



Still Serving in Korea



Newsletter 04-4

The newsletter for U.S. military retirees in the Republic of Korea

Oct-Dec 2004

Medical Care Matters

DoD and VA Agree on Common Separation Physical Exam

The Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) signed an agreement this week to implement cooperative separation processes and physical examinations for the service members at discharge sites. This initiative builds upon the 26 individual benefits delivery at discharge sites that have existing agreements, many of which date from the mid-1990s. Both departments are committed to a seamless transition process for service members.

In a memorandum of agreement (MOA), David S.C. Chu, under secretary for defense, personnel and readiness, and Gordon H. Mansfield, veterans affairs deputy secretary, agreed on several key issues for separation and disability evaluations. The examination process includes providing adequate medical resources (examining physicians, laboratory facilities, examination rooms, and support staff) and additional testing and/or screening.

The departments also agree to begin exploring the technical feasibility, schedule, and cost requirements for the implementation of an electronic physical exam, through a single, consistent electronic physical examination record, which will meet military service and VA requirements. To fulfill such requirements in the past,

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Still Serving in Korea is published quarterly by the Osan Air Base Retiree Activities Office to inform retirees and family members on information of interest on rights, benefits and privileges, and on the status of legislative initiatives which affect military retirees and beneficiaries. Items in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the 51 FW, 7AF, PACAF, USAF, USFK, or DOD.

Pay Matters

CRDP Update

We got a better fix Monday afternoon from Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) officials who said they are prepared to pay 100% Combat-Related Disability Pay (CRDP) or 100% CRDP plus the IU's (individually unemployable).

The more liberal DoD interpretation includes up to 23,000 rated 100% and 28,000 with between 60-90% and rated as IU. There are opponents in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Pentagon that have emerged since last week, and now the issue is described as a "50-50 chance of approval."

The optimism of last week's reports from "the building" has decreased slightly because of resistance to the DOD legal opinions. Regretfully, there are a few who will not understand that our reporting is reflecting a "moving target" in the form of a decision paper at the highest levels of DoD and OMB.

In two weeks, American Veterans Political Action Committee (VETSPAC) will take the place of this web site. It will be a hard act to follow because there were about five thousand visitors each day with a total of three million five hundred visitors to CRLegislation and it's forums. We focused on legislation for the most severely disabled and with the assistance of National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS), and hundreds of supporters we clearly influenced legislation for the 100% CRDP disabled with the financial assistance of those that believed in our strategy.

We are very encouraged by a team of twenty founding members who have generously contributed five hundred dollars each, and one hundred one hundred dollar contributors. Additionally there are hundreds of subscribers who will have access to our VETSPAC forums.

CRLegislation.com, Dec 20

Combat-Related Special Compensation Status for Military Retirees

On Nov 12, 2004, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) completed processing the backlog of more than 9,000 approved Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) retroactive payments older than 60 days to qualified military retirees.

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service members underwent two physical examinations within months of each other when service members filed for VA disability compensation. Neither of the examinations fully satisfied the needs of both VA and DOD. These redundant examinations inconvenienced service members, delayed claims processing and access to VA healthcare, and created an added cost to the federal government. This MOA helps to streamline the process without compromising the gathering of information critical to both departments and is one of many initiatives undertaken by the two departments to create a more seamless process for service members to access benefits.

NAUS Legislative Update, Nov 24

"Brown Bag" Initiative Shows Promise

The problem was how to get Congress' attention about proposed legislation that would exempt older military retirees from paying Medicare Part B premiums and give all military retirees the option of participating in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). Retiree Tom Gould had an innovative suggestion: make those letters to Congress unique by writing them on a piece of a brown paper bag.

Some may laugh, but anything that makes letters stand out to legislators and staffs can be a plus. And the initiative has the strong support of Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Bud Day (USAF-Ret), whose health care equity lawsuit went all the way to the Supreme Court before it finally ruled that only Congress could address any broken health care promises to military retirees.

So far, the initiative has generated almost 6000 "brown bag letters" to Congress in support of Rep. Chris Van Hollen's H.R. 3474 and Sen. Tim Johnson's S. 2065.

These two bills expired when the 108th Congress adjourned earlier this month, but new legislation will be introduced when the 109th Congress convenes in January. These bills support two of MOAA's legislative goals.

For more information on the Brown Bag Project (and a photo of Col Day holding a sample), visit <http://mrgrg-ms.org/history14.html>.

The project sponsors ask retirees who participate in the program to record which legislators they sent "brown bag" letters to by visiting <http://mrgrg-ms.org/educate-the-congress.html>.

Questions regarding the Brown Bag Project should be directed to lawsuit@classact-lawsuit.com.

MOAA Legislative Update, Dec 17

Lung Cancer May Be Linked to Gulf War Oil Fires

Veterans of the 1991 Gulf War exposed to pollution from oil well fires, exhausts and other sources may face an increased risk of lung cancer, a government advisory group has reported.

A committee of the Institute of Medicine concluded there isn't enough evidence to determine whether most of veterans' health problems are associated with such exposures. But it said occupational and environmental exposure to combustion products has been shown to increase danger of lung cancer.

"Studies of people exposed to air pollution, vehicle exhaust and burning of coal and other heating and cooking fuels consistently show that such exposures are linked to increased risk for developing lung cancer," committee chair Lynn Goldman said in a statement. "This provides sufficient evidence that exposure to combustion products during the Gulf War could be associated with lung cancer for some veterans," said Goldman, a professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

However, Goldman added, "it should be emphasized that smoking is the major culprit for lung cancer, accounting for 80 percent of all cases, according to the American Cancer Society."

The committee said evidence is too weak to connect other cancers to exposure to combustion products. But it said there are indications that such exposure may be linked to asthma, cancers of the nose, mouth and throat, bladder and to low birth weight and premature births among women exposed while pregnant.

A major problem, the report said, is that there is little information about the actual exposure of individual service members to these pollutants during the war.

Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait ignited more than 600 oil well fires and the smoke and other combustion products sometimes remained low to the ground mixing with other products from vehicle exhaust, heaters and cooking.

The Institute of Medicine is a branch of the National Academy of Science, an independent organization chartered by Congress to advise the government on scientific matters. ■

News of the Force (page 1), Dec 25

No Flea Collars

Some people are being encouraged to send flea and tick collars to servicemembers in the Gulf. This is being discouraged by health authorities who advised that "wearing the flea and tick collars is a dangerous practice, which is harmful to the wearer and in violation of established federal laws." "There are so many other ways that concerned citizens can help service members and their families."

Details on the harmful effects of these collars is at: http://www.gulflink.osd.mil/pesto/pest_s04.htm#4.

condensed from NAUS Weekly Update, Dec 17

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The backlog was created when legislation passed in June 2003 and January 2004 changed entitlements and required additional policy and coordination between the military services, the Department of Veterans Affairs and DFAS before payments on certain portions of CRSC could begin. The new legislation also changed the entitlements to include the following considerations, which required manual intervention and additional time to complete due to their complexity:

- Court-ordered garnishments
- Deductions for former spouses
 - Disabled retirees whose pay is computed using the percentage of disability instead of years of service
 - Multiple changes in the awarded disability since the inception of CRSC

CRSC applications will normally be paid within 60 days of military service approval. DFAS is working on automating CRSC payments to improve the quality and efficiency of that service. Automation is expected to be completed in the summer of 2005.

Since April 2004, DFAS has received approximately 1,980 approved applications each month. As of Nov. 9, 2004, more than 22,000 military retirees have received CRSC payments totaling more than \$346 million.

DFAS News Release, Nov 12

Medicare Part B Automatic Enrollment

Retirees, their spouses and widow(er)s who are 65 or older and who were not enrolled in Medicare Part B have been automatically enrolled with an effective date of November 2004. Those affected will receive a letter allowing them to specify a start date for the Part B coverage. Why would they want to do this? Let's look at an example. In April 2004, a retiree received a referral to a civilian hospital to receive care. The medical bill came to \$15,000 for this care, which the retiree was required to pay out of pocket. Being over 65 and not enrolled in Part B, he was out \$15,000. Now he receives his letter, and he specifies that he wants his Part B coverage to be effective April 1, 2004. Once that goes into effect, he goes to the local TRICARE office and files a claim for reimbursement. He will receive \$12,000 in reimbursement from TRICARE, as he pays only up to the catastrophic cap of \$3,000. His cost to get this money back was to pay the Medicare Part B premiums back to April, seven months at \$66.60 per month, or \$466.20.

To receive Medicare Part B without having the pay a late enrollment penalty, a person must enroll in the period starting three months before their 65th birthday and ending three months after their 65th birth month. For those who enrolled in Medicare Part B between 2001 and 2004 and were required to pay a late enrollment penalty, the penalty has been removed and these persons will receive a refund of late fees paid in 2004 (not 2001-2003).

As a reminder, people born after 1937 who opt to wait to receive 100% Social Security retirement benefits past their 65th birthday must still be enrolled in Medicare Part B on the first day of their 65th birth month in order to continue TRICARE coverage without interruption. A chart in *Still Serving in Korea* newsletter 98-1 (first issue), page 1, shows the effect of delayed eligibility for full retirement benefits. Remember, dependent and survivor benefits are based on the amount the worker actually received. Waiting until full retirement age maximizes benefits for your dependents and survivors. And the longer you wait to receive your retirement benefits up to age 70, the more you will receive. However, dependent and survivor benefits are capped at 100%, or your full retirement age. Don't forget that if you decide to wait past your 65th birth month, you still have to enroll in Medicare Part B and arrange to make the payments.

*Air Force Retiree News, Nov 3
and Osan AB Retiree Activities Office*

Medicare Parts A and B Deductibles Increase

The Medicare Part B deductible increases from \$100 to \$110 in 2005. Medicare Part A hospitalization coverage deductible increases by \$36 from \$876 to \$912 per benefit period. For civilian patients, this would be their cost for up to 60 days of inpatient hospital care and if hospitalization continued for more than 60 days, a daily co-insurance charge would be paid by the patient.

For military retirees who have TRICARE for Life, the annual deductible cost and total cost would be \$150, because TRICARE would cover all allowable remaining expenses except the TRICARE deductible of \$150. (Don't believe me? See *Still Serving in Korea* newsletter 03-2, page 2, and look for the article entitled, Glen Painter Follow-up.)

*Social Security Handbook
and Osan AB Retiree Activities Office*

Exchange Credit Card Interest to Rise

The Exchange Credit Program is raising the interest rate for the Military STAR card to 10 percent, an increase of .25 percent. Officials explained that the increase is based on the rise of the prime rate to 5 percent, and interest charged is the prime rate plus 5 percent. The new interest rate will take effect after the January billing statement. Any new purchases after the Jan. billing statement will constitute acceptance of the revised interest rate, according to officials.

Notification of the rate change will be in the December billing statements. The rate increase doesn't apply to the zero-interest Military Clothing Plans, special promotions already in existence or to deployed customers whose balances are treated under special conditions or have balances at reduced rates. Military STAR cards are valid at Army/Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard exchanges. ■

Armed Forces News, Dec 17

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Legislation Matters

TREA 2005 Legislative Agenda

Following is the 2005 legislative agenda of The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) as announced in a special legislative update.

Concurrent Receipt (CR) and Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC)

- Expansion of CRSC to those with less than 20 years of service
- Expansion of CR to those with VA disability compensation ratings of 40% and below (to include those with 0% disabled with Special Awards from VA)
- Expansion of CR to those with 15 years or more service (last enlistment should benefit)
- Elimination of the 10 year phase-in for CR for those less than 100% to include those rated as unemployable
- Effective date of CRSC and CR to be retroactive to VA disability compensation rating effective date (VA claims can be backlogged for a year or more before claim is adjudicated)
- Specific legislative language indicating that guard/reserve eligible retirees at age 60 who become disabled on active duty with less than 20 years of active service are eligible for CRSC or CR at age 60.
- Include those as unemployable for higher CRSC rating.

Military Retiree Healthcare

- Refundable tax credit for Medicare Part B premiums
- Pre-tax deduction of TRICARE premiums, deductibles and co-payments
- Increase reimbursement rate for TRICARE Standard
- FEHBP eligibility for military retirees

Military Retirement

- Reserve/Guard retirement lowered to age 55 (includes full TRICARE benefits)
- Reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act
- Monitoring of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process for beneficiary impact (active, guard/reserve, retired and survivors)

Survivors Benefits

- Eliminate the SBP/DIC offset
- Paid-up Premiums at age 70 with 30 years in SBP
- Correct the SBP government subsidy to the 40% as originally intended

Medicare

- Authorize DoD and VA to become Medicare providers

Veterans Affairs

- Guaranteed funding of the VA Appropriations (Currently enrolled and those eligible to enroll)
- Zero percent service connected – category 3 for VA healthcare
- Non-service connected military retirees – category 3 for VA healthcare

Other

- Flag Protection Constitutional Amendment
TREA Special Legislative Update, Nov 12

Command Policy and Retirees

The following statement was issued by a member of the USFK staff in response to a Retiree Council request:

“... human trafficking... is a violation of U. S. law and in most other countries. If a civilian was charged with human trafficking, here in Korea, the Korean Government could elect to prosecute the case and if not case could be referred to U. S. Federal Attorney for prosecution in the States. I am not saying that is what will happen, but what could happen in worst case.

For the prostitution issue those kinds of acts are against the law in Korea and the Korean Government is prosecuting Koreans who are caught violating the law. The USFK has taken a position that military members will be subject to prosecution under the UCMJ for engaging in acts with prostitutes. In addition, DoD is proposing that the UCMJ be changed to add an offense, which specifically relates to prostitution. Since such conduct is a violation of Korean law, civilian employees who are caught soliciting or engaging in illegal acts with prostitutes could be subject to prosecution in a Korean court, or be subject to appropriate civilian disciplinary and/or administrative procedures.

The off-limits issue is based upon a determination by USFK that Korean establishments that are engaged in prostitution are aiding and abetting human trafficking and as such are off-limits to all SOFA eligible members, which includes U. S. civilian employees. Whether a disciplinary action taken against a civilian for simply being in one of those establishments would be upheld is debatable. Unless there were other issues involved, the employee would most likely be subject to administrative action, such as curtailing his/her tour or not approving extension of overseas tour.

The curfew issue is very complex and more difficult to answer. When the curfew was recently changed to 2100 hours, the reason cited by USFK was notification by Seoul U. S. Embassy of increased threat of terrorism. When USFK made the curfew applicable to U. S. civilians, it specifically cited DoD Directive Number 2000.12 and the increased terrorism threat as

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Community Matters

New RAO Hours and 2005 Holiday Schedule

The RAO hours and days of operation for the office are changed in 2005. The office will only be open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00am to 2:00pm. If you need assistance at other than these times, you can leave a message on the telephone answering machine (031-661-1441), send an e-mail message, or call my cell phone at 017-477-1441.

The RAO will be closed on the following days:

Dec 24-Jan 10	Christmas vacation
Feb 8-10	Lunar New Year
Jun 27-Jul 8	Summer Vacation
Nov 24	Thanksgiving Day
Dec 26-Jan 7 2006	Christmas Vacation

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

Change in Monthly Visits to Seoul

The RAO visits Yongsan on the second Tuesday of each month and has been doing this in the ACS building from 9:00am until 12:00pm. There are some important changes in 2005 because ACS was unable to provide space for the RAO for the full twelve months of 2005. If you visit us for assistance, please read this schedule carefully.

Jan 11	Meet in lobby of Dragon Hill Lodge
Feb 8	No visit this month due to Lunar New Year holiday
Mar 8	Meet in ACS
Apr 12	Meet in lobby of Dragon Hill Lodge
May 10	Meet in ACS
Jun 14	Meet in ACS
Jul 12	Meet in ACS
Aug 8	Meet in lobby of Dragon Hill Lodge
Sep 13	Meet in ACS
Oct 11	Meet in ACS
Nov 8	Meet in ACS
Dec 13	Meet in ACS

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

New USFK Regulation 190-7

United States Forces Korea (USFK) has issued a new version of USFK Regulation 190-7, which covers base passes and vehicle registration. Appendix H describes the requirements for various categories of individuals and their access requirements. The new version makes several changes to non-SOFA vehicles registered by retirees and their dependents, and by widows of US military personnel (including widows of military retirees).

The changes common to the retirees and widows are as follows:

- DD Form 2220 (DoD decal) is no longer required and is invalid after Dec 31, 2004

- Installation tabs are required for all vehicles, SOFA and non-SOFA (but don't currently appear to be issued to SOFA vehicles)
- The bar-coded Inspection Decal is the primary decal and is recorded in the Biometric Identification System (BIDS)

As a reminder to those who have SOFA or non-SOFA status, only one vehicle (either SOFA or non-SOFA) can be registered per family, unless an exception is granted by the Area Commander.

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

U.S. Army Ups Retiree Recall Age to 70 for Voluntary Assignment

U.S. Army retired reserve soldiers may volunteer for pre-assignment to specific locations, commands or agencies to fill mobilization positions.

Voluntary pre-assignments to specific mobilization positions will remain in force until the soldier's 70th birthday.

The current process of pre-assignment equates to the earmarking of computer records. Retiree requirements and records are reviewed monthly and retirees who are most recently retired (those with current skills and knowledge of Army systems and procedures) with needed grades and military skills are selected to fill the positions.

Pre-assignments are changed frequently; therefore, retirees are not notified of their change in assignment.

Retiree pre-assignment, or "Hip Pocket," orders ceased to exist in August 1996. HRC St. Louis no longer produces paper orders unless it receives an involuntary recall to active duty.

Retirees are being pre-assigned to mobilization positions for recall to active duty in support of an expansion of the nation's military forces.

News of the Force, Dec 5

Task Force Focusing on Exchange Transformation

This week, representatives of Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and The Military Coalition (TMC) attended a briefing by the Unified Exchange Task Force (UETF) on the DoD's efforts to create a more efficient military exchange system. Exchanges have provided a significant and highly popular non-pay benefit for servicemembers, their families, and retirees for over a century.

The UETF is tasked with providing recommendations to defense leaders and Congress on how best to organize the exchange system going forward and how to transition from service-by-service exchanges to inter-service shared retail offerings. The group must ensure both that the exchange

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benefit is sustained and enhanced and that exchanges will continue to be able to provide dividends to the military service MWR programs (i.e. generate enough revenue to fund other leisure programs).

While the task force initially was looking at consolidating the three existing systems into a single organization, the problems inherent in that approach led DoD to refocus the Task Force's efforts on the "doable." That means seeking the best ways to combine or co-develop certain "back room" functions (accounting, personnel, information technology, logistics, etc.) that all three exchange systems agree can be made more efficient without impinging on unique service needs.

Over the last year, the task force completed a baseline assessment of current exchange operations. Based on that evaluation, it will develop recommendations for Pentagon action. The Defense Department expects to provide formal recommendations to Congress next fall, with Congressional hearings and public comments to follow.

MOAA and TMC meet with the UETF quarterly to monitor the process and provide inputs. The Task Force has actively solicited this input to ensure exchange patrons have an early voice in the transformation process, and because its leaders recognize that community support is critical to successful implementation of potential changes.

More information about the Unified Exchange Task Force and its mission is available at <http://www.unifiedexchange.org>.

MOAA Legislative Update, Dec 17

Airmen May Wear Medals Before System Catches Up

Air Force officials have assured eligible Airmen that they may wear certain decorations even if the military personnel data system has not been updated to reflect the awards. Decorations affected include the Korean Defense Service Medal, Gallant Unit Citation/Meritorious Unit Award, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and the "V" device on the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism. Officials stress that Airmen should ensure they meet the proper criteria before wearing any new decoration. Eligibility requirements are at http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/awards/Recently_approved_awards.htm. For more information, airmen can contact their local military personnel flight or call the Air Force Personnel Center contact center, (800) 616-3775. ■

Armed Forces News, Nov 12

The Fan

After spending all day Sunday watching football on television, a man fell asleep and spent the night in the chair. His wife woke him in the morning.

"It's twenty to seven," she called.

"In who's favor?"

"their authority for applying it to civilians. There is not any other law, regulation or citation which specifically addresses whether a curfew does or does not apply to civilians. We will not know whether USFK can continue to apply their curfew to all civilians until such time that a civilian is disciplined for violating the curfew, then appeals that action to the Merit System Protection Board and a decision is subsequently issued which upholds or overturns the disciplinary action. I suspect that in most cases a violation of the curfew, unless other issues are involved, would most likely be subject to administrative action, such as curtailment of overseas tour or disapproval of extension of overseas tour.

"My advice to all civilian employees is to be very careful about what they are doing and where they are doing it. **I would... recommend to anyone that they not become the test case to see if the curfew does or does not apply to civilians.** Reading various court and MSPB decisions on what authority the military has over civilians indicate that the courts are giving the military a lot of latitude; especially, when it applies to safety and well being of the command." ■

response to Civil Service employee question

SSBP Update 01

Some military retired members will see more money in their Dec 1 paychecks. They're the ones who, beginning with the 1992-93 special Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) open enrollment period, signed up for the Supplemental SBP coverage (SSBP). Retired members who took the SSBP coverage at that time and members retiring later who elected the coverage have been paying a higher premium than those who remained with the standard SBP. Originally, at age 62, the SBP annuity is reduced from 55 percent to approximately 35 percent. Beginning with the 92-93 open season, retired members could ensure the annuity remained at 55 percent or a lesser annuity in 5 percent increments down to 40 percent with a variable SSBP cost. On Oct 28, President Bush signed Public Law 108-375, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2005. Section 644 of this Act terminates costs for the SSBP elections effective Nov 1. For those with the SSBP, this means:

- * Your current level of SSBP coverage will continue but you will no longer be charged any SSBP costs.
- * Your basic Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage and costs (generally 6.5 percent of gross retired pay) remain unchanged.
- * Your Dec 1 retired pay will be increased by the amount of tax-free premiums you were paying for the SSBP coverage, less federal income tax.

[Source: Air Force Retiree News, Dec 1]

RAO Baguio Bulletin Update, Jan 1, 2005

Laughing Matters

The Cat

A man absolutely hated his wife's cat and decided to get rid of him one day by driving him 20 blocks from his home and leaving him at the park.

As he was getting home, the cat was walking up the driveway!

The next day he decided to drive the cat 40 blocks away. He put the beast out of the car and quickly headed home.

Driving back up his driveway, there was the cat again!

He kept taking the cat further and further away but the cat would always beat him home. At last he decided to drive quite a few miles away--so he turned right, then left, past the bridge, then right again and another right until he reached what he thought was a safe distance from his home and left the cat there.

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Hours later the man calls home to his wife: "Hon, is the cat there?"

"Yes," the wife answers, "why do you ask?"

Frustrated, the man answered, "Can you please put him on the phone? I'm lost and need directions."

MikeysFunnies.com

Arthritis Cure

Doctor Bloomfield, who was known for miraculous cures for arthritis, had a waiting room full of people when a little old lady, completely bent over in half, shuffled in slowly, leaning on her cane.

When her turn came, she went into the doctor's office, and, amazingly, emerged within 5 minutes walking completely erect with her head held high.

A woman in the waiting room who had seen all this walked up to the little old lady and said, "It's a miracle! You walked in bent in half and now you're walking erect. What did that doctor do?"

"Gave me a longer cane." ☺

www.christianvoices.org

The Director's Corner

RAO Director Volunteer

As most of you should know by now, I have stepped down as RAO Director effective Dec 23. This does not mean that I am leaving the RAO. The Director's position provides SOFA status to eligible individuals, and I am not eligible, having been determined to be "ordinarily resident" as defined by the Status of Forces Agreement. The good news is that a volunteer has stepped up to fill the position. He is Pat Quinn and he is currently still active duty, but on terminal leave. He showed up on Dec 21 based on a recommendation by Jim Dunnett (a retiree) of Osan's Family Support Center. So if you call and the phone is answered by somebody other than Jack, it's probably Pat you'll be speaking to.

I'm hoping that Pat will be a stable addition to the RAO and his presence may mean that the office will be open more in line with the original schedule than is shown in the item in Community Matters.

On Dec 17, I was notified that the RAO should be able to remain in Building 936, Room 103, and that the room will be reconfigured to be dedicated to the RAO function. This is a major improvement, since much of the RAO business deals with very personal information. Thanks to the 51st Fighter Wing for coming up with a way to get this done.

USFK Regulation 190-7 Confusion

I want to explain how the incorrect briefing on vehicle registration came about. I focused on Appendix H because it defines "Sponsorship" and specified that retirees do not need to be sponsored whereas widows do need to be sponsored. If Appendix H defines personnel access to USFK installations, that means that widows cannot enter an installation without being sponsored by the Area Commander. Since widows carry DoD ID cards, which grant them access to installations unless barred due to a transgression, then I assumed that Appendix H referred to vehicle access requirements. My error, but we still need to clarify both personnel and vehicle access for retirees and widows.

Jack Terwiel

**RETIREE ACTIVITIES OFFICE
51 MSS/CVR
UNIT 2097
APO AP 96278-2097**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

USMRAK Elects Officers for New Term

The United States Military Retirees Association Korea (USMRAK) held its annual membership meeting and election of officers on Dec 4. Chuck Jackson, United States Forces Korea (USFK) Retiree Council Chairman, talked to the members about recent policy developments affecting retirees in Korea. Some of the issues he covered were the applicability to retirees of the curfew, and policies regarding what's considered solicitation of prostitution. Jack Terwiel, Osan AB RAO Director, gave a briefing on information of interest to retirees, particularly regarding the impact of 2004 legislation on retirees, their dependents and survivors.

Following discussions, USMRAK Acting President Boyce presented Jack Terwiel a certificate of appreciation for 15,000 volunteer hours of service to the retiree and widow communities. Retiree Council Chairman Jackson presented Mr. Terwiel an engraved eagle statue for seven years of selfless service from the USFK Retiree Council.

The meeting concluded with the election of officers. LTC Al Chellis, USA Retired, was elected President. SFC Richard Boyce, USA Retired, was re-elected Vice President, and Capt Jack Terwiel, USAF Retired, was

elected Secretary. In addition to Mr. Boyce's re-election, Mr. Chellis and Mr. Terwiel will be filling positions that they held in past years.

The Osan AB Retiree Activities Office web site at <http://www.rao-osan.com> has extensive coverage of the meeting. This includes meeting minutes, the briefing, and photos and text of the award presentations. ■

USMRAK, Dec 4

Web Site Update

The Osan AB Retiree Activities Office web site at <http://www.rao-osan.com> has undergone extensive renovation to provide compatibility with browsers by Netscape, Mozilla-Firefox, and Opera. If you tried one of these browsers before, prepare to be surprised.

Osan AB Retiree Activities Office

In the Next Issue

E-Mail Newsletter – Transition from hardcopy to electronic version
Once More: Preparing Yourself – Vital information your survivors need

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