

## **Retiree Corner:**

### **Signing Up for Social Security by Telephone**

By Jack Terwiel

Military Retiree Assistance Office

The Social Security Administration office in Manila recently changed its name to Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) and upgraded services. The upgrade is due to direct access to the main Social Security computer system. Information that applicants provide over the phone to apply for benefits can be verified without going through the excruciating paper chase that we've used up to now. To accommodate the new capabilities, the office has added five new Claims Examiners for a total of 11 people to serve you. To be eligible to use telephone signup, the applicant must be able to speak and understand English.

To start the process, contact the office to indicate the intention to apply for Social Security benefits. Provide name of the worker on whose work record the benefits will be paid, worker's social security number, applicant's name if not the worker, and applicant's preferred telephone number. Provide it by telephone to (632) 301-2000 ext. 6319/6302/5085, via e-mail to **FBU.Manila@ssa.gov**, or by fax to (632) 522-1514.

When the Examiner calls, the conversation starts with a security question to confirm the applicant's identity. Then the Examiner will start asking questions to complete the claim. If the applicant is not a native English speaker, there should be someone such as husband, wife or other trusted person nearby to assist in responding to the questions, but the person applying for benefits must be the one speaking to the Examiner.

Have a pencil/pen and paper handy because the Claims Examiner will provide a short list of documents that must be sent to SSA-Manila to complete the claim. These must be originals (not recommended), copies certified by the U.S. Embassy, or copies notarized by the Legal Office. Benefits payments are promised to start within three months and seem to be starting much sooner.