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Army Chief Discusses Future of Training

By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, June 1, 2011 - Army Chief of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey has put a lot of thought into ways to take the lessons learned during more than nine years of war and apply them to the military's training and education programs.

Dempsey, who spent two years commanding U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command before taking his current post in mid-April, knew it wouldn't be easy to replicate the complexity of the operational environment in the classroom or at home station.

"We cannot expect to capture the imagination of combat-seasoned forces that have been in some of the most complex environments imaginable for almost a decade by sitting them in a classroom and bludgeoning them with PowerPoint slides," he wrote earlier this year in a five-part series in Army magazine about the Army's "Campaign of Learning."

"We must make the 'scrimmage' as hard as the 'game' in both the institutional schoolhouse and at home station," Dempsey wrote.

Speaking in February at the Association of the U.S. Army's Winter Symposium and Exposition in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Dempsey offered a glimpse of what's likely ahead for military leaders.

"The challenge we face is that we have to get ready for an Army that will have a potentially insatiable demand to train and to expand the aperture away from strictly [counterinsurgency] to hybrid threats, full-spectrum operations, maneuver training and all the things that we know can atrophy over time," the general told the audience.

Dempsey told the Senate Armed Services Committee during his Army chief confirmation hearing in March that his challenge is to build on a decade of battlefield experience that's proven the Army to be a courageous, resilient, resolute, inquisitive and adapt-

able force.

"Our challenge will be that these young men and women have had capabilities, authorities and responsibilities as captains that I didn't have as a two-star general -- and I'm not exaggerating a bit when I say that," he told the panel. "And so continuing their development, ... from that point, that much higher entry level than I had, is our challenge."

Dempsey said troops simply won't accept a return to the pre-conflict way of training. "If we were a rubber band and have been stretched over the last 10 years, we can't let ourselves simply contract back to our previous shape, because they won't stand for that," he said.

Making training as challenging as possible to ensure readiness, despite what's expected to be an era of reduced resourcing, is the goal behind the new Army Training Concept. Introduced in the Army's 2010 Posture Statement, it provides the vision of the way ahead for the 2012-2020 modular force.

The idea, Dempsey wrote in Army Magazine, is "to make training more rigorous and relevant by leveraging technology to create challenging training environments for our leaders."

The concept strikes a balance between operational and institutional training requirements and offers different ways to train beyond 2012 that will maintain current capabilities while producing the next generation of agile, ready forces.

A centerpiece of the Army Training Concept is Tradoc's "Training Brain." This blend of capabilities, systems, networks and data repositories directly from the Joint Training Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Operations Integration Center puts soldiers smack in the middle of realistic operational environments.

It "allows us to pull [a] stream of real-world data from current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, declassify it, and use it to build realistic scenarios to support training throughout the Army," Dempsey wrote.

In addition, the Army is using the Training Brain to create videos based on recent battles and operations to make them accessible on the Army Training Network. "Soldiers can use this as a tool to facilitate their own learning, whether they're in a schoolhouse environment, conducting home-station training or even deployed,"

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Dempsey wrote.

Meanwhile, the general said, Training Brain is helping the Army evolve massive, multiplayer online role-playing games. These provide a forum for soldiers and leaders to interact and collaborate using common scenarios in a virtual environment -- not only with soldiers within their own units, but across the Army.

"This enables us to provide realistic and relevant training and learning opportunities at the point of need," Dempsey said, while making training student- rather than instructor-centric.

Dempsey shared the contents of an email he had received from a Tradoc schoolhouse. Captains attending a career course had organized voluntarily into teams so they could compete against one another in an online role-playing game based on a relevant training scenario. The officers, he said, began giving up their lunch periods, coming in early and staying late so they could continue their training experience on their own time.

"This Army training captures the imagination, challenges the participants and allows them to adapt the material to facilitate their learning needs," Dempsey said. It's "a far cry from the death-by-PowerPoint approach with which many of us are all too familiar."

Dempsey offered assurance that Army training will never lose sight of the fundamentals of "move, shoot and communicate." But looking toward the future, he said, leader-development programs must produce leaders who are inquisitive, creative and adaptable.

"It should be clear to all after more than nine years of conflict that the development of adaptive leaders who are comfortable operating in ambiguity and complexity will increasingly be our competitive advantage against future threats to our nation," he said.

With that in mind, Dempsey said he made a series of promises to students in pre-command courses who are preparing to become battalion and brigade commanders and command sergeants major.

"I promise them that the future security environment will never play out exactly the way we've envisioned. History confirms this," he said. "I promise that we will not provide the optimal organizational design nor perfectly design the equipment that they will need when they enter into a future mission. History -- especially recent events -- confirms this as well, although we do our best not to get it too wrong.

"And I promise that the guidance they receive from 'higher headquarters' will always come a little later than needed," he said. "We would be ill-advised to think that we will do much better than our predecessors in that regard.

"What I promise, however -- and this,

too, is confirmed by our history is that it is always the leaders on point who are able to take what we give them, adapt to the environment in which they are placed and accomplish the mission," Dempsey continued. "Leader development becomes job No. 1."

(This the second article in a series about how the Defense Department and military services plan to maintain combat effectiveness and readiness as the current operational tempo begins to decline.)

Army Reserve Seeks to Expand Cooperation Plans

By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service



LILONGWE, Malawi, May 16, 2011 - The after-action reports still are works in progress after a successful MEDREACH 11 medical humanitarian assistance exercise that wrapped up here

May 13, but the Army Reserve already is exploring ways to expand its participation in theater security cooperation engagements in Africa and elsewhere.

Nearly half of the participants in U.S. Army Africa's first MEDREACH exercise, which began May 3, were Army reservists, most of them assigned to the Boston-based 399th Combat Support Hospital. Working alongside the Illinois National Guard's 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, which provided command and control for the exercise, and small teams of Air Force Reserve dentists and active-duty Army ophthalmologists, they provided the bulk of the manpower to teach medical skills to Malawi Defense Force medics and provide medical and dental treatments at three outreach clinics during the exercise.

Additional Army Reserve soldiers contributed civil affairs and military information support operations expertise to the mission.

These theater cooperation engagements support the broader U.S. strategy in the region, explained J.T. Ice, political-military advisor at the U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe.

MEDREACH 11 promoted two specific U.S. Mission Malawi goals for the Malawi Defense Force, he said. It increased its capacity to conduct peacekeeping operations on the African continent, and it helped Malawi become a stronger partner in responding to humanitarian assistance and disaster response crises.

The exercise is an example of the "whole of government" approach to U.S. foreign policy objectives, with the military dovetailing with its State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development and Peace Corps counterparts to support common goals, Ice said.

"Working the interagency is the future. We have gotten our marching orders that the different parts of government will -- not may -- work together on these issues," he said. "And here at the U.S. mission in Malawi, the country team understands that it takes different parts of government working together on these issues."

Army Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz, chief of the Army Reserve, said he wants to see his troops play a bigger part in these engagements, particularly as wartime demands in Iraq and Afghanistan subside. The Army Reserve provides many of the enabling capabilities the active component has come to rely on, particularly in areas such as civil affairs, transportation and engineering. Stultz said he sees no end to demand for these capabilities, even after the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan conclude.

He cited "pent-up demand" among U.S. Africa Command and other geographic commands that he said would love to tap into Army Reserve capabilities to support more theater engagement activities such as MEDREACH 11.

The Army Reserve already supports many of these efforts: medical support and engineering missions in Central America and the Caribbean as well as Africa, and aboard U.S. Southern Command's Continuing Promise and U.S. Pacific Command's Pacific Partnership medical missions.

Stultz said combatant commanders get excited when he suggests contributing additional Army Reserve capabilities to enhance these activities.

"What if in the future -- when these units are in the [Army Force Generation] model and when there is no requirement for them in Iraq and Afghanistan -- I could give you these units for 90 days at a time?" he asks, rather than the current two or three weeks.

"Their eyes light up," he told American Forces Press Service. "They say, 'Now you are talking about really expanding our horizons as far as engagement strategy, if we were able to build a strategy around that capability.'"

The approach could be used to fine-tune reserve-component capabilities, he said, while putting no additional burden on the active force.

Army Lt. Col. Klemens "Van" Schmidt is on the leading edge of a division being established to help in making Stultz's vision a reality.

"I am the guy trying to figure out business practices for the Army Reserve, or to take all those pre-existing business practices we have and then try to put it into one well-working mechanism," he said.

With two years of experience as U.S. Africa Command's deputy for humanitarian assistance and program manager for military and civic assistance under his belt, Schmidt

said the Army Reserve is particularly well-suited to support some of the operations for which he has helped to lay groundwork. Its structure is heavy with “enablers” – the combat support and combat service support capabilities as important to these engagements as to combat operations, he noted.

This blend of capabilities is ideal for many theater engagement missions such as MEDREACH 11, said Navy Cmdr. Jonathan Adams, exercise planner for Africom. Many of the participants are doctors, nurses and other medical professionals in their civilian careers, and also have operational experience from deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

“So they bring an added level of professionalism and expertise in these specific areas we are dealing with,” he said.

But beyond that, the reserve component has a manpower pool able to support the Africom exercise program.

“The biggest thing is that they are available,” Adams said. “The [active] Army is stretched very thin, but we want to have engagement. So they are a very useful, viable source of manpower to do these exercises.”

As they contribute needed capabilities in exercises such as MEDREACH 11, Schmidt said, they realize an often-overlooked payoff in terms of military occupational skills training. Working with their Malawi military counterparts, participants operated in austere environments not found in the United States, and exposure to diseases and challenges not seen at home, he explained.

Schmidt emphasized the importance of working with the host nation during missions such as MEDREACH 11 to ensure that what’s started can be sustained.

“Just going to one location at one time and giving 30 days of vitamins is just that – 30 days of vitamins. These episodic, one-time events are only one-time events,” he said. “You want to have something more sustainable.”

With an expanded role in security cooperation and international engagements, the Army Reserve can help to provide that sustainable support, Schmidt said. “We get wonderful experience” from even short, one-time engagements, he said. “But if we can get another group to come in a year later, six months later, that would be wonderful.”

Reoccurring engagements help build relationships and credibility about U.S. intentions in Africa, he said. Ultimately, Schmidt said, that’s the foundation for strong partnerships needed to address regional challenges, whether natural disasters or enemy threats.

Meanwhile, Stultz noted another consideration in tapping Army reservists to support these engagements: the troops themselves. He’s convinced that after playing key roles in an operational reserve, they’ll

never be satisfied reverting to their long-abandoned “weekend warrior” status.

“We have created an environment and culture that [the soldiers] want to be part of and that they feel good about,” he said. “We have Army Reservists [for whom] two weeks at home station ain’t gonna cut it anymore,” agreed Schmidt. “They want to go out and do something exciting, particularly the ones who have been deployed. They have seen the goodness they can do, and they want to continue to do that.

“And we want them to continue to do that,” he continued, “because A, it retains them, and B, it is good for their [specialty] skills – the training they get in those austere places.”

Army Spc. Brian Zimmerman, a member of the Army Reserve’s 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion in Syracuse, N.Y., said he jumped at the opportunity to participate in MEDREACH 11 and would welcome more, longer engagements.

“It’s meaningful, and I can’t overstate the experience we’ve gotten from this,” he said, shaking hands with Malawian civilians as they filed from a tent, mosquito nets in hand, following a class in malaria prevention. “We are doing something. We are helping. I wish we could be here longer, because the work we are doing here really matters.”

Gates Says Guard, Reserve Roles Need Examining

By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service



FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan, June 6, 2011 - The Defense Department is taking a look at the roles of the National Guard and reserve components, Defense

Secretary Robert M. Gates said here today.

Gates spoke to the men and women of Task Force Currahee, a unit built around the 101st Airborne Division’s 4th Brigade, and based in Paktika province.

The secretary thanked the soldiers for their service during a town hall meeting and took questions. One soldier asked about the future of the reserve components.

Gates said he has been concerned about the Guard and reserves since he took office in 2006. “One of my concerns when I took the job was my concern that after 9/11, we pulled a kind of bait and switch on the National Guard,” he said.

Since World War II, the National Guard always had been a strategic reserve, and those signing up for service generally trained one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer. They understood they

would be called up for national disasters or great national crises. Instead, they “found themselves ultimately being deployed for 15 months in the field,” the secretary said.

Since then, of course, the reality is that everyone who has joined the Guard and reserve has known they were going in to the fight, he said.

But this is an issue for reservists. The department is asking what are the right roles for the Guard and reserve going forward, Gates said.

One suggestion is that the Guard be divided into a strategic reserve and an operational reserve, with each group trained, paid and equipped differently, the secretary said.

Another suggestion calls for moving more of the Army’s heavy infantry brigade combat teams into the National Guard.

“These are questions we are looking at, but we need to do some hard thinking,” he said, “because we could not have done what we did in Iraq and do what we’re doing here in Afghanistan without the operational engagement of the Guard.”

Whatever happens, the Guard is going to continue to have an operational role, Gates said. “How much of the Guard that involves, and how we situate the Guard and reserve going forward is still a question everybody is looking at,” he said.

Officials Suggest New Role for More Capable Reserve Force

By Cheryl Pellerin, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, June 3, 2011 - Capabilities gained from a decade of combat have transformed military reserve components into a full-spectrum operational force that should be integrated into the

active fighting force, a defense official said today.

Paul Patrick, deputy assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs for readiness training and mobilization, briefed an audience here on the Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component, approved by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates on April 27.

The report calls on the Defense Department to institutionalize experiences and integration that has occurred among the National Guard and reserves over the last 10 years. After operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are over, Patrick said.

The reserve components study was a product of the Pentagon’s Quadrennial Defense Review, completed last year. The review called for a comprehensive look at the

roles of the National Guard and reserves, and the balance between active and reserve forces.

Dennis M. McCarthy, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, and Marine Corps Gen. James E. Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were co-chairs in the review.

"The 21st century will require the United States to maintain an array of forces that can consistently win across the full spectrum of military operations on a global scale," McCarthy and Cartwright wrote in the study foreword.

"These forces must be augmented by an accessible and ready pool of reinforcing and complementary capabilities, some of which will reside in our reserve components," they added, noting that "the policies and practices necessary to use the National Guard and reserve as the report suggests have not been fully institutionalized."

At the briefing, Robert Smiley, principal deputy for readiness training and mobilization in the office of the assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, said 24 DOD agencies participated in the study, which offered seven suggestions for best use of the part-time military force.

In its current role -- as units, teams and individuals -- the reserve component participates in overseas conflicts, defends the homeland against external attacks and supports civil authorities in response to attacks or natural disasters.

In major combat operations it augments and reinforces the national effort with combat and support forces, supports combatant commanders worldwide and supports the efforts of the military services to preserve the all-volunteer force.

According to the report, several options exist for rebalancing capabilities in the total military force.

These include relying on the reserve component when building force structure to avoid shortfalls or expand capacity, assigning some recurring operational missions to reserve component units, and establishing long-term relationships between specific guard or reserve units and individual combatant commands.

"If you have the same people come back to the same well several times, we think that works out better, and this long-term relationship we think is a good deal," Smiley said.

"[Intelligence] people do that now," he added. "A lot of [reserve] folks work on intel things, and the intel folks see the same people over and over again. It's a good idea to build these relationships."

Other options include establishing national or regional reserve units staffed with people who are willing to serve on active duty more often or for longer periods than usual based on individual missions, and us-

ing reservists to respond to emerging needs like cyber defense.

"How do I capture [an] engineer from Microsoft and say to him, 'You don't have to join the military all the time, but we need your expertise for this requirement?'" Smiley asked.

"What can we do in the reserves?" he continued. "How do we recruit that person, how do we retain that person, and what's the proper way to compensate that person?"

The report also suggested integrating active and reserve forces into blended units, and assigning some institutional support tasks -- recruiting, organizing, supplying, equipping, training and others -- to reserve-component units, teams or individuals.

Without employing the Guard and reserves, the report says, "the United States cannot continue to remain engaged globally, given DOD's current force structure."

Army to Inactivate Accessions Command; Recruiting and Cadet Commands Align with TRADOC

From a Department of Defense Media Release



WASHINGTON, - The Army Accessions Command will inactivate by the end of fiscal 2012 as part of the Department of Defense and Army efficiency reviews.

The decision is a result of a comprehensive study to develop appropriate options for the alignment of Accessions Command and other commands that fulfill human resource functions. The decision will streamline the Army's accessioning process and produce savings by de-layering the command structure without increasing the risk to the Army.

In his memorandum to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of the Army John McHugh outlined five decisions which include inactivating Army Accessions Command, realigning Army Recruiting Command and Cadet Command under the Army Training and Doctrine Command, and continuing to align Human Resources Command under the deputy chief of staff, G-1.

Over the next year to 18 months this inactivation is expected to create economic savings through manpower reductions, including the elimination of two general officer and 65 other military positions, approximately 130 civilian positions, and 290 contractor man-years.

This action is not related to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure reduction-in-force notices being given to the residual U.S. Army Armor Center and School civilian

employees at Fort Knox, Ky.

Within 60 days of the April 19, 2011, directive, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower & Reserve Affairs (ASA M&RA), Thomas Lamont, will present McHugh a phased implementation plan addressing issues associated with the inactivation of Accessions Command. The realignment calls for the establishment of an Army Marketing and Research Group (for national and corporate marketing and research) as a field operating agency to ASA M&RA in the Military District of Washington.

Additionally, the Accessions Support Brigade will be retained and aligned to the Army Marketing and Research Group as a direct reporting unit. It will remain at Fort Knox.

Accessions Command was activated at Fort Monroe, Va., on Feb. 15, 2002. It was originally chartered to better align accessioning and initial entry training by subordinating Recruiting Command, Cadet Command and initial entry training (IET) organizations under a single headquarters. The IET organizations were removed from Accessions Command after a few years.

Deadline for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay Extended

From a Department of Defense Media Release



WASHINGTON - The deadline for eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP) has been extended to Oct. 21, 2011, allowing those eligible more time to apply for the benefits they've earned under the program guidelines.

The deadline extension is included in Continuing Resolution H.R. 1473, signed by President Obama April 15, 2011, providing funding for federal government operations through Oct. 21, 2011.

The RSLSP was established to compensate for the hardships military members encountered when their service was involuntarily extended under Stop Loss Authority between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible members or their beneficiaries may submit a claim to their respective military service in order to receive the benefit of \$500 for each full or partial month served in a Stop Loss status.

When RSLSP began on Oct. 21, 2009, the services estimated 145,000 service members, veterans and beneficiaries were eligible for this benefit. Because the majority of those eligible had separated from the military, the services have engaged in extensive

and persistent outreach efforts over the past 18 months. Outreach efforts including direct mail and engaging military and veteran service organizations, social networks and media outlets, will continue through Oct. 21, 2011.

To apply, or for more information on RSLSP, including submission requirements and service-specific links, go to <http://www.defense.gov/stoploss>.

DOD Joins Effort to Promote Healthy Habits in Children

By Elaine Sanchez, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, June 9, 2011 - The Defense Department has joined a national initiative aimed at ensuring the nation's youngest children, including children from military families, get off to a healthy start.

Speaking from a child care center here yesterday, First Lady Michelle Obama, accompanied by Marine Corps Gen. James E. Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, unveiled the "Let's Move!" child care initiative for parents and providers, which includes standards for healthy eating, physical activity and screen time.

The Defense Department is among the first to adopt these standards, Obama said, noting that DOD serves more than 200,000 children in its child care facilities each day.

The Defense Department is committed to promoting healthy habits among military families, Barbara Thompson, director of the Pentagon's office of family policy, children and youth, said.

"The Defense Department is very proud to be one of the first to initiate nutrition, screen time and physical activity standards in child care settings," she said. "This first step is part of a larger strategy to improve a family's desire for improved health and wellness."

By introducing healthy habits early on, "child care facilities and home-based providers can be a real building block for an entire generation of healthy kids," the first lady said, noting more than half of the nation's children under age 5 are in some type of child care arrangement.

The early years are critical, she added, since obesity rates among children ages 2 to 5 have doubled in recent decades, and children as young as age 3 are showing warning signs of heart disease.

"Let's Move!" participants will be given a five-step healthy habits checklist, Obama said, which includes:

-- One to two hours of physical activity throughout the day, including outside play

when possible;

-- No screen time for children under age 2. For children ages 2 and up, limit screen time to no more than 30 minutes per week during child care, and work with parents and caregivers to ensure children have no more than one to two hours of quality screen time per day, the amount recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics;

-- Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal, eat meals family-style when possible and no fried foods;

-- Provide access to water during meals and throughout the day, and don't serve sugary drinks. Children ages 2 and up should drink low-fat or nonfat milk and no more than one four-to-six-ounce serving of 100 percent juice per day; and

-- For mothers who want to continue breastfeeding, child care providers should offer their milk to their infants and welcome mothers to breastfeed during the child care day, and support all new parents in their decisions about infant feeding.

"It's as simple as five steps," Obama said. "It's not complicated. It is not costly. It's just a matter of knowledge and implementation."

A few small changes can make a big difference, the first lady noted. "If our kids get into the habit of getting up and playing again, and turning off the TV, and finding other ways to engage themselves other than the computer, ... if they relearn how to do that, that's a good thing."

The first lady encouraged people to visit the "Let's Move!" website at <http://letsmove.gov> or the "Let's Move! Child Care" site at <http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org> for how-to tips and ideas for creating a healthier environment for kids.

DOD Launches Online Career Transition Training for Service Members

From a Department of Defense Media Release



WASHINGTON - The Department of Defense today announced the launch of an online Career Decision Toolkit that will allow service members to self assess transition needs and thoroughly explore an array of transition related subjects such as: career exploration, financial planning for transition, job search success, effective resumes and cover letters, interviewing excellence, and negotiating your ideal compensation.

"The toolkit is customized to a service member's own transition needs and assists them in cataloguing their military skills and experience in a way that helps them effec-

tively communicate their skills to prospective employers," said John R. Campbell, deputy assistant secretary of defense for wounded warrior care and transition policy.

The online toolkit will deliver 24-hour global access to career transition training to service members who are not geographically able to attend Transition Assistance Program (TAP) classes traditionally offered at military installations. The toolkit's online launch also marks the second phase of a major redesign of the Defense Department's main career transition website, and a cornerstone of the transformation of TAP into a blended delivery model that takes advantage of online resources, as well as a virtual classroom settings and platforms to enhance the traditional "brick and mortar" TAP experience that most service members receive.

Originally released in compact disc format last August, the Career Decision Toolkit was developed by the DoD's Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy in collaboration with Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor to assist separating, demobilizing, retiring and wounded service members, and their families, to effectively navigate their course to civilian employment and educational opportunities.

For more information on the online Career Decision Toolkit, visit <http://www.turbotap.org> or contact Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy at 703-428-7649 or warriorcare@osd.mil.

Airlines Revise Policies for Troops' Checked Baggage

By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, June 9, 2011 - Military members traveling on orders on several major U.S. air carriers can check four, and in some cases, five bags without charge based on new policies the airlines instituted in recent days.

Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, United Airlines and Continental Airlines announced the new policies after Army reservists returning from Afghanistan had to pay more than \$2,800 to cover the costs of their fourth checked bags on a Delta flight. Two members of the unit en route to Fort Polk, La., complained of their plight on a YouTube video that went viral.

Delta apologized for the situation and is working with the soldiers individually "to make this situation right for each of them," a Delta spokeswoman said. "We regret that this experience caused these soldiers to feel anything but welcome on their return home," she said. "We honor their service and are grateful for the sacrifices of our

military service members and their families.”

Delta’s new policy allows U.S. service-members traveling on orders to check up to four bags in economy class and five bags in first and business class at no charge, she said. Each bag can weigh up to 70 pounds and measure up to 80 linear inches.

Due to weight and space constraints, travelers on Delta Connection carriers, regardless of their seating class, can check up to four bags without charge.

“We hope these changes to our policies reflect the true respect we hold for our servicemen and women and again demonstrate our appreciation as both a company and as individuals who benefit from the freedom our troops defend,” the spokeswoman said.

Other airlines are following Delta’s lead.

American Airlines is in the process of increasing its baggage policy for military members to check five bags without cost, spokesman Tim Smith reported. “Full implementation of that policy, and further details, should be completed in the next few days,” he said.

One of the checked bags can weigh up to 100 pounds and measure up to 26 linear inches, but others are subject to the regular 50-pound, 62-linear-inch restrictions.

The previous American policy allowed servicemembers to check three bags without cost. “But given the potential confusion, with different military units carrying different amounts of bags depending on their mission, we have elected to proceed with our five-free-bag limit,” Smith said. “We think it just makes good sense and eliminates possible confusion.”

The new policy will apply whether the military members are traveling on official orders or on personal travel, Smith said.

United Airlines and Continental Airlines, which merged last fall, also announced that they will now waive the fee for military personnel traveling on orders to check a fourth bag.

The decision was made, according to spokeswoman Christen David, “in recognition of their sacrifice and service to our country.”

Servicemembers traveling for official business, including deployments, are entitled to receive full reimbursement for reasonable, authorized excess baggage fees, defense officials said.

Army Identifies Net Zero Pilot Installations

From a Department of Defense Media Release



WASHINGTON - The Army announced April 19 the locations identified to be pilot net zero installations. As part of the Army’s

overall effort to conserve precious resources, net zero installations will consume only as much energy or water as they produce and eliminate solid waste to landfills.

The announcement initiates the programmatic environmental analysis and planning process for the Army’s Net Zero Installation Strategy. Specifics for projects and initiatives will be determined through a programmatic environmental analysis which will include public engagement and stakeholder outreach.

“The Army has identified six net zero pilot installations in each of the energy, water, and waste categories and two integrated installations striving towards net zero by 2020. This is a significant step in addressing the Army’s sustainability and energy security challenges,” said Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army for installations, energy and environment, who made the announcement at the opening session of the annual Association of United States Army Installation Command Symposium. “Striving for net zero is operationally necessary, financially prudent, and critical to our mission.”

A net zero energy installation produces as much energy on site as it uses, over the course of a year. The Army’s pilot net zero energy installations are: Fort Detrick, Md.; Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.; Kwajalein Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands; Parks Reserve Forces Training Area, Calif.; Sierra Army Depot, Calif.; West Point, N.Y.

Additionally, the Oregon Army National Guard volunteered to pilot a unique and challenging Net Zero Energy Initiative, which includes all of their installations across the state. This strategy will be included in the environmental analysis.

A net zero water installation limits the consumption of freshwater resources and returns water back to the same watershed so as not to deplete the groundwater and surface water resources of that region in quantity and quality over the course of a year. The pilot net zero water installations are: Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; Camp Rilea, Ore.; Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico; Fort Riley, Kan.; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.; Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa.

A net zero waste installation reduces, reuses, and recovers waste streams, converting them to resource values with zero landfill over the course of a year. The Army’s pilot net zero waste installations are: Fort Detrick, Md.; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.; Fort Polk, La.; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.; U.S. Army Garrison, Grafenwoehr, Germany.

Two installations volunteered to be integrated net zero installations: Fort Bliss, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colo. A net zero installation is comprised of three interrelated components: net zero energy, net zero water, and net zero waste.

Hammack said the installations will become centers of environmental and energy excellence as they participate in the Net Zero Installation Strategy programmatic environmental planning process, showcase best management practices, and demonstrate effective resource management. Further, they will establish a framework of reduction, re-purposing, recycling and composting, energy recovery, and disposal to guide them towards achieving net zero in an environmentally responsible, cost-effective and efficient manner.

As part of the pilot, the installations will also participate in a kick-off meeting in June to receive training and showcase their proposed strategies to achieve net zero. Each installation will participate in monthly conference calls and share experiences and lessons learned in newsletters and military and industry conferences. These installations will also participate in a programmatic environmental analysis and integrated planning process that will inform future decisions regarding impacts to resources throughout the Army’s initiative. Public participation will be an integrated part of the process and part of the environmental planning process.

Three panels made the pilot installation recommendations from the 100 self-nominations (53 energy, 23 water, and 24 waste) received from 60 highly motivated installations managed by the Army National Guard, Army Materiel Command, Installation Management Command, Medical Command, Space and Missile Defense Command and the U.S. Army Reserve Command.

Installations that self-nominated for the pilot Net Zero Installation Initiative, but were not identified are highly encouraged to continue to strive towards net zero learning from the net zero journey of the pilot installations. In fiscal 2014 another 25 installations in each category will be asked to self-nominate to achieving net zero.

“I am amazed at the progress Army installations have already made to reduce energy and water consumption as well as waste generation. We will all monitor the journey these installations embark on to reach the final net zero goal,” Hammack said.

For more information, contact Dave Foster at 703-697-5344.

DOD Makes Progress in Civilian Hiring Reform

By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 18, 2011 - Until very recently, applying for a civilian job at the Defense Department was an exercise in endurance and patience. Applicants

had to navigate through a byzantine federal hiring process and amass thick application packets, then often waited as long as a year for any word on their applications.

Pasquale “Pat” M. Tamburrino Jr., deputy assistant secretary of defense for civilian personnel policy, said the practice left defense offices short of critical skills for extended periods and discouraged the best candidates from even considering federal service.

“If you are going to be in the marketplace, competing for the best and brightest – which is what we want – we want to be the employer of choice,” he said. “And if you make it hard to apply, you are going to lose in the marketplace.”

Committed to attracting the best job candidates, the Defense Department is making good on President Barack Obama’s mandate last year to improve the federal hiring process.

DOD launched its own hiring reform initiative two years ago, and it’s revolutionizing the way the department processes about 250,000 hiring actions a year, Tamburrino said.

The typical timeframe for hiring new employees already has been cut from an average of 155 days to 116. “We’re pretty happy with that, but we are not stopping there,” Tamburrino said. His goal is to reduce that to the administration’s goal of about 80 days.

The broad, 10-step DOD hiring reform initiative covers the full spectrum of the hiring process to make it not only faster, but also simpler, less bureaucratic and more transparent, he explained. It makes applying for a DOD job more in line with what the private sector offers, he added, and ensures hiring managers have the tools they need to advertise and fill vacancies.

It builds a closer partnership between hiring managers and human resources personnel to expedite the hiring process and make it a better experience for everyone involved, Tamburrino said.

For applicants, gone is the burdensome Standard Form 171, the official federal resume that could run 15 to 20 pages. Also gone is the requirement that job-seekers write essays proving they have the proper knowledge, skills and abilities – called KSAs – for the job.

Applications have gone electronic, filed through the Office of Personnel Management’s governmentwide “USAJobs” portal. And once applicants enter their profile into the system, detailing their education, work history and skills, that information propagates all of their other job applications.

After they press “send,” applicants are no longer left wondering if their application has gone into a “black hole,” Tamburrino said. “People are getting feedback when they submit their application,” he said. “They are

getting a response: ‘Your application is in the queue. It has been received by the [human resources] office. It is being processed.’”

Any questions that need to be cleared up are addressed early on to ensure they don’t slow down the process.

DOD’s hiring reform initiative doesn’t stop with the application process. Hiring managers are adopting new, streamlined methods to advertise their positions and interview the best-qualified candidates.

The days of “convoluted vacancy announcements that were almost unique to every individual job we advertised” have fallen by the wayside, Tamburrino said. Now, rather than custom-writing every vacancy announcement, hiring managers are encouraged to use standardized templates that cover basic job functions at the designated occupational series and grade level. Minor edits to those templates ensure they properly describe the particular job being filled.

“We think that makes it go a lot faster,” Tamburrino said. “We are teaching managers how to do structured interviews and how to write better job opportunity announcements.”

Much of that instruction is provided through the new online Hiring Managers Toolkit, which DOD started rolling out about eight months ago and continues to refine. The toolkit offers guides, tip sheets and checklists to help hiring managers better partner with their human resources servicing centers, Tamburrino said.

The toolkit has become the gold standard among federal agencies, receiving raves from OPM and others wanting to adopt it as well.

“We routinely get feedback on that toolkit, that it is one of the most forward-leaning, innovative tools in the federal government,” Tamburrino said. “We are unaware of any other executive agency that has a toolkit with as many tools in it and as many information pieces in it to help hiring managers. ... We think we have a lock on the market.”

Another key to DOD’s hiring reform initiative are the human resources professionals themselves.

“You are responsible for providing the very best in customer service,” Tamburrino tells his HR professionals. “If an organization comes to you seeking advice, you must give clear, plain-language advice on how to address their challenge.”

As subject-matter experts who understand the nuances of sometimes daunting federal hiring regulations and know what it takes to attract and recruit good talent, HR professionals are valuable partners in helping hiring managers navigate the hiring process, he said.

As DOD starts realizing the benefit of its hiring reform initiative, Tamburrino said, he’s seeing a lot of enthusiasm about its

possibilities.

Feedback, garnered through surveys, gives job applicants and hiring managers alike an opportunity to weigh in on the improvements. Tamburrino said it also helps to uncover shortcomings in an effort to further refine the process.

Regardless of how much the process improves, Tamburrino said he never expects to be able to declare “mission accomplished.”

“I don’t think this is ever going to be over,” he said. “This is continuous process improvement, and I don’t think we are ever going to be satisfied with where we are.” In the meantime, Tamburrino said, he’s satisfied with the direction the process is taking DOD’s hiring process.

“It’s timeliness and quality, balanced,” he said. “It’s success for the applicant and success for the manager, balanced.”

These initiatives have eliminated barriers to attracting the broadest, most talented workforce for the department’s work in caring for military members and their families, conducting research, running depots and shipyards, and even developing the next-generation weapons systems, Tamburrino said.

“Where else are you going to do that?” he asked. “We think we are a great place to work, and we give people at every level of experience a great opportunity to do really unique stuff. So we want people to gravitate to us, and we want an ability to really pick out the crown jewels that exist out there in the workforce and say, ‘Come work with us.’”

Ultimately, Tamburrino said, he’d like to see the hiring reform initiative expand its focus to “employment reform.” He describes that as an effort to improve the way the Defense Department manages the careers of the civilian employees it recruits.

“To me, it is a whole lifecycle event,” he said. “Getting you in is just one step.”

DOD Seeks Input From Employers of Guardsmen, Reservists

By Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, June 10, 2011 - Defense Department officials want to hear by July 6 from the civilian employers of reservists and National Guardsmen in a survey intended to measure the impact of service members on the civilian workplace.

Announced in March, the Department of Defense National Survey of Employers will indicate how the past decade of war and the heavy use of reserve-component forces

have affected civilian employers, officials said. It is the first time employers have been the center of such a survey, they added.

"Officials are encouraging all survey recipients who have not yet submitted their responses to do so today to ensure the study captures reliable results," said Beth Sherman, a spokeswoman for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Defense Department agency.

"Based on scheduled follow-up calls to employers invited to participate, the department learned a large portion of employers wanted to complete the survey via hard copy, versus participating online," Sherman said. "July 6 was set to allow ample time for those surveys to be returned, and this deadline affords employers the opportunity to provide comprehensive replies."

DOD officials contacted 80,000 employers of all sizes and industries in every state and territory during March and April to gain insight into the benefits and challenges of employing members of the Guard and reserves. So far, Sherman said, enough surveys have come back to validate the results, but officials hope to hear from as many more employers as possible.

"As surveys continue coming in, the feedback equips DOD to build on the success of the past and chart a mutually beneficial course for the future," Sherman said.

Because Guard and Reserve members make up nearly 50 percent of the military's total strength, Sherman said, feedback from employers is important.

"The Department of Defense wants to learn how we can help sustain the incredible support America's employers have shown our Guard and Reserve members through nearly 10 years of ongoing military operations," she said, "and employer participation in this survey is critical."

Sherman said employers can click on the survey link on the ESGR website to give their feedback on employing members of the Guard and Reserve. Those who want to submit the hard-copy version of the survey must postmark responses by June 30, she added.

Employers who believe they received the survey, but need assistance, should visit the website to learn how they can still participate, Sherman said.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a Department of Defense agency established in 1972 to develop and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service.

ESGR advocates relevant initiatives, recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of applicable laws, and resolves conflict between service members and employers. Paramount to ESGR's mission is encouraging employment of Guardsmen and Reservists who bring integrity, global

perspective and proven leadership to the civilian workforce.

Family Matters Blog: Families Can Connect With Global Support Network

By Elaine Sanchez, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 5, 2011 - Robert L. Gordon III is the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy. In this blog, Mr. Gordon writes about the partnership that helped launch the 2011 Family Resilience Conference and encourages families to engage a worldwide network of support professionals.

By Robert L. Gordon III
Military Community and Family Policy
Last week nearly 2,000 professionals who support family programs gathered in Chicago for the 2011 Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Agriculture Family Resilience Conference.

The conference theme, "Forging the Partnership," acknowledges DOD's close relationship with USDA. They have a number of programs that benefit military families and we've had a robust working relationship with them for more than 25 years.

This is the first co-sponsored conference to integrate the knowledge, experience, and innovation within USDA's Children Youth and Families At Risk program, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, and the Department of Defense's community and family support programs.

This biennial event is a premier professional development opportunity for our world-wide network of military practitioners and their key local partners.

The conference was officially launched when Dr. Catherine E. Woteki, USDA's undersecretary for research, education and economics, and I signed a proclamation to formalize the partnership between the Defense and Agriculture departments to better families' lives.

Sesame Workshop's CEO Jeanette Betancourt provided the opening address for the conference, with some energetic help from Elmo. Attendees chose from more than 200 seminars that covered the full spectrum of family readiness and resilience programs and practices.

I was continually reminded of the passion for military families as I observed the discussions between our attendees and our speakers, expert panels and workshop lead-

ers on promising tools and practices focused on military families.

Your opportunity to join the conversation on Twitter and Facebook continues, even though the conference has concluded. This is an amazing opportunity to engage a worldwide network of family program professionals with your questions, observations and suggestions. I welcome you to take advantage of this opportunity.

In today's complex social environment surrounding military families, it's impossible for DOD to provide families with all the support they need to cope with life challenges without active coordination with civilian communities. To address challenges, the DOD must continue to create partnerships with agencies such as USDA, land-grant universities, and the Cooperative Extension Service in providing joint programs in support of military children, youth and families.

Again, I hope you will join the conversations on Twitter and Facebook. We look forward to hearing from you! Thank you.

Families Can Access Military Child Guide

By Elaine Sanchez, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 24, 2011 - This blog is reprinted from the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury website. - Elaine Sanchez

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury has developed a military child resource for parents, other family members and health care providers.

The "Children of Military Service Members Resource Guide" is a quick-reference tool that addresses the mental and emotional well-being of military children.

Whether concerns are associated with deployment, rehabilitation or reintegration, all can be challenging for the entire family unit, especially children. The resource guide is one way to help recognize and respond to the psychological and emotional health needs of children of military families.

Age-appropriate resources listed in the guide include books, films, websites and social media support groups on topics such as deployment, homecoming, grief, mental and emotional health, and moving.

One of the resources listed under mental and emotional health is the Sesame Workshop's Talk, Listen, Connect initiative, intended for preschool-age children. This bilingual, multimedia initiative guides families through multiple challenges, such as deployments, homecomings and changes that occur when a parent comes home.

Click on the links below to learn more about each one:

For more information, download a copy of the guide today. If you can't find what you need or are looking for other types of resources related to psychological health or TBI, contact the DCoE Outreach Center and speak with a trained health resource consultant at 866-966-1020, email resources@dcoeoutreach.org or live chat through the DCoE website.

New Tricare Program Offers Coverage for Young Adults Under 26

From a Department of Defense Media Release



WASHINGTON - DoD announced today the Tricare Young Adult (TYA) program is now open for enrollment with coverage beginning May 1, 2011.

Military dependents under 26, unmarried, and not eligible for their own employer-sponsored health care coverage may be qualified to purchase TYA, which offers Tricare Standard coverage, for monthly premiums of \$186, as long as their sponsor is still eligible for Tricare. Those eligible for TYA who have been saving receipts since Jan. 1, 2011, in anticipation of the new program, can also pay all premiums back to January to purchase coverage retroactively.

Beneficiaries can find out where to send their form and payment by filling out the simple profile at <http://www.tricare.mil> to get information tailored to their specific location. Once the initial three-month fee is made, monthly premiums must be paid in advance through automated electronic payment.

When the application is processed, Tricare coverage will begin the first day of the following month. However, since TYA was "fast-tracked" to begin enrollment as soon as systems changes, forms, premiums and other rules governing the program were approved and in place, a short term waiver will allow coverage back to May 1, 2011, as long as enrollment forms and payment are received (not postmarked) by the regional contractor prior to May 31, 2011.

After getting a welcome letter and enrollment card, dependents and their sponsor should visit uniformed services identification (ID) card issuing facility to obtain a dependent ID card. This card will identify eligibility for health care, prescriptions and access to military installations for the dependent. Nearby ID card facilities can be found through a link at <http://www.tricare.mil/tya>.

A Prime benefit will be available later

this year. To get e-alerts on TYA and other Tricare news, sign up at <http://www.tricare.mil/subscriptions>.

A complete telephone list of regional healthcare support contractors can be found at <http://www.tricare.mil/tya>.

Need for Healthy Diet Hits Home for Blogger

By Lisa Daniel, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 16, 2011 - Guest blogger Lisa Daniel is Elaine Sanchez's colleague at American Forces Press Service. - Elaine Sanchez

Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, the Army's deputy chief of staff for personnel, appeared on Capitol Hill earlier this spring along with other service leaders to report on the military's state of readiness, including the physical health of the troops. The news mostly was good (see my article "Caring for People Aids Readiness, Official Says").

Despite 10 years of war, recruiting, retention and morale remain strong. But Bostick's assessment came with a warning of a troubling trend. The obesity crisis sweeping America has gone beyond health problems for individuals to threatening our nation's military readiness. That's because fewer than 30 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds are eligible to serve because they can't meet physical or educational requirements, Bostick said.

A big reason for that: one in five young people are overweight, compared to one in 20 in the 1960s, he said.

"As a nation, together, we must continue to address these concerns," he said. Bostick is not the first leader to sound alarms over America's obesity problem. First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign has brought the issue into the national spotlight, as well as publicity from doctors, dieticians and others who share their concerns with the media.

There is no shortage of resources aimed at helping people maintain a healthy weight. Many volumes have been written on the values of counting calories -- or, more recently, counting carbohydrates -- and maintaining regular exercise. Weight loss clinics make millions of dollars by helping people manage their food, drink and exercise.

Even with all this, we remain a nation overweight. Unfortunately, knowledge of a problem isn't always enough to effect change. Sometimes it takes an emergency.

My family discovered this in January when my 7-year-old daughter was diagnosed with Type 1, or "juvenile," diabetes. Unlike Type II diabetes, or "adult-onset" that can

be caused by obesity, Type I is an autoimmune disease that destroys the pancreas' ability to produce insulin. Natalie was not overweight; as she lamented in the hospital, she eats healthier than many children her age.

Despite their different causes and treatment -- Type I still requires insulin shots throughout the day, whereas Type II often can be controlled by diet, exercise or oral medication -- both require a highly regimented accounting of all carbohydrate and sugar intake, as well as consideration for how much energy is spent in activities. In fact, for today's Type I diabetics, doctors recommend each insulin dose be based on what the child plans to eat and drink, as it is given before meals.

That amount of planning and structure scared me to death. How would our busy and chaotic family ever slow down enough to make it work? How would my daughter hold up against treats being distributed regularly at school, sports, Scouts and play dates? As I said only half-jokingly to the hospital staff who spent days training my family on diabetes management, if I could follow this much dietary structure, I'd be thin.

The answer is, we had to make it work because diabetes is a matter of life and death. I can't say it's been easy -- or that I've had any significant weight loss -- but I am writing to tell you that this kind of diet regimen can be done, and my daughter is proof of it. Her diabetes is well under control and our family is better off for this new health focus -- careful monitoring of carbs and sugar, fewer restaurant meals, and eating healthy even when those around you aren't.

As Gen. Bostick observed, it will be up to all of us, as a nation, to create a culture where future generations are as healthy as those before them. Such changes start at home, but can easily multiply. We owe it not just to our own families, but to the nation. For more on this topic visit: MilitaryOneSource Healthy Meal Planning, CDC Diabetes Fact Sheet or the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line. For more family-related posts like this one, visit Family Matters Blog or check out Family Matters on Facebook and Twitter.

Family Matters Blog: Your Voice Matters

By Robert L. Gordon III
Military Community and Family Policy



WASHINGTON, June 10, 2011 - Robert L. Gordon III is the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy.

Military spouses, you talked.

We listened.

We asked you to share your challenges with trying to maintain or even launch a career in fields requiring licenses or certifications. We brought your powerful words to state lawmakers which prompted them to take action. So far this year, they have proposed 15 state bills to improve the portability of military spouse careers!

Here are just a few excerpts from the more than 190 responses we received from military spouses:

"I gave up education as a profession because of all that was involved in obtaining licensure with each move. It was a difficult decision."

"I must complete a 3,000 hour internship within a 3-year period before I can qualify to take the (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) exam. The soonest I could sit for the exam is after 2 years of starting the internship. My husband's job requires him to move about every 2-3 years."

"Then there is the hassle of having to keep up with all of the different state licenses ... do I renew or let it lapse, what if we move back there. It's just one more thing to have to juggle."

As you can see, your important words are critical to helping us understand the issues and challenges you're facing. We are about to start another round of engagement with the states on the issue of military spouse employment, so once again, I need your valuable input.

Have you shared your experiences yet? Are we accurately addressing your employment and licensure concerns? What else do we need to know? Tell us what needs to change. Please join the conversation and be heard.

You are part of an adaptable, resilient, educated and dedicated work force, but barriers to transferring licenses from state to state are extremely challenging for frequently moving spouses. This process is time-consuming, cumbersome and expensive because the process varies from state to state. You deserve every opportunity to choose and pursue a career that is personally and professionally rewarding. Thank you, and let's keep moving forward together to change the system!

Reminder!

Last week, I told you about a "Hiring Our Heroes" hiring fair happening July 10 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Sony Pictures Studios in Los Angeles. This fair is designed exclusively to connect both veterans and military spouses to job opportunities with nearly 200 Fortune 500 companies. Already, 100 spouses and 500 veterans have signed up, and slots are going fast -- only 500 spouses and 1000 veterans will be permitted to attend.

Registration is first-come, first served, so don't miss your chance! Register here.

Select "Military Spouse Registration" in the drop-down menu. It is highly recommended that those interested in attending register by June 13.

Military spouses from the active, National Guard, and Reserve ranks from all services, including the Coast Guard, are eligible to attend this event. Admission is free.

Participants should bring at least 30 copies of their resumes. If you do not have a resume, visit your local installation family center or call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647 and ask to speak to a spouse career consultant who can assist you with writing yours.

The U.S. and Los Angeles Chambers of Commerce, in cooperation with the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor, are co-hosting this event.

I'll be at the fair and will look forward to meeting you

Lynn Cites Progress in DOD, VA Partnership

By Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 18, 2011

- The partnership to ensure seamless transitions for wounded warriors from military to Veterans Affairs medical care has made significant progress, but work remains to be done, Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III said here today.

In testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, Lynn and Deputy Veterans Affairs Secretary W. Scott Gould laid out their goals and achievements to show the progress of the partnership, established four years ago.

"The professionalism and commitment of the staff in both departments is helping make [seamless transition] a reality," Lynn told the committee. "We've reached a historic level of cooperation between the departments."

A modernized disability evaluation system is one of the vital tools to create seamless transitions, Lynn said, noting that the former system remained relatively unchanged for decades.

The new Integrated Disability Evaluation System, which DOD and VA developed, serves more service members, Lynn said, and full adoption of the new system, expected to be in place by year's end, is the partnership's top priority.

In the new system, service members will get a single set of physical disability exams based on VA medical protocol, and processing will be done simultaneously by DOD and VA. "This will create more consistent evaluations and a more orderly

experience for service members and their families," Lynn told the committee.

Also, he said, service members will continue to receive their full pay, allowances, compensation, medical base support care and benefits under the new system, which "largely eliminates the benefits gap" under the former system. The new evaluation system is faster and more fair, and it's expected to cut processing time substantially, he added. Processing time now is down to 400 days, compared to 540 days under the former system, he said.

"It has not reached [our] goal of processing in less than 300 days," he acknowledged. "We have further to go, but we don't plan to stop there."

Lynn noted that as DOD and VA work together toward a common electronic health records system, they're collaborating on a number of other fronts.

"Among the many current systems that exchange data to varying degrees, DOD and VA have created a service called the "Blue Button" that will allow beneficiaries to safely and securely access personal health data at TRICARE Online," he said. To support the most severely wounded and injured, he added, the large military medical centers provide scanned records and radiology images for patients transferring from to VA polytrauma rehabilitation centers.

"But to create a truly integrated electronic health record," Lynn said, "DOD and VA have agreed to implement a joint common platform that has compatible data and services, joint data centers, common interface standards and a common presentation format."

It's an ambitious program, but one with great potential benefits, Lynn said. Noting the effort required in developing any large-scale information technology system, especially an interoperable system across two major federal departments, he said DOD and VA officials are observing lessons from other successful large joint IT systems. "We plan to use those lessons to lead us to the best possible outcome," he said.

The achievements of the DOD-VA partnership so far cannot be overstated, Lynn said, and the work that remains cannot be underestimated.

"Taking care of our wounded, ill and injured service members is one of the highest priorities for the department, the service secretaries, and the service chiefs," Lynn told the committee, noting that Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has made it clear that "other than the wars themselves, we have no higher priority."

Southeast Youth, Leadership, Education and Development Summit



In October 2006, Army Reserve (AR) Child, Youth and School Services (CYSS) launched the inaugural YLEAD Summit. The YLEAD Summit seeks to empower young people to further develop their leadership skills. Army Reserve youth serve as participants from communities throughout their region, participate in a wide range of activities and learning experiences during the four day Youth Leadership Forum.

The YLEAD curriculum includes training on and development of: Life goals, Leadership skills, Social skills and Self-esteem.

The Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Service program is hosting its 2011 Southeast Youth, Leadership, Education and Development (YLEAD) Summit July 28-31 2011 in Biloxi, MS.

The Southeast YLEAD is open to military connected youth ages 14-17 residing in the states of MS, AL, GA, SC, NC, TN, KY, & FL. This 4-day residential summit will enhance the leadership skills of Army Reserve youth through a creative, engaging and hands on approach curriculum.

For more information and to register for the Southeast YLEAD please visit www.arfp.org/ylead or contact Tasha Martin @ 404.903.7794 or Tasha.M.Martin@usar.army.mil.

Program Offers Free Museum Visits

By Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 24, 2011 - Service members and their families can visit a wide array of museums free of charge from Memorial Day through Labor Day, courtesy of the second-annual Blue Star Museums program.

Kathy Roth-Douquet, Blue Star Families chairman, and Rocco Landesman, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, announced this year's program yesterday in San Diego.

"Blue Star Museums recognizes and thanks our military families for all they are doing for our country," Landesman said, "and simultaneously begins young people on a path to become lifelong museum-goers."

Roth-Douquet noted the program's success in its first year.

"We are thrilled that 300,000 military family members visited our partner museums in the summer of 2010," she said. "We

hope to exceed that number this year as the military community takes advantage of the rich cultural heritage they defend and protect every day.

"We appreciate the NEA and the nation's museums who chose to partner with us," she continued. "We also are grateful to our friends at the MetLife Foundation, the lead supporter of the Blue Star Museums outreach initiative, whose generous donation helps make our work possible."

This year, more than 1,300 museums in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa are taking part in the initiative, including more than 500 new museums this year, officials said, and others may join throughout the summer.

The Blue Star Museums program runs from May 30 through Sept. 5. The free admission program is available to active-duty military and their immediate family members -- military ID holder and up to five immediate family members. Active duty National Guard and Reserve members also are eligible.

Recent Press on Citigroup Data Breach; Accounts Compromised

From an Emergency Operations Center e-mail



PINELLAS PARK, Fla. - During routine monitoring, Citi recently discovered unauthorized access to Citi's Account Online. No commercial card or commercial prepaid card programs were impacted and no commercial or prepaid cardholder information was involved. A limited number - roughly one percent - of Citi North America consumer bankcard customers' account information (such as name, account number and contact information including email address) was viewed. These customer's social security number, date of birth, card expiration date and card security code (CVV) were not compromised. Citi is in the process of contacting those consumer bankcard customers whose information was impacted and has implemented enhanced procedures to prevent a recurrence of this type of event.

Citi has asked us to remind cardholders that when contacted by someone claiming to be from Citi, the cardholder should advise the caller that they will call Citi back (using the toll-free number on the back of their credit card). This should safeguard the cardholder from phishing attempts.

Citi has assured us that DoD cardholders were not affected by this event. However, all cardholders should monitor their account for any fraudulent or unauthorized use.

Woodson Praises Military's Medical Professionals

By Terri Moon Cronk, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 11, 2011 - Military medical professionals posted in combat theaters are skilled, patriotic and make sacrifices by serving in harm's way, the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs told members of Congress here today.

Dr. Jonathan Woodson, who advises the defense secretary on medical issues, testified before the House Appropriations Committee Defense Health Program hearing for the fiscal 2011 and 2012 budgets.

Emphasizing the strides military medicine has made in 2011 and the goals for 2012, Woodson characterized the commitment of a medical professional -- an Army nurse, Capt. Joshua McClimins, a 32-year-old husband and father of two on his second deployment to the 356th Combat Support Hospital in Afghanistan.

On April 22, McClimins was killed in Afghanistan by indirect fire, Woodson said. At the memorial service, Woodson said, members of McClimins' unit were deeply saddened.

"But these true professionals 'soldiered on' and continued their medical-mission support of other brothers and sisters in harm's way," he said.

Such medical professionals, along with improved public health and preventive medical strategies, Woodson said, have aided in the reduction of disease and injuries across the military.

And, the likelihood of survival for service members wounded in combat after medics arrive "remains at historic and unmatched levels," he said.

Seriously wounded service members who require long-term care receive the "finest, evidence-based, medical service that is available in the country," Woodson said.

"Thanks to the continued support of Congress and this committee, we are accelerating the delivery of our findings from the laboratory bench to the battlefield, to include prevention, diagnosis and treatment of both the visible and invisible wounds of war," he said.

The military's medical system works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs to coordinate the disability evaluation process, sharing personnel and health information, and working together to establish electronic health records, Woodson said.

The Defense Department's efficiencies initiative, he said, aims to reduce overhead

costs, eliminate redundant functions and distribute resources to better support service members.

The proposals in the fiscal 2012 budget also include manageable cost growth, Woodson said, adding that DOD's efficiencies initiative is a shared responsibility across the department.

"Our proposed budget keeps fidelity within our core principles," Woodson said. "We will never lose our commitment to the members of our armed forces."

The military health care system "is a vibrant, learning organization," he added, that's "capable of self-improvement and rapid incorporation of lessons learned in both peacetime and [in] combat."

Red Cross Eases Access to Emergency Communication Services

From an American Red Cross News Release



WASHINGTON, May 26, 2011 - As part of an ongoing effort to better serve the military community, the American Red Cross will move to a single telephone number for its emergency communication services next month.

Beginning June 13 at 8 a.m. EDT, service members and their families can use one toll-free number -- 877-272-7337 -- to send an urgent message to a service member.

"The Red Cross has always been there for us," Robert L. Gordon III, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy, said. "It's critically important to our men and women serving away from home that their families know whom to call in the event of an emergency. The Red Cross is now making it even easier to make that call."

In the past, military families living outside an installation needed to remember the phone number for their local Red Cross chapters for emergency communications, while those living on a military installation used the 877-272-7337 number. Now, military members and their families can use this single number to initiate an emergency communication, regardless of where they live.

For those stationed overseas, the three options for calling will remain the same: calling 877-272-7337 direct, accessing the number through a military operator or calling their local Red Cross station.

"An emergency situation can be a very stressful time for a military family, and having just one common telephone number to remember can make a difficult situation a little easier," said Sherri Brown, senior vice president for service to the Armed Forces. "U.S. military personnel and their families

can remain confident that the Red Cross will be there to keep them connected when there is a crisis at home."

Through this number, Red Cross emergency communications services can put military personnel in touch with their families following the death or serious illness of an immediate family member, the birth of a service member's child or grandchild or when a family faces other emergencies. Additional Red Cross services such as case management and emergency financial assistance also are available.

Moving Families Can Transfer TRICARE Prime Enrollment

From a TRICARE Management Activity News Release



WASHINGTON, June 7, 2011 - Active duty military members and their families who are moving to a new location can now transfer their TRICARE Prime military health plan enrollment with a simple phone call.

The enrollment transfer includes a new primary care manager best suited to the location of the service member's work, home and anticipated medical needs, officials said.

Moving service members should call their current regional health care contractor to transfer their family's enrollment, and include a cell phone number and email address. The new regional contractor will contact them within five business days after the relocation date to finalize the TRICARE transfer.

Officials emphasized that active duty service members and their families will not have to worry about coverage during the transfer process, because they are continuously covered under TRICARE. Once settled, officials said, they can confirm coverage on the Beneficiary Web Enrollment website.

Active-duty service members or family members who forget to notify their current regional contractor of their upcoming move still have the option to contact the new regional contractor to transfer enrollment over the phone, officials said.

Other options include transferring during military base in-processing, using the Beneficiary Web Enrollment site or downloading and completing an enrollment application, DD Form 2876, to mail. Service members and their families also can visit a local TRICARE Service Center.

Labor Department Grants to Provide Veterans Job Training



By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 1, 2011 - As part of an interagency effort to support America's veterans, the Labor Department today announced \$37 million in grants to provide job training for about 21,000 veterans, many of them homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Labor Secretary Hilda L. Solis announced the grants today, awarded to continue successful programs into their second and third years.

Twenty-two grants totaling more than \$9 million will provide job training to about 4,000 veterans to help them succeed in civilian careers, Labor Department officials said.

Those funds, provided through the Veterans Workforce Investment Program, emphasize training in "green" jobs related to energy efficiency and renewable energy, modern electric power development and clean vehicles.

"Our veterans sacrifice so much for our country, so it is important that we provide assistance to them when they return home from active duty," Solis said. "These grants will help veterans access the resources they need to find good jobs and build a bright future for themselves and their families."

Solis also announced 122 grants totaling more than \$28 million to provide job training to about 17,000 veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

These grants, awarded under the Labor Department's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, include \$4.3 million for the Homeless Female Veterans and Veterans with Families Program and \$3.9 million for the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program that helps veterans who have served time in justice facilities, officials said.

Homeless veterans may receive occupational, classroom and on-the-job training, as well as job-search and placement assistance and follow-up services, through the programs.

"The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program is recognized as an extraordinarily efficient and effective program, and is the only federal program that focuses exclusively on employment of veterans who are homeless," Solis said. "I am pleased that the department can assist these veterans and their families."

The Labor Department grants are awarded to state and local agencies, boards and nonprofit organizations that have demonstrated through first-year funding their ability to administer effective programs

to veterans within their geographic areas, officials said.

More information on the Labor Department's unemployment and re-employment programs is posted at <http://www.dol.gov/vets>.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen has been a staunch advocate of programs to support veterans who have transitioned from military service.

"They bring home a potential that is unimaginable for the future of our country," he said May 11 at Arizona State University's Phoenix campus. "This is an exceptional group, and they will make a difference for a long time to come."

Mullen recognized the Post-9/11 GI Bill as a big step in helping tens of thousands of veterans get the training and education many seek. But he also called communities a key part of helping combat veterans make a smooth transition following wartime service.

"If we can just open up our lens to be inclusive of them as they return home, with that little boost, I really believe they will take off and make a huge difference for the future," he said.

Meanwhile, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki is leading President Barack Obama's effort to eliminate homelessness among veterans by 2015.

"As the president has said, 'We're not going to be satisfied until every veteran who has fought for America has a home in America,'" Shinseki told the Marine Corps League in February. "If you wonder what I will be working on for the next several years, this is it. We will end veteran homelessness in 2014."

Proposal Would Save \$3.2 Billion in Health Care Costs

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden
American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 5, 2011 - The Defense Department's proposal to reform the TRICARE health plan and the military health system would save at least \$3.2 billion between 2012 and 2016, the Pentagon's chief financial officer told Congress yesterday.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee's personnel subcommittee, Robert F. Hale said the initiatives would support President Barack Obama's debt-reduction plan, which calls for reducing the federal budget \$4 trillion by 2023.

Obama's plan includes a reduction of \$78 billion in the Defense Department's fiscal 2012 budget and an additional \$400 bil-

lion in national security cuts through 2023.

Hale stressed that although \$3.2 billion is only modest savings toward the president's overall goal, the savings are "substantial" within the Defense Department.

"The federal government as a whole would save money under this plan -- not a lot, but there are modest savings," he explained. "The department savings from this proposal would be very substantial. We're looking out over the whole career of an individual and setting aside money to pay for it, so you immediately see major effects."

The fiscal 2012 budget request calls for \$52.5 billion to support the military health system's 9.6 million beneficiaries, which include retirees, active duty members and their families. The department's health care bill has more than tripled from \$19 billion in 2001.

"We've got to find ways to maintain the quality of health care but slow the growth in cost," Hale said.

Meeting that challenge begins with streamlining operations at the health affairs headquarters, he said, which means cutting more than 700 civilian contractors from the TRICARE staff. The proposal also calls for reforms for beneficiaries, including a maximum \$5 a month increase for working-age military retirees under 65, raising the co-payment for prescription drugs, and regulatory changes that would eliminate special subsidies for community hospitals that serve beneficiaries, Hale said.

Hale noted that TRICARE enrollment fees have not increased since Congress appropriated funds for the program in 1994. Families pay an estimated \$460 annually for TRICARE Prime coverage, but had the fees been indexed today to meet the growth in per capita national health expenditure, those fees would now be more than \$1,000 per family each year, he said.

Beginning in 2013, future enrollees would pay fees based on the national health expenditure if the proposal is enacted, Hale said, and that, he added, still would be significantly less than what beneficiaries would pay in the private sector for health insurance.

The proposals would save an estimated \$430 million over the next five years and would stabilize cost sharing in TRICARE at a level much more favorable than what Congress envisioned in the 1990s, Hale said.

Reform proposals in pharmaceuticals include incentives for allowing the department to prescribe generic drugs and deliver prescriptions by mail, saving \$2.5 billion by 2016, he added.

Hale told the panel that the rates the Defense Department pays to "sole community hospitals" that serve military beneficiaries are substantially higher than the rates it pays to other hospitals. Sole community hospitals are determined by Medicare rules that factor in distance from other hospitals,

capacity and other criteria.

Federal law requires that the department adopt Medicare rates when practical, and combined with lower rates paid to sole community hospitals, the proposal would save the department \$395 million through 2016, Hale said.

"We will phase in this change slowly, at least over a four-year period, in order to avoid adverse effects on care provided at these hospitals," he added.

Hale also discussed the department's proposal for equitable treatment for all Medicare-eligible military retirees. Under current law, he said, some Medicare-eligible enrollees are allowed to remain in the U.S. Family Health Plan, a TRICARE Prime option that provides care to active duty family members and all military retirees regardless of whether they participate in Medicare Part B, which covers doctor services, outpatient care and home health services that Part A does not.

The Defense Department, Hale added, seeks legislation that requires those who are part of the U.S. Family Health Plan to join Medicare, as all other retirees must. This, he added, will ensure that TRICARE does not pay claims that exceed Medicare rates when military retirees qualify for both programs.

"We will make these fee changes very gradually, very slowly, and 'grandfathering' all those who are currently over age 65 and in the Family Health Plan, so it will take place over a number of years," Hale said. "I particularly ask the committee's support for the provisions affecting the sole community hospitals and for legislation to permit changes to the U.S. Family Health Plan."

The proposals are more than reasonable, Hale said, and strike a solid balance between bringing savings and maintaining quality health care for veterans and their families. None of the proposals would affect active duty troops, he emphasized.

"These proposals generate savings that will help us pay for needed training and equipping of the armed forces," Hale said. "If we don't get authority to do this, we'll face major holes in the military budget, and it will be very hard to handle in difficult budgetary times. But most importantly, these proposals will lay the groundwork for a sustainable future of the military health care system."

TDY Trip to USARC/Ft. Bragg?

From an Emergency Operations Center e-mail



If you are planning on making a TDY trip to USARC Ft. Bragg, and you plan on bringing a government computer, please ensure that you bring a copy of your hand receipt. If you do not bring a copy of the hand receipt verifying that the government computer is signed to you, you will not be able to bring the computer into the building.

Military Spouses Get Help With Professional Licenses

By Lisa Daniel, American Forces Press Service



ARLINGTON, Va., June 13, 2011 - A Defense Department organization is making it easier for military spouses to maintain professional licenses as they move from

state to state.

State Liaison and Educational Opportunity, an office of military community and family policy here, today announced that 16 states have adopted laws, or are close to doing so, to make it easier for military spouses to work in their career fields.

"It gets them to work faster, and that's been our objective," Marcus Beauregard, chief of the state liaison office and a retired Air Force officer, said in an interview with American Forces Press Service.

States require licenses for practitioners in virtually every medical occupation, as well as teaching, social work, cosmetology and other fields, and the standards vary from state to state, Beauregard said. DOD's state liaison office was created in 2004 to work with states to address military family issues, and the licensing problem has been among the top concerns of families, he said.

Of working military spouses, 33 percent work in fields that require licenses, mostly nursing and teaching,

Beauregard said.

The state liaison office created a forum for spouses to discuss the licensing problems on its Facebook page. More than 100 spouses wrote in, describing licensing challenges ranging from the expense of having to license with a new state every two to three years to lengthy processes of certification that include much paperwork, training, waiting periods, internships and the like. Many found that by the time they could get through the process, it would be time to relocate again.

"I gave up education as a profession because of all that was involved in obtaining licensure with each move," a spouse wrote. "It was a difficult decision."

The state liaison office formed partnerships with state agencies and professional associations to educate state lawmakers about the unique challenges to military families.

"We're not looking to make the military community have a preferred status in states," Beauregard said. "We're looking at those things that impede people because of their military life. In all cases, we're just looking to level the playing field."

The office promoted two strategies for mitigating the licensing challenges. The first -- and favorite -- is for states to permit licenses by endorsement of the last state license. The second option allows a temporary license to expedite the spouse's employment options.

States that have enacted laws for endorsement of licenses -- or those waiting for a governor's signature -- are Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, North Carolina, New York and Texas. States that allow temporary licenses are Alaska, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina and Tennessee. Utah allows nonresident military spouses to use out-of-state licenses, and Virginia allows military spouses who leave the state to re-use the license upon their return, Beauregard said.

The state liaison office's efforts are in line with President Barack Obama's directive released early this year to promote a "whole of government" approach to helping military families. Since 2008, the office also has succeeded in getting 39 states to pass laws to accept the out-of-state course work of school-age military children.

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UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

01 JUN 2011

SUBJECT: Army Travel Charge Card Program, Individually Billed Account Use for Official Travel Related Expenses

1. The Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998, Department of Defense (DoD) and Army policy require that the Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) be used by all DoD personnel to pay for all costs related to official Government travel unless they are exempt. Exemptions from mandatory use of the GTCC are contained in the Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation, Volume 9, Chapter 3. The GTCC policies are applicable to all DoD employees and uniformed members.
2. Accordingly, all senior leaders, Soldiers and Army Civilian employees, who meet the eligibility requirements, will obtain an individually billed account (IBA) travel charge card and use it for all official travel related expenses. Use of the centrally billed travel account for airfare is restricted to those individuals ineligible for an IBA.
3. When the Defense Travel System is used to support travel requests, airline tickets will be purchased using the reservation module available in the system. Changes to ticketing, requiring manual intervention by the Commercial Travel Office (CTO), should be kept to a minimum.
4. Points of contact are: Mr. Jorge F. Roca, Director of Management Services, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Financial Operations), 703-693-2770, jorge.f.roca@us.army.mil; Mr. Frank Rago, Army Travel Charge Card Program Manager, 703-693-3386, francis.rago@us.army.mil.



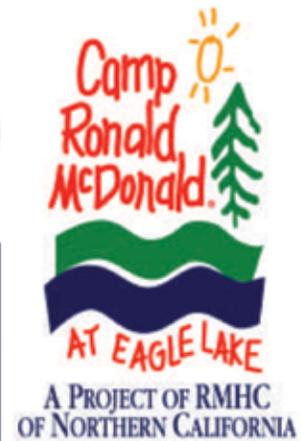
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(CONT)



Enjoy Some Summer Fun!

The 4-H Military Partnership Program and Camp Ronald McDonald at Eagle Lake are offering camping opportunities for up to 92 special needs military youth.

When: August 7-12, 2011

Where: Camp Ronald McDonald, Eagle Lake, near Susanville, CA

Who: Special needs military youth ages 8-18

This camp is a military youth-only camp and is free of charge.

Registration begins soon.

For more information, visit: <http://www.campronald.org/home.php>

or contact Crystal O'Hara, 4-H Military Partnership Program

Representative, at 530-757-8968 or crohara@ucdavis.edu.

Camp Ronald McDonald at Eagle Lake

Come Join in the Fun!

Ronald McDonald House Charities® Northern California is dedicated to supporting children and their families by supporting Camp Ronald McDonald at Eagle Lake and the Sacramento Ronald McDonald House.

Since 1992 Camp Ronald McDonald® at Eagle Lake has been putting smiles on children's faces each summer. This 35 acre, fully accessible camp welcomes nearly 1,000 campers with disabilities and disadvantages each year. This 'special place for special children' opens up a world of possibilities for children through arts and crafts, water sports, group activities and so much more. On the shores of Eagle Lake there are no boundaries or limitations.

Camp Ronald McDonald® at Eagle Lake is a totally accessible residential summer camp facility. Camp program staff members are equipped to assist youth in the following categories: speech, language, visual or orthopedic impairment; learning disabilities; deafness or hard of hearing; deaf-blindness; multiple disabilities and autism.

Youth at this camp will have opportunities to explore and discover their physical environment and increase their physical activity. The camp will provide confidence-building experiences and programs designed to support each camper's individuality through the challenges of outdoor group living and teamwork in a supportive environment.

For more information, visit: <http://www.campronald.org/home.php>.



Changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill Based on P.L. 111-377

On January 4, 2011, President Obama signed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Improvements Act of 2010 into law. The legislation amended the Post-9/11 GI Bill, modifying the rules governing the way VA makes eligibility, award and entitlement calculations. The provisions vary in their effective dates, with some effective on the date of enactment (January 4, 2011) and the later provisions effective on October 1, 2011.

Effective Date of Enactment (January 4, 2011)

The following types of entry level and skill training are now excluded from the computation of total aggregate service needed to qualify for Post-9/11 benefits:

- Army One Station Unit Training
- Coast Guard Skill Training
- Active duty service obligation (ADSO) associated with Coast Guard Academy graduation

An Honorable character of service is now required for all service periods ending on or after January 4, 2011, including those with the following separation reasons:

- A Condition Interfering With Duty (CIWD)
- A condition Existing Prior to Service (EPTS)
- A Hardship (HDSP)

CIWD, EPTS, and HDSP discharges prior to January 4, 2011, that are not Dishonorable may still be qualifying.

Effective Immediately but *Not Payable* until October 1, 2011:

Expands the Post-9/11 GI Bill to include National Guard members who are on active service under title 32 U.S.C. orders, *"for the purpose of organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training"*; or under section 502(f) *"for the purpose of responding to a national emergency."*

Effective 60 Days after the Date of Enactment (March 5, 2011)

Limits active duty members to the net cost for tuition and fees prorated based on the eligibility tiers (40%-100%) previously established for Veterans.

- Same limitations apply to transferee spouses of active duty servicemembers;
- This will apply to terms beginning on or after March 5, 2011;
- Applies to degree programs with a rate of pursuit of more than one-half time.

www.gibill.va.gov

VA Benefits: 1-888-GI-BILL1 (442-4551)



Effective August 1, 2011

For Veterans and their transferees: Simplifies the tuition and fee rates for those attending a public school and creates a national maximum for those enrolled in a private or foreign school. *NOTE: The Yellow Ribbon Program still exists for out-of-state fees and costs above the cap.*

- Pays all public school in-state tuition and fees;
- Private and foreign school costs are capped at \$17,500 annually and are prorated based on eligibility tiers (40% - 100%).
- Prorates housing allowance by the student's rate of pursuit (rounded to the nearest tenth). *Example: A student training at a rate of pursuit of 75% would receive 80% of the BAH rate;*

For Active Duty Members and their transferees: creates a national rate for those active duty members enrolled in a private or foreign school pursuing a degree.

- Pays all public school in-state tuition and fees;
- Private and foreign school costs are capped at \$17,500 annually and are prorated based on eligibility tiers (40% - 100%);

Housing Allowance rates will change effective August 1 of each year, not January 1;

Allows those who are eligible for both Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (chapter 31) benefits and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to choose a higher subsistence allowance equal to the basic allowance for housing payable to an E-5 with dependents based on the zip code area where the school is located.

Allows VA to pay MGIB (chapter 30) and MGIB-SR (chapter 1606) "kickers" or college fund payments on a monthly basis instead of a lump sum at the beginning of the term. Kickers will be paid regardless of rate of pursuit or eligibility for the Monthly Housing Allowance. The applicable (MGIB or MGIB-SR) full time kicker rate will be multiplied by the rate of pursuit.

Break or interval pay is no longer payable under any VA education benefit program unless under an Executive Order of the President or due to an emergency, such as a natural disaster or strike.

- *Example: If your semester ends December 15th, your housing allowance is paid for the first 15 days of December only and begins again when your next semester begins January 10th;*

www.gibill.va.gov

VA Benefits: 1-888-GI-BILL1 (442-4551)



- Students using other VA education programs are included in this change and monthly benefits will be pro-rated in the same manner;
- Entitlement that previously would have been used for break pay will be available for use during a future enrollment.

Allows reimbursement for more than one license or certification test (previously only one test was allowed).

Allows reimbursement of fees paid to take national exams used for admission to an institution of higher learning (e.g., SAT, ACT, GMAT, LSAT). *NOTE: Entitlement will be charged for these fees/tests.*

NOAA and PHS personnel are now eligible to transfer their entitlement to eligible dependents

Effective October 1, 2011

Allows a student on active duty to receive a books and supplies stipend.

Allows students to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for:

- *Non-college degree (NCD) programs:* Pays actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees at public NCD institutions. At private and foreign institutions, pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees or \$17,500, whichever is less. Also pays up to \$83 per month for books and supplies;
- *On-the-job and apprenticeship training:* Pays a monthly benefit amount prorated based on time in program and up to \$83 per month for books and supplies;
- *Flight programs:* Per academic year, pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees assessed by the school or \$10,000, whichever is less;
- *Correspondence training:* Per academic year, pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees assessed by the school or \$8,500, whichever is less.

Housing allowance is now payable to students (other than those on active duty) enrolled *solely* in distance learning. The housing allowance payable is equal to 1/2 the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents. *NOTE: The full-time rate for an individual eligible at the 100% eligibility tier is \$673.50 for 2011.*

www.gibill.va.gov

VA Benefits: 1-888-GI-BILL1 (442-4551)

United States Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense (USAMRICD)
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Fallen Army Journalist Honored at Newseum

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, May 16, 2011 - Army Staff Sgt. James Hunter is remembered for lots of things. His fellow soldiers will tell you he was a hard worker, selfless and dedicated to his soldiers and their mission. His family will tell you that he loved Kentucky basketball and, above all else, he loved his country.

Today, Hunter was honored for his work as a journalist. He was an Army public affairs noncommissioned officer who was killed by a roadside bomb in June during a foot patrol in Afghanistan. His rifle was slung across his chest, but clutched in his right hand was his camera.

"He was an outstanding NCO and leader," Army Lt. Col. Larry Porter, public affairs officer for the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, said. Porter was Hunter's boss at the time of his death. "He was very dedicated to telling the soldiers' story."

He and 76 other fallen journalists were memorialized at the Newseum here today in the 2011 rededication ceremony of the Journalist's Memorial. The memorial honors 2,084 reporters, photographers, editors and broadcasters who died covering the news between 1837 and 2010. Their names are inscribed on the glass panels of the memorial, adjacent to a wall filled with photographs of their faces, some with a short biography. Of those reporters honored today, 59 died in 2010.

Krishna Bharat, founder of Google News, delivered the ceremony's keynote address, praising the character and drive of journalists for the risks they take to inform the otherwise uninformed public.

"In most cases, [journalists] made the conscious choice ... to walk a path that was not paved with gold, but danger, to serve a higher human cost," Bharat said. "As we look back on the lives lost in the service of journalism, it's worth remembering that while we cannot predict how and when we die, we can certainly choose how we live.

"The journalists we remember and honor today chose lives full of meaning and purpose," he added. "They chose to bring news that mattered to people who care to make the world a better place."

The fact that Hunter was part of the ceremony is a humbling honor, said Army Lt. Col. J. Frank Garcia, an Army public affairs officer who worked closely with Hunter at Fort Campbell, Ky.

"It really is great to see the Newseum honor a soldier journalist," Garcia said. "[Hunter] was someone who volunteered

not only to be a soldier, but to put himself in danger repeatedly just to tell the soldiers' story [and] to ensure the story of what [soldiers] do all over the world is being told."

Hunter grew up in South Amherst, Ohio, and enlisted in the Army in September 2003. He served in the 82nd Airborne Division's 49th Public Affairs Detachment on Fort Bragg, N.C., and deployed with the unit to Iraq in 2006. Following his tour at Fort Bragg, Hunter reported to the 10th Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team on Fort

Campbell, Ky. He deployed to Iraq a second time in 2008. He was only two months into his Afghanistan deployment when he was killed. He was 25.

"I'll always remember [Hunter] as the guy who always volunteered for the tough assignments," Garcia said. "He was the kind of guy who wanted to be up front with the troops, living with them and experiencing their experiences and making sure the world knew their stories."



The photograph and short biography of Army Staff Sgt. James Hunter is on display near the Journalists Memorial at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. Hunter was among 77 fallen journalists honored at the 2011 re-dedication of the memorial, May 16, 2011. Photo Credit: Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden, DoD

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