

July 15, 2022

Commissary User Savings

Update 06: Commissaries Claiming Inflated Savings

The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) used unreliable and inconsistent methodologies to calculate the annual savings realized by commissary shoppers, resulting in inflated savings figures, according to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released in June. The study, required by the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), highlighted concerns with DeCA's conflicting goals and savings rate calculation methods. DeCA strives to meet two primary objectives: To be a benefit to servicemembers and their families by providing the target savings rate to its customers, and to operate like a business to reduce its reliance on appropriated funds.

DeCA operates 236 commissaries worldwide, all funded by both appropriations and revenue from the sale of goods. As commissary sales have fallen from about \$6 billion in FY 2015 to about \$4.4 billion in FY 2021, DeCA has worked to implement business reforms such as variable pricing, sale of private label goods, and a 5% surcharge to help improve its operations and reduce reliance on appropriations. Since 2016, DeCA has had a global target customer savings rate of 23.7%, which it says has been met or nearly achieved over the last several years. The average savings for CONUS patrons in FY 2021 was 17.7%, compared with 42.5% for OCONUS patrons. When calculated to reflect the 81% of CONUS commissary sales and 19% of OCONUS sales, the average savings rate was 22.4%.

The report found the savings rate calculation for CONUS commissaries is accurate, as it relies on market-based price comparison data from two sources: manual shoppers and syndicated data. Yet the calculation methodology for OCONUS commissary savings relies on cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) rather than actual price data. For example, DeCA selects a CONUS coastal region to use as a basis, then multiplies the customer savings rate of the selected region by the COLA for the OCONUS region. The savings rate calculated is unreliable because COLA includes the cost of many unrelated, non-grocery items such as transportation, services, income taxes, and so on. Additionally, DeCA does not conduct actual price comparisons of items in OCONUS commissaries against the price of similar items charged by local competitors. GAO provided three recommendations to DeCA:

- Conduct and document an analysis of whether the OCONUS customer savings rate methodology provides comparable accuracy to a market-based price comparison and make appropriate adjustments.
- Conduct an analysis of tradeoffs that specifically identify the customer savings rate and related benefits, such as number, location, and operating hours of commissaries, that it can provide at varying levels of appropriation.
- Update the strategic plan and supporting documentation to include all business reforms and identify goals with associated performance measures, milestones, and deliverables.

DeCA concurred with all recommendations. In this time of inflation and DoD's efforts to reduce food insecurity among military families, the commissary benefit is especially important. [Source: MOAA | Jen Goodale | July 6, 2022 ++]

NDA 2023

Update 05: House Wants Troops to Chow Down Bison Meat

Want a hot bison sandwich on rye? The uncommon food product may soon be on the table for troops as Congress has proposed in its annual defense bill the Department of Defense purchase bison meat from native tribes and organizations. House lawmakers passed their \$840 billion version of the National Defense Authorization Act out of committee on June 23, incorporating a series of amendments that included, among others, a procurement measure for bison meat. The final annual defense bill must still be passed by the full House, and later agreed to by the Senate, which earlier in June passed its own version out of committee.

If passed, the Pentagon will begin "increasing procurement of bison meat...with the goal of procuring two million pounds of bison meat annually to promote bison as a healthy and sustainable food source and further treaty and trust responsibilities and Native American agriculture," according to the amendment text. The amendment would also direct the secretary of defense to provide a briefing to the House Committee on Armed Services by Feb. 1, 2023, outlining opportunities to increase the procurement of bison meat and other agricultural products from native tribes and organizations.

The amendment was introduced by Rep. Ruben Gallego, an Arizona Democrat and Marine veteran. "The success of our nation's armed forces is dependent upon its ability to innovate and use resources efficiently. One possible practice is the procurement and use bison meat in Indian Country," Gallego said in a statement to Military Times. "As a leader in Congress on Tribal issues, I have seen the success Tribes have had in rehabilitating our country's bison population,

and the military would benefit from this meat to keep troops fed. That’s why my NDAA amendment is a cost-effective win for both our military and Indian Country.”

This unique component to the annual defense legislation serves as an example of how the Pentagon aims to expand its relationship with native communities, as well as how the nutritional value of an otherwise untraditional military food may become a new staple that packs a protein-filled punch for troops. The Pentagon and other government agencies already work with tribes to acquire goods and services thanks in part to the Buy Indian Act, which gives the Department of the Interior the authority to create contracts with native businesses. The yearly number of new contracts can range from \$20 million to more than \$60 million according to DOI.

There are approximately 3,500 bison at Yellowstone, the largest free-roaming bison population in the world, and roughly 400,000 in North America, according to the National Bison Association, a non-profit group for bison producers and consumers. The National Bison Association has long been advocating for the nutritional value of bison. The U.S. Department of Agriculture finds that per 100 grams of bison meat there are a total of 25.4 grams of protein, compared to 17.2 grams in traditional 80% lean ground beef. Nearly 30,000 bison have been slaughtered in U.S. federal plants this year and nearly 245,000 pounds of boneless and bone-in chilled bison meat has likewise been imported from Canada, according to the USDA’s most recent monthly bison report.

In 2021, Vox reported that the Army once tried to exterminate bison and also as recently as last year bison have been found to roam around at military installations, as reported by CBS. The USDA is now launching a new study this month that will focus on health and nutrition of bison as well as industry management. After the NDAA’s passage, Pentagon leaders will be given until next February to come up with a plan to work on this new procurement assignment with federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Jonathan Lehrfeld | July 7, 2022 ++]

NDAA 2023

Update 06: Combat Disabled Veterans Are Being Denied Benefits.

Our nation’s combat disabled veterans are being denied full access to their hard-earned benefits. Over 50,000 medically retired veterans—many of whom are Purple Heart recipients—are forbidden from receiving their full retirement pay and disability compensation. The VFW firmly believes that Department of Defense retired pay and Department of Veterans Affairs service-connected disability compensation are fundamentally different benefits, earned for different reasons, yet Congress has failed to acknowledge and act on this long-standing injustice. The VFW

demands that Congress includes the *Major Richard Star Act* as an amendment in the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2023*.

Time is of the essence, so we must contact our members of Congress today and tell them to support the Major Richard Star Act as an amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2023. Purple Heart recipients have already waited too long for their earned benefits! Towards this the VFW has provided an editable message for veterans to access at <https://www.votervoices.net/VFW/Campaigns/96233/Respond> which can be forwarded to their legislators. [Source: VFW Action Corps | July 9, 2022 ++]

NDA 2023

Update 07: Full House Debate Looms On the Annual Defense Bill

House officials will begin debate on the annual defense authorization bill this week with an eye towards completing the massive military policy measure before the August recess. Last month, House Armed Services Committee members advanced plans for an \$840 billion defense authorization bill with more money than the White House requested to offset rising inflation costs and provide additional support for allies in Ukraine. The measure passed by a 57-1 bipartisan vote but is likely to face more political turmoil on the chamber floor because of pending amendments on abortion, extremism in the ranks and additional military spending. House Rules officials are to meet on 12 JUL to decide how many of the 1,200-plus amendments filed will be ruled in order.

Senate Armed Services Committee members approved their authorization bill draft last month as well, but Senate leaders have not announced when that draft may come to the chamber floor for a full vote. The two chambers must reconcile their separate versions in coming months to produce a compromise bill. The legislation, which contains the annual military pay raise and a host of other budget policy issues, has passed out of Congress for more than 50 consecutive years. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 10, 2022 ++]

VA Claim Denial

Update 19: Request a Higher-Level Review for Your Appeal

Veterans can request a higher-level review (HLR) of a benefits claim decision. As part of the HLR process, VA offers an optional one-time informal conference. This allows a Veteran or

their representative to speak directly with a higher-level reviewer assigned to complete the decision review.

How do you request a Higher-Level Review? For disability compensation claims, you can request a Higher-Level Review online right now at <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/request-higher-level-review-form-20-0996/start>. For other types of claims, you'll need to request a Higher-Level Review either by mail or in person. By mail fill out the Decision Review Request: Higher-Level Review (VA Form 20-0996) at <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-20-0996>. Send the completed form to the benefit office that matches the benefit type you selected on the form or Department of Veterans Affairs, Claims Intake Center, PO Box 4444, Janesville, WI 53547-4444.

What you should know before requesting a Higher-Level Review?

- You can't submit any evidence.
- You and/or your representative can talk with the reviewer on the phone (called an "informal conference"). You can tell them why you think the decision should be changed and identify errors. If you want an informal conference, you'll need to choose that option when you apply for a Higher-Level Review.
- If you're applying for a Higher-Level Review online, you can request an informal conference in step 3 of the application process.
- If you're applying for a Higher-Level Review by mail or in person, you can request an informal conference by marking the circle in item 16A on VA Form 20-0996.
- Learn more about requesting a Higher-Level Review
- You're allowed only 1 informal conference for each Higher-Level Review. Make sure you have enough time to talk with the reviewer to explain any errors in your case.
- The VA's goal for completing Higher-Level Reviews is an average of 125 days. Note: If you request an informal conference, it may take us longer to complete your Higher-Level Review. If there are any errors you'd like to point out, consider submitting a written statement with your application instead. This will help us make a decision as quickly as possible.

Helpful information for filling out your form (VA Form 20-0996).

- **Section III: Select a benefit type** -- The most common benefit type is compensation, but if you're unsure, check your VA decision. You can't select multiple benefit types. You have to complete a separate form for each type.
- **Section IV: Request an optional call (informal conference) with the reviewer** -- You and/or your representative can talk with the reviewer on the phone. You can tell them why you think the decision should be changed and identify errors. To schedule an informal

conference, you'll need to select one contact preference. Choose either a morning or afternoon time frame. And choose whether you want VA to call you or your representative. If you'd like us to call your representative, please fill in their name and phone number.

- **Section VI: List the issue(s) you want reviewed** -- You'll need to list the issue(s) you disagree with and the VA decision date for each. You can include all or just some of the issues VA has decided, but they must all be within the same benefit type. **Note:** You can't submit any evidence.
- **What if I have new and relevant evidence?** -- If you have evidence to submit, please select another decision review option. Learn more about the decision review options at <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews>
- **What if I need help?** -- A Veterans Service Organization or VA-accredited attorney or agent can help you request a decision review. Go to <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/get-help-with-review-request> to get help requesting a decision review. Go to <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/faq> to get answers to frequently asked questions about decision reviews

What happens next? You don't need to do anything while you wait, unless VA sends you a letter asking for more information. If VA schedules exams for you, be sure not to miss them. If you've filed a request for a Higher-Level Review, VA may randomly select you to receive an email with a short, optional survey. If selected, you'll get a survey about one week after they receive your initial claim. You'll get a second survey about one week after you receive your decision notification letter. You aren't required to fill out either survey, but your feedback will help VA improve the decision review process. It takes about 3 minutes to answer the questions. Please review your VA.gov profile to make sure we have your most recent email address. Go to <https://www.va.gov/change-address> to update your email address. To find out what happens after you request a decision review go to <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/after-you-request-review>.

[Source: <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review> | May 18, 2022 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse

Reported 01 thru 15 JUL 2022

Rhode Island – A woman who authorities say pretended to be a decorated Marine Corps veteran with cancer to fraudulently collect about \$250,000 in veterans benefits and charitable contributions has agreed to plead guilty, federal prosecutors said 12 JUL. **Sarah Jane Cavanaugh**, 31, of East Greenwich, signed an agreement in U.S. District Court in Providence under which she will admit to wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, forgery, and fraudulent use of medals, U.S. Attorney Zachary Cunha said in a statement. She has also agreed to pay more than \$82,000 in restitution. She faces more than 20 years in prison, but prosecutors have agreed

to recommend a sentence on the low end of sentencing guidelines, according to court documents.

There is no record of Cavanaugh ever serving in the U.S. military, according to authorities. However, she did work as a licensed social worker for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Providence. Through her job, she gained access to documents, personal information and medical records belonging to a real veteran with cancer, which she used to create fraudulent documents and medical records in her name that said she had been honorably discharged and had cancer, prosecutors said. She also purchased replicas of a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star that she put on a Marine uniform she wore at public events, according to prosecutors.

Cavanaugh, who also served as commander of the North Kingstown VFW post, requested financial assistance and falsely claimed that she was being treated for lung cancer from exposure to burn pits in Iran and Afghanistan and inhaling particulate matter from a bomb explosion, Cunha said. She collected \$207,000 from the Wounded Warrior program to pay for groceries and physical therapy, collected about \$18,500 in financial assistance from “Code of Support” in Virginia for mortgage payments, repairs to her home furnace, a gym membership and other bills, and \$4,700 from a fundraising website, prosecutors said. She also collected \$16,000 from another charity that provides therapy for veterans through art programs, CreatiVets, according to court documents.

An investigation was launched after the Providence nonprofit HunterSeven contacted the Providence VA because they were suspicious of Cavanaugh when she requested assistance from them. The organization helps veterans with cancer. [Source: The Associated Press | July 12, 2022 ++]

Vet Unemployment 2022

Update 06: Rate Under 3% for Nearly All Eras of Service

The unemployment rate for veterans of every era since the Vietnam War fell below 3% in June, the first time those various generations of troops have reached that mark since early 2019. According to data released 8 JUL by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for all veterans in America in June was 2.7%, holding steady at that level for the second consecutive month. The number has been less than 3% for four consecutive months now, which administration officials have called a sign of improving hiring and job stability across America. The figure translates to about 235,000 veterans across America unable to find stable employment last month. In June 2021, that number was roughly 437,000 veterans.

The national unemployment rate was 3.6% for the fourth consecutive month, and BLS officials said that an estimated 372,000 non-farm payroll positions were added to the economy in June. In recent years, veterans have generally outpaced the rest of the workforce in terms of employment rates. But younger veterans — those who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars — have struggled slightly more than their peers, posting higher unemployment rates than older veterans already established in the civilian workforce. The Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans unemployment rate for June was 2.9%, the first time that group has dropped below 3% since May 2019. The rate for that generation of veterans reached as high as 13% in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020.

Individuals who left the military after September 2001 make up the largest single group of veterans in the civilian workforce today, comprising about 45% of nearly 8.4 million veteran employees. The unemployment rate for veterans of the first Gulf War-era in June was 1.5%, and the rate for those from the peacetime period from the Vietnam War to the early 1990s posted an unemployment rate of 2.7%. Veterans from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War (BLS groups all of those older generations together) had a 5.1% unemployment rate last month. Of the estimated 6.3 million veterans from those eras still living in America today, less than 15% are still active in the civilian workforce.

As a result, unemployment rates for that group are prone to significant swings each month due to sampling issues. The rate for that group in June 2021 was 6.1%. BLS officials said that most employment indicators have returned roughly to the same levels as February 2020, which was just weeks before the pandemic began in America. The national unemployment rate was 3.5% that month. However, the number of long-term unemployed individuals — those jobless for 27 weeks or more — is still about 215,000 higher than before the pandemic's start. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 8, 2022 ++]

Overseas Military Mail

Update 03: APO/FPO Mail Halt For Overseas Retirees on Hold

Military retirees living overseas may continue using their APO and FPO addresses for at least a little longer, following the Military Postal Service Agency's decision to halt a move that would have taken away their mailboxes next month. The postal agency rescinded an announcement it made in June, saying it would end services for certain categories of customers beginning Aug. 24, Installation Management Command-Europe said 7 JUL. Another announcement about authorized customers is expected within the next six months, IMCOM-Europe spokesman Mark Heeter said, citing information given to his office by the Military Postal Service Agency, which is an extension of the U.S. Postal Service.

Until then, current customers can use services as normal, Heeter said, adding that no additional information about the pause was given. The Military Postal Service Agency did not immediately reply to questions 7 JUL. The Defense Department in May directed the Military Postal Service Agency to end services for many customers after a review found they were “not authorized by law” for overseas delivery by the agency, the Office of the Secretary of Defense said last month. The Pentagon did not specify who was improperly benefiting from the service. However, the postal superintendent at Camp Humphreys in South Korea, James Goff, told Stars and Stripes that overseas military retirees and Red Cross workers would be among those affected by the change.

Tens of thousands of U.S. military retirees lived overseas as of 2020, according to a DOD retirement report in 2021. Roughly 12,500 retirees live in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. Germany hosts 7,366 retirees, followed by 3,354 in the Philippines. Japan and South Korea have 3,196 and 1,677 retirees, respectively. The military postal system delivers mail and packages overseas to service members, DOD civilians, contractors and their families, while charging domestic postal rates. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Phillip Walter Wellman | July 7, 2022 ++]

Desert Storm Memorial

Update 13: Installation on National Mall Begins 14 JUL

The installation of a new monument in Washington, D.C., recognizing Gulf War veterans begins July 14 with the formal groundbreaking of the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial. Situated on the National Mall to the north of the Lincoln Memorial, the new park-like monument will honor veterans who served on Active duty in support of the two operations. The memorial commemorates “the service and sacrifice” of the military personnel who from 1991 to 1992 “liberated Kuwait from Iraq and defended Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula from further invasion,” according to information from the National Desert Storm Memorial Association. Kuwait is the lead donor contributing to the memorial.

Derived from Gulf War veterans’ responses to a five-question survey, the monument’s design presents the war’s historical events and significance along with the “unique environmental and battle conditions experienced” by the troops who fought in it, according to the association. Survey replies led the association to conclude that the design should reflect the war’s desert environment; should include a statue of Soldiers wearing chemical warfare protective gear; and should represent the war’s so-called “left hook” maneuver by ground troops—a trick by which the U.S. Army cut off supplies and prompted Iraqi forces’ retreat.

After consideration, the association chose not to feature the names of service members who died in the war because doing so “would omit the names of so many of our comrades who were lost outside of the parameters” of the dates bookending the two operations; and because its educational purpose is distinct from that of monuments such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which is meant instead as “a place of mourning, healing, and reconciliation.” “This memorial represents and includes many degrees of sacrifice,” according to the association, including that of those who died in theater, those who since died as a result, “and those who are currently suffering as a result of their honorable service.”

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David A. Deptula, dean of AFA’s Mitchell Institute of Aerospace Studies, served as a principal architect of Desert Storm’s air campaign and said the war was historically significant because, among other reasons, it “set expectations for low casualties,” “presaged the age of precision weapons,” marked the first use of a joint force concept of operations, and was the first time “airpower was the key force” in achieving victory. The association intends to complete the memorial’s construction by Veterans Day of 2024. The groundbreaking will be livestreamed at www.ndswm.org/live at 10 a.m. Eastern time July 14. [Source: Air Force Magazine | Amanda Miller| July 12, 2022 ++]

VA Vet Medical Legal Partnerships

Update 07: H.R. 3950 | Veterans Medical Legal Partnerships Act

The **Veterans Medical Legal Partnerships Act**, would establish a grant program for states and local governments to create medical-legal partnerships. Medical-legal partnerships are holistic care models that integrate legal assistance into health care settings or delivery systems to address social and legal needs that negatively affect the health outcomes of veterans and their families. Veterans are disproportionately at higher risk for health problems. Veterans are also at higher risk of having legal issues, and unmet legal needs often exacerbate existing health problems. Medical-legal partnerships have proven to be a successful model of addressing issues related to veteran care.

For example, receiving a discharge status upgrade through legal assistance, obtaining proper identification, or being awarded education benefits can lead to employment opportunities. Consistent employment helps provide money for food and safe housing, which also helps avoid costly emergency health care services. Likewise, legal assistance preventing eviction or foreclosure, improving sub-standard living conditions or addressing consumer issues, such as debt and bankruptcy, may allow a veteran to secure stable housing. Stable housing reduces stress and allows veterans to focus on their health care decisions and mental health.

There are currently 31 medical-legal partnerships at VA facilities nationwide. Through these partnerships, volunteer attorneys train VA health care teams to screen veterans for unmet legal needs. After the screening, medical teams can refer veterans to on-site legal clinics, where attorneys provide them with free legal services for noncriminal cases. DAV supports this legislation to establish medical-legal partnerships at state and locally-operated veterans' homes, treatment facilities and support programs and is urging readers to ask their elected Representative to cosponsor H.R. 3950, as this bill would provide more comprehensive health care services to VHA-enrolled veterans. [Source: DAV National Commander | Andrew Marshall | July 8, 2022 ++]

Congressional Resources

Member's Contact Info & Vet Bill Status

If in doubt as to your legislator's online contact info or who they are, the below websites provide ALL legislator's names with contact info to facilitate the copying and forwarding of suggested letters to them, asking them questions, or seeking their assistance:

- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%7D> – **House**
- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%2C%22chamber%22%3A%22Senate%22%7D> – **Senate**

To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress> for any House or Senate bill introduced in the 117th Congress. Bills are listed in reverse numerical order for House and then Senate. Bills are normally initially assigned to a congressional committee to consider and amend before sending them on to the House or Senate as a whole. To read the text of bills that are to be considered on the House floor in the upcoming week refer to <https://docs.house.gov/floor>. Note that anyone can sign up and use MOAA's Legislative Action Center at <https://moaa.quorum.us/issueareas>. You do not have to be a member.

Army Enlistment

Update 04: Policy Dropping High School Diploma Requirement

After only a week, the Army has swiftly reversed a new policy that would have allowed potential recruits to enlist into the force without a high school diploma or GED, according to an

internal memo reviewed by Military.com and confirmed by a spokesperson. The Army, along with the other services, faces an ongoing crisis to fill in the ranks amid a convergence of issues, including an increasingly competitive civilian job market and the military losing some public awareness in the absence of a major conflict. So far, the Army has only hit about 40% of its recruiting goals this year.

On June 23, the service said that it would drop the requirement for completing high school under the condition that enlistees quickly ship out to boot camp, setting a deadline of Oct. 1 to begin training. However, the move was met with some mockery online and accusations of it being a desperate measure, lowering standards to fill in the ranks wherever the Army could. "Some people have frankly become very self-conscious of the news coverage," an Army official with direct knowledge of the policy change told Military.com. The service has relatively few options for changes it can implement quickly, so officials have chipped away at the margins where they can.

The potential recruits who would have been exempted from the high school requirement had to be 18 and score at least a 50 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB, an SAT-style quiz to measure a potential recruit's academic ability. That was a higher threshold than normal, with a 31 being the minimum score for anyone else. Scoring at least a 50 would likely qualify an individual for a healthy roster of the Army's jobs. A lack of education plays a relatively small role in disqualifying potential recruits, with most issues related to minor criminal infractions and intense scrutiny on past minor medical and mental health issues. Only about one-fourth of young Americans are even eligible to serve, with the top problem being obesity.

Multiple sources with direct knowledge on lifting the requirement for a high school diploma or GED said that policy makers were concerned about legitimate reasons a candidate might have not finished their schooling, and raising the bar on the entrance exam was a good control factor to not lower education standards. One Army official told Military.com the lift on requiring diplomas could return. "A score in the 50th percentile on the ASVAB is a good score," the Army official, who spoke to Military.com on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the press on the subject, said. "So, if someone doesn't have a GED or high school diploma, but they score well on the ASVAB, meet all other requirements, then military service could potentially be a great option for their future."

Army officials have made a number of small adjustments to make recruiting easier where they can without having negative impacts on the quality of soldiers enlisting. In a sign of the need for capable recruits, the service is offering up to \$50,000 enlistment bonuses, its highest ever, and allowing recruits to pick their first duty station with some limitations. This was on top of existing benefits that have been key for recruitment for decades, including the GI Bill,

relatively cheap and easy access to health care and VA home loans -- all of which are still generally more generous than most entry level jobs for people without college degrees.

The Army has also picked low-hanging fruit such as relaxing its tattoo policies, which is expected to impact only a few hundred recruits per year. In an interview with Task & Purpose, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth has also expressed concerns that negative media attention on scandals and issues in the force, including sexual assault and harassment, suicide and other quality-of-life problems faced by the rank and file, may be impacting recruiting [Source: Military.com| Steve Beynon | June 30, 2022 ++]

Military Inflation Bonus

Lawmaker Trying to Nearly Triple in Exchange for Missile Funding Cuts

Bonuses service members could get to help cope with inflation would be nearly tripled under a proposal from a progressive House Democrat that would pay for the increase by cutting missile funding. Under the version of the sweeping annual defense policy bill known as the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, being considered by the House, service members making less than \$45,000 annually would get a 2.4% bonus in 2023 to help offset strains from inflation.

Advertisement An amendment proposed by Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) would increase those bonuses to 6.6%, according to a copy of the text obtained by Military.com. An earlier version of the amendment available on the House Rules Committee website did not specify a new rate for the bonuses.

Bowman's amendment would pay for the increased bonuses by cutting \$1.4 billion in funding for the Army to buy missiles and redirecting that money to personnel accounts. "With this year's NDAA, we need to put the needs of our lowest-paid service members and DOD civilian employees first," Bowman said in an emailed statement to Military.com. "The Pentagon's weapons procurement is a major source of profits for weapons contractors that makes no impact on the reality that many of our young military families are struggling to put enough food on the table."

Separately, Republican Rep. Ted Budd (NC) who is running for Senate, has filed an amendment to increase the inflation bonuses to 4%. "While the current pay raise for our troops in the NDAA is substantial, it does not cover the increased prices at the grocery store or the pump," Budd said in an emailed statement to Military.com. "My amendment ensures that our brave servicemembers do not have to bear the brunt of this historic inflation." It is unclear

whether either amendment will be given a vote when the NDAA comes to the House floor next week. Both Bowman's office and Budd's office told Military.com they had not heard yet whether their amendments would get a vote.

As of 8 JUL, at least 1,192 amendments had been filed for the NDAA, and typically only a small fraction of the total number of amendments filed are given votes. The House Rules Committee is scheduled to meet 12 JUL to decide which ones will get votes on the House floor. Service members are on track to get a 4.6% raise in basic pay for 2023 regardless of any congressional action, which would be the highest military pay raise in two decades. But inflation is currently hovering around 8.6%, according to the most recent update of the Consumer Price Index in June. Lawmakers in both parties have expressed concern that troops, like the rest of the American public, are having trouble affording groceries, gas and other goods because of spiking prices.

The 2.4% inflation bonuses were approved by the House Armed Services Committee as part of a broader amendment that added \$37 billion to the NDAA's overall price tag, bringing the bill's total cost to roughly \$840 billion. In addition to the inflation bonuses, the amendment approved by the committee included about \$6 billion for inflation costs related to military construction and fuel, as well as billions for more weapons. Progressives, who have unsuccessfully fought for years to slash the defense budget, lambasted the Democratic-led committee for going above the Biden administration's request for what already would have been record high defense funding. Fourteen centrist Democrats on the committee sided with Republicans to approve the amendment in a 42-17 vote.

Progressives have filed several amendments to undo the committee action or go further, including one to cut the \$37 billion added by the committee and another to cut \$100 billion from the defense budget. The missile funding cuts in Bowman's amendment specifically target accounts that were increased by the Armed Services Committee amendment, bringing that funding back to the level the Biden administration requested. "Instead of allotting an extra \$1.4 billion for missiles, we can choose to give that to the lowest paid service members at a time when inflation is high and the cost of living continues to go up due to unchecked corporate profiteering," Bowman said.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA) opposed the amendment that was approved by his committee. Still, when the committee debated it last month, he commended "a lot of things in here that address inflation for our service members." A spokesperson for Smith, who is responsible for shepherding the NDAA through the House, declined to comment on his stance on either the Bowman amendment or the Budd amendment. [Source: Military.com | Rebecca Kheel | July 8, 2022 ++]

Army Bonuses

Update 02 ► Performance Proposal

The Army's top enlisted soldiers got together in El Paso, Texas, last month for Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Grinston's most recent "Solution Summit" — and one of the policy proposals emerging from the event could help transform how the Army retains top-performing soldiers. Grinston told Army Times in a phone interview that they're exploring performance-based retention incentives. The proposal goes back to "a fundamental concept," Grinston said. "How do we acknowledge talent, and how do we manage the talent that we have?"

The proposal, which is currently in the conceptual phase amid ongoing research, was one of several concepts Grinston approved for further exploration following the Texas conference. Grinston explained that the Solution Summit was meant to generate ideas that the sergeants major will work towards putting into place through monthly virtual meetings. Other ideas moving forward for further research include a monthly accessions review board chaired by Training and Doctrine Command's top NCO, eliminating alcohol restrictions in the barracks, a service-wide mentorship initiative, adding peer feedback to initial entry training and more. The proposals also included other retention-focused ideas, such as non-chargeable leave after reenlistments, additional G.I. Bill benefits and bonuses for those who win Army-level competitions.

Some of the ideas might require coordination across the Army, or even with senior Defense Department officials or Congress, Grinston acknowledged. And each senior NCO tasked with developing a proposal will have to identify those external challenges when they bring their pitch back to the group. Grinston's explanation of the bonuses was light on detail because Sgt. Maj. Tobey Whitney, the Army's senior career counselor, will ultimately develop the proposal, but he offered insight into what may be on the table. "If you had two [infantrymen], and one was airborne, Ranger-qualified and a master gunner...and then one passed basic qualifications of [infantrymen], scored [the minimum] on the PT test and had no other qualifications, which one would you want to keep?" asked Grinston. "We've got to do better at managing talent outside of the two variables — your [pay] grade and your [job]."

Currently, the service's enlisted retention bonus program offers money based on an eligible member's job, rank and a limited number of skill identifiers or special units, like the 75th Ranger Regiment. But for soldiers who fall into the same categories, the program offers the same amount of money regardless of performance. Grinston said that Whitney, who will present his findings to his fellow sergeants major at the end of the month, will look into the history of performance-based pay as well. "What were we doing back then, [and] why did we get rid of

it?” Grinston asked. According to a 2020 RAND report, the military had monthly “superior performance” pay from 1958 to 1976, but the program was “unpopular.”

The service’s top NCO hinted that if a new performance-based bonus pilot launches, it will likely be on a limited basis to allow it to start soon. “We don’t want to start with the whole Army. Maybe we start with one specific MOS...pilot it, try it,” he explained. “And if it doesn’t work, you get rid of it.” Ultimately, though, it’s all about talent. “For those that are really talented, they have a lot of options outside the military,” said Grinston. “We should look at that talent [as] having a lot of options inside the military.” [Source: ArmyTimes | Davis Winkie | July 13, 2022 ++]

Air Force Recruiting

Update 03: Enlisting Could Land You Almost \$60,000 in Bonus Pay

With just over two months left to hit its recruiting goals, the Air Force is dangling hefty enlistment bonuses for anyone who wants to fill a growing list of in-demand jobs. The service on 11 JUL added several more career fields that come with signing bonuses for those who enlist for four or six years by Sept. 30, bringing the total to 22 specialties. Those new options largely focus on computer systems and aircraft maintenance-related fields. People who sign up for network operations (1D731A), systems operations (1D731B), security operations (1D731D) and client systems operations (1D731E), can now bring in \$12,000 to \$20,000 for a six-year contract, depending on their cyber certifications.

- Opting to work in aircraft fuel (2A634) or electrical and environmental systems (2A636) comes with a \$3,000 bonus for a four-year contract or \$6,000 for six years.
- So does enlisting in fuels (2F031); missile and space systems electronic maintenance (2M031), general maintenance (2M032) or facilities (2M033); vehicle maintenance (2T331); and aircraft armament (2W131).
- Special warfare recruits remain the most highly sought airmen on the list. They can bring in a \$50,000 bonus upon starting active duty.

Anyone who can ship out to basic military training within five days of signing their enlistment contract, regardless of their chosen specialty, snags an extra \$8,000. Around 180 recruits have received the fast-track payments for filling last-minute vacancies at BMT since April, the Air Force Recruiting Service said in a release. “Incentives give recruiters additional support and tools to use as they press through all the challenges associated with reaching the Air Force’s FY22 accessions goals,” the service said. “Those challenges include a low youth

inclination to join, a national labor shortage and the aggregate effects of recruiting with reduced face-to-face contact since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020.”

The Air Force aims to recruit 26,151 enlisted airmen by Sept. 30 — about 1,300 fewer people than it sought earlier this year. As of July 13, 20,241 have gone to Basic Military Training and nearly 4,000 are waiting to ship out, Recruiting Service spokesperson Randy Martin said Thursday. That leaves 1,920 openings to fill in about 11 weeks. [Source: AirForceTimes | Rachel S. Cohen| July 13, 2022 ++]

Troop Vaccine Refusal

Update 08: 60K Guard/ Reserve Soldiers Cut Off from Pay and Benefits

Some 40,000 National Guard and 22,000 Reserve soldiers who refused to be vaccinated against COVID-19 are no longer allowed to participate in their military duties, also effectively cutting them off from some of their military benefits, Army officials announced 8 JUL. "Soldiers who refuse the vaccination order without an approved or pending exemption request are subject to adverse administrative actions, including flags, bars to service, and official reprimands," an Army spokesperson said in a statement.

The move comes in the midst of the annual training season, during which part-time soldiers are often ordered to serve from two weeks to a month with their units for summer training exercises. Those training events are usually critical for soldiers to sharpen their military skills and for unit commanders to ensure their formations are ready to deploy if needed. If the soldiers continue to refuse the vaccine, the consequences could be even more dire. "In the future, Soldiers who continue to refuse the vaccination order without an exemption may be subject to additional adverse administrative action, including separation," the Army spokesperson said.

The long-term impact may mean many soldiers would be forced to leave, a devastating outcome especially in the middle of a recruiting crisis as Defense Department officials struggle to fill the ranks. Soldiers will be allowed to come on duty and earn their pay in order to be vaccinated or to take part in separation procedures. "We're going to give every soldier every opportunity to get vaccinated and continue their military career," Lt. Gen. Jon Jensen, director of the Army Guard, told Military.com in an emailed statement. "We're not giving up on anybody until the separation paperwork is signed and completed."

The Army National Guard and Reserve deadline to receive the vaccine was June 30, the latest of all the services, which required vaccination last year. As of July 1, 13% of the Army

Guard and 12% of the Reserve is unvaccinated. Part-time soldiers with a pending medical or religious exemption for the vaccine may continue to train with their units and collect pay and benefits. But exemption approvals are rare. The vaccines have some rare side effects, including heart inflammation that has affected at least 22 service members, according to a study from the JAMA Network. Only six Guard soldiers across all states and territories have permanent medical exemptions for the vaccine, out of 53 who requested one, according to Army data. No Reserve soldiers have a medical exemption.

No Guard or Reserve soldiers have been approved for a religious exemption after nearly 3,000 requests. It is unclear what would qualify a soldier for a waiver on religious grounds. Soldiers are required to be inoculated against at least a dozen other ailments, including the flu and hepatitis. And no major religious leaders have come out against vaccines. Army officials have stopped short of outlining a clear plan on removing part-time soldiers, particularly Guardsmen, from service for continuing to refuse the vaccine. As of now, Guardsmen are barred only from attending federally funded drills and other training events, which make up the bulk of their service. While Guardsmen technically serve under their respective governors during their typical weekend duties, those weekends are federally funded.

Multiple Republican governors have vowed not to kick out Guardsmen who remain unvaccinated. It's unclear how easy it will be for the Defense Department to enforce its decision to bar unvaccinated Guardsmen from pay and benefits. On paper, the only thing an unvaccinated Guard soldier is qualified for now is state active-duty (SAD) orders, a comparatively rare tool for a governor to activate their Guard for short-term emergencies such as hurricane relief and responding to domestic disturbances.

SAD duties are usually short term. However, there are outliers such as Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who has used SAD orders lasting up to a year to mobilize thousands of troops for missions on the U.S.-Mexico border. But SAD duties do not qualify Guardsmen for federal benefits or retirement -- effectively shutting them out of all of the military's service incentives other than a paycheck. Reserve soldiers fall exclusively under the federal government, possibly making it easier to separate them from service. As of 8 JUL, 1,148 active-duty soldiers have been removed from the Army for failing to comply with the vaccine mandate. [Source: Military.com | Steve Beynon | July 6, 2022 ++]

Army Barracks Drinking

Alcohol Restrictions May Ditched For Soldiers in the Barracks

In a move that would no doubt be celebrated by soldiers everywhere, the Army is considering removing alcohol restrictions from the barracks. The idea was discussed at a recent summit of Army sergeants major in El Paso, Texas, where the service's enlisted leaders looked at new ways to deal with old problems. It first surfaced online after Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston's staff posted on the unofficial Army Reddit, asking for insight and ideas for the summit. One of the topics of conversation on the Reddit post, and during the summit, was creating a positive alcohol culture in the Army, which many of the services senior enlisted leaders said needed to be worked on.

"The intent, first right off the bat, was [to] ask ourselves 'do we have the right culture that we want in the Army for alcohol?'" Grinston told Task & Purpose last week. "I think that was a fair question, and I think the majority of the individuals said 'yes, we need to take this on and do something about it.'" It was decided after the summit that one unit within Army Forces Command, which hasn't yet been identified, would be the guinea pig for the new approach. Grinston said one of the first things that came up when examining the question of alcohol culture was whether restricting alcohol in the barracks was feeding into that negative culture. It was "an interesting way to look at it," he said. While policies vary by installation, some restrictions are limited to either one 12-pack of beer, two 750ml bottles of wine, or one 750ml bottle of liquor per soldier in their barracks room.

Those existing restrictions, however, haven't cut down on alcohol misuse in the military. A study published this year by Sage Journals and shared by the RAND Corporation said "binge and heavy drinking represents a serious threat to force readiness" across the military. But the study also pointed out some key aspects of "alcohol culture," namely that coworkers can view drinking together as "a way to bond and build group cohesion." The study also examined a previous report on the alcohol culture among college athletes and their coaches — when the coaches are seen as approaching alcohol with a sense of "concerned communication," which is when they create an open culture for discussions about alcohol, college athletes "reported less overall alcohol use and heavy episodic drinking." "Enforcement had no significant association with alcohol consumption," the report said.

Grinston said on 8 JUL that he was viewing removing restrictions as an idea in line with a book the sergeants major summit talked about last year: *Upstream*, by Dan Heath. The idea of the book is to look at solving problems before they happen. "The upstream of this is 'do we have the alcohol culture right in the Army?' The downstream is, when you look at suicide, how many people were drinking before they picked up the gun? When you look at a sexual assault, how many people had drank in excess before the sexual assault?" Grinston said. "So going back to last year's theme of *Upstream*, and then fast forward to this year, when we look at a lot of our suicides and sexual assaults, they have alcohol. So that leads to, 'if we do better with responsible drinking, will we have fewer suicides and sexual assaults?'"

Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond Quitugua Jr., the senior enlisted leader of the Army Chemical Corps at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, told Stars and Stripes that lifting alcohol restrictions really

could lead to fewer discipline problems. “Soldiers are saying, ‘because I know I can only keep this amount of alcohol in my barracks, when I’m at the bar I will drink as much as I can as fast as I can because I can’t continue to drink at my barracks because you just don’t want me to have enough in there,’” Quitugua told Stars and Stripes. Not to mention the double standard of allowing soldiers who live off-post to be restriction-free. “The only change is somebody has a dependent, which allows them to live off post, while others don’t,” he told Stripes.

The idea around alcohol restriction in the barracks is reminiscent of an idea from U.S. Forces Korea in 2019, which proposed ending a midnight curfew for service members. U.S. Forces Korea leaders used a 90-day trial run to see if service members could handle a curfew-free existence in South Korea, in an attempt to make the posting more attractive for future assignments. Ultimately, it was decided that the curfew would be tossed. While the intent behind the change to alcohol restrictions may be different from that in Korea, they both seem to boil down to: what would happen if we trusted our troops to be responsible?

Grinston said the Army officials taking the lead on figuring out which unit would test the new policy and for how long, will come back later this month with a plan at the monthly summit held between Grinston and the service’s sergeants major. And while removing alcohol restrictions may be what gets the most attention from soldiers, it’s far from the only idea Army leaders came up with in June to confront existing issues facing the service. They’re exploring the idea of performance-based financial incentives for re-enlisting and giving more days off to the soldiers who do. One working group from the summit is looking at more opportunities for mentorship, specifically among the noncommissioned officer corps. And at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Command Sgt. Maj. TJ Holland of the 18th Airborne Corps is overseeing a new approach to caring for soldiers who receive in-patient behavioral health care.

Grinston said he was “really proud” of the sergeants major who came to the summit ready to look for innovative ideas for how to tackle difficult issues. Similar to the monthly summit Grinston holds with them, they moved away from the typically risk-averse culture of the military, eager to try things to see what happens instead of taking years to study an approach before actually implementing it. “I think it’s really catching on to bring an idea to the table, let’s test it, and then we can measure it and say who owns it. Then we look at it next month and go oh, that’s getting momentum, maybe we go bigger ... So as we grow it at some point, we can go hey we need to do this for the whole Army. And we don’t have to wait two years. And each month we’ll assess, are these things working? Are they not working? Can we go bigger? Or do we need to just get rid of it?” Grinston said.

And is that approach working? Does Grinston believe there are ideas coming out of these monthly meetings that will really make a difference on issues like suicide and sexual assault and harassment? “Yes,” he said. “Absolutely.” [Source: Task & Purpose | Haley Britzky | July 11, 2022 ++]

Military Health Care

Update 05: 155,000 Patients to Be Pushed to Civilian Care Starting This Year

More than 155,000 military family members and retirees will be moved from the military hospital system to civilian health providers starting later this year, a process expected to last through mid-2026, according to a new Defense Department report. Under a revised plan, however, at least 29 facilities that were slated to serve only active-duty patients may still see some active-duty family members to sustain their staffs' clinical skills. In a report sent to Congress on July 1, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Gil Cisneros said that the number of facilities scheduled for downsizing has changed and active-duty family members might be kept in the military system, depending on location and training needs.

The plan gives 29 clinics the option of keeping some active-duty family members "as appropriate for provider skill sustainment." The facilities will "generally transition non-active duty Service member Primary Care to the purchased care component of the Tricare program," including the provider network and those in Tricare for Life, the defense health program that serves as a wraparound for Medicare, according to the report to the congressional defense committees. But unlike the original recommendations, all 29 will "enroll active duty family members as appropriate."

The changes are part of an effort that began in 2017 to reform the military health system to slow the rising cost of health care, sending more patients to the private sector, paid for by Tricare, and focusing military providers mainly on active-duty personnel and training. The DoD process called for downsizing or closing dozens of hospitals and clinics. In the revised plan, developed after studying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health system and the availability of care in communities near military bases, three clinics will be spared from downsizing or becoming military-only facilities: Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center at Fort Meade, Maryland, and Joel and Robinson Clinics at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Kimbrough was slated to transition to an outpatient-only clinic that served all beneficiaries, while the Joel and Robinson clinics were to transition to active-duty only facilities. But the review determined that Kimbrough is a vital part of the military health system in the National Capital Region in Washington, D.C., while changes at Fort Bragg made by the Army improved the efficiency and service of the clinics to military families, resulting in their preservation. Two facilities will still close, Community Based Medical Home Columbus Georgia and the Air Force's Sabal Park Clinic in Brandon, Florida.

In Columbus, patients will have the option of enrolling with Martin Army Community Hospital on a space-available basis or use Tricare. In Brandon, all patients will transition to Tricare. One clinic, at Naval Submarine Base New London, Connecticut, will continue serving active-duty troops and active-duty family members, but no retirees. Since the effort began, 12 facilities have transitioned to active-duty only clinics or have closed.

Reforms have been underway within the military health system since 2013, when the Pentagon established the Defense Health Agency to assume duties such as medical administration, IT, logistics and training that existed in triplicate under the separate Army, Navy and Air Force medical commands. In 2017, Congress gave the DHA broad authority to reevaluate the scope of its facilities and how the DoD serves Tricare beneficiaries who aren't in the military, such as family members and retirees. The services became responsible mainly for military operational medicine and maintaining combat-ready medical forces. "The purpose of this program is to increase the readiness of military medical staff by allowing them to be concentrated at medical platforms that have the volume and complexity of medical cases required to maintain medical skills," the report noted.

Congress has 180 days to examine the proposal, which the Defense Department will begin implementing at the start of fiscal 2023, which begins in October, according to the report. Members of Congress have expressed concerns that some areas lack the capacity to accept new patients into the community. Most recently, Rep. Greg (R-NC) wrote Defense Health Agency Director Lt. Gen. Ronald Place asking him to ensure that military personnel and dependents had access to timely appointment and care, including obstetrics care. Military physicians and spouses reported missing appointments and waiting weeks for pregnancy care as the result of a shortage of providers. "This issue may not be just one that my district is experiencing but may be systemic to all military hospitals due to reforms DHA is leading to cut costs," Murphy wrote April 6.

In their report to Congress, Defense officials said network assessments have determined that there were at least enough network primary care managers to absorb 120% of patients expected to transition. According to the report, the military treatment facilities will continue to care for patients until they have a primary care manager. Those who are in a case management program will be reviewed for remaining in the program and continue in the program or transition to private care. And those with complex medical needs who transition will receive a "warm hand off" with their new primary manager "The MHS' commitment to beneficiaries' health care is not changing. While the location where care is received may change, access to quality health care will be provided," the report noted.

As a result of the post-pandemic review, the following changes have been made, including clinics that will be closed to retirees and their family members but will retain the option to treat active-duty family members:

- Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas
- Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana
- Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama
- Dover Air Force Base, Delaware
- Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts
- MacDill Air Force Base, Florida
- Robins Air Force Base, Georgia
- Dyess Air Force Base, Texas
- Patrick Space Force Base, Florida
- Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey
- Navy Weapons Station Earle, New Jersey, Colts Neck Earle clinic
- Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland
- Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, New Hampshire, outpatient clinic
- Naval Support Activity Mid-South, Tennessee, outpatient clinic
- Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas
- Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, Louisiana, outpatient clinic
- Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Virginia, Naval Branch Health Clinic Dahlgren
- Naval Support Facility Indian Head, Maryland, outpatient clinic
- Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island, Naval Health Clinic New England
- Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Georgia, Naval Branch Health Clinic Albany
- Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Kirk Army Health outpatient clinic
- Redstone Arsenal,
- Fort Detrick, Maryland, Barquist outpatient clinic
- Rock Island Arsenal
- Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Miami, Florida, Gordon outpatient clinic
- Fort Lee, Virginia, Kenner-Lee outpatient clinic
- Defense Distribution Center in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, outpatient clinic
- Naval Technical Training Center Meridian, Mississippi, outpatient clinic

Naval Submarine Base New London, Connecticut, Naval Branch Health Clinic Groton

may continue to see active-duty families. Facilities that will retain current functions are Fort Meade, Maryland, Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Joel and Robinson Clinic. Facilities that will close completely to all users are MacDill Air Force Base's an Fort Benning, Georgia, North Columbus-Benning clinic. Two facilities are slated to receive upgrades, but those have been deferred, according to the report. They include Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii. [Source: Military.com | Patricia Kime | July 12, 2022 ++]

SBP DIC Offset

Update 69: What Surviving Spouses Need to Know About Phase 2 & 3

On January 1, 2022, Phase Two of the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination began. To help surviving spouses who are entitled to both SBP and DIC in 2022 understand the effect of this change, DFAS mailed letters in early December with individual estimates of 2022 SBP payments. As a reminder, the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination only affects SBP payments issued by DFAS. The changes do NOT affect Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments from the VA. Eligible surviving spouses will continue to receive the full amount of DIC from the VA. Check out the DFAS new Quick Reference Guide on the special focus webpage: <https://www.dfas.mil/sbpdicnews>

What Happens in 2022

January 1, 2022 marked the start of the second phase of the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination. The changes affect surviving spouses who are, or who will become in the future, eligible for both Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments, and who were subject to a full or partial SBP-DIC Offset. In Phase Two of the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination the amount that is offset (deducted) from the spouse's SBP annuity payment is *one-third* of the amount of the DIC payment.

DIC payments are not affected. The SBP monthly payment is reduced by the amount of the offset (1/3 of the amount of the DIC payment). If a spouse's gross SBP benefit is less than one-third of the amount of the DIC they receive from the VA, the spouse will not receive an SBP payment. About 12 percent of spouses (approximately 7,600) will not see a change in their SBP payment in 2022 because their gross SBP benefit is less than one-third of their DIC payment from the VA. Spouses who have their SBP offset by DIC will continue to receive the Special Survivors Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) in 2022, up to the maximum amount of \$346 per month, or up to gross amount of SBP (if the gross amount of SBP is less than \$346). In summary:

- VA will pay: 100% of the DIC payment
- DoD/DFAS will pay: The remainder of the SBP benefit after deducting an amount equal to 1/3 of the spouse's DIC payment from the SBP gross annuity amount (SBP gross – 1/3 of DIC = SBP net) plus the appropriate amount of SSIA up to the maximum allowable (\$346).
- The last payment of Phase Two is for December of 2022, which will be paid on January 3, 2023.

What Happens in 2023

In the third and final phase that begins January 1, 2023, the SBP-DIC offset will be fully eliminated. That means spouses will begin to receive their full SBP monthly payments with no

offset (reduction) on February 1, 2023. DIC payments will not be affected, the SBP benefit will be paid in full (no offset), and SSIA will NOT be paid. Note:

- Spouses should have received a January 2022 Annuitant Account Statement (AAS) near the time of their February 1, 2022 payment that showed changes to the SBP and/or SSIA payment because of the second phase of the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination
- Annuitant Account Statements are available in your myPay account <https://mypay.dfas.mil>
- Reminder: if a spouse previously received a refund of SBP premiums paid due to the SBP-DIC offset, they will NOT need to pay back that refund because of this change in the law.

Questions?

Check out the full range of Frequently Asked Questions and download the new Quick Reference Guide on the SBP-DIC News webpage: <https://www.dfas.mil/sbpdicnews>. DFAS also has a webpage explaining SBP, DIC and SSIA at <https://www.dfas.mil/sbpdicssia>

[Source: DFAS Retiree Newsletter | June 2022| ++]

Rental Scams

Update 04: Cons Take Advantage Of Stressed Out Movers

Finding a new place to live is stressful! Scammers know that people in the midst of moving don't always have time to do the necessary research. Avoid scams by watching out for these latest tricks.

How this scam works

- You respond to an online rental listing that touts a beautiful home, low rent, and great amenities. It looks legitimate; con artists often use real photos and descriptions stolen from other websites. The "landlord" replies to your message claiming to be unable to show the property. In the newest BBB Scam Tracker reports, con artists pretend to be out of town for work or in the hospital with a health emergency.
- The scammer will then create a false sense of urgency, telling you that others are interested, so you must act immediately. They will ask for a security deposit and/or the first month's rent to reserve the property. The scammer may claim that you can see the

property through a rental agent – only after you pay the deposit. In some versions, the “landlord” will require prospective tenants to complete an application form, which asks for personal details like a Social Security number.

- One renter reported this experience, “I saw a house for rent on Facebook and reached out... They sent me an application link and requested \$50 per adult through CashApp. I sent \$100 for 2 adults and got a confirmation link saying that they received the application. After that they requested \$400 to be sent to them to hold the property. I refused since I had not met them in person or seen the house.”
- No matter the details, once you send the money, the result is the same. The “landlord” will stop responding to messages and disappear. Renters reported to BBB Scam Tracker losing thousands after paying fees to hold an apartment, make a deposit, and pay the first month’s rent.

How to avoid rental scams:

- **Watch out for deals that are too good.** Scammers lure you in by promising low rents, extra amenities, and a great location. If the price seems much better than elsewhere, it may be a scam.
- **Search online for similar properties.** Do a quick search for the listing, scammer’s email address, or phone number. If you find the same ad listed in other cities, that’s a huge red flag.
- **See the property in person.** Don’t send money to someone you’ve never met for an apartment you haven’t seen. If you can’t visit an apartment or house yourself, ask someone you trust to go and confirm that it is what was advertised.
- **Don’t pay a stranger with cash transfer apps.** Many scammers now ask for payments through peer-to-peer apps instead of wired funds or prepaid debit/gift cards. Only use these apps with people you know. It’s ok to pay a landlord you trust with Venmo, Zelle, or another P2P app, but don’t use this payment method to secure an apartment or pay a deposit.

For more information

Read tips and scam alerts on our [moving page](#). For additional tips, review the [BBB Scam Alert: Avoid peer-to-peer payment scams on Paypal, Zelle, Venmo, and others](#).

If you’ve spotted a scam (whether or not you’ve lost money), report it to [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Learn how to spot a scam at [BBB.org/SpotAScam](#). [Source: Better Business Bureau | July 8, 2022 ++]

Notes of Interest

JUL 01 thru 15, 2022

- **Amazon Tip.** You can spot these dubious discounts with <https://camelcamelcamel.com>, a price tracker "that will tell you at a glance if the item frequently goes on sale, if it never goes on sale, or if it goes on sale like clockwork on Prime Day and Black Friday. It gives you real pricing of an item, so you can see if the 'sale' price is actually a good price.
- **Postage.** The United States Postal Service has just increased stamp prices by 2 to 10 cents per letter, even though the last hike was less than a year ago. The postal service says the 2-cent bump is still lower than the current rate of inflation, but not by much. As CBS News points out, it amounts to 9% more than prices less than a year ago, while inflation is around 8.6%. Higher operating expenses are also a factor, the postal service says.
- **RP Space A Travel.** RAO Angeles in response to numerous requests on clarification on current policy asked JUSMAG/AMC for an update and has received a reply. They were advised by JUSMAG/AMC that the U.S/Philippine visiting forces agreement did not extend coverage for space a travel; therefore, military retirees are no longer allowed space a travel in/out of the Philippines.
- **Euro vs. Dollar.** The euro and the U.S. dollar are exchanging at a 1-to-1 rate for the first time in nearly two decades, when the European currency was in its infancy

[Source: Various | July 15, 2022 ++]

Body Armor

Update 05: After Mass Shootings, Lawmakers Weigh Bans

Calls for new gun restrictions inevitably follow most American mass shootings, including the one that killed 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket in Late May. But in the wake of the Tops supermarket massacre, legislators here and in several other states also have turned their attention to a new target: civilian body armor. Such equipment—including helmets, bulletproof vests and armor plates—is designed to protect soldiers and law enforcement officers in the line of duty. Until recently, however, no state but Connecticut had restricted how ordinary citizens buy and sell military-grade tactical gear. The armor has, critics say, empowered violent criminals—including mass shooters—to return fire at law enforcement and extend their rampages.

Over the past 20 years, sales of body armor—like sales of guns and ammunition—have grown steadily among the general population, said Aaron Westrick, a professor of criminal justice at Lake Superior State University who has worked extensively with body armor companies and law enforcement. That has complicated some procedures for police officers, who now must train to shoot around body armor, and alarmed some lawmakers and advocates, who question why so many Americans now own tactical gear intended for combat.

In Buffalo, a bulletproof vest allowed the accused 18-year-old gunman to continue his attack even after being shot by a store security guard, retired police officer Aaron Salter Jr. Salter was among those killed. According to the Violence Project, a nonpartisan research center, 21 mass shooters in the past 40 years have worn body armor. “The shooter in Uvalde had it, in Buffalo, in Aurora, in Boulder, in Sutherland Springs,” New Jersey state Sen. Joseph Cryan, a Democrat and former county sheriff, said of the Tops shooting and other massacres in Texas and Colorado. Cryan’s proposed civilian body armor ban is in committee. “Why do we have to wait for another one?”

New York passed the nation’s first body armor ban June 6; it is a narrow prohibition on soft body vests that legislators have said they will soon expand. New York’s ban earned votes from both parties, though 46 of the 63 Republicans in the legislature opposed it. Pennsylvania Democrats also have promised to introduce body armor legislation this session. On June 16, three of New York’s U.S. representatives—two Democrats and a Republican—introduced a bill to nationally bar the sale of high-performance body armor to civilians. Already, however, these measures have proved deeply controversial. At least one body armor manufacturer has promised to sue New York, arguing the state has no right to outlaw protective equipment.

Even among researchers who study gun violence, there’s some doubt that restrictions on body armor sales will make shootings less deadly or less frequent. Instead, Democratic lawmakers have sometimes described the bans as a kind of policy fallback: Given the deadlocked politics of gun control, they’ve said, regulating body armor is one rare area of possible bipartisan consensus.

“Mass shootings are horrific—don’t get me wrong—but they’re such an insignificant part of the violence we’re confronting,” said Warren Eller, a public policy professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. “The probability of having an armed offender wearing a body vest get into a firefight with law enforcement is really, remarkably insignificant.” Guns killed more than 45,000 Americans in 2021, according to the Gun Violence Archive, a nonpartisan data collection group. Only 705 of those deaths took place during mass shootings.

Few Existing Restrictions

Lawmakers have attempted to regulate body armor before, but without much success. In 2019, Democratic U.S. lawmakers in the House and Senate proposed two separate, federal body armor bills that never made it to a vote. New York State also has repeatedly considered, but never adopted, a proposal to create a central registry of body armor sales and distributors. This time, however, proponents have been bolstered by the back-to-back tragedies in Buffalo and Uvalde, Texas, where both gunmen wore some type of tactical gear. In Buffalo, a set of law enforcement-grade hard armor plates saved the shooter from a bullet that police say might have ended his attack much earlier. In Uvalde, the gunman wore a plate carrier vest without its

bulletproof inserts—a nonprotective get-up that some legislators have nonetheless said illustrates the threat of mass shooters and body armor.

In addition to Uvalde and Buffalo, shooters recently wore bulletproof vests during the 2015 attack on a county Christmas party in San Bernardino, California, that killed 14 people; the 2017 attack on the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, that killed 26; and the 2019 attack outside a Dayton, Ohio, bar that killed nine. Some rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, also wore body armor, a fact reinforced by testimony in a House congressional hearing this week that recounted Secret Service concerns about then-President Donald Trump’s security at a rally that day.

“We shouldn’t be giving civilians’ equipment that makes them think they can get in a firefight and return fire,” said Adam Skaggs, the chief counsel and policy director at the Giffords Law Center, which advocates for gun safety legislation. “When you give people all this tactical gear made for offensive tactical assaults, it’s not a surprise when some percentage of people use it for the purpose it was designed for.” Few laws restrict civilians’ rights to buy or own body armor. Federal law prohibits people with violent felony records from owning it, and in many states, people who wear body armor while committing certain crimes can receive longer prison terms or lose the opportunity for parole. Connecticut also bans online body armor sales, requiring such transfers to happen in person.

In an online diary, the Buffalo gunman wrote that he bought his armor plates on a manufacturer’s website and his carrier vest on eBay. In the absence of stricter regulations, body armor vendors and manufacturers have been left on their own to decide how to vet their customers, if they vet them at all. Some companies require that buyers provide a reference, a reason for purchasing tactical gear or a copy of their government-issued identification. But it’s far more common for manufacturers who market to civilians to sell openly and to anyone, much like any other retailer, said Willie Portnoy, the vice president of sales and marketing at the body armor maker Buffalo Armory. “All types of companies sell on the internet, or to anyone who has a credit card or cash in hand,” said Portnoy, whose company does not sell to civilians. “That is not something we’re comfortable with. ... We don’t want to run the risk of a bad actor using our product for ill intent.”

An Unlikely Deterrent

Body armor bans seek to minimize that risk by criminalizing the sale or possession of civilian body armor, with some narrow exceptions for people whose jobs require it. In both New York and New Jersey, it will fall to either the attorney general or the department of state to determine which occupations qualify. But the legislation has drawn questions and criticisms—and not only from Second Amendment groups, who have argued that body armor restrictions impinge on Americans’ rights to protect themselves. Although New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul

touted her state's legislation as a response to the Buffalo shooting, the law omitted the type of body armor used by the gunman, an oversight that lawmakers have since said they will fix.

Several journalism organizations also have opposed the law because it may prevent reporters who cover protests, wars or other dangerous situations from obtaining protective equipment. During a June 2 debate in the New York Senate, Republican Sen. George Borrello questioned why bulletproof vests shouldn't be available to taxi drivers or people working overnight shifts. In an interview with Stateline, Borrello argued that the measure would do little to prevent mass shootings or make them less fatal. "This was a slapdash, last-minute bill they [wrote] because of the Buffalo shooter," he said. "And the law they passed wouldn't even address that."

Experts agree that body armor bans are unlikely to deter mass shooters from using tactical equipment, or from reducing gun violence overall. Body armor is so widely available, and in such large quantities, that local bans will simply push buyers into neighboring states, Westrick said. Several manufacturers already have reported a jump in sales, and neither the New York nor New Jersey bills require current owners to surrender equipment, though the federal proposal would also outlaw body armor possession. On top of that, only a tiny fraction of the more than 100,000 shootings that take place in the United States each year are committed by a perpetrator wearing body armor. There also is little evidence to suggest that people who are highly motivated to purchase tactical equipment will be dissuaded by the possibility of a misdemeanor, said Eller.

"These are meant to be deterrents, but they don't work that way," he said. "If you get a plate carrier and plates, that's a couple hundred dollars. ... If somebody's decided to do that, they're probably not someone who's worried about consequences." In the current political climate, however, some Democratic lawmakers see body armor bans as one of the few gun safety policies they can get passed. On the national level, some Republicans also have signaled they're open to body armor legislation.

U.S. Representative Tim Briggs, the Pennsylvania Democrat who chairs the House Judiciary Committee, is preparing to introduce a body armor bill that mimics New York's. Briggs told Stateline that he began looking for more "creative ways" to address gun violence after the chamber's Republican majority blocked universal background checks and other, more conventional legislative measures. Briggs isn't giving up on those policies, he said. But the attacks in Buffalo and Uvalde convinced him of the need for immediate action to prevent mass shooters from outgunning security personnel and law enforcement. "We are at an inflection point," he wrote in a memo seeking cosponsors for the ban, "where we either become part of the solution or we have blood on our hands." [Source: Government Executive | Caitlin Dewey | July 7, 2022 ++]

Advertisements

Once Acceptable Vintage Ads | 08

This Coffee Ad

This one is a doozy. In an effort to tell people about their coffee samples so you can test for freshness, the Chase & Sanborn Coffee company decided a great idea would be to enable domestic abuse. Look, she's even smiling! "Woe be unto you" for not store-testing for fresher coffee. And apparently a whole load of spanks, too. This whole ad is just really uncomfortable as it reveals the assumption that men would do this to their wives if they did anything wrong at all.

Body Language

Blunders to Watch Out For

Until we get to know someone, our brain relies on snap judgments to try to categorize the person, predict what they will do, and anticipate how we should react. You may have heard that you only have a few seconds to make a first impression, but the truth is, your brain has made up its mind (so to speak) about a person within milliseconds of meeting them. According to research done by a Princeton University psychologist, it's an evolutionary survival mechanism. Your brain decides from the information it has—in other words, how you look—whether you are trustworthy, threatening, competent, likeable and many other traits. One way we can “hack” this split-second judgment is to be aware of our body language, especially in important situations. Whether you're applying for a job, asking for a raise, or meeting with a new client, tweaking or just being mindful of our body language can influence the other person's perception of us and the outcome of the situation. 15 Body language blunders to watch out for:

1. Leaning back too much—you come off lazy or arrogant.
2. Leaning forward—can seem aggressive. Aim for a neutral posture.
3. Breaking eye contact too soon—can make you seem untrustworthy or overly nervous. Hold eye contact a hair longer, especially during a handshake.
4. Nodding too much—can make you look like a bobble head doll! Even if you agree with what's being said, nod once and then try to remain still.

5. Chopping or pointing with your hands—feels aggressive.
6. Crossing your arms—makes you look defensive, especially when you’re answering questions. Try to keep your arms at your sides.
7. Fidgeting—instantly telegraphs how nervous you are. Avoid it at all costs.
8. Holding your hands behind your back (or firmly in your pockets)—can look rigid and stiff. Aim for a natural, hands at your side’s posture.
9. Looking up or looking around—is a natural cue that someone is lying or not being themselves. Try to hold steady eye contact.
10. Staring—can be interpreted as aggressive. There’s a fine line between holding someone’s gaze and staring them down.
11. Failing to smile—can make people uncomfortable, and wonder if you really want to be there. Go for a genuine smile especially when meeting someone for the first time.
12. Stepping back when you’re asking for a decision—conveys fear or uncertainty. Stand your ground, or even take a slight step forward with conviction.
13. Steepling your fingers or holding palms up—looks like a begging position and conveys weakness.
14. Standing with hands on hips—is an aggressive posture, like a bird or a dog puffing themselves up to look bigger.
15. Checking your phone or watch—says you want to be somewhere else. Plus, it’s just bad manners.

So, what should you do? Aim for good posture in a neutral position, whether sitting or standing. Stand with your arms at your sides, and sit with them at your sides or with your hands in your lap. Pay attention so that you naturally hold eye contact, smile, and be yourself. If you discover you have a particular problem with one or two of the gestures on the list, practice by yourself with a mirror or with a friend who can remind you every time you do it, until you become aware of the bad habit yourself. [Source: Quartz | Bernard Marr | Jul 9, 2014 ++]

Vocabulary

Some Words to Enhance Yours | 220715

Which word best fits these example sentences?

1. (a) Which of these is NOT another word for “gambit”?
(b) *Ploy - Stratagem – Ruse - Discourse*
2. (a) What is another word for “feriation”?
(b) *Holiday – Hollandaise – Haricot - Harbinger*
3. (a) Which of these is a synonym for “assoil”?
(b) *Absolve – Forgive – Resolve - All of them*
4. (a) The models confidently _____ their way down the catwalk to draw attention.
(b) *Teeter – Tittup – Titter - Tantrum*
5. (a) What else could you call a philomath?
(b) *MVP – Bookworm – Sweetie - Queen*

Answers

1. Gambit [GAM-bət] - An act or remark that is calculated to gain an advantage, especially at the outset of a situation.
2. Feriation [fər-ee-EY-shən] - The observation of a holiday; cessation from work.
3. Assoil [ə-SOYL] - To absolve or release (someone) from blame or sin; to forgive, to pardon.
4. Tittup [TID-əp] - Move with jerky or exaggerated movements.
5. Philomath [FI-lə-math] - A lover of learning; a student or scholar, especially of mathematics, natural philosophy, etc.

[Source: www.wordgenius.com | July 15, 2022 ++]

News of the Weird

July 01 thru 15, 2022

Read Between the Lines – “Forever in our hearts until we meet again, cherished memories, known as our son, brother, father, papa, uncle, friend, & cousin.” The message on Steven Paul Owens’ tombstone at the Warren-Powers Cemetery in Polk County, Iowa, reflects the sentiments of the family the 59-year-old left behind when he died in September of 2021, but the message within the message has the community in an uproar, WHO-13 reported. That’s because if one reads the first letter of each line vertically, the phrase “F--- OFF” can be found. Owens’ daughter said not only was the message intentional, but her dad would have loved it: “It was a term of endearment. If he said that to you, it meant he liked you. If he didn’t like you, he didn’t

talk to you.” A statement from the board of trustees that oversees the cemetery says community members are organizing a legal response and “will not stop until the headstone is removed.” [WHO13, 6/15/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

What a Catch? – When Richard Kaser of Shelbyville, Indiana, took his friend Jon Hoop out fishing in the Ohio River on June 5, the hope was that Hoop would catch his first blue catfish, Fox 59 News reported. And Hoop succeeded with the first fish he hauled in, though the fish’s stomach seemed unusually lumpy. Expecting to discover upon cutting it open that the catfish had swallowed another fish or perhaps a turtle, Kaser instead found a foam ball, part of a fish and ... a rather large sex toy. “When it came out, Jon, my wife and I started laughing,” Kaser recalled in a Facebook post. “My wife immediately covered my daughter’s eyes and turned her away from it.” No word on when Hoop’s next fishing outing will be, but it will be hard to top his first. [Fox59, 6/9/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

Say It, Don’t Spray It – There’s a big difference between paying one’s respects and spraying one’s disrespect, and Laurie Lynn Hinds, 51, of Quitman, Texas, knows better than anyone. KLTV-7 reports that Hinds was arrested on June 5 and charged with state-jail abuse of corpse for a November 2021 incident in which Hinds walked into a Tyler, Texas, funeral home, made her way directly to an open casket and spit on the corpse inside. A witness to the incident said Hinds was angry with the family of the deceased. Abuse of a corpse is a state-jail felony in Texas, punishable by six months to two years in a state jail and up to \$10,000 in fines. [KLTV, 6/14/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

Better Late Than Never – It’s not unheard of for a library to receive a late book return in the mail, but the package the Tooting Library in London received from Canada recently won’t be forgotten anytime soon. CBC News reported that the package contained a copy of the book “A Confederate General From Big Sur” by Richard Brautigan, a book that had last been checked out in 1974 – making it approximately 48 years and 107 days overdue. Efforts to track down and thank the borrower were successful, and Tony Spence, 72, a retired judge living in British Columbia, will be spared the late fees – not only the \$7,618.10 that would be charged if the fines weren’t capped, but also the \$10.50 maximum fine. “We’re pleased to have the book back in a condition good enough to return to the shelves, if we wanted, and under the circumstances we’re waiving the fines,” a statement from the library said. “We thank Mr. Spence for returning it and hope he enjoyed it.” [CBC News, 6/11/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

Let Me Off Here – A bus driver from Boston learned the hard way that in areas where cannabis is legal, it pays to read every label. As AP News reported, on March 13, police found Jinhuan Chen, a 10-year veteran driver for Go Go Sun Tour with an exemplary record, unconscious at the wheel of a bus pulled over on the side of Interstate 95 in Stratford, Connecticut. Chen, who, according to his manager, “doesn’t drink, he doesn’t smoke, but he has a sweet tooth and likes candy,” had been transporting 38 passengers and munching on a package of gummy candies when he blacked out. Turns out the gummies were Smokies Edibles Cannabis Infused Fruit Chews, and toxicology reports revealed a high level of THC, the active ingredient in cannabis, in Chen’s bloodstream. “This would never have happened a couple of years ago,” Go Go Sun Tour manager Victor Chen said, “but now there’s marijuana everywhere here.” Jinhuan Chen will face 38 counts of reckless endangerment at his court date in August. [AP News, 6/15/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

More Gas Prices on the Rise – New Zealand’s Ministry for Environment recently proposed a plan to help curb the country’s greenhouse gas emissions, Reuters reported on June 8. The gist: charging farmers for cow burps. The country is home to 5 million people, but twice that many cattle – and 26 million sheep, to boot – and almost half of its greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture. Even so, agricultural gases have so far been exempted from the country’s emissions trading program. Well, your free ride could soon be over, Bessie: Starting in 2025, farmers would have to pay for their livestock’s emissions by volume. The proposal includes incentives for farmers to reduce gases through feed additives, and to use on-farm forestry to offset emissions. [Reuters, 6/8/2022]

[Source: <https://www.uexpress.com/oddties/news-of-the-weird/2022/06/17> | July 2022 ++]

Have You Heard or Seen?

Potpourri 01 | Toons | Pun-ography (4)

Potpourri 01

A wealthy old lady decides to go on a photo safari in Africa, taking her poodle along for company. One day the poodle starts chasing butterflies and before long, discovers that he's lost. Wandering about, he notices a hungry-looking leopard heading rapidly in his direction. The

poodle thinks, "Oh, oh!" Noticing some bones on the ground close by, he immediately settles down to chew on the bones with his back to the approaching cat. Just as the leopard is about to leap, the poodle exclaims loudly, "Boy, that was one delicious leopard! I wonder if there are any more around here?" Hearing this, the leopard halts his attack in mid-strike, a look of terror comes over him and he slinks away into the trees.

"Whew!", said the leopard, "That was close! That poodle nearly had me!" Meanwhile, a monkey who had been watching the whole scene from a nearby tree, figures he can put this knowledge to good use and trade it for protection from the leopard. So off he goes, but the poodle sees him heading after the leopard with great speed, and figures that something must be up. The monkey soon catches up with the leopard, spills the beans and strikes a deal for himself with the leopard. The leopard is furious at being made a fool of and says, "Here, monkey, hop on my back so you can watch me chew that poodle to bits!"

Now, the poodle sees the leopard coming with the monkey on his back and thinks, "What am I going to do now?", but instead of running, the dog sits down with his back to his attackers, pretending he hasn't seen them yet, and waits until they get just close enough to hear. "Where's that damn monkey?" the poodle says, "I sent him off an hour ago to bring me another leopard!"

-o-o-O-o-o-

A police officer sees a man driving around with a pickup truck full of penguins. He pulls the guy over and says: "You can't drive around with penguins in this town! Take them to the zoo immediately." The guy says OK, and drives away. The next day, the officer sees the guy still driving around with the truck full of penguins, and they're all wearing sun glasses. He pulls the guy over and demands: "I thought I told you to take these penguins to the zoo yesterday?" The guy replies: "I did . . . today I'm taking them to the beach!"

-o-o-O-o-o-

An old man in Mississippi was sitting on his front porch watching the sun rise.

He sees the neighbor's kid walk by carrying something big under his arm.

He yells out "Hey boy, whatcha got there?"

Boy yells back "Roll of chicken wire."

Old man says "What you gonna do with that?"

Boy says "Gonna catch some chickens."

Old man yells "You damn fool, you can't catch chickens with chicken wire!"

Boy just laughs and keeps walking.

That evening at sunset the boy comes walking by and to the old man's surprise he is dragging behind him the chicken wire with about 30 chickens caught in it.

Same time next morning the old man is out watching the sun rise and he sees the boy walk by carrying something kind of round in his hand.

Old man yells out "Hey boy, whatcha got there?"

Boy yells back "Roll of duct tape."

Old man says "What you gonna do with that?"

Boy says back "Gonna catch me some ducks."

Old man yells back, "You damn fool, you can't catch ducks with duct tape!"

Boy just laughs and keeps walking.

That night around sunset the boy walks by coming home and to the old man's amazement he is trailing behind him the unrolled roll of duct tape with about 35 ducks caught in it. Same time next morning the old man sees the boy walking by carrying what looks like a long reed with something fuzzy on the end.

Old man says "Hey boy, whatcha got there?"

Boy says "It's a pussy willow."

Old man says "Wait up ... I'll get my hat."

-o-o-O-o-o-

A man absolutely hated his wife's cat and decided to get rid of him one day by driving him 20 blocks from his home and leaving him at the park. As he was getting home, the cat was walking up the driveway. The next day he decided to drive the cat 40 blocks away. He put the beast out and headed home. Driving back up his driveway, there was the cat!

He kept taking the cat further and further and the cat would always beat him home. At last he decided to drive a few miles away, turn right, then left, past the bridge, then right again and another right until he reached what he thought was a safe distance from his home and left the cat there. Hours later the man calls home to his wife: "Jen, is the cat there?"

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

Frustrated, the man answered, "Put that son of a bitch on the phone, I'm lost and need directions!"

-o-o-O-o-o-

Q: What do you do with a sick chemist?

A: If you can't helium, and you can't curium, then you might as well barium.

Q: What did the scientist say when he found 2 isotopes of helium?

A: HeHe

-o-o-O-o-o-

Reporter: "Excuse me, may I interview you?" Man: "Yes!"

Reporter: "Name?" Man: "Abdul Al-Rhazim."

Reporter: "Sex?" Man: "Three to five times a week."

Reporter: "No no! I mean male or female?" Man: "Yes, male, female... sometimes camel."

Reporter: "Holy cow!" Man: "Yes, cow, sheep... animals in general."

Reporter: "But isn't that hostile?" Man: "Yes, horse style, dog style, any style."

Reporter: "Oh dear!" Man: "No, no deer. Deer run too fast. Hard to catch."

Pun-ography (4)

- How do hedgehogs make love? Very carefully.
- What did the Policeman say to the stomach? You're under a vest
- Why is it so difficult to train dogs to dance? They have two left feet.
- What wobbles and flies? A Jelly-copter.
- What goes ha ha ha clonk? A man laughing his head off.
- What do you get when you cross a cat with a lemon? A sour puss!
- "Waiter! This coffee tastes like mud." "Yes sir, it's fresh ground."
- What athlete is warmest in winter? A long jumper.
- Why did the man get the sack from the orange juice factory? Because he couldn't concentrate.
- What has four legs but can't walk? A table!

- Why did the hedgehog cross the road? To see his flatmate!
- What goes up and never comes down? Your age.
- What do you give a man who has everything? Antibiotics.
- What did the fish say when it swam into a wall? Dam.
- What's brown, steams and comes out of Cowes? The Isle of Wight ferry.
- What do you call a man that plays with leaves? Russle!
- What is the definition of an American Bra? One yank and it's off.
- What's six inches long and two inches wide and drives women wild? Money.
- What is Santa's favourite pizza? One that's deep pan, crisp and even.
- Why would you invite a mushroom to a Christmas party? He's a fungi to be with. (fun guy)
- Why was Santa's little helper feeling depressed? He had low elf-esteem.
- Who was England's first chiroprapist? William the Corncurer.
- Why should husbands make the early morning tea for their wives? Because the Bible says he Brews.
- What's the longest word in the English language? Smiles, because there is a "mile" between the first and the last letters.
- On which side do chickens have the most feathers? The outside.
- What kind of paper likes music? (W)rapping paper.
- What do you call a woman who stands between two goal posts? Annette.
- Did you hear about the man who bought a paper shop? It blew away.
- How do snowmen get around? They ride an icicle.
- Who hides in the bakery at Christmas? A mince spy.
- What do you call a penguin in the Sahara desert? Lost.
- Did you hear about the two ships that collided at sea? One was carrying red paint and the other was carrying blue paint. All the sailors ended up being marooned.
- Why are chocolate buttons rude? Because they are Smarties in the nude.
- How do you make a tissue dance? Put a boogie in it.
- What did the grape say when the elephant stepped on it? Nothing. It just let out a little wine.
- What's ET short for? Because he's only got little legs.
- What's red and white and black all over? Santa Claus after he slid down the chimney.
- Where do Snow-women like to dance? At Snowballs.
- What did Cinderella say when the chemist lost her photographs? Someday my prints will come. (prince)
- What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney? Claustrophobia!
- What kind of motorbike does Santa ride? A Holly Davidson!
- What do you call a cat in the desert? Sandy Claws!
- What does Santa do with fat elves? He sends them to an Elf Farm!
- What do you get if you cross Santa with a duck? A Christmas Quacker!
- Did Rudolph go to school? No. He was Elf-taught!
- What's the most popular Christmas wine? 'I don't like Brussels sprouts!'
- What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations? Tinsilitis!
- What do crackers, fruitcake and nuts remind me of? You!

- Santa went to the Doctors with a problem. Doctor: What seems to be the problem? Santa: I seem to have a mince pie stuck up my bottom! Doctor: Well you're in luck because I've got just the brandy cream for that!
- What time is it when you see a Chinese dentist? Tooth-hurty. (Two thirty)!
- How do you stop a skunk smelling? Hold its nose!
- What's tall and wobbly and stands in the middle of Paris? The trifle tower!
- Which country has the largest appetite? Hungary!
- What do spacemen play in their spare time? Astronauts and crosses!
- Who delivers presents to baby sharks at Christmas? Santa Jaws
- What's green, covered in tinsel and goes ribbet ribbet? Mistle-toad!
- What do you call a bunch of chess players bragging about their games in a hotel lobby? Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer!
- How do you make an octopus laugh? Ten tickles.

Thought for the Week 7/15/22

Military justice is to justice what military music is to music.

-- **Groucho Marx**

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