

Retiree Corner:

Applying for Social Security Benefits

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Military Retiree Assistance Office

Many retirees have contacted the Military Retiree Assistance Office to apply for Social Security retirement benefits for themselves, or family benefits for their dependents. The MRAO has provided the forms to be completed as well as assistance in obtaining the supporting documents required by the Social Security Administration to prove eligibility for the benefits. All Social Security claims from applicants residing in the Western Pacific area must go through the Social Security Administration Division (SSAD) located in Manila, PI.

Up to now it has been a painfully time-consuming process to file a claim. A paper copy would be sent to SSAD, a Claims Examiner would review it, ensure that all supporting documents were there and, when complete, would forward the paper claim to SSA in Baltimore. The claim would go into an in-basket and when the Baltimore Claims Examiner finished verifying the paper claim, the claim would be entered into the computer. That has recently changed with SSAD-Manila being directly connected to the network that provides access to the computer in Baltimore.

When you indicate to SSAD-Manila that you want to submit a claim, you must provide your telephone number. The SSAD Claims Examiner will call you, ask a security question to confirm your identify, and then start taking the information over the phone and entering it into the computer. When the claim is complete, the Claims Examiner will tell you which supporting documents you must submit in order to complete the claim.

The supporting documents requirement is significantly reduced from what was required with the paper claim. That's because SSAD-Manila, via the network, now has access to government files and documents that were previously inaccessible.