

Afterburner

NEWS FOR USAF RETIRED PERSONNEL

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JANUARY 2004

2003 Authorization, Medicare Acts affect retiree community

Finance Center works to implement Concurrent Receipt Legislation; SCSD recipients first to see pay increases

Concurrent receipt of both retired pay and Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) disability compensation has become a reality.

Signed by President Bush on Nov. 24, 2003, the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Public Law 108-36, authorizes a 10-year, phased elimination of the DVA disability offset to retired pay. In all cases, the retiree must be rated at least 50 percent disabled by the DVA.

Information available after the Afterburner press deadline will be posted on the Internet at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay> and will be disseminated through the Air Force Retiree News Service (AFRNS). Please see page 2 for information on the AFRNS.

This legislation also expands the field of eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to include retirees with 20 years who have a combined disability rating of less than 60 percent, but repeals the authority for Special Compensation for the Severely Disabled (SCSD).

The SCSD came about Oct. 1, 1999 under the NDAA which provided special compensation, ranging from \$100 to \$300 a month, to certain severely disabled uniformed services retirees retired under the regular retirement law.

Those losing the SCSD pay will be the first to see Concurrent Receipt increases to their retired pay effective Jan. 1, 2004 for the payment dated Feb. 2, 2004.

Implementation of the full legislation is complex and is not possible by January 2004, according to DFAS officials who report that DFAS is working closely with the DVA to

Medicare Part B premium penalty waived for some; TRICARE pharmacy benefits continues as separate program

Although some may not be aware of it, one or more of the provisions in the "Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003," will affect many members of the retiree community in the near future and in the years to come.

At the top of the list in the Act, signed into law by President Bush on Dec. 8, 2003, are three very important changes relating to enrollment in Medicare Part B. The first two changes affect persons not enrolled or paying surcharges because they enrolled after they were initially eligible for Part B. This includes those individuals who reside overseas where Medicare doesn't pay and those who thought a local military medical facility would always be available for their health needs.

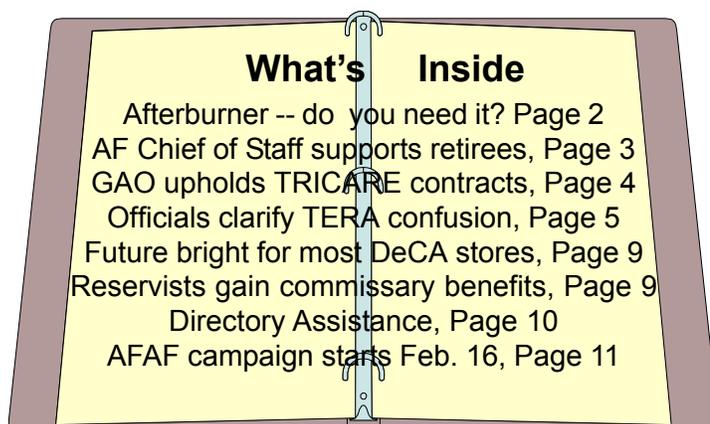
Uniformed services beneficiaries who would be eligible for TRICARE for Life, but are not enrolled in Medicare Part B, may enroll without penalty during a special enrollment period through Dec. 31, 2004. The special enrollment period will be announced via Medicare on the TRICARE Web site and will be widely publicized.

Second, uniformed services beneficiaries who enrolled in Medicare Part B in 2001, 2002, 2003, or 2004 and are subject to a premium surcharge for late enrollment in Part B, can get those surcharges eliminated by demonstrating that they are covered under TRICARE.

The elimination of surcharges is effective Jan. 1, 2004, but the Department of Health and Human Services must work out procedures to be followed.

The third change made by the bill affects all seniors, not just uniformed services beneficiaries. The Part B premium will be tied to income beginning in 2007. Premiums for individuals with incomes above \$80,000 and couples with incomes above \$160,000 will increase.

(See Concurrent Receipt on Page 5)



Prescription drug benefits

The number one question asked by members of the military retiree community concerning the "Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003," has been: **How does it affect my pharmacy benefits?**

(See Prescription Drugs on Page 4)

Afterburner— Do you still need it?

It's becoming more of an electronic world as evidenced by the rapidly growing number of subscribers to the Air Force Retiree News Service (AFRNS), and the hits on the Air Force Retiree Services web site.

For those of you who regularly use computers, but who have not yet discovered the AFRNS, it's a fast, easy way of disseminating information to e-mail recipients which now number 32,000 plus subscribers. Individual articles are also posted on the Internet, along with a text version of the **Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel**.

Because so much information is available so quickly, we asked AFRNS subscribers in mid-September: Do you really need the printed version of the **Afterburner**?

More than 2,000 folks responded that the internet version worked great for them. A follow-up story brought an additional 1,000 plus into the fold.

Now it's time for you, the recipients of this publication, to let us know. Certainly, many of you do not have a computer and have no interest in getting one — the **Afterburner** will continue to be sent to you as long as funds are available.

However, there are probably thousands of you who have gotten comfortable with computers, have e-mail and Internet access, but just didn't know about the almost instant information available to you.

First, you need to subscribe to the AFRNS so you will get up-to-date information at least weekly, and also because that's the medium I use to let you know when an

Editor's Notebook

By
Bill
Turner



Afterburner has been posted to the Internet. First, take a look at the web site at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire> and click on the various areas listed including **Afterburner**, Retiree News, etc. Please note that beginning with the January issue, a portable document format (PDF) version will also be available.

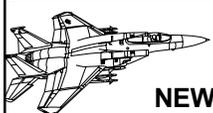
The instructions to subscribe to the AFRNS are on the web site under Retiree News, "How to Subscribe." They are also shown in the sidebar below.

After subscribing and receiving confirmation, send an e-mail to [Billy.Turner@randolph.af.mil](mailto:Bill.Turner@randolph.af.mil) with "Cancel **Afterburner**" in the subject line. In the message block, add your full name and address and the last four digits of your SSN so we can distinguish among individuals with the same name. Or you can write a letter with "Cancel **Afterburner**" on the envelope and inside, include the full name, address and full SSN.

Even if you are not into computers, you may still not need the **Afterburner** for some other reason, such as two retiree families getting two copies of the publication. In that case, just send a letter with the retired member's name and SSN to stop.

If, in addition to the **Afterburner**, you are receiving an official retiree newsletter from a local Air Force base (many bases print Retiree Activities Office, RAO, newsletters), also let me know the name of the Air Force base so we can ensure you continue to get that newsletter. Otherwise, the "cancel **Afterburner**" code also cancels the local newsletter. This does not pertain to any other publications you may receive from other Services, military related organizations, Air Force Times, DFAS, etc; they are not connected to this operation.

As a final note, please understand that right now we have no plans to stop the print version of the **Afterburner**, but we're also not saying that day will never come. If we can reduce costs now by not sending it to people who don't need it, that's great.



AFTERBURNER NEWS FOR USAF RETIRED PERSONNEL

*The **Afterburner** is authorized by Air Force Instruction 36-3106. It is published in January, May and September by the Retiree Services Branch. Distribution: individuals entitled to Air Force retired pay; unremarried surviving spouses of retirees (automatically if they are receiving an annuity under Survivor Benefit Plan and/or the Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan, or the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan); unremarried nonannuitant surviving spouses of deceased Air Force members who were entitled to receive retired pay, may receive the **Afterburner** by requesting it from the address below. The **Afterburner** is not sent to former spouses nor to retirees of other services. Additional copies are not available. The **Afterburner** address:*

HQ AFPC/DPPT
550 C Street W Ste 11
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713

*E-mail address is [Billy.Turner@randolph.af.mil](mailto:Bill.Turner@randolph.af.mil), and the phone number is (210) 565-2126. The **Afterburner** is available on the Internet at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire/>. Retirees may write to the Co-chairmen of the Air Force Retiree Council by using the office symbol, HQ AFPC/CCU, at the address above. To change your address to receive the **Afterburner** and other official correspondence, see the procedures elsewhere in this issue.*

Air Force Retiree News: How to subscribe

Please don't type anything that is in parenthesis as that is for instruction only.

(Prepare an original e-mail message without putting anything in the from line as the computer will take care of that)

(On the "to" line type exactly, no variations)

list.manager@listserver.afpc.randolph.af.mil

(On the subject line type exactly, no variations)

subscribe AFRETIRE

(That's all there is to it. Hit send. Later you will get a return message indicating you have been subscribed as a non digest member. E-mail articles are not released on a set schedule, but when the editor determines a subject would be of interest to the retiree community.)



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, DC

MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM/CC

ASG 21 033

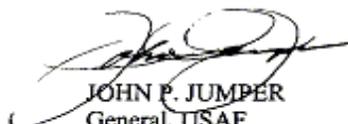
FROM: HQ USAF/CC
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

SUBJECT: Support for Air Force Military Retirees

We have approximately 660,000 retired Air Force members in our Air Force Family and many of them continue to put "service before self" by working more than one million volunteer hours annually supporting both our active duty forces and fellow retirees. We owe a debt of gratitude to those retirees who so generously volunteer their time at Air Force bases worldwide; without their assistance many commanders would find accomplishment of their mission difficult and, in some support areas, significantly impacted.

We need to support our retiree community and the programs they operate, such as Retiree Activities Offices (RAOs). One way of supporting these programs is through funding of their operations at the local level, which includes providing sufficient funds for annual retiree appreciation days and periodic retiree newsletters. While I realize budgets are tight, this is a small investment in view of the huge payback we all receive.

I urge you to take a personal interest in our retiree programs and strongly encourage your commanders to support their local RAOs and the programs they offer. I ask your commanders to not only support the RAOs financially, but to get personally involved by participating in retiree appreciation day events and recognizing those retiree volunteers who give so much of themselves and who continue to reflect the retiree motto "Still Serving."



JOHN P. JUMPER
General, USAF
Chief of Staff

AF Chief of staff urges commanders to support retirees

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen John P. Jumper has continued to show his strong support of the Air Force Retiree Council, Retiree Activities Offices, and the retired population in general.

Following up on the letter he wrote when he first assumed the Chief of Staff position in 2002, the general recently sent another letter to commanders of all major commands showing his support and urging them to do the same.

In both letters, the general pointed to the efforts of the Air Force Retiree Council, currently headed by retired Lt. General Donald Peterson and CMSAF Jim Finch; volunteer Retiree Activities Office (RAO) directors and volunteer staffs at 115 bases throughout the world; and to members of the retiree community in general — including retired members, family members, and also surviving spouses of retirees.

In addition to working throughout the year in the 15 council regions — 13 in the United States and one covering Europe and another Alaska and the far east — council members meet once a year at Randolph AFB, Texas, to work key interest subjects affecting the entire Air Force retiree community. Besides the 15 area council representatives, there are also two members at large currently lending their expertise to medical and widow's benefits.

Following last year's meeting of the Air Force Retiree Council, the two major issues the Council sent the chief of staff in support of retirees were full concurrent receipt for all disabled retirees and changes to the Survivor Benefit Program. Those SBP recommendations were to accelerate the paid up provision from 2008, and to eliminate Social Security offset from 55 percent to 35 percent at age 62.

GAO upholds two TRICARE contract awards; no delays seen

The Government Accounting Office has upheld two recently awarded TRICARE contracts, according to separate announcements by the Department of Defense.

The DoD announced Nov. 19 the affirmation of its July 2003 TRICARE Dual-Eligible Fiscal Intermediary Contract (TDEFIC) award to Wisconsin Physicians Service Insurance Corp. (WPS) of Madison, Wis.

The department received notice that the General Accounting Office denied the protest of PGBA LLC against the initial award. This contract replaces current arrangements under which Medicare-eligible TRICARE beneficiaries' claims are processed and paid.

On July 25, 2003, the TDEFIC contract was originally awarded to WPS. The TDEFIC contract is a single, separate vehicle for claims processing, customer service and administrative services for an estimated 1.7 million Medicare-eligible TRICARE beneficiaries. The transition to WPS is scheduled to take effect April 1, 2004.

Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, said he wanted "to assure our Medicare-eligible beneficiaries that their TRICARE claims will continue to be processed in a timely manner."

In an announcement Dec. 5, DoD officials said the GAO had upheld the award of the \$2.3 billion TRICARE Healthcare Services and Support Contract North Region to Health Net Federal Services (Health Net) of Rancho Cordova, Calif.

The GAO decision was prompted by protests filed by the losing bidders, Sierra Military Health Services Inc. and Aetna Government Health Plans.

The North Region contract is one of three regional TRICARE contracts awarded and will deliver health care services and support for five years for approximately 2.3 million TRICARE beneficiaries. Services include: establishing and managing a provider network; enrolling beneficiaries in TRICARE Prime; processing healthcare claims; educating providers and beneficiaries about the TRICARE program; and operating local TRICARE Service Centers.

The North Region covers the geographical area consisting

of the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia, as well as the Fort Campbell military treatment facility catchment (healthcare delivery) area of Tennessee, the Scott Air Force Base catchment area of Missouri, the Rock Island Arsenal clinic coverage area that extends into Iowa, and the District of Columbia.

The transition to HealthNet is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2004, in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Southern Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin, and on Sep. 1, 2004, in Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Northern Virginia.

At the time the award was made to HealthNet originally, other TRICARE contracts were awarded to Humana Military Healthcare Services, \$2 billion contract for the TRICARE South region which provides support and health care services in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and the eastern portion of Texas.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp. was awarded a \$2.1 billion contract for the TRICARE West region and will provide support and health care services in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, the western portion of Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

During the transition period, beneficiaries will continue to file claims with their current TRICARE contractor. Eligible TRICARE beneficiaries are encouraged to contact the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (DSO) to ensure enrollment information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) is current. DEERS enrollment may be verified by contacting the DSO at toll-free (800) 538-9552, or by visiting the nearest uniformed services personnel office.

Prescription Drugs

(Continued from page 1)

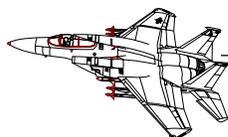
The simple answer is that for most uniformed services beneficiaries, it doesn't.

For older Americans, the most significant aspect of the new bill signed into law by President Bush Dec. 8 is the fact that it introduces an outpatient prescription drug benefit. However, the TRICARE pharmacy benefits will continue as a separate program.

On the other hand, uniformed services beneficiaries should be aware of the provision as it could come into play in the future if they lose their TRICARE eligibility. Example: eligibility is lost when a member's widow

or widower remarries a person who is not entitled to TRICARE benefits.

According to TRICARE officials, the TRICARE pharmacy benefit provides excellent coverage and wide availability of services through military facilities, retail pharmacies, and mail order. Thus, it is likely that the vast majority of uniformed services beneficiaries will not find it advantageous to enroll in the new Medicare pharmacy benefit. Individuals who think it could affect them in the future can obtain more details at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.



Concurrent Receipt

(Continued from page 1)

implement this legislation and issue the payments to all eligible retirees as soon as possible.

Although full details are sketchy, key points to remember according to officials are:

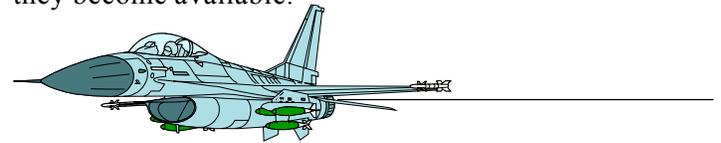
* Retirees do not have to apply for Concurrent Receipt. DFAS and the VA will work that issue and the pay will be automatic to those determined eligible;

* Individuals who have applied for CRSC and been turned down, do not have to reapply. The board will review again those records that had been determined to have combat related disability, although not at the 60 percent level. Those individuals who did not apply earlier for CRSC because they felt they did not meet the 60 percent disability

requirement should go to the Disability Web site at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/disability/> and click on CRSC. More information will be posted as it becomes available. CRSC questions may also be directed to toll free 1 800 616-3775.

* Officials note that those retirees who qualify for both CRSC and Concurrent Receipt will have to choose between the two during an open season to be announced later. Although it would appear obvious that an individual would select the one that paid the most, this may not be the case. Since Concurrent Receipt is taxable and CRSC is not, tax liability is a consideration.

In all cases involving provisions under the Authorization Act, officials urge patience. Full implementation may take several months, but monies due as a result of the 2004 Authorization Act will be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2004. Updates will be posted to the DFAS MyPay website as they become available.



SBP annuitants

COE must be completed annually

Like clockwork, if you're a Survivor Benefit Plan annuitant, you're going to get two things in your mail box each year. One is a tax statement and the other a Certificate of Eligibility (COE).

Both are important documents. One is used to determine how much tax is owed and the other, the COE, determines if you're going to continue receiving an SBP check each month.

The COE is automatically generated and sent to annuitants approximately 90 days prior to their birthday each year. It's important that it be completed by the annuitant and returned via mail or fax before the annuitant's birthday to avoid any interruption in pay. An annuitant should include his or her name and Social Security Number, the name and Social Security Number of his or her deceased sponsor and the signature date.

If a legal representative such as a power of attorney has been added to an annuitant's account, that individual should complete and sign the form, marking the legal representative portion as requested.

Officials explain that upon return of the COE, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service processes the document according to the information provided and will either continue, adjust or terminate the annuitant's pay as appropriate.

A marriage certificate is required when the "I married in the past year. . ." box is marked to update the annuitant's account properly.

Forms may be mailed to DFAS, US Military Annuitant Pay, PO Box 7131, London, KY 40742-7131 or may be faxed to 1-800-982-8459.

Officials say some TERA retirees confused by act's provisions

Based on questions by a number of retired members who failed to completely understand the provisions of the Temporary Early Retirement Act (TERA), officials have provided a web site offering additional information.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1992, Public Law 102-484, Oct. 23, 1992, under which Congress enacted the Temporary Early Retirement Act (TERA), permitted selected military members to retire early and accrue additional military retirement credits if they gained employment with qualifying public or community service organizations.

The TERA measure gave each of the Armed Services the 'temporary early retirement authority' (TERA), to offer retirement at 15 years to less than 20 years of service. It stated that a service member electing early retirement may accrue additional retirement credit if employed in public or community service between the time of retirement and the time the retiree would have attained 20 years of military service. The early retiree will have his or her military retired pay increased at age 62.

According to officials, the public or community service organization employing the retiree must be designated a qualifying organization and be on the Department of Defense's Public and Community Service Organization Registry, which is maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). More information is at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/tera/>.

VA and DoD select eight medical demonstration sites

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) announced the selection of eight medical sites to participate in demonstrations with nearby military medical facilities.

These demonstrations will test the capabilities of the two departments to provide a seamless delivery of benefits and services to military members and veterans by sharing information and other efficiencies.

Mandated by the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act, the demonstrations will test three separate areas: budget and financial management; staffing and assignment; and medical information and information technology systems.

“These demonstration projects reflect the determination and desire by those in both the military and VA health care systems to improve the delivery of care for our beneficiaries,” said Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

He explained that the demonstrations will “enhance the quality, efficiency and effectiveness for the delivery of benefits and services to veterans, service members, military retirees and their families.”

The DoD/VA Health Executive Council selected the sites from a list of hospitals that volunteered to participate. These projects will operate through Fiscal Year 2007. The

budget and financial management demonstrations will be conducted at:

- * Tripler Army Medical Center and VA Pacific Islands Health Care System, Hawaii; and

- * Air Force 3rd Medical Group and Alaska VA Health Care System in Anchorage, Alaska.

Staffing and assignment demonstrations will be at the following locations:

- * Madigan Army Medical Center and Puget Sound VA Health Care System, Seattle/Tacoma;

- * Eisenhower Army Medical Center and Augusta VA Health Care System, Augusta, Ga.; and

- * Langley Air Force Base 1st Medical Group and Hampton VA Medical Center, Hampton, Va.

The medical information and information technology systems will be tested at:

- * Madigan Army Medical Center and the Puget Sound VA Health Care System, Seattle/Tacoma;

- * William Beaumont Army Medical Center and El Paso VA Health Care System, El Paso, Texas; and

- * Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center, Brooke Army Medical Center and South Texas VA Health Care System, San Antonio, Texas.

KMC not your typical Hawaiian vacation site

Travel wisely

Editor's note — The following article is intended to assist members of the retiree community in getting the most for their leisure dollars.

“At 4,000 feet above sea level, the warm Hawaiian temperatures drop and each of our cottages feature a fireplace. Not your typical Hawaiian vacation.”

That's how Arlene Bali, marketing director, describes the Kilauea Military Camp on the big island of Hawaii. While most folks are familiar with the Hale Koa and even Camp Bellows, Kilauea isn't nearly as well known.

This may change, however, as more members of the military retired community, looking for affordable vacation spots, turn to the KMC, a Joint Services Recreation Center that allows visitors to experience another side of Hawaii.

It's lush and tropical as well as dramatic and stark because of the all the lava activity, said Bali, who described the center as featuring 77 comfortably-appointed cottages and apartments right in the heart of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. “We are near the crater's edge of the much publicized, active volcano, Kilauea,” she said.

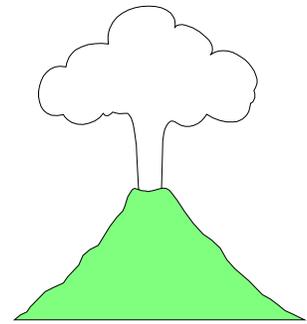
Besides a fireplace in the room, there is cable TV, a mini-

refrigerator, microwave, coffee-maker, hair dryer, iron and ironing board as well as an umbrella for the those unexpected showers. Cottages and apartments vary from one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Selected units include a Jacuzzi and/or kitchen.

KMC also offers an array of activities from tennis, golf, biking, bowling, hiking, guided island tours and more. There is also a café, general store, recreation lodge, meeting rooms, gas station, theater and chapel.

Open to all active duty military, Reserves, National Guard, retirees and Department of Defense civilian employees and their guests, rates range from \$46 to \$120 per night for double occupancy.

Reservations may be made up to a year in advance except during peak season. Call 438-6707 directly from Oahu or call (808) 967-8333 for reservations and information. Write: Kilauea Military Camp, HQ Building 40, Attn: Reservations Office, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii 96718. The email address is reservations@kmc-volcano.com. Also, visit the web site at www.kmc-volcano.com for other information as well as photos.



U.S. will 'reposition' overseas footprint before U.S BRAC cuts

Although many in the standing-room-only audience expected to hear the plans for the next Base Realignment and Closure round scheduled for 2005, Raymond DuBois, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, said that for now, the major issue concerning the Pentagon is the military's global footprint overseas.

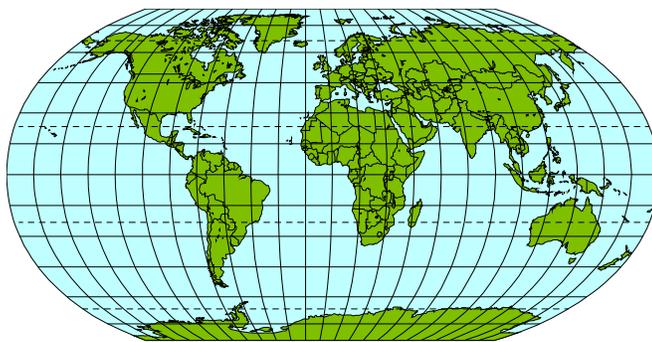
DuBois spoke at the Association of the U.S. Army convention in Washington recently.

The BRAC process has become an important part of the military's transformation efforts, he said, as the Pentagon tries to eliminate excess capacity and infrastructure and free up funds for those installations that will be vital to the war on terrorism and future warfighting efforts.

"The secretary of defense promised the Congress of the United States that he would rearrange his overseas footprint before he began to rearrange his domestic footprint," DuBois said during his briefing on installations and transformation.

DuBois said the reason behind the secretary's decision to focus on its "overseas footprint" is because the terrorism threat to the United States is "clearly more global than ever before."

"Secretary Rumsfeld knows that in order to fight and deter that global threat, we've got to have a repositioning of our global footprint," he said.



Describing the global basing issue facing the Pentagon as "very, very" crucial, DuBois noted the 2004 budget was "reprioritized" to shift and realign millions of dollars in military construction funds away from what he calls "nonenduring" overseas bases — those bases where the military's long-term presence is questionable — to installations

that will fulfill critical operational, logistical or training mission requirements, which he said are "key to (the U.S.) global basing posture."

Using Germany as an example, DuBois said that in fiscal 2003 and 2004, the Pentagon canceled 26 military construction projects worth some \$280 million. That money was then funneled to 18 new projects in the United States.

"For anyone in the media or anyone in Congress to suggest that we didn't make some serious decisions or move some serious money is incorrect," he said.

DuBois also noted that in South Korea, construction money was diverted from nonenduring installations there to Camp Humphries, a base he said will be "central" to future U.S. strategy.

President Bush's \$87 billion supplemental spending request included \$412 million for military construction, DuBois said, with the Army slated for \$120 million to replace and rebuild "aged or almost nonexistent" infrastructure for deployed U.S. soldiers.

AFPC contact center changes toll-free telephone number

The Air Force's contact center at the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph AFB has changed its toll-free number.

In order to provide better service, according to Master Sgt. David Melnick, contact center systems superintendent, a number of contact centers have been tied into the new number, 1 (800) 616-3775.

The commercial number (210) 565-5000 and DSN number 665-5000 have not changed.

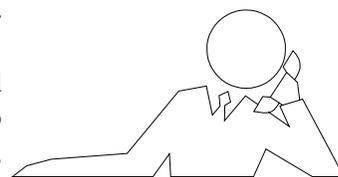
The most common calls to the contact center from members of the Air Force retiree community have been about Combat Related Special Compensation and the Korean War Service Medal. The staff has also answered questions and referred calls about: ID card issuing agencies; how to make changes in records; awards and decorations;

and benefits and entitlements of retirees and family members.

Customers may also send an e-mail message to contact.center@randolph.af.mil, and should expect an answer within a couple of days. Customers may also log onto the contact center's home page available at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil and review the frequently asked questions section, submit a help request directly to the contact center, or chat live with a contact center agent.

The contact center is now available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Retirees are reminded to direct their questions to the agency concerned whenever possible. For example, retirees and SBP annuitants with pay problems should call the Defense Finance and Accounting Service toll free number, 1 (800) 321-1080.



Deadline nears for DeCA scholarship program

The application window for the 2004 Scholarships for Military Children program, for the children of active duty, retired and Guard and Reserve members, extends through Feb. 18.

Now in its fourth year, the program, operated by the Defense Commissary Agency, has awarded nearly \$2.5 million in scholarships to some 1,500 children of U.S. service members and retirees.

The goal, according to Kay Kennedy, chief of corporate communications for the Defense Commissary Agency, is to award at least one scholarship at every commissary location, depending on the number of qualified applicants and funding.

Funding comes from manufacturers and suppliers whose products are sold at military commissaries, Kennedy explained. In addition, the Fisher House Foundation is underwriting the program's administrative costs.

For more information about the scholarship program and application procedures, visit the program's Web site: <http://www.militaryscholar.org/> or your nearest commissary.

MOAA offers interest-free loans for undergraduate study

More than 1,200 students will receive \$3,750 each in interest-free loans from the Military Officers Association of America's (MOAA) Scholarship Fund for the 2004-2005 school year. Of those, about 240 students will be first-time recipients.

Students can apply online at MOAA's web site for the loans, which are awarded annually for up to five years of undergraduate study. Applicants must be children of MOAA members or enlisted service members and be under the age of 24.

Qualified students with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale are considered for selection based on their scholastic ability, potential, character qualities, participation in extracurricular and community activities, as well as financial need.

In addition to the 1,200 interest-free loans, MOAA will award 19 grants to college seniors who are current loan recipients in the program, 10 grants to children of deceased retired officers, and 15 grants to children whose military parent died in active service. Six of the 19 senior grants will be for \$5,000 and the others will be \$3,750 each. Also,



438 students will receive \$500 Designated Scholar grants in addition to their interest-free loan.

For MOAA Scholarship Fund applications for the 2004-2005 school year, please visit MOAA's web site at www.MOAA.org/education or e-mail the organization at edassist@MOAA.org. Individuals without computer can call MOAA's Member Service Center at 1-800-245-8762.

Include cover sheets with faxed prescriptions to TMOP

Extra care is needed by providers who fax prescriptions to the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP).

According to TRICARE officials, many prescription pads used by providers contain embedded watermarks to prevent fraud and forgery. When prescriptions written on watermarked pads are faxed to TMOP, the watermarked area of the copy received at TMOP is black and unreadable or totally blank.

TRICARE is spreading the word among its customers to encourage providers to fax a cover sheet containing the provider's name and telephone number along with every prescription. This will allow TMOP to contact a provider when an unreadable watermarked prescription is received.

Officials noted that TMOP receives thousands of faxes daily and will make every attempt to track down providers as long as they have contact information. The cover sheet is the best possible way to provide the needed contact information and, as a result, prevent unnecessary delays in providing services to TMOP beneficiaries.

TMOP related information is available online at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/tmop.cfm>.

Retired Military Golf Classic on tap

The 21st annual National Retired Military Golf Classic will be held in Myrtle Beach, S.C., June 1-5, 2004. The classic will be played on five different courses at Myrtle Beach Nation and Wildwing Golf Clubs.

Only 864 men and 132 women will be accepted for this event, competing for more than \$125,000 in cash and prizes.

Applications were mailed in December to those on the mailing list. Applications are also available at most military golf courses in the United States. Priority will be given to those who have recently played in the classic. After Feb. 1, 2004, acceptance will be on a first come, first served basis. A waiting list will be established once the classic is full.

For applications, call 1 (800) 255-4763 or write to the National Retired Military Golf Classic, PO Box 3608, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578.

Top DoD official says future bright for most commissaries

To soothe anxiety among service members and their families about reports of the Defense Department closing commissaries, a top DoD official has emphasized that the department strongly supports commissaries as an important benefit of military service.

In an interview at his Pentagon office, John M. Molino said, "The future of the commissary benefit is very sound, very healthy." Molino is deputy undersecretary of defense for military community and family policy, and acting deputy undersecretary of defense for equal opportunity. "The department is committed to maintain a commissary benefit."

Molino said the controversy goes back three years to when, shortly after arriving at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld asked whether the department should be running a chain of grocery stores.

"We did a detailed analysis of whether or not there were other ways to deliver the commissary benefit," Molino said. "The conclusion was that the commissary needs to stay (as) something we do within the Department of Defense, even though it is outside our core competency."

Even though DoD isn't searching for ways to close commissaries, Molino said, realistically, there might be a location that needs to be closed.

DoD doesn't want to close any commissary, but it will



do so if one is draining the system to the point of affecting customer support throughout the system, Molino noted.

For example, DoD closed the commissary at Fort Monroe, Va., several months ago. "It's literally a 10-minute drive to the commissary at Langley Air Force Base, which is much larger, much better stocked and provides a better service," the deputy undersecretary noted.

He noted that when Fort Schafter, Hawaii, was closed, a new commissary opened at Pearl Harbor, which is about a 20-minute drive away.

The void at Fort Schafter was filled when the Army and Air Force Exchange Service opened an exchange market store there, Molino noted. "The people who live on Schafter are able to get the quick milk-and bread-type items they need," he said. "They travel to the Pearl Harbor commissary for the big groceries."

Noting that there are 276 commissaries around the world, Molino said 19 have been put on a "watch list."

"That leaves 257 that are in good shape, operating very well and are not in danger of closing," he said. "We look at every store every year. Those that fall below the criteria for what we would otherwise call a healthy store get put on a watch list."

'Little pink cards' go away as Guard, Reserve get full time commissary benefits

All over America, Guard and Reserve personnel are burning their "little pink cards."

The signing of the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act signaled unlimited shopping privilege for Reserve component members and their families. It also signaled the end of issuing, tracking, and checking off those little pink Commissary Privilege Cards. Previously, Reserve component personnel and their families were allowed 24 commissary shopping days per calendar year, and they had to have their privilege cards initialed at the commissary each day they shopped.

Approximately 1.2 million Guard and Reserve personnel and their authorized family members can now save an average of 32 percent or more over commercial grocery prices – every day if they wish. A family of four can save more than \$2,700 per year with regular commissary shopping.

Members of the Retired Reserve are also included in the extended benefit, adding about another 200,000 shoppers. These "gray area retirees" were not formerly entitled to un-

limited commissary shopping until they reached age 60.

"Although we've recently seen many Guard and Reserve members with unlimited privileges due to activation," said DeCA Consumer Advocate Bonita Moffett, "the extra traffic does not really impact the ability of commissaries to handle increased customer shopping. The average customer generally only shops twice a month, and since they are spread out all over the country the impact is very low at any one commissary." DeCA operates about 275 commissaries worldwide.

"The major benefit for Guard and Reserve members now is the convenience of being able to make a quick stop at the commissary to buy a loaf of bread and a gallon of milk, or diapers and baby food, without worrying about running out of shopping trips for the year," added Moffett.

The extended benefit may not apply worldwide. While Reserve and Guard personnel not on active duty can enjoy unlimited shopping in the United States, Guam or Puerto Rico, many overseas installations are impacted by host nation agreements that limit on-base shopping by non-active-duty personnel. When visiting or living outside the United States or its territories, Guard and Reserve personnel should always check with appropriate installation authorities about the local commissary shopping privilege.

Directory assistance

Air Force Retiree Services Branch – HQ AFPC/DPPTR, 550 C Street West Ste 11, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713; (210) 565-4663. Manages the retiree activities program and supports the Air Force Retiree Council; advises the Air Force retirement community.

* **Air Force Enlisted Foundation, Inc.**, 92 Sunset Lane, Shalimar FL 32579, or call (850) 651-9858 or 651-3766, or toll free (800) 258-1413; the web address is <http://www.afenlistedwidows.org> and the e-mail address is afef@afenlistedfoundation.org.

* **Air Force Village Foundation**, a retirement community for retired officers and their spouses, widow(er)s and elderly family members. Also provides assistance to widow(er)s of Air Force officers. 5100 John D. Ryan Blvd., San Antonio TX 78245-3502, <http://www.airforcevillages.com>; call (210) 677-8989 or (800) 762-1122.

* **The General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation**, 17050 Arnold Dr., Riverside CA 92508, helps indigent widows of Air Force people. The phone number is (909) 697-2099/2000; or toll free 1 (800) 554-5510; <http://www.lemayfoundation.org>.

Arlington National Cemetery – (703) 695-3250/3255, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org>.

Armed Forces Recreation Centers:

Dragon Hill, Korea – 011-822-790-0016, FAX 011-822-792- 0036; <http://www.drangonhilllodge.com>

New Sanno Hotel (Tokyo) – <http://www.thenewsanno.com>.

Hale Koa Hotel, Hawaii – Call 1-800-367-6027; fax is (800) HALE FAX; or write to Armed Forces Recreation Center, 2055 Kalia Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96815-1998.

Shades of Green Resort in Orlando, Fla. – Call (407) 824-3600; fax (407) 824-3665. Toll-free reservations number is 1 (888) 593-2242.

Europe – Chiemsee: 011-49-8051-803172, FAX 011-49-8051-803158; Garmisch: 011-49-8821-79081, FAX 011-49-8821-3942. E-Mail vacation@afrc.garmisch.army.mil; or write Vacation Planning Center, AFRC Europe, Unit 24501, APO 09053. Check the site on the web at <http://www.armymwr.com>.

Armed Forces Retirement Homes:

U.S. Soldiers and Airmen's Home – Contact USSAH Admissions Dept., Washington, D.C. 20317-0001; (800) 422-9988 or (202) 730-3337.

U. S. Naval Home – Resident Affairs Office, U. S. Naval Home; 1800 Beach Drive; Gulfport, MS 39507-1597 (800) 332-3527.

Casualty Assistance – Report the death of an Air Force retiree by calling the local base or HQ AFPC's hotline (877) 353-6807, Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. central. Voice mail available after duty hours.

DEERS Telephone Center – (800) 334-4162 (Calif.); (800) 527-5602 (Alaska and Hawaii); (800) 538-9552 (all other states). Sponsors are responsible for updating DEERS if family status changes.

ID cards – Customers with ID card questions should contact a military personnel office. Call (866) 229-7074 for location of the nearest issuing facility.

Locating Air Force retirees or active duty members – Write a letter to the person you're trying to locate, seal it in a stamped envelope, enter your return address (including retired grade) and send letter and addressee's name, grade and SSN or service number in another envelope to HQ AFPC/MSIMDL, 550 C Street West Ste 50, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4752. For more information, go to: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/IM/AFLocator&FOIA/afwwloc.htm> or call (210) 565-2660.

Logging Reservations – Air Force, (888) 235-6343 (AF-LODGE), after prompt, dial first three digits of base name; Army, (800) 462-7691 (GO-ARMY-1); Navy, (800) 628-9466 (NAVY INN).

National Personnel Records Center – Recorded information is available at (314) 801-0800. Written requests are required to replace lost documents from the NPRC: NPRC/NCMPF-C, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5000. Include full name, retired grade, SSN, and an explanation of exactly what you need. Check the web site at: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>. Dependents' medical records are forwarded to an NPRC depository at 111 Winnebago St., St. Louis, MO 63118-4126 two years after the sponsor retires.

Pay – Retirees may contact the retired pay section at the nearest Air Force base or contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service-Cleveland Center; toll-free (800) 321-1080 or commercial (216) 522-5534. The fax number is (800) 469-6559. SBP annuitants may use the same voice toll-free number but the fax is (800) 982-8459.

Survivor Benefit Plan – Call or visit the military personnel flight at the nearest Air Force installation.

TRICARE – General telephone menu: (303) 676-3400. For other health care information, visit the health benefits advisor at the nearest military installation. The web site is <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

TRICARE Senior Pharmacy – (877) 363-6337.

VA matters – For an NSLI account, contact VA Insurance, P.O. Box 8079, 5000 Wissahickon St., Philadelphia, PA 19101, 1-800-669-8477. For a VGLI account, contact OSGLI, 213 Washington St., Newark, NJ 07102, (201) 802-7676. For VA benefits or disability compensation, claims and for other information, call (800) 827-1000; VA TDD (Telecomm. Device for Deaf) (800) 829-4833. Web site is <http://www.va.gov>.

Social Security – (800) 772-1213 or (410) 965- 8019 or write to: Social Security Administration, Attn: Office of International Operations, 6401 Security Blvd, Baltimore Md 21235. Web site: <http://www.ssa.gov>.

2004 Air Force Assistance Fund drive starts Feb. 16

Air Force retirees are invited annually to join the active duty, Guard and Reserve forces in contributing to the Air Force Assistance Fund (AFAF) campaign, with this year's campaign set for Feb. 16 through May 7.

The AFAF campaign supports the four official charities of the Air Force — the Air Force Aid Society, the Air Force Enlisted Village, the Air Force Village and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation.

Officials note that these organizations provide comfortable and secure retirement environments for indigent Air Force spouses, and provide educational, financial and emergency assistance to active duty and retired members in times of need.

The 2003 AFAF Campaign raised \$5.9 million for the AFAF charities.

The active duty and retired AF community has long benefited from these charities who's return on the investment of contributions and loan repayments enable them to provide more than \$7 in assistance for every \$1 contributed during the annual campaign.

Unfortunately, according to officials, these investments are now renewing at today's greatly reduced rates of return making this and future campaigns extremely important for these organizations to continue their current levels of support after several years of down markets.

Officials, who said the Air Force family has always prided itself on taking care of our own, have made it easy to make a donation to the AFAF drive by simply complet-

ing the form below as soon as possible. Campaign information and links to the AFAF charities are on the worldwide-web at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/votefund.

SBP Notes

Survivor Benefit Plan officials offer the following reminders to members of the military retiree community:

- * The SBP "Paid Up" provision which allows retirees to stop paying premiums after 30 years of premium payment and reaching age 70 does not go into effect until Oct. 1, 2008.

- * In the event of the death of an Air Force retiree, the next of kin should call the Air Force Casualty Assistance Office at toll free (877) 353-6807 and DFAS at (800) 269-5170.

- * A retiree has one year to add a newly acquired spouse if not married on the date of retirement.

- * Remarriage options (increase base amount, terminate coverage, or resume previous coverage) are available when spouse coverage has been suspended. It's important to contact DFAS immediately at (800) 321 1080 upon marriage to ensure the time for change does not expire.

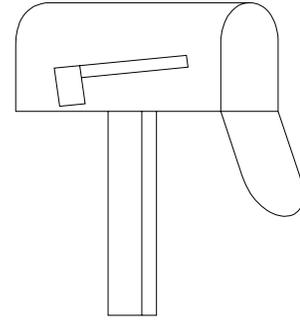
2004 Air Force Assistance Fund			Mail to: Air Force Assistance Fund HQ AFPC/DPSFM 550 C Street West Suite 37 Randolph AFB TX 78150-4739		
Name (last, first, middle initial)	Grade	SSN			
IF CASH, COMPLETE SECTION A IF PDP, COMPLETE SECTION B	B. PDP (Remember, the minimum allotment to any affiliate is \$1 per month) Allotments are effective June 2004	AFV Air Force Village Indigent Officers' Widows 706 \$	Allotment	Months	Total
A. CASH Air Force Village Indigent Officers' Widows (AFV)		\$		X 12 =	\$
Air Force Aid Society (AFAS)		\$		X 12 =	\$
Air Force Enlisted Village (AFEV)		\$		X 12 =	\$
The General and Mrs Curtis E. LeMay Foundation (LeMay)		\$		X 12 =	\$
TOTAL GIFT		\$			TOTAL
		Please Read: I hereby authorize deductions from my monthly retired pay beginning June 2004 for a period of 12 months in the amount shown to the affiliate(s) designated. This allotment will remain in effect for 12 months unless I request to terminate in writing to Defense Finance and Accounting Service - Cleveland Center, ATTN: CODEFR, PO Box 99191, Cleveland OH 44199-1126.		FOR AFO USE ONLY CLASS C ALLOTMENT FOR AFAF CONTRIBUTION EFFECTIVE DATE 010604	
		SIGNATURE	PREPARED BY		

How to change your correspondence address

The **Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel**, is mailed to Air Force retirees and Survivor Benefit Plan annuitants using correspondence addresses supplied by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Cleveland Center (DFAS-CL).

Addresses of non annuitant surviving spouses of Air Force retirees are maintained in a separate data base explained below.

It's important to send the change of address to the correct location to en-



Retirees – Those members in receipt of or entitled to retired pay, including retirees whose pay (part or all), comes from the VA or from Civil Service (because of combined federal service), should send their change of address to:

DFAS
U. S. Military Retirement Pay
P.O. Box 7130
London, KY 40742-7130
Phone: 1 (800)321-1080 or
FAX: 1(800)469-6559

Include your Social Security number and sign your request when mailing or FAXing.

sure the change is made in a timely manner. Please note that the London, KY address below is a contractor that films the written request as a computer image and transmits it to DFAS.

SBP/RSFPP annuitants – Those surviving spouses who are in receipt of or entitled to a Survivor Benefit Plan/Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan annuity (this includes surviving spouses of retirees who were enrolled in SBP but who are receiving DIC in lieu of the SBP, must send a change of address to:

DFAS
U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
P.O. Box 7131
London, KY 40742-7131
Phone: 1(800)321-1080 or
FAX: 1(800)982-8459

If mailing or FAXing, include your Social Security number and that of the sponsor and sign your request.

Non-SBP/RSFPP annuitants — Surviving spouses of retirees who were not enrolled in either the Survivor Benefit Plan/Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan (but who may or may not be receiving a DIC pension from the VA), and who are currently receiving the **Afterburner** in their own name, should mail the new address and include the sponsor's retired grade and SSN to:

HQ AFPC/DPPTTR
550 C Street West Ste 11
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713

Surviving spouses in this category who are not receiving the **Afterburner** in their own name may request to be placed on the list by sending a letter of request to the same address.

DO NOT use this portion as a Change of Address form. See information in the appropriate block above for the correct change of address procedures. Anything else will only delay matters.

HQ AFPC/DPPTTR
550 C STREET WEST STE 11
RANDOLPH AFB TX 78150-4713

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