a massive e-mail flood.

The e-mail messages use a variety of subterfuges to trick recipients into opening the virus attachment, including messages that pretend to come from the FBI and CIA, security firms said.

E-mail security vendor MessageLabs of New York City said it blocked more than 2.7 million e-mail messages with the new

Sober variant since around 7 p.m., GMT, on Monday, in what it called a "major offensive."

Symantec Corp. rated the worm, which it dubbed "Sober.X," a "Level 3" threat on a scale of one to five. The company has received more than 1,600 samples of the worm from corporations and 300 from consumers, Symantec said in an e-mail statement.

Sober worms are nothing new, but the latest variant is much more widely distributed than other recent versions because it is being sent out, simultaneously, from countless other Sober-infected machines, or "bots," said Symantec.

The new worm also uses a variety of enticing messages, in both German and English, to trick users. Messages that appear to come from the FBI or CIA tell users that their IP address has been logged on "more than 30 illegal Web sites," and asks them to open an attached file containing a "list of questions." Opening the file launches the Sober worm and infects the computer, anti-virus vendors said.

Other e-mail campaigns containing the Sober.AG worm promise recipients a glimpse of videos of jet-setters Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie if they open the file, according to an e-mail alert from Computer Associates International, Inc.

The FBI issued a statement Tuesday warning the public to avoid falling for the scam.

Anti-virus vendors advised customers to update their anti-virus signatures and to be wary of scam e-mail messages.

News of the Force (Page 1), Nov 24

Laughing Matters

Father

A man exiting a grocery store was very surprised when a rather good-looking and perky young lady greeted him cheerfully by saying, "Good evening!" Her face was beaming. At least she was smiling until he gave her that "Who are you?" look. He couldn't remember having ever seen her before. Then she obviously realized that a mistake had been made and apologized. She explained, "Oh, I'm so sorry. When I first saw you I thought you were the father of one of my children." She walked on her way into the store.

The man was left staring dumbfounded after her. More than a bit puzzled, he thought to himself, "What is the world coming to, an attractive woman who doesn't even keep track of what the father of her children look like." However, he was also a bit flattered that he might resemble one of her former suitors, but also hoped that nobody overheard her saying that she mistook him for being the father of one of her children.

A bit stunned, he walked to his car. He still did not realize, of course, that she was ... a second grade teacher.

Christian Voices, Oct 31

Pastor's Kitten

Dwight Nelson recently told a true story about the pastor of his church. He had a kitten that climbed up a tree in his backyard and then was afraid to come down. The pastor coaxed, offered warm milk, etc. The kitty would not come down. The tree was not sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and drove away so that the tree bent down, he could then reach up and get the kitten. That's what he did, all the while checking his progress in the car. He then figured if he went just a little bit further, the tree would be bent sufficiently for him to reach the kitten. But as he moved the car a little further forward, the rope broke. The tree went "boing!" and the kitten instantly sailed through the air – out of sight. The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. So he prayed, "Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping," and went on about his business.

A few days later he was at the grocery store, and met one of his church members. He happened to look into her shopping cart and was amazed to see cat food. This woman was a cat hater and everyone knew it, so he asked her, "Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?"

She replied, "You won't believe this," and then told him how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but she kept refusing. Then a few days before, the child had begged again, so the Mom finally told her little girl, "Well, if God gives you a cat, I'll let you keep it."

She told the pastor, "I watched my child go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, Pastor, you won't believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. A kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky, with its paws outspread, and landed right in front of her!"

Never underestimate the Power of God and His unique sense of humor.
Christian Voices, Oct 28

Computer Wisdom: Power corrupts and PowerPoint corrupts absolutely.
— Vincent Cerf, Internet pioneer

Director's Corner

Printing the E-Mail Newsletter

I concluded that there may be some people who would want to print the e-mail version of the newsletter. However, that poses some problems because it's formatted for on-screen display. When you print it, you don't necessarily want to include the graphics, particularly ones like the yellow "Return to Index" images. Also, links might not contain the actual URL (universal resource locator) of a referenced web site.

I spent some time trying to come up with a way to allow the e-mail newsletter to be printed without adding a lot of additional workload on me. The display version is formatted based on what's known as a style sheet that contains the commands to make it look like it does. The style sheet simplifies formatting and makes changes easier to implement.

The obvious solution would be to create a style sheet to reformat the newsletter for the printer. So I experimented with that approach. It sort of worked, but didn't do what I expected. That's one of the problems with a computer, it does what you tell it to do, not what you want it to do. I could add the complete URL to each link reference to the e-mail newsletter screen version, but it adds clutter that might detract from the newsletter's style.

The bottom line is that the solution is not easily solved – for me at least – because the newsletter contains internal hyperlinks. Those are the links connecting, for example, the table of contents to the individual articles. So my recommendation for those who want to print the e-mail newsletter is to go to the HTML Archive and select the Plain Text version of the newsletter. That prints out very cleanly and it contains the complete URL for every link in the newsletter. It does that because I enter each one manually for the Plain Text version.

Jack Terwiel

Considering Medicare Part D?

If you are 65 or older, you've probably received a letter from Social Security offering Medicare Part D, the new prescription drug plan. For the vast majority of retirees, their families and survivors, this is not a good deal. First – for Korea retirees – as the fourth article in Medical Care Matters (above) highlights, the program is not available overseas. Second, if you live in Korea or any other country with U.S. military installations, you very probably have access to the pharmacy at a nearby installation. So why pay for something you can get for free. Third, if you don't live near a military installation, you have the much better option of the National Mail Order Pharmacy. There's no enrollment or subscription fee and you pay only a reasonable co-payment for your prescriptions.

If you're still wondering whether or not you should sign up, call the RAO at 784-1441 (commercial 031-661-1441) and let's talk about it.

Jack Terwiel