



News for U.S. Military Widows in Korea

- 1. Pay Increase:** Good news! The annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2009 is 5.8%. Any of the benefits that you receive – such as VA, SBP and Social Security – will increase by this much in the money you receive starting in January. I can only provide an estimate of the increase for VA benefits. For those who receive DIC of \$1,091, that will increase to \$1,154. For those who receive the Death Pension of \$624, that will increase to \$660.
- 2. SBP Annual Increase:** For those who receive both the DIC from VA and the Survivor Benefit Plan from DFAS, the SBP was reduced when you started to receive the VA DIC. In many cases, the SBP was completely replaced. We have been trying for years to get the government to give you both the full SBP and DIC. The government finally decided to give a little of the SBP back to you. Last year, your SBP increased by \$50, and for this year and for the next four years it goes up an additional \$10 until you receive a total of \$100. I don't see much chance to continue the fight to get the full SBP returned to you until the current economic problems in the U.S. are fixed.
- 3. Social Security:** Widows who reach age 60 are eligible to receive Social Security benefits because of their husband's work. Some widows receive The VA Death Pension. The VA pays that money only to widows who have no other income. If you start to receive Social Security, then that VA money must be stopped. It is your responsibility to tell me when to stop the VA Death Pension. If you don't stop it, you will receive a letter from the VA that you must repay the Death Pension money that you received once you started receiving Social Security. If you don't repay the money voluntarily, then the VA will start to take repayments out of your Social Security.
- 4. Assistance Visits:** As most of you know, I no longer travel to provide assistance where you live. The Army has two Retirement Services Officers who travel. Mr. Mark Wade works at Camp Casey and travels to Yongsan on the 3rd and 4th Tuesday and Wednesday of each month and he is available

0900-1600 each day. Mr. Roger Brown works at Camp Humphreys and travels to Camp Henry in Daegu on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday and Wednesday of each month and is available 0800-1600 on Tuesday and 0800-1200 on Wednesday. If you have a problem that your RSO cannot solve, then he will contact me and I'll work on the problem from my office outside Osan Air Base. If you want to call, my office is open Monday-Friday 0900-1500 and closed on all U.S. and Korean holidays. The office number is 031-663-0319.

- 5. Christmas Vacation:** The Military Retiree Assistance Office will be closed for Christmas Vacation from December 22 for two weeks and will reopen on January 5, 2009. And we send to everyone our wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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