

Issue 2010-02 — February, 2010

Notices

Korea Retirees' Schedule of Events

Feb 2 – USAG-Daegu RSO Office will be open Tue 1000-1400 at the Garrison Hq Building.

Feb 9 – the USFK Retiree Council will meet at the USAG-Yongsan Main Street Cafeteria starting at 0730. Council members are asked to be ready to start the meeting promptly at 0730. Attendance by non-council members is by invitation.

Feb 12 – the Military Retiree Assistance Office will be closed for the start of the Lunar New Year in Korea.

Feb 15 – all Korea Retiree Offices will be closed for the President's Day holiday.

Feb 16 – USAG-Daegu RSO Office will be open Tue 1000-1400 at the Garrison Hq Building.

Feb 16-17 – USAG-Yongsan RSO Office will be open Tue & Wed 0900-1500 in the Soldier Support Center, Bldg 4024, Room 140.

Feb 23-24 – USAG-Yongsan RSO Office will be open Tue & Wed 0900-1500 in the Soldier Support Center, Bldg 4024, Room 140.

Mar 1 – the Military Retiree Assistance Office will be closed for the Sam Il Korean Independence Movement holiday.

H1N1 Immunizations

The Brian Algood Community Hospital at Yongsan finally received the remaining shipment of H1N1 vaccine, so anyone who needs to be immunized should be able to get it. Details are available at <http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/ShowArticle.aspx?ID=438>.

Osan area retirees are reminded that the H1N1 immunization has been available for retirees and their families since early January.

Military Retiree Assistance Office

Enhanced-Overseas TRICARE Retiree Dental Program

If you're an overseas retiree looking for help in paying the dental bills, TRICARE and Delta Dental have the answer. It's the Enhanced-Overseas TRICARE Retiree Dental Program. Mr. Doug Schobel at Delta Dental provided a two-page information sheet for those who want to know more.

If this interests you, go to <http://www.rao-osan.com/retact/info/dental/TRDP-Overseas.pdf> to get the facts.

Military Retiree Assistance Office

Speeding Up Direct Deposit of VA Benefits

Mr. Chris Palombi is the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Pacific Department Service Officer in Thailand. Chris experienced excessive delays in getting direct deposit requests to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) acted upon quickly. So he checked into it and discovered that direct deposit requests can be submitted by fax.

To submit the direct deposit request, first complete and print <http://www.rao-osan.com/retact/info/Forms/VBA-24-0296.pdf> (computer fillable). Obtain a completed Form 1199a from your bank or credit union, and ensure both forms are signed. Then fax both forms to 1-877-838-2778 (including your overseas calling card number or the prefix for international phone service). Chris reports that the widow he helped had her benefits direct deposited the following month.

Military Retiree Assistance Office

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Medical Care Matters

UA Researcher to Lead Tinnitus Treatment Trial

By Adam Jones Staff Writer

A University of Alabama researcher is leading a \$3.2 million clinical study of a treatment of severe tinnitus, or ringing in the ear.

"There's been a lot of attempts to come up with treatments, but nothing has been very successful," said Craig Formby, a UA graduate research professor in audiology.

About 50 million Americans say they suffer from tinnitus, but a smaller group, less than 5 million, say the ringing is debilitating. For those people, tinnitus is an all-consuming disease that dominates their life, Formby said.

"We're trying to bring people back into the pack of those who aren't bothered by it," he said.

The treatment being tested is non-medical and is hoped to help patients live with the disease. There is no known cure for the ringing, since the disease is not fully understood.

The new method, called tinnitus retraining therapy, will combine current methods of counseling with a hearing aid like device that will pipe a sound into the ear that blends with the ringing, Formby said.

If you'd like to read the full article, go to <http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100111/NEWS/100119964/1007>.

Extract from Tuscaloosa News, Jan 11

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is up and the death rate is down, according to recent data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). From data collected in 2007, life expectancy for newborns reached a new high of 77.9, according to the latest mortality figures reported in Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2007. The figures are based on nearly 90% of all death certificates in the United States. The 2007 increase in life expectancy was the continuation of a long trend. Between 1997 and 2007, life expectancy increased by 1.4 years, from 76.5 years to 77.9 years. Other highlights of the report include:

- The average 65-year-old senior can now expect to live another 19 years or so, to nearly age 84.
- Record high life expectancy was recorded for both males (75.3 years) and females (80.4 years) in 2007. While the gap between male and female life expectancy has narrowed since the peak of in 1979, the 5.1 year difference recorded in 2007 is the same as in 2006.
- For the first time, life expectancy for black males reached 70 years.
- The U.S. death rate fell for the eighth year in a row to an all-time low of 760.3 deaths per 100,000 population in 2007. This is 2.1% lower than the 2006 rate of 776.5 and about half of what it was 60 years ago in 1947.
- Heart disease and cancer, the two leading causes of death, accounted for nearly half (48.5 percent) of all deaths in 2007.

Want to improve your longevity? In addition to getting exercise, regular medical checkups, and eating healthy food, researchers say that making time to travel and making new friends help to increase our longevity. Travel can increase longevity by helping people establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, says Dr. David Lipschitz, director of the Center on Aging at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. In a 10-year longevity study of people aged 70 and older, researchers at the Centre for Ageing Studies at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia concluded:

- Close relationships with children and relatives had little effect on longevity rates for older people during the 10-year study.
- People with extensive networks of good friends and confidantes outlived those with the fewest friends by 22%.
- The positive effects of friendships on longevity continued throughout the decade, regardless of other profound life changes such as the death of a spouse or other close family members.

[Source: About.com Guide to Senior Living, Sharon O'Brien article, 26 Dec 09]

RAO (Baguio) Bulletin, Jan 1

Medicare Part B Inequity Strikes

The Senate failed to act in time on legislation to prevent all Medicare beneficiaries from seeing a Part B premium increases this year.

As a result nearly 25% of Medicare beneficiaries are now subject to increased Part B premiums (and a net reduction in their Social Security checks) this month.

In years like 2010 when there's no Social Security COLA, current law protects most Medicare beneficiaries from premium increases. This "hold harmless" provision covers nearly 75% of Medicare beneficiaries who will maintain their 2009 Part B premiums of \$96.40 per month.

The other 25% of Medicare-eligibles will see a significant increase in their premiums. Those affected by the Part B premium increase include:

- new eligibles who will turn 65 in 2010
- Medicare beneficiaries who don't yet receive Social Security benefits and pay Part B premiums directly to Medicare

- some Medicare-eligibles who also qualify for Medicaid
- beneficiaries with 2008 adjusted gross incomes greater than \$85,000 (\$170,000 for married couples)

Even though overall inflation was negative for FY2009, medical costs actually rose, and that's what drives Part B premiums, which are supposed to reflect 25% of Medicare's cost of delivering care. But when the premium for 75% of beneficiaries is frozen, the cost increase must be borne entirely by the remaining 25% (about 11 million beneficiaries).

So the basic Part B premium for beneficiaries not protected by the "hold harmless" provision will be \$110.50 a month in 2010 — a \$14.10 increase. Premiums for higher-income people with a modified adjusted gross income of more than \$85,000 (for those filing an individual return) or \$170,000 (married couples filing jointly) will rise even more — to \$154.70–\$353.60 a month, depending on the size of their incomes.

[The Military Officers Association of America] MOAA believes all Medicare-eligibles should have their premiums frozen in years with no Social Security COLA, and the House already passed legislation (H.R. 3631) to do that. But the Senate has to pass it to make it happen.

Please send your Senators a MOAA-suggested message urging them to pass this important legislation immediately.
MOAA Legislative Update, Jan 8

Role Reversal — Evading Alzheimer's

By Nanette Lavoie-Vaughan

I recently received a frantic phone call from my friend Patrick. During his weekly phone chat with his mother she told him she had gone shopping a few days earlier and had trouble finding her car in the crowded parking lot. Luckily, after several minutes of searching, an alert bag boy helped her find her car, and she returned home safely.

Based on this single incident, Patrick was fearful his mother was developing Alzheimer's disease. I assured him that while memory loss is a sign of Alzheimer's disease, his mother most likely was experiencing age-related cognitive changes.

Geriatric specialists recognize that as the brain ages, it experiences changes in its size, blood flow, and function. These normal changes lead to cognitive decline, which slows a person's ability to retrieve information, learn new things, and perform complex tasks. The good news is not all changes are negative. Scientists have found the older adult's brain can learn new vocabulary, comprehend new material, and accumulate data.

With this in mind, the [Center for Disease Control] CDC, The Alzheimer's Association, and the [American Association of Retired Persons] AARP have developed special strategies for maintaining brain health with age. A public education campaign provides a 'Cognitive Health Road Map' to assist seniors in maintaining a healthy brain lifestyle.

The program recognizes physical health as a key factor in preventing cognitive decline. Certain risk factors have been identified as contributing to cognitive decline; they include:

- **Blood pressure control:** High blood pressure can cause changes to the blood vessels in the brain, leading to decreased blood flow and strokes.
- **Cholesterol levels:** Elevated cholesterol leads to the formation of plaque in arteries.
- **Antioxidants:** Research shows the reduction of harmful free radicals by taking antioxidants might decrease injury to brain cells.
- **Vitamin B-12:** Decreased levels can cause cognitive changes.
- **Glucose levels:** If your parent is diabetic, glycemic control is essential in maintaining blood flow and cognition, because high blood glucose levels can negatively affect brain neurons.
- **Smoking:** Tobacco narrows blood vessels, which can lead to decreased blood flow and strokes.
- **Diet:** A diet low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol can help prevent cognitive decline.
- **Stress:** Chronic stress produces chemicals that can damage brain cells and neurons and lead to cognitive changes.

If your parent has more than one or two of these factors, discuss positive steps he or she can take to maintain optimum brain

health.

The Alzheimer's Association's "Maintain Your Brain" campaign suggests the following:

- Stay mentally active and commit to lifelong learning. Reading, writing, working puzzles, attending lectures or classes, playing games, and performing memory exercises all help preserve cognitive function.
- Remain socially active by volunteering, traveling, or joining clubs and associations.
- Stay physically active by walking, biking, performing tai chi and yoga, or doing any other activity that gets the body moving and the heart pumping for at least 30 minutes a day.
- Keep body weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar under control.

Find more tips at www.aarp.org. A 20-page booklet, *Staying Sharp: Quality of Life*, is available along with detailed suggestions for brain exercises, brain-healthy diets, and memory-improving tools.

Brain health should be treated as seriously as physical health. By engaging your parents in brain health activities, you can help improve their quality of life long into their senior years.

MOAA News Exchange, Jan 13

Pay Matters

Mileage Reimbursement Rates Decline

[The Government Services Agency] GSA has reduced the mileage reimbursement rates for federal employees using personal transportation for official business in calendar year 2010. The most widely applied rate, for the use of a privately owned automobile, is dropping from 55 to 50 cents per mile. The rate for a motorcycle is dropping from 52 to 47 cents per mile.

Rates typically are adjusted early in a calendar year to reflect changes in fuel prices and to parallel rates set by the [Internal Revenue Service] IRS for certain tax purposes.

Federal Manager's Daily Report, Jan 12

Did Your Net Retired Pay Drop in January?

Federal income tax withholdings increased slightly in January, yielding a net reduction in most members' military retired pay checks.

But the withholdings adjustment wasn't some new tax increase. It occurred because last year's economic stimulus package provided extra money in retirees' checks for the last eight months of 2009.

For 2009 and 2010, last year's Making Work Pay provision of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized a refundable tax credit of up to \$400 for working individuals and up to \$800 for married taxpayers filing joint returns. The law was enacted in February 2009 and the IRS needed additional time to adjust tax withholding tables. Because of that delay, the \$400/\$800 tax reduction for calendar year 2009 had to be packed into the May-December paychecks rather than equally spread over the January-December checks.

In 2010, by contrast, the \$400/\$800 withholding reduction could be spread over the full 12 months of the year.

An example will illustrate. Reducing withholding by \$400 over 8 months of 2009 meant a single person's taxes went down \$50 a month for May thru Dec of 2009. In 2010, that same \$400 withholding reduction will be spread over 12 months, meaning their taxes are reduced by \$33.33 a month for 2010.

So between Dec 2009 and Jan 2010, they'll see their withholding increase (and take-home pay go down) by \$16.67.

So there was no new law or tax change. It's just that the two-year stimulus withholding initiative could not be implemented until the spring of 2009, so the tax withholding schedule had to be different for 2009 and 2010 in order to give people full \$400 tax credit each year.

If there had been a [cost of living adjustment] COLA for 2010, most people probably wouldn't have noticed this unusual withholding issue.

But the absence of any COLA made the change obvious — far more obvious than the explanation is!
MOAA Legislative Update, Jan 15

Retirees \$250 Tax Credit

If you are a retired [not military] federal or postal worker you may be eligible for a \$250 credit toward your 2009 federal tax bill.

Retirees who get Social Security benefits have gotten, or will get, a one-time \$250 payment in their January checks. The one-shot payment is to make up, in part, for the fact that federal, military Social Security retirees did not get a cost of living adjustment [COLA] this month. We tipped you that was coming some time back, but when the dire prediction turned out to be true, it still came as a shock to many retirees who were counting on a COLA to help pay higher health insurance premiums.

Retirees got a 5.8 percent COLA last January. But because of the recession and deflation (as opposed to inflation) they didn't qualify for an inflation-catch-up this year.

To make up for that, the Obama administration and Congress okayed the one-time payment for retirees who get Social Security. (Several sharp-eyed readers point out that in fact the special payments and/or tax credits is in lieu of the \$250 economic stimulus checks that were received by many people last year. It is not, they point out, to make up for the lack of a COLA. Congress is still considering that.)

But about half of all current federal retirees (those who left under the old Civil Service Retirement System) there was no payment because they never qualified for Social Security. For them the solution is a tax credit. Unlike the automatic one-shot payment to Social Security beneficiaries, those who don't get the payments have to go after their \$250. And it will be in the form of a tax-credit, not a payment.

To qualify for the \$250 tax credit (assuming you did NOT or will not get the payment in your January Social Security payment) you have to be pro-active. As in go after it. To do that you need to get an interestingly-named IRS form called "Making Work Pay and Government Retiree Credits". Fill it out and file it with your regular 1040A or 1040 or 1040NR form for the 2009 tax year.

To a lot of people a \$250 payment isn't such a big deal.

But for many federal retirees it is.

[For] one Florida based fed (Marc, you know who you are!) the payment in the Social Security check will be enough to cover higher health insurance premiums. Even a tax break as small as \$250 will be welcomed by many.

Anyhow, it's out there. If you DID NOT get the one-shot \$250 payment in this month's Social Security check you can apply for the tax credit. If you did get the payment, don't apply for a tax-credit too. Uncle Sam obviously has pots of money, but he frowns on that sort of double-dipping.

If you have a retired fed friend or relative, and they don't do computers, you might want to print and pass this information on to them. Some could really use the tax relief.

FederalNewsRadio editor Suzanne Kubota spotted the form and alerted yours truly. Hence I will get the glory (if any) but that's show biz. Anyhow we both hope it helps you if it applies to you.

To reach me: mcausey@federalnewsradio.com
Mike Causey's Federal Report, Jan 15

Form Fitting

Employees typically fill out an IRS Form W-4 when they start a new job. The purpose is to let the employer know how much to

withhold from the employee's paycheck.

However, you might want to revise your W-4.

Suppose John Smith starts a job when he is single. He only has one personal exemption on his tax return so he requests one "withholding allowance" on his W-4. With one allowance, a fairly large portion of his paycheck will be withheld for state and federal income tax.

A few years later, John is married with two children and a home mortgage. If he still claims one withholding allowance, he'll be over-withheld and get a smaller paycheck, aftertax. It's true that John eventually will get a refund for overpaid income tax but the IRS will have the use of John's money in the meantime.

Similarly, John may be under-withheld if he claims four withholding allowances after his children are grown and his home mortgage is paid off. Then John might owe a sizable sum with his income tax return.

To avoid such problems, go over your W-4 whenever your financial situation changes substantially. Use the form's worksheet to closely match your paycheck withholding to your eventual tax obligation.

Retirement & Financial Planning Report, Jan 21

VA Issues List of Ships with Agent Orange Exposure

The Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pension (C&P) Service has initiated a program to collect data on Vietnam naval operations for the purpose of providing regional offices with information to assist with development in Haas related disability claims based on herbicide exposure from Navy Veterans.

To date, the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) received verification from various sources showing that a number of offshore "blue water" naval vessels conducted operations on the inland "brown water" rivers and delta areas of Vietnam. The VA also has identified certain vessel types that operated primarily or exclusively on the inland waterways.

The ships and dates of inland waterway service are listed on the [Compensation & Pension Service Bulletin \[PDF\]](#). If a Veteran's service aboard one of these ships can be confirmed through military records during the time frames specified, then exposure to herbicide agents can be presumed without further development.

TREA Washington Update, Jan 29

Community Matters

Revisit Korea Tours

Since 1975, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has been inviting Korean War Veterans, and family members, to return to Korea on a subsidized visit to thank them for their sacrifices that saved their country from Communism. Thousands of veterans, from all the Allied Countries that participated in the war, have enjoyed this sojourn to the "Land of the Morning Calm." The Korean government pays for hotel rooms and meals for 5 nights and 6 days plus in-country tours. Accommodation is based on two persons per room.

Commencing in June 2010, the Revisit Korea tours will be increased "three fold" and, for the first time, the ROK government is planning to subsidize the airfare of both the veteran and his family member/companion. A veteran is allowed to bring one family member. The eligibility requirements will also be relaxed in view of the age of the veterans. The exact dates have not been published. However, they are planning on five major commemorations, the first being the Invasion Anniversary, 25 June. This will be followed by the Pusan Perimeter, the Inchon Landing, the Liberation of Seoul and the Northern Winter Campaign of 1950.

Applications are available at www.kwva.org/graybeards/gb_09/gb_0912/gb_0912_revisit_korea_application.pdf. A \$400 deposit per person is required to be included with the application and payment in full must be made prior to 60 days of the tour departure. Participants are required to have a valid passport. A visa is not required for stays of up to 90 days for U.S. citizens.

Registrations will be date stamped and will be "First Come - First Served"! To register, call (800) 722-9501 or (703) 590-1295. Check the KWVA web site at www.KWVA.org or www.miltours.com for tour dates. You can also mail the Revisit Coordinator at mhtours@miltours.com, to request a brochure. Those eligible to participate include:

- Veterans who supported ground, naval, or air operations between 25 Jun 50 and 25 Oct 54.
- A widow or family member of a veteran killed in action during the war.
- A family member of a Korean War veteran physically unable to travel.
- Anyone who has previously participated in the Revisit Korea program

[Source: www.kwva.org, Dec 09]

RAO (Baguio) Bulletin, Jan 1

Scams

Better Business Bureau on Jan 6 released a list of the top 10 scams and rip-offs of 2009. Not surprisingly, many scams sought to take advantage of people who were suffering under tough economic circumstances — such as the unemployed. Additionally, the use of free-trial offers to lock consumers into recurring credit and debit card charges was widespread online.

"While many of the scams on the list are perennial problems, some scams were distinct in 2009 because of the economic climate and scammers' penchant for taking advantage of the top headlines," said Steve Cox, Council of Better Business Bureaus President and CEO. "Some scams plagued different parts of the country more than others. For example, in places particularly hard hit by the housing crisis, bogus offers for foreclosure rescue or debt assistance ran rampant." Following, in no particular order, is BBB's list of top scams and rip-offs that took advantage of consumers and small business owners across the U.S. in 2009:

1. **Acai Supplements and Other "Free" Trial Offers** – Ads offering trial offers for teeth whiteners, acai anti-aging pills and other miracle supplements blanket the Internet, including trusted Web sites of national news organizations. The marketing campaigns often falsely claimed an endorsement by Oprah, Rachel Ray and Doctor Oz. Thousands of consumers complained to BBB that the free trial actually cost them as much as hundreds of dollars, month after month.
2. **Stimulus/Government Grant Scams** – Even before President Obama announced the stimulus plan in February, scammers had already set up schemes for misleading consumers and small business owners into thinking they could get a piece of the pie. Offers for worthless assistance and advice on how to get government grants bombarded consumers online, over the phone and via mail and e-mail.
3. **Robocalls** – Owning a cell phone or having their phone number on the do-not-call list did not help thousands of people across the US put a stop to harassing automated telemarketing calls in 2009. The robocalls often claimed that their auto warranty was about to expire – which wasn't true – or offered help in reducing their interest rate on their credit card. The prevalence of robocalls violating federal telemarketing laws prompted the FTC to increase restrictions on the practice in 2009.
4. **Lottery/Sweepstakes Scam** – The victim receives a letter in the mail pretending to be from Reader's Digest, Publisher's Clearing House, or a phony foreign lottery claiming that he or she has won millions. The letter comes with a check that represents only a portion of the total winnings. In order to get the rest, the victim has to deposit the check and then wire hundreds of dollars back to the scammers supposedly to cover taxes or some other bogus fee. The victim wires the money, but the prize never arrives.
5. **Job Hunter Scams** – Scams targeting job hunters vary and include attempts to gain access to personal information such as bank account or social security numbers and requirements to pay a fee in order to even be considered for the job. Another common scam was reported to BBB by job hunters who were told by a prospective employer that they had to check their credit report before being considered for a job. The job offer is actually a marketing ploy for online credit monitoring that costs the victim every month until they cancel.
6. **Google Work from Home Scam** – Countless Web sites cropped up in 2009 that claimed you could learn how to make money from home using Google or Twitter and offered a free trial of learning materials. The Web sites often included the Google or Twitter moniker and logo. As a result, many people who complained to BBB thought they were getting a job with Google or Twitter when in, fact, they were being lured into another misleading free-trial offer and were billed every month for the materials and other mystery charges that added up to hundreds of dollars.
7. **Mortgage Foreclosure Rescue/Debt Assistance** – Many families are struggling in the current economy and hucksters are offering to help them save their house from foreclosure or help them get out of credit card debt. Unfortunately, victims are paying hundreds of dollars up front for the assistance they desperately need but ultimately never receive.
8. **Mystery Shopping** – Consumers across the country thought that they could make some extra money by becoming a secret shopper and evaluating the customer service of various stores. The victim is asked to evaluate their shopping experience at a few stores as well as a money wiring service such as Western Union or MoneyGram by

wiring money back to the scammers. A seemingly real looking check is supposed to cover the costs, but ends up being a fake. The victim is out hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars.

9. **Over-Payment Scams** – Over-payment scams typically target small business owners, landlords or individuals with rooms to rent and sellers on classifieds or sites like Craigslist. Typically the scammer pretends to be a customer, possible renter or interested buyer, respectively. The victim receives a check for more than the amount requested. The scammers then ask the victim to deposit the check and wire the extra amount elsewhere, such as to a shipping company. Ultimately though, the check is fake and the victim is really wiring money back to the scammers.
10. **Phishing e-mails/H1N1 spam** – A perennial problem, phishing e-mails pop up in inboxes and can take various forms such as appearing to be from a business, a government agency or official or even a friend. Whatever the setup, the goal of any phishing e-mail is the same: to trick victims into divulging sensitive financial information or to infect the victim's computer with viruses and malware. In addition to phishing e-mails, spam e-mail selling wares to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus were particularly rampant in 2009.

Consumers or small business owners victimized by a scam can contact their local BBB or file a complaint at www.bbb.org. Always research a business with BBB before you sign any contracts or hand over any money. For more information or to schedule an interview with a BBB spokesperson, contact Alison Southwick at (703) 247-9376. [Source: BBB Press Release, 6 Jan 2010] *RAO (Baguio) Bulletin, Jan 1*

OPM Launches FedsHireVets.Gov

New Website Makes it Easier to Find Federal Employment Resources

Today, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced the official launch of www.FedsHireVets.gov, a critical component of President Obama's Veterans Employment Initiative. This website will help ensure Veterans, transitioning military service members, their families, HR professionals, and hiring managers receive accurate and consistent information regarding Veterans employment in the Executive Branch.

John Berry, Director of OPM, stated, "FedsHireVets.gov will be a one-stop gateway to Veterans employment resources throughout the government. Our goal is to honor Veterans service by helping them find good Federal jobs when they lay the uniform down."

On November 09, 2009, OPM Director John Berry joined President Obama as he signed the Executive Order on the Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, which established the Veterans Employment Initiative for the executive branch and the Council on Veterans Employment. The Executive Order underscores to Federal agencies the importance of recruiting and employing Veterans, and assisting transitioning service members seeking employment with the Federal Civil Service.

The Council on Veterans Employment, consists of 24 Executive Branch agencies and is chaired by Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki; OPM Director Berry serves as the Vice Chair and Chief Operating Officer of the Council.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2008, there were approximately 480,000 Veterans working within the Federal Executive Branch.

For more information, visit: www.FedsHireVets.gov.

TREA Washington Update, Jan 22

Federal Service Matters

EEOC Proposes Changes to Discrimination Complaint Process

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has proposed changes to the federal discrimination complaint process reflecting the recommendations of an internal federal sector work group.

According to the EEOC, the changes include allowing agencies to conduct pilot projects for complaints processing, conforming the standard for bringing complaints of retaliation in the federal sector to private sector standards, and requiring agencies to notify complainants of their right to request a hearing when an agency investigation has gone on for more than 180 days.

In fiscal 2008, federal agencies completed close to 40,000 counseling sessions regarding employment discrimination, and handled nearly 17,000 complaints.

The proposed regulations – published in the December 21 Federal Register – authorize administrative judges to make final decisions on class complaints and provide for expedited processing of appeals from class certification decisions.

The commission noted other changes including mandating that agencies comply with management directives and bulletins issued by the EEOC, and requiring agencies and encouraging complainants to submit filings electronically in order to expedite the process and move from paper-intensive files.

A final rule would need to be reviewed by [the Office of Management and Budget] OMB prior to becoming effective.
Federal Manager's Daily Report, Jan 5

GAO: Defense Implementing Safeguards for Intelligence Personnel System

DoD has taken positive steps to incorporate 10 internal safeguards in the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System [DCIPS], but it could do more to ensure the fair, effective, and credible implementation of the system, [the Government Accountability Office] GAO has said.

After analyzing guidance, interviewing officials and conducting discussion groups with employees at select DoD components, GAO cited opportunities to immediately improve the implementation of certain safeguards and it said the continued monitoring of all is needed.

While [Department of Defense] DoD's guidance requires feedback between employees and supervisors at the midpoint and at the close of the performance rating cycle, GAO determined that in the case of one safeguard – involving employees – DoD could immediately improve its implementation.

While DoD has leveraged mechanisms like town hall meetings and "brown bags" to involve employees in DCIPS, its guidance does not identify a formalized process for the continuous involvement of employees in the system implementation — which could ultimately undermine its credibility, according to GAO-10-134.

It also said that while DoD has stated that it will conduct an analysis of final ratings utilizing demographic data, that the department does not have a written policy outlining how this will be accomplished, and therefore may be unable to fully determine whether potential barriers to fair and equitable ratings exist.

Continued Monitoring Needed

As it has recommended in the past regarding similar systems, GAO called for continued monitoring of DCIPS safeguards to ensure agency actions are effective.

In October DoD provided a draft DCIPS evaluation plan that would be executed after the first payout in January 2010.

GAO said however that without finalizing and executing the plan, DoD would not know if it has achieved desired outcomes from the system.

DoD has used several mechanisms to provide employees with information, but these they do not comprehensively identify and address employee perceptions of DCIPS, said the report.

Participants at most of the intelligence components noted that DCIPS was being implemented too quickly or many questions put forward online and through feedback groups went unanswered.

Although DoD officials have drafted surveys that will allow them to more comprehensively collect employee perceptions about DCIPS, these surveys lack questions that would provide insight about employee perceptions of certain safeguards and overall acceptance of DCIPS, the report said.

It called on the undersecretary of defense for intelligence to issue guidance to institutionalize a process to involve employees continually in future design and implementation changes to DCIPS, as well as guidance on the analysis of finalized ratings that

explains how the demographic analysis of ratings is to be conducted.

It also called on the undersecretary for intelligence to finalize and execute the department's evaluation plan with metrics to assess the system, including the implementation of internal safeguards, to help ensure the department evaluates the system's impact.

Federal Manager's Daily Report, Jan 6

Postal Law Might Need Revisions, Report Says

Just three years after passage of a major postal reform law, Congress may need to revisit some of the philosophies underlying that law and some of the provisions it imposed, according to a Congressional Research Service [CRS] analysis.

CRS was examining the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, in view of the severe downturn in the service's finances that started just about the time the law was enacted. The USPS lost \$5.3 billion in fiscal 2007, \$2.8 billion in 2008, and \$3.8 billion in 2009 — a number that would have been \$7.8 billion had Congress not granted some relief from a requirement imposed by the law to pre-fund retiree health benefits.

It added, though, that the relief, passed last September, merely shifted that \$4 billion obligation into the future and did not eliminate it. Under the law, [the United States Postal Service] USPS is obliged to make nearly \$40 billion in payments through 2016, and both USPS management and outside bodies have suggested that the schedule is "too aggressive" and should be reduced to between \$1.6 billion and \$3.4 billion a year, CRS said.

The law's provisions also have complicated postal service efforts to deal with its financial crisis by closing facilities and by entering into new lines of business, CRS added.

Federal Manager's Daily Report, Jan 12

Laughing Matters

Securing a Building

The meaning of "secure a building" in different branches of the military:

If you told Navy personnel to "secure a building," they would turn off the lights and lock the doors.

Army personnel would occupy the building so no one could enter.

Marines would assault the building, capture it, and defend it with suppressive fire and close combat.

Air Force personnel would take out a three-year lease with an option to buy.

from the Internet

A Couple of Questions

Hillary Clinton goes to a primary school in Ithaca, New York, to talk about the world.

After her talk she offers question time. One little boy puts up his hand, and the Senator asks him what his name is.

"Richard", replied the little boy.

"And what is your question, Richard?"

"I have three questions:

1. Whatever happened to your medical health care plan?
2. Why would you run for President after your husband shamed the office?
3. Whatever happened to all those things you took when you left the White House?"

Just then the bell rings for recess. Hillary Clinton informs the kiddies that they will continue after recess.

When they resume Hillary says, "OK, where were we? Oh, that's right, question time. Who has a question?"

A different little boy puts his hand up.

Hillary points him out and asks him what his name is.

"My name is George."

"And what is your question, George?"

"I have 5 questions:

1. Whatever happened to your medical health care plan?
2. Why would you run for President after your husband shamed the office?
3. Whatever happened to all those things you took when you left the White House?
4. Why did the recess bell go off 20 minutes early?
5. What happened to Richard?"

from the Internet

With That in Mind

The Israeli Ambassador at the U.N. began, "Ladies and gentlemen before I commence with my speech, I want to relay an old Passover story to all of you.

"When Moses was leading the Jews out of Egypt toward the Promised Land, he had to go through the nearly endless Sinai desert. The people became thirsty and needed water. So Moses struck the side of a mountain with his staff and a pond appeared with crystal clean, cool water. The people rejoiced and drank to their hearts' content.

"Moses wished to cleanse his whole body, so he went over to the other side of the pond, took all of his clothes off and dove into the cool waters. Only when Moses came out of the water, he discovered that all his clothes had been stolen. 'And,' he said, 'I have reasons to believe that the Palestinians stole my clothes.'"

The Palestinian delegate, hearing this accusation, jumps from his seat and screams out, "This is a travesty. It is widely known that there were no Palestinians there at that time!"

"And with that in mind," said the Israeli Ambassador, "let me now begin my speech."

from the Internet

Texas Sheriff Job Application

A man seeking to join a south Texas Sheriff's Dept. is being interviewed.

The Sergeant doing the interview says, "Your qualifications all look good, but there is an attitude suitability test that you must take before you can be accepted." Then, sliding a service pistol across the desk, he says, "Take this pistol and go out and shoot 6 illegal aliens, 6 meth dealers, 6 Muslim extremists and a rabbit."

"Why the rabbit, the man asked?"

"That's the attitude we want," says the Sergeant. "When can you start?"

from the Internet

Director's Corner

C-7a Caribou Association Reunion

The C-7a Caribou Association (enlisted/officer) is holding its 25th annual reunion at the Marriott City Center Hotel in Macon, Georgia. It will be held August 25-29, 2010. If you wish to make reservations yourself, call the Marriott City Center Hotel at (478)621-5300 and ask for the C-7 Reunion rate.

For information visit our web site at <http://www.c-7acaribou.com> or contact Bill Avon at e-mail: veteran1@tusco.net, or phone: (330) 878-7451.

Bill Avon, C-7a Caribou Association

Ex-AAFES Official Gets Three Years in Prison for Taking Bribes in South Korea

By Franklin Fisher, Stars and Stripes

Former [Army and Air Force Exchange Service] AAFES official H. Lee Holloway was sentenced Thursday in a Georgia federal court to three years in prison for taking bribes to help Korean telecom firm SSRT keep a lucrative contract selling Internet and phone service to U.S. troops in South Korea. During the sentencing in U.S. District Court in Columbus, Ga., District Judge Clay D. Land also fined Holloway \$5,000 and ordered him to forfeit \$70,000 in proceeds from his involvement in the bribery conspiracy, a U.S. Department of Justice news release said.

In a plea agreement with prosecutors, Holloway admitted that even though he knew SSRT – also known as Samsung Rental Company Ltd. – was not providing the promised services to military customers, he "turned a blind eye" to customer complaints once the bribes began flowing, according to court documents.

Holloway, also known as Henry Lee Holloway, pleaded guilty in April to taking at least \$70,000 in bribes and to not reporting bribe income to the Internal Revenue Service. The bribes were in the form of cash, stock offerings, entertainment, travel and other items of value, as well as prostitutes, dining and drinking, according to court documents.

The conspiracy ran from 2001 to 2006, according to court records, and centered on a \$206 million AAFES contract to provide home Internet and phone services on U.S. military installations in South Korea.

Holloway was Army and Air Force Exchange Service general manager at Osan Air Base from June 2000 to August 2005. He was then AAFES general manager at Fort Benning, Ga., until he resigned in January 2007, during disciplinary proceedings, according to court documents. The South Korean businessman who headed SSRT, Jeong Gi-hwan, was sentenced in November in Dallas federal court to five years in prison and fined \$50,000.

Stars and Stripes Pacific edition, Sunday, Jan 10