



NAVAL ENLISTED
RESERVE ASSOCIATION
WINDY CITY CHAPTER



Mar-Apr 2011 Edition
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From the President's desk...

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Hello to all.

I want to first thank our past officers of the Windy City Chapter. Thank you for stepping up and taking your positions. We need to continue passing the gavel in order to continue the strength of our chapter.

Next, I would like to thank you all. Thank you, for all the support you have always giving me in the past as National President. Jim Premeske thank you for the last write-up you wrote in our newsletter. It took me by surprise and I am humbled.

I have sat back for four years and watch NERA HQ as Joanne Elliott and Nick Marine sat in the National President's seat. I am proud of what they have accomplished. We are still here and productive. NERA has helped many of our military in need. Our name is stronger in Washington, DC.

The major concern of our organization and others is membership. I'm sure you have heard this over and over. It's true! There are chapters with the same members standing up and taking officer positions for years. Some chapters have ceased to exist because membership dwindled into obscurity. That has to stop or NERA will also cease to exist.

We need new members in order to continue our lifeline. How do we do that? How long have you been a member? Why do you continue going to the meetings? What is there that you want to get involve with? How do you feel about the members in your chapter? These are the things you should tell someone. Invite them to a meeting, picnic or chapter event. What can NERA give them that you found?

Each one of us needs to bring one person to a chapter event. Introduced them to us and our chapter. We need to grow one person at a time.

Our chapter meetings are going to change to keep on a one hour time limit. I would like to divide our chapter meetings into four 15 minutes sections. First section: chapter officer/committee reports, Second section: NERA HQ news. Third section: Current Bills that affects our and military needs for today and tomorrow. Fourth section: Good for the chapter. If you have any news or ideas to pass on, please do, before our future meetings. This way we can get it into the next agenda.

Last but not least...always keep us informed on any changes in your life i.e., address, phone and email. We need to stay connected.

See you at the next meeting, 12 APR 2011, time: 2000. Call or email me anytime.

Thanks!

Mark Your Calendar:

Meetings are conducted at 2000 on the second Tuesdays of even numbered months at the VFW Post #3579 Canfield at Higgins (alongside the Kennedy Expressway) : on the 2nd deck adjacent to the bar. Remaining 2011 WCC Meetings: Apr 12, Jun 14, Aug 9, Oct 11, Dec 6 (1st Tuesday)

Planning Ahead!

The Leo J Milobar Chapter will host a North Central Regional Conference 10, 11, & 12 June 2011.

Restoration & Hospitality Room on 10 June

Visit Special Sights in Omaha on the 12th.

Jerry Swift would appreciate a response if you plan to attend.

Holiday Inn Express 6902 N 102th St Omaha, NE 68122 Phone 402-505-8181, rooms will be about \$75.00 +taxes with a breakfast included. Make reservations by 1 May as rooms are short in supply. Registration Fee will be \$35.00 or \$40.00 per person; Sat - 11 June Luncheon is included with registration.

In this issue: 2/8/11 Minutes / W^oTC relative in spotlight/ Desert Cross / Supreme Crt denies Obama Case / Transgender vets want in / New Force M^CPO / Air Tanker boom falls off / 2011 Pay raise ? / Vet foreclosures deferred / Tri Care young adults are expensive / S^AT software / Pentagon still pushing Tri care fees increase / What we learned from USS Cole / C^MT fired for touching / synthetic drug use / Crusade on Islam untrue / Record sniper kill / Yardstick- where to retire

Windy City Chapter meeting minutes -2 /08/2011

meeting of the Windy City Chapter convened @ 2010 .

Pres & VP, Treas, Sec, Exec. Coun. & MAA Present
Minutes approval: Mx Bill Anderson 2xGeno Koelker Ayes
Treas. Report Approval Mx Jim Premeske 2x Steve Devereaux Ayes.

Sunshine fund: steady @ \$202 following \$37 contribution
Newsletter & Website reports: Must endeavor to maintain compact size of newsletter/ Editor

Nominating Committee Report: 2011-12 Officers sworn in
Old Business: Windy City new flag status = logo being provided to vender- 2011 Mtg dates given to bar tendress
Discussion of WCC no pay relationship with VFW. New manager is Mary Lou

New Business: Motion solicited to host 2013 National Conference in Chicago Metro area. Motion was amended to approve consideration of hosting, pending a report to be presented by interim Conference Chair. Motion byGeno Koelker, 2nd by Andy. Ayes. Amendment by Jim Premeske

Penny suggests hospitality suite close by 2300. Consideration for being near Midway was tabled. Geno would like it to be near GLakes, i.e.: Waukegan. Larry Monroe suggested go north and west, not in city. Jim Premeske recommended downscale, & austerity. Ayes, 0 Nays. Force Ronnie Wright is scheduled for an exit interview at NERA HQ. March 4 was the Sailor of the Year presentation in DC. On May 5th Delores Rucker is hosting a MCPO conference hosted by NERA. North Central Regional Conference @ Omaha in June. Chicago Area Navy Day is 6/25 thru 7/4 with Taste of Chicago;celebrating 100 years at Great lakes and 100 years of Naval aviation.

Geno was directed to reorder another 100 WCC challenge coins. Mx Ed Whiteside 2x Butch Michaelson.

National Website Meister relocated to Nome,Alaska with site incomplete. Contract for 2011 National Conference in Sacramento, California.

Good of Order: NONE

Motion to adjourn @ 2122 x DON Mitchell 2 X Jerry Padour

50/50 \$30 won X ?.

Major Joel Verneti. Military Intelligence Windy City relative in the Spotlight

Editor's note: Over a year ago, as I announced a few proposed adjustments to the Windy City Newsletter content, I lamented that my goal was to increase the number of stories about our members.

Although I have repeatedly phished for input, little has been forthcoming. Part of the issue is that no one particularly wants to be accused of "bragging about themselves". So I'm going it alone. Beginning this month I'll be asking key participants in Windy City Chapter to career resume to cite their Navy and civilian accomplishments, to brag (or complain) about their offspring, and to tell our membership what makes them special.

Out of the frying pan and into the fire:

MrP as your editor believes you should be afforded concise, unbiased, information on the status of current military operations. Several Windy City

Chapter members have served in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. Others have received special augmentation orders to fill stateside personnel shortfalls due to the current tempo of military operations.

Our retirees should consider how the DOD has changed over the last fifteen to twenty years. The new, smaller, less costly military is heavily dependent upon contractors to perform the routine logistic and sustenance activities the uniform services formerly performed internally. We no longer do our own landbased cooking, laundry, nor provide utility services. In the U.S. and Out CONUS, gate guards, and often all base security, are contractors, as are most admin staff personnel.

As patriarch of my family I carry a greater interest than most. Before I finished my thirty one years of service, my children had already begun their careers as Army Officers. Both of my daughters subsequently met their future husbands at the Officer basic Courses of their respective corps.

All have since completed more than their required ROTC commitment, except my youngest daughter's husband, a Military Intelligence (in the Army an oxymoron is an eight sided moron) Major. Joel has just returned to Fort Campbell, KY from another year of deployment, this time to Afghanistan. (This necessitated a pre-Christmas move by my daughter from Fort Leavenworth, KS to Tennessee, with her three rug rats and three dogs and no [deployed] husband.) His next assignment is as G-2 (intelligence officer) for the 160th SOAR (Special Operations Airborne Regiment) of the 101st Airborne Division.

While Joel sees this as a career enhancing billet, I am wary of the units valiant reputation. 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment

The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) is a special operations unit of the United States Army that provides helicopter aviation support for general purpose forces and Special Operations Forces. Its missions have included attack, assault, and reconnaissance, and are usually conducted at night, at high speeds, low altitudes, and on short notice. The 160th SOAR is headquartered at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The 160th SOAR are also known as the **Night Stalkers**.



U.S. Navy Sailors from the USS Bataan (LHD 5), stand-by as two U.S. Army MH-60L Blackhawk helicopters, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) prepare to land in 2006.



An MH-6 Little Bird from 160th SOAR carrying Special Forces Soldiers prepares to land during an aerial infiltration demonstration.

The 160th SOAR fly MH-47G Chinooks, A/MH-6M Little Birds, MH-60K Black Hawks and MH-60L Black Hawks.

History

After the failure of 1980's Operation Eagle Claw, the disastrous attempt to rescue American hostages held in Tehran, Iran, President Carter ordered the CNO to determine why it went wrong and how the U.S. military could best mount another attempt. There were no U.S. helicopter units trained in this kind of stealthy, short-notice Special Operations mission.

The Army looked to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), which had the most diverse operating experience of the service's helicopter units. The chosen pilots immediately entered intensive training in night flying.

The 160th first saw combat during 1983's Operation Urgent Fury, the U.S. invasion of Grenada as the first unit in assigned to assemble students, assure their safety and prevent hostage taking.

In 1987 and 1988, its pilots took part in Operation Earnest Will, the protection of re-flagged Kuwaiti tankers in the Persian Gulf during the Iran–Iraq War. They flew from US Navy warships and leased oil barges in a secret sub-part called Operation Prime Chance, and became the first helicopter pilots to use night vision goggles and forward looking infrared devices in night combat.

The Night Stalkers spearheaded Operation Just Cause, the 1989 invasion of Panama, taking control of the airport prior to the invasion. They were also used in Operation Desert Storm in 1991.



The crew of Super 6-4 a month before the Battle of Mogadishu. From left: Winn Mahuron, Tommy Field, Bill Cleveland, Ray Frank and Michael Durant.

In October 1993 in Somalia, Night Stalkers became involved in the Battle of Mogadishu, which later became the subject of the book Black Hawk Down, and its film adaptation. Two Night Stalker Black Hawks, Super 6-1 (piloted by Cliff Wolcott), and Super 6-4 (piloted by Mike Durant), were shot down in the battle. Eighteen men killed in the Battle of Mogadishu were members of the SOAR Night Stalkers team, who were lost along with the two Black Hawks.

Afghanistan 2001: In October one month after 9/11 a 160th Chinook chopper flew over 150 miles from Uzbekistan. A few weeks later they, along with the Northern Alliance retook the city of Mazari Sharif from the Taliban. That December Night Stalker crews resupplied over 150 Delta Force, British SBS and CIA SAD operatives during their hunt for Osama bin Laden in the Tora Bora mountain complex.

Afghanistan, 2005: Eight Night Stalkers were lost along with eight Navy SEALs on a rescue mission for Seal PO1 Marcus Luttrell, after their MH-47 Chinook helicopter was hit by an RPG (rocket propelled grenade). They were sent out to look for Luttrell after Operation Red Wings, which he was undertaking with

three other SEALs, went horribly awry after their presence was revealed to the Taliban, presumably by goat herders. The SEALs voted to release the goat herders for fear of repercussions back home should they chose the safe options

The 160th provided aviation support during numerous special operations raids during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. One of them was the rescue mission of PFC. Jessica Lynch taken prisoner in 2003, the raid in Al Qadisiyah, as well as the rescue of three Italian contractors and one Polish businessman held for ransom by Iraqi insurgents in 2004.

Cross Case Spurs New Legislation

January 14, 2011

[Stars and Stripes](#) by Leo Shane III

WASHINGTON -- A group of California lawmakers is pushing for congressional protection for religious symbols included at U.S. war memorials after the latest court challenge to a San Diego veterans monument that features a 43-foot high cross.

Earlier this month, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Mount Soledad cross -- which has been at the center of legal fights for more than two decades -- amounts to an unconstitutional display of government favoring a specific religion, and must be changed. Supporters of the memorial have vowed to continue fighting the case to the Supreme Court.

But California Republican Rep. Duncan D. Hunter hopes his latest legislative bid might settle the fight before that, by allowing religious symbols to be included in any federal military memorial by law. The measure could circumvent the courts' interpretation of the Establishment Clause, which prohibits the U.S. government from showing preference for one religious group over another.

"The War Memorial Protection Act is just as much about Mount Soledad as it is every other war memorial across the country," Hunter said in a statement. "In cases where religious elements are present, the fact that these monuments stand as symbols of military service and sacrifice does not change."

But opponents of the cross say its presence replaces the military focus of the memorial with a Christian one. Supporters say a defeat in California could have widespread changes for memorials throughout the country, including Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, where religious symbols are engraved in the headstones of thousands of fallen servicemembers.

High Court Denies Obama Citizenship Case

January 11, 2011

Agence France-Presse

The U.S. Supreme Court refused Monday to take up the question of President Obama's citizenship, which a core group of skeptics continues to challenge despite presentation of his U.S. birth certificate.

The high court, without comment, rejected the request by Orly Taitz, a California lawyer who has emerged as a leader of the "birther" movement of mainly rightwing protesters who question where Obama was born.

She had asked the court to annul a federal judge's \$20,000 penalty for filing a "frivolous lawsuit" by her client, a U.S. Soldier who refused to deploy to Iraq because she viewed the commander in chief as illegitimate.

The U.S. Constitution allows only "natural born" Americans to be elected to the presidency. Obama was born on Aug. 4, 1961, in the U.S. state of Hawaii.

Judge Clay Land in the southeast state of Georgia determined in October 2009 that Taitz's pursuit of the case was "breathtaking in its arrogance and borders on delusional," and scolded her for expressing "no contrition or regret regarding her misconduct."

She had filed a stay of deployment request on behalf of Capt. Connie Rhodes, an Army medic who challenged Obama's legitimacy as president. When Land threw the case out, Taitz publicly branded it "an act of treason."

In her petition before the Supreme Court, Taitz asked: "Is the whole nation de facto reduced to the level of slaves or serfs when one without valid vital records, without Social Security number of his own and without a valid long form of birth certificate is able to get in the position of president?"

On Monday, Taitz said she would not let the case rest.

"I will file a motion for reconsideration," she said on her website, adding that she has "evidence of highly suspicious activity in several federal courts."

"If we don't clean up corruption in the judiciary, in the White House, citizens of this country will have no trust in the system and will take justice in their own hands. This is dangerous," she wrote.

According to a survey early last year of 2,000 Republicans, 36 percent said they believed Obama, the country's first African-American president, was not born in the United States.

Several complaints on the subject have been filed in various U.S. courts but the motions have been rejected, although Obama's arch-conservative opponents continue to level the charges.

Last week during a symbolic reading of the U.S. Constitution in the House of Representatives, a woman screamed out "Except Obama! Except Obama!" when a lawmaker read the passage that spells out requirements for becoming president.

Hawaii has published the birth certificate of Barack Hussein Obama, which states he was born Aug. 4, 1961, at 7:24 p.m. in the maternity ward of Kapiolani hospital in Honolulu.

Transgender Vets Want Military Access

First it was the compromise of "Don't Ask, don't tell", now it is Gay is Optional, after Gay is Mandatory this is the next DOD position on the issue.

SAN FRANCISCO -- Before handcuffing herself to the White House fence, former Petty Officer First Class Autumn Sandeen carefully pinned three rows of Navy ribbons to her chest. Her regulation dress blue skirt, fitted jacket, hat and black pumps were new -- fitting for a woman who spent two decades serving her country as a man.

Sandeen was the only transgender person among the six veterans arrested in April while protesting the military's ban on openly gay troops. But when she watched President Obama last month sign the hard-fought bill allowing for the ban's repeal, melancholy tinged her satisfaction.

"This is another bridesmaid moment for the transgender community," the 51-year-old San Diego resident said.

The "don't ask, don't tell" policy now heading toward history does not apply to transgender recruits, who are automatically disqualified as unfit for service. But the military's long-standing posture on gender-identity has not prevented transgender citizens from signing up before they come out, or from obtaining psychological counseling, hormones and routine health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs once they return to civilian life.

So as the Pentagon prepares to welcome openly gay, lesbian and bisexual servicemembers for the first time, Sandeen is not alone in hoping the United States will one day join the seven other nations -- Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, the Czech Republic, Thailand and Australia -- that allow transgender troops.

"There is really no question, it's just a matter of when," said former Army Capt. Allyson Robinson, 40, a 1994 West Point graduate who has spoken to sociology classes at the alma mater she attended as a male cadet. "There are active-duty, as well as reserve and national guard transgender servicemembers, serving today."

No one knows how many transgender people are serving or have served. Neither the Department of Defense nor the VA keep statistics on how many servicemembers have been discharged or treated for transgender conditions or conduct.

The Transgender American Veterans Association, an advocacy group founded in 2003, estimates there could be as many as 300,000 transgender people among the nation's 26 million veterans.

When 50 TAVA members laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier six years ago, representatives from every U.S. conflict since World War II were there, said former Navy Machinist Mate First Class Monica Helms, the group's co-founder and president.

Most had spent years, if not decades, as veterans before they could acknowledge the mismatches between their brains and their bodies. Helms, 59, spent four years in the engine room of a nuclear submarine during the Vietnam War, but did not start living as Monica until 1997.

Military regulations state that men and women who identify with or present a gender different from their sex at birth have mental conditions that make them ineligible to serve. Those who have undergone genital surgery are listed as having physical abnormalities. Servicemembers caught cross-dressing on base have been court-martialed for interfering with "good order and discipline," according to the National Center for Transgender Equality.

Until the American Psychiatric Association removes Gender Identity Disorder from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, as it did for homosexuality in 1973, that's likely to remain the case, Sandeen said.

The very diagnosis that keeps transgender Americans out of uniform has enabled some to obtain transition-related medical care and other services when they become veterans.

Federal law prohibits Veterans Health Administration (VA) facilities from performing or paying for sex-change surgeries. But some VA medical centers provide psychological counseling, sex

hormones, speech therapy and other medical treatment short of gender reassignment surgery.

Sandeen said the VA hospital in San Diego made it possible for her to start living as a woman once she retired from the Navy a decade ago.

"As soon as I got an appointment with the psychiatry department, the first thing I said to them is, 'I have gender issues. I don't know if I'm a transvestite or a transsexual or if I'm something in between, but I need to work this out with a therapist,'" she recalled.

She eventually received a recommendation to see a VA doctor who could prescribe estrogen to help her grow breasts and hips and diminish body and facial hair. The endocrinologist told her she first would have to try presenting herself as a woman for two-and-half-months.

Sandeen, already classified as a disabled vet with bipolar disorder, had lined up a work-study job at the hospital's patient health library.

"February 6, 2003, my first day of being publicly female; I was working for \$10 an hour at the VA helping other vets with health care needs," she said. "The VA is the organization that helped me work this out."

The attention Sandeen received as a veteran is not unusual, but not universal, transgender advocates say. In response to complaints that some transgender veterans have been treated disrespectfully or denied care at VA facilities, Helms' group has lobbied the Veterans Affairs department to issue guidelines on services to which transgender patients are entitled.

San Diego resident Zander Keig, who was a woman during a two-year stint with the Coast Guard, had been on testosterone for a year when he wanted his prescription transferred from a suburban VA clinic. But veterans are not allowed to change their names on discharge papers so he was directed to the women's VA clinic in San Francisco.

Keig, 44, said a senior physician there "grilled me with questions. Why are you taking T? Do you know what it's doing to your body? How are you eligible for these services?"

"I said, 'I established my eligibility for VA services in 1988, I have every reason to be here. Am I going to get my shots or not?'" Keig recalled. He did get his injections.

In 2007, the VA complex in Boston became the first veterans' medical provider to draft a policy designed to assure transgender veterans received consistent and sensitive care.

Department of Veterans Affairs spokeswoman Katie Roberts said the VA is reviewing the Boston policy and others, hoping to create a formal directive in the "near future."

"As all veterans served this nation with the same expectation of honor and excellence, VA strives to provide all veterans equitable treatment respecting their honor by providing medical services with excellence," she said.

Even with the enormous changes in their lives, many transgender veterans maintain connections with their military service. Sandeen still shops at a Navy commissary and grabs her military identification when she goes walking. Robinson considers her four years as a West Point cadet the best of her life, although she feared being caught with women's clothes in her trunk.

"I love this country and I felt a personal calling to express that love of America through my willingness to sacrifice," she said.

But when Robinson made her triumphant return to the academy for her speaking engagement, along with the congratulations,

came comments that she was unworthy to be part of the "Long Gray Line."

"It was as though the service I had rendered was suddenly worthless," she said.

Former Air Force Sgt. Nicole Shouder, 52, who underwent sex reassignment surgery in 1999, has spent the last four years wearing a uniform at sea, first with the Coast Guard auxiliary and now as a civil service mariner nurse aboard the USNS Robert E Perry, which recently supplied deployments in the Mediterranean.

Shouder considers it a privilege to wear Navy-issued collar brass and shoulder boards.

"Given my circumstances, it really is," she said. "Essentially, until someone can say otherwise, I am probably the only out and open post-op transsexual in uniform for the Navy, or as close as you can be."

New Reserve Force Master Chief Chosen

Navy News|by Capt. Robert Durand

WASHINGTON -- The next Navy Reserve Force master chief was announced by the chief of the Navy Reserve Jan. 6.

Chief of Navy Reserve Vice Adm. Dirk Debbink announced that Command Master Chief Christopher T. Wheeler was selected as the next Navy Reserve Force master chief.

Wheeler will relieve Navy Reserve Master Chief (FMF) Ronney Wright as Navy Reserve Force master chief in June 2011.

"Command Master Chief Wheeler was chosen for this important job from a group of highly motivated, professional and qualified candidates," said Debbink. "I will rely on his insight and counsel to ensure that our Sailors, their families and their civilian employers have what they need to carry out our mission and to live up to our Navy Reserve Force motto - 'Ready Now. Anytime, Anywhere.'"

Wheeler's focus as force master chief will be taking care of the Navy Reserve Sailors he works for.

"Taking care of Sailors is what this job is all about, and Master Chief Wheeler is a deckplate leader who knows and cares deeply for our Sailors," said Wright. "Serving in this job is a tremendous honor and an awesome responsibility. Command Master Chief Wheeler is eager to take on this challenge."

Stewardship to the citizen-Sailors who man the Reserve Force is high on Wheelers priorities.

"I believe this job is about being an honest steward for the Navy Reserve Force, and I pledge my stewardship to Vice Adm. Debbink and all of our Navy Reserve Sailors," said Wheeler.

Wheeler currently serves as the command master chief of Naval Air Force Reserve and as staff command master chief for Naval Air Force.

The Navy Reserve Force master chief is responsible for advising the chief of Navy Reserve on matters affecting the morale, retention, Sailor development and general well-being of the 53,000 enlisted personnel of the Navy Reserve. The force master chief is also charged with ensuring active communications

throughout the force and instilling a sense of heritage and active support of Navy core values to all Sailors.

Wheeler will be the 14th Navy Reserve Force master chief.

Substantial Piece of Refueling Boom Falls Off EADS Tanker



Oops. A “substantial” part of the aerial refueling boom aboard an Airbus A330 MRTT tanker built for the Royal Australian Air Force broke off and fell into the Atlantic during a recent flight test.

While everyone aboard the (Airbus crewed) tanker and refuelee was ok, a “major part of the boom broke off part-way through refueling a Portuguese Air Force F-16 at around 5 p.m. Jan. 19,” reads a Defense News article on the matter.

From an EADS statement released this morning:

The incident resulted in the detachment and partial loss of the refueling boom from the MRTT, which fell into the sea.

Both aircraft suffered some damage but returned safely to their home airfields.

This is the same boom, and according to EADS officials almost the exact same airplane, that’s being offered as the KC-45 in the U.S. Air Force’s \$35 billion KC-X contest. It did its first wet refueling with another airplane in 2008, although it has yet to enter service anywhere.

EADS, whose North American division has the lead for its KC-X bid, is the parent company of Airbus.

EADS has repeatedly stressed the superiority of its [boom design](#) over the last few years, insisting that it gives the A330-based tankers a critical edge in terms of fuel flow over Boeing’s proposed [NewGen Tanker](#) which is based on an updated KC-767.

It’s too early to tell how this will impact the competition which is likely to wrap up next month. First, investigators will need to know what on Earth caused the fairly advanced boom to fall apart. This could be a one time occurrence due to freak circumstances or it could reveal a design flaw in the system. We’ll see.

For proper analysis we would also like to know how often this type of thing happens with the USAF’s current fleet of KC-135s and KC-10s.

Another big question is: Could the Air Force delay the contract award to give EADS time to investigate the accident?

Benies:

2011 Pay Raise and TRICARE Expansion

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 was passed by Congress and has been sent to the President for signature. Touted as the largest Defense budget since WWII, the bill authorizes \$725 billion for fiscal year 2011. The bill covers virtually every aspect of military spending including authorization for expanding TRICARE coverage to include dependents up to age 26, TRICARE fee protection, family support and care giver programs and a 1.4 percent increase in military pay.

Moratorium on Foreclosures on Vets

Freddie Mac recently instructed its mortgage servicers to hold off on starting foreclosure proceedings against servicemembers who are recently released from active duty. These companies must now wait at least nine months from the time of discharge before taking any kind of foreclosure action. Any veteran or servicemember should contact his or her mortgage servicer for more information. The Department of Veterans Affairs also offers counseling and resources.

New 'TRICARE Young Adult'

It wasn't bad enough that Tricare was "an insufficient insurance program" to avoid further penalizing military retirees for carrying inadequate health insurance coverage (remedied by exempting Tricare from the requirement, not by improving coverage) but now the coup de grace'!

National Defense Authorization Act of 2011 includes a provision to offer the "TRICARE Young Adult" program, which opens TRICARE coverage for adult dependents up to age 26. Unfortunately, the new TYA program comes with a large price tag. Some estimates show the annual premium could go as high as \$2,400 or \$200 a month. By comparison, Health and Human Services estimates that under that Health Care Reform Act civilian families will see an increase in annual premiums of somewhere between \$62 to \$149 a year.

I Hope this is not an example of the *CHANGE* we were promised!

SAT/ACT software available to prep your teen for college

Tremendous challenges face America's military families, especially when frequent relocations are involved. Military families move approximately every two years and military children will attend six to nine different schools between kindergarten and high school graduation. Students face the stress of making new friends and leaving others behind. They must become acquainted with new schools at awkward times, and the stress can affect their school performance. It is especially difficult for high school students preparing for college.

The SAT/ACT exams are one of the most important tests in a child's life. Above average scores result in thousands of dollars in scholarships, and acceptance to preferred universities. The best way to improve score results on the SAT or ACT, and thus increase a student's odds of receiving scholarships and getting into the school of their choice, is to practice. By practicing students become acquainted with the format, the timing, and the subject-matter on the tests. Due to the demands and sacrifices military families face, often times parents are unavailable to help their high school students prepare for their college entrance exams.

There are many college test preparation programs available, most of which are very expensive. Fortunately, military families do not need to spend a fortune preparing their students for SAT and ACT exams. eKnowledge, LLC is donating \$200 SAT and ACT PowerPrep™ Programs to Military families

worldwide. The software offers self paced practice that fits the military student's needs and lifestyle. The DVD contains hours of video instruction, animation, graphics, and thousands of sample questions and practice tests. Students can select the training they need and study at their own pace. Research shows that students who study for their college entrance exams are more comfortable, more confident and better prepared, resulting in higher test scores.

eKnowledge has received over 60,000 thank you letters and testimonials from grateful recipients of the software "*Thank you so much. I am retired Air Force. This is the third child I've ordered for. My other two children did very well on the ACT, PSAT and SAT using this software to prepare them.*"

Eligible recipients of the software include Servicemembers from all branches of the military who are active duty, retired, Veterans, Guard, **Reserve**, DOD employees, and civilians performing military support. Also eligible are relatives and dependents of anyone who otherwise qualifies from the prior list. There is a nominal charge of \$13.84 per standard program for the cost of materials and registration (+s/h). eKnowledge does not profit from this venture.

Benies- Pentagon Pushes for TRICARE Fee Increases

Stars and Stripes by Leo Shane III

WASHINGTON -- End strength cuts and the demise of the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle program dominated the headlines of the this week's defense budget conversations, but the financial projections also call for another controversial cost-saving measure: increases in TRICARE fees for military retirees.

On Thursday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates called the military's future health care costs "unaffordable" and said the department could save up to \$7 billion over the next five years with modest increases in TRICARE fees for working-age retirees. Active-duty troops and their families would not be affected by the plan.

Let your legislator know how you feel about the proposed TRICARE increases.

"The current TRICARE enrollment fee was set in 1995 at \$460 a year for the basic family plan and has not been raised since," Gates told reporters. "During this time, insurance premiums paid by the private sector and other government workers have risen dramatically. For example,

the fees for a comparable health insurance program for federal workers cost roughly \$5,000 per year."

As a result, he said, many of those retirees forgo their employer's health plan to remain with TRICARE, creating a heavy burden on the defense budget.

But lawmakers have rejected that idea multiple times in the past decade, including three straight years during President George W. Bush's tenure in office. And in 2009, veterans groups lashed out at the White House when officials there resurrected the idea.

That year, as part of the fiscal 2010 defense budget, lawmakers passed nonbinding language warning Pentagon officials not to punish military veterans through health care hikes in order to balance the budget.

But Gates insisted that the changes will "better align the department with the rest of the country," and strengthen the military health care system in the long run. The new TRICARE fees are expected to be included in the fiscal 2012 defense budget proposal, to be unveiled next month.

Sea Service News

'We Must Always Be Ready' - What we learned from the USS Cole attack

Virginian-Pilot|by Kate Wiltrout

The suicide blast that ripped open an American warship during a fueling stop in Yemen did more than kill 17 sailors and change the lives of everyone on board that day.

The events of Oct. 12, 2000, also fundamentally changed the way the Navy operates around the world -- how it assesses threats in foreign ports, trains recruits and prepares medical personnel for deployments.

In ways large and small, the lessons learned after the bombing resonate throughout the Navy. Sailors who joined in the past decade may not know it, but everything from the drills they endured at Great Lakes Naval Training Center to their daily routines aboard ships have been shaped by the attack on the Cole and its crew's response to widespread damage.

Perhaps the most obvious changes involve what the Navy calls anti-terrorism and force protection: keeping ships safe when they pull into ports from Norfolk to New York to Dar es Salaam.

Capt. Chris Peterschmidt has seen the changes first-hand. He was the executive officer, or second-in-command, on the Cole in 2000. Years later, he became commanding officer of the destroyer Pinckney, a newer version of the Cole.

After the bombing, he said, the Navy started using a buoy line to establish a clear boundary around warships in foreign ports. The line, suspended across the water by a cable, extends about 100 meters around the ship in all directions.

The ship has responsibility for securing the area inside the buoy line. Host nations are expected to be responsible for patrolling the waters outside the line.

When the Cole arrived in Aden in 2000, Yemeni authorities did not provide any guards, police boats or security. Under the new guidelines, that would put a port off-limits to U.S. Navy ships.

Crews are trained to treat breaches of the buoy line seriously.

"If you enter the zone, you get a lot of attention," said David Mitchell, a former SEAL who spent five years working for the Navy on maritime threat issues and now is a consultant in Seattle. It's not a free-fire zone, he said, and sailors patrolling the area have tools such as loudspeakers that deliver messages in local languages.

Boaters who stray into forbidden territory "are given every opportunity not to be stupid," Mitchell said. "But if they keep coming on a straight bearing at high speed, American ships are certainly within their rights to defend themselves."

Another big difference between the Cole's refueling stop in Yemen and the Pinckney's similar calls in Malaysia, Singapore and India was Peterschmidt's personal communication with Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents prior to arrival.

According to Peterschmidt and Capt. Sam McCormick, director for anti-terrorism/force protection for the Navy's Fleet Forces Command, NCIS now has more agents serving overseas who provide specific, timely analysis about what kind of threats await in foreign ports. They provide that intelligence directly to the ship.

"I had somebody I could talk to," Peterschmidt said.

Depending on the agents' input, he would modify specific procedures for docking or refueling.

Although attacking a U.S. warship is an act of war that will be met with severe consequences, ultimately, it's up to the captain and crew of each vessel to fend off attacks.

"Our enemies have called us out. They've specifically said they're targeting the Navy," McCormick said. "We have to be ready all the time."

The Cole bombing "really precipitated a mindset change. When a captain takes his ship into a foreign port, there's no doubt that they have to protect their ship."

And no captain takes that job lightly.

The Navy still requires ships to file detailed force protection plans days in advance of arrival in a foreign port, even if, like the Cole, they anchor hundreds of yards from the mainland to refuel.

"There are certain minimum standards that are clearly delineated and must be met," McCormick said.

Navy brass -- especially those in charge of overseas operations -- now scrutinize those plans more carefully. And if certain measures aren't met, they forbid a warship from pulling into port. That has happened multiple times since the Cole bombing, McCormick said, though he

declined, for security reasons, to provide specifics of where and when.

Still, Navy officials know that it's highly unlikely another ship attack would mimic the Cole bombing, in which two men in a small boat packed with explosives pulled up next to the destroyer as it refueled. Instead, those wanting to cripple a vessel will look for a new vulnerability to exploit.

"What keeps me up at night is the fact that we're dealing with a highly adaptive enemy," McCormick said. "But what makes me feel good at night is that at the end of the day, our sailors figure it out. They innovate, they adapt, they overcome. They're the guys our force protection ultimately rests on."

Mitchell said the Navy has elevated force protection and anti-terrorism concerns "almost to a science," as have other branches of the military. But they can't be crippled by concern about terrorism: a primary task remains serving in dangerous places overseas.

"Are they doing enough? Yeah, they're doing enough. But let's not forget that's not the only thing that they do," he said. "You have to balance safety against accessibility."

The Navy has also increased emphasis on teaching recruits how to handle emergencies aboard a ship.

Every enlisted sailor goes through boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, near Chicago. And even though they don't set foot on an actual boat during the eight-week period, their training emphasizes the basic tenets of shipboard damage control, fire fighting and handling medical casualties.

Each class of recruits undergoes a sort of "final exam" at Great Lakes -- an exercise called Battle Stations 21, held aboard a mockup of a destroyer similar to the Cole.

The Trayer is a 210-foot-long, 3/4-scale replica of an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer housed inside a 157,000-square-foot building. It uses special effects to simulate disaster scenarios that recruits must battle for 12 hours, testing the skills and teamwork they've learned.

The Trayer -- in use since mid-2007 -- has lots of similarities to the Cole. The clock in the mess deck is set to 11:20, roughly the time of the blast that almost destroyed the Cole's galley, or kitchen, and cafeteria.

The Trayer's mess deck mimics the destruction on the Cole. Its fast-food style tables and chairs are overturned and canted at an angle; sheaths of blackened metal have peeled off the walls.

The scenario includes audio recordings of an explosion and the sounds of a ship under attack, special-effects lighting, the smell of sea water and diesel fuel, and 90,000 gallons of rushing water that pour through the set.

Since 1999, years before the Trayer was built, the Navy had put recruits through a lower-tech version of Battle Stations on a wooden mock-up of a ship.

Some of the youngest sailors aboard the Cole in 2000 had been through that training, and Peterschmidt said he thought they responded better in the real emergency than some of their older shipmates did.

"Recruits got exposed to what it's like to have their normal work environment severely damaged, with no light and a lot of danger of sharp edges and injured people. They had to crawl through mess decks into a maze of structures to get at casualties and get them out," he said.

"That young group stood out. Investigators talked to them and they said, 'We saw this before. It reduced our lag time in being able to respond.' "

Peterschmidt and retired Command Master Chief James Parlier -- the highest-ranking enlisted sailor on the Cole that day -- are glad that the Navy embraced Battle Stations 21.

"All sailors now who enter the Navy go through that trainer," Peterschmidt said. "All sailors in the Navy today have relived a portion of the Cole attack."

One specialized group of sailors has gotten upgraded training as a result of the lessons learned on the Cole: Navy corpsmen, the enlisted medical personnel who provide primary care and respond to traumas on the majority of Navy ships.

The Cole blast sidelined almost a fifth of the crew: 56 sailors were killed or injured in the blast. Many of the injured suffered major traumatic wounds: shattered bones, burns and crush injuries. It was immediately apparent to Cmdr. Kirk Lippold that the number and type of injuries went beyond the resources of the ship and its three corpsmen.

The primary medical response was triage: assess which injuries required immediate attention, which could wait, and which were so bad that a sailor's life couldn't be saved.

The leading corpsman, Chief Petty Officer Cliff Moser, and Petty Officer Tayanika Campbell were assisted by Parlier, himself a trained independent duty corpsman.

A 2002 report on the medical lessons learned from the Cole attack concluded that corpsmen need more mass-casualty triage training in both their basic and advanced schools.

Cmdr. Brett Sortor, officer in charge of the Navy's Undersea Medical Institute in Groton, Conn., said that since the Cole bombing, corpsmen assigned to surface ships and submarines undergo more direct trauma training, both in and out of school.

In addition to 58 weeks of intense training, submarine corpsmen now spend a week working alongside a trauma team at the Yale-New Haven Medical Center.

The sheer number of injuries aboard the Cole meant medical help was needed from crew members at large. Luckily, everyone assigned to the ship had gone through mandatory first aid training.

The Navy had long taught a first aid curriculum known as "Gitmo Eight," which concentrated on treating limb fractures, abdominal wounds, electrical shock, amputation, smoke inhalation, sucking chest wounds, jaw fractures and burns. The Cole validated the use of that instruction.

It proved that other measures were inadequate, however.

The body boards stored on ships to transport injured sailors proved inferior; they didn't provide enough stability to move patients. The crew instead relied on basket-type litters and search-and-rescue gear to move seriously injured sailors out of passageways to larger spaces.

In response, the body boards were removed from ships and replaced with full-length backboard litters. Other upgrades to medical departments included a larger supply of disposable gloves, which were quickly used up in the days after the explosion, and more anti-bacterial wipes.

The crew of the Cole had access to just one bathroom, and its supply of fresh water was limited. Days after the blast, more than 70 surviving crew members came down with diarrhea.

Other shortcomings: the lanterns used for emergency lighting after the ship lost power weren't adequate, so ships' medical departments are now stocked with battery-powered headlamps that help them work in dark environments.

And though it wasn't an emergency, Cole crew members discovered their supply of sunblock fell woefully short. The only lotion available was SPF 15, and there wasn't enough of it available for crew members working on the exposed flight deck under the Middle Eastern sun. Ships now stock a greater supply of SPF 30 lotion.

The recovery of remains took almost a week in temperatures that exceeded 100 degrees. That brought about a grisly supply issue: need for a bigger supply of oil of wintergreen and eugenol, both of which are used to mask the smell of decomposition.

The attack also highlighted the value of close relationships with allies.

Thirty-three crew members were evacuated off the destroyer to the mainland in the first 99 minutes after the blast. Only one of them died.

Some of that is thanks to the French military, which dispatched a team of doctors and a surgical operating unit from Djibouti just hours after the attack.

The team set up shop on the runway at the Aden airport, Peterschmidt said. They gathered 13 patients in the most dire conditions and moved them from the local hospitals to their clinic.

"The Yemeni doctors said, 'If they're moved, they'll die. The French responded, 'If they stay here, they'll die.' "

The French were right: All 13 survived.

That led to another recommendation from the group that studied the medical lessons learned from the Cole: Fleet commanders should expand their contacts with "allied medical personnel" in their respective parts of the world, to prepare for medical contingencies.

Peterschmidt said some of the simplest preparations for disaster might prove more useful than the latest high-tech gear.

When the Cole was taking on water and in danger of sinking in the days after the bombing, sailors used old-fashioned solutions to fill the holes: they used mallets and

hammers to pack the holes with wood and oakum, a kind of hemp soaked in tar that's been in use since the earliest days of naval warfare.

The Navy instituted another low-tech solution to problems Cole sailors encountered when clearing sharp or twisted metal debris with their bare hands. About three days later, Peterschmidt said, many suffered from cuts to their hands that had become infected.

When he took command of the Pinckney, he was pleased to see a robust supply of leather gloves. The ship had more pairs of gloves than sailors.

The military misconduct section

CMC fired over touching allegations

The command master chief of a Norfolk-based dock landing ship was fired Wednesday afternoon as the result of an ongoing investigation into the inappropriate touching of a shipmate, Naval Surface Force Atlantic said.

Cmdr. Scott Curtis, commander of the Ashland, relieved Command Master Chief (SW/AW) Ron Burnett "due to loss of confidence" pending completion of the investigation, said SURFLANT spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Bill Urban.

Urban said Curtis fired Burnett after a preliminary review of evidence gathered during an ongoing Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigation into the alleged inappropriate touching. Curtis "determined that Master Chief Burnett could no longer serve in the unique position of trust and confidence that a command master chief enjoys, and relieved him of those duties," Urban said.

Burnett could not be reached for comment.

Urban, citing privacy concerns, would not reveal the female sailor's rank or job. The allegation was first reported to Curtis on Jan. 20 while the ship was moored at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek – Fort Story. The NCIS investigation began immediately, Urban said.

Burnett, who had been command master chief aboard Ashland since November 2009, has been temporarily reassigned to the staff of Amphibious Squadron 8. He enlisted in the Navy in September 1981; his only previous tour as a command master chief prior to Ashland was at Patrol Squadron 10, where he reported in June 2008.

The ship, which has a crew of about 360, is conducting a maintenance availability in port at Metro Machine, a local Norfolk Shipyard..

16 Bataan sailors discharged for spice use



By Jim Premeske- WCC NorVa Bureau Chief/Staff rewriter

Sixteen sailors assigned to the Norfolk-based amphibious assault ship Bataan are getting the boot for using or dealing the service-banned synthetic marijuana generally known as “spice,” the Navy confirmed Thursday.

The busts follow an eight-week investigation launched in November aboard the huge warship, according to Lt. Cmdr. Bill Urban, spokesman for Surface Force Atlantic. All 16 sailors were given nonjudicial punishment and are or will be administratively discharged.

“The Navy has a zero tolerance policy on drug abuse,” Urban said in a statement. “Drug use undercuts unit readiness and morale, and is inconsistent with our Navy core values of honor, courage and commitment.”

The busts, first reported by Norfolk’s Virginian-Pilot newspaper, come during a week when the Navy has made a proactive effort to publicize and stem a growing problem with spice, a marijuana-like herbal blend that can be smoked and is sold under a wide variety of names. It yields a euphoric high, but can produce anxiety attacks or worse in some users.

According to Fleet Forces Command, as of Jan. 26, at least 151 sailors Navy-wide had been accused of using or caught with spice over the past four months, with 79 of those in Fleet Forces Command. Figures for previous years have not been made available.

In January, seven midshipmen were expelled from the Naval Academy for using or selling spice.

Fleet Forces chief Adm. John Harvey has called the number of incidents “alarming” and said the Navy is cracking down.

“If you are considering using spice or a similar drug, I strongly urge you to reconsider,” Harvey said in a statement that accompanied release of the fiscal year figures. “If you are caught using it, even once, you will be separated from the Navy. There is no second chance.”

Spice has quickly grown in popularity over the past few years. Only a few of the wide variety of chemical compounds in spice products can be detected through urinalysis testing, and none of the results can as yet be used as the basis for disciplinary action, officials say. And it remains readily available in the Hampton Roads area despite last fall’s decision by Navy Region Mid-Atlantic to place 10 local retailers off limits for selling the pricey products, as less-specialized retailers continue to carry the substance, which is also widely available online.

But last year, chief of naval operations Adm. Gary Roughead signed off on an order prohibiting the possession or use of the so-called “designer drugs.” In addition, Bataan sailors last March were required to sign a statement of understanding acknowledging the ban and the consequences.

The Drug Enforcement Agency does not yet list spice as a controlled substance but in November temporarily placed five versions of spice on the list in anticipation of making it a Schedule 1 controlled drug on a par with marijuana and heroin. It remains legal in Virginia, although several bills banning the substances are pending in the General Assembly

Headliners: Afghanistan

McChrystal: Claims of Crusade on Islam Untrue

[Stars and Stripes](#) by Jeff Schogol

WASHINGTON -- Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal says he is not part of a religious order waging war on Islam despite recent assertions by acclaimed journalist Seymour Hersh.

Speaking in Qatar earlier this week, Hersh claimed that McChrystal and current members of the special operations community are members of the Knights of Malta and Opus Dei, both Catholic organizations, according to the blog Foreign Policy.

"They do see what they're doing -- and this is not an atypical attitude among some military -- it's a crusade, literally," Foreign Policy quoted Hersh as saying. "They see themselves as the protectors of the Christians. They're protecting them from the Muslims [as in] the 13th century. And this is their function."

Hersh won a Pulitzer Prize in 1970 for exposing the My Lai massacre in Vietnam and the subsequent military coverup.

But McChrystal's spokesman, David Bolger, said Hersh was way off base in this case.

"The allegations recently made by Seymour Hersh relating to General McChrystal's involvement with an organization called The Knights of Malta are completely false and without basis in fact," Bolger said in an e-mail. "General McChrystal is not and has never been a member of that organization."

Prior to his stint as the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, McChrystal served as the head of Joint Special Operations Command.

Officials with U.S. Special Operations Command declined to comment on Hersh's allegations.

Stars and Stripes was unable to reach the officials with the Knights of Malta, but a spokesman for Opus Dei said the group is meant to help Christians find God, not to fight Islam.

"We have a number of activities: So it would be classes on Catholic doctrine, teaching people about the Catholic faith, and there's classes about how to live that faith in the everyday world," said group spokesman David Gallagher. "We have weekend retreats."

Opus Dei was portrayed in "The Da Vinci Code" as a secret society, but Gallagher noted that it has a website and an office in Manhattan.

"I don't think it's too secret," he said.

Hersh told Stars and Stripes he has proof to back up his claims but he declined to provide any because he is writing a book that will touch on the subject and revealing his evidence before the book is published would be "unethical."

He added that it is impossible to be around special operations troops and not notice just how religious they are.

But one former Green Beret and defense official disputed the notion that there is a religious cabal inside special operations.

Religion is considered very personal and rarely discussed among special operators, said Kalev "Gunner" Sepp, a Special Forces officer from 1986 to 1999 and deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations and counterterrorism from 2007 to 2009.

There have been exceptions, such as one Special Forces commander who gave church sermons while in uniform, but such practices have not been widely embraced, Sepp said.

"Zealotry is viewed as being unprofessional," he said. "Anyone who professes religion in an open way like that is suspect to where their real loyalties lie."

Brit Makes Record Sniper Kill in Afghanistan



A Kit Up tipster sent us some late breaking gouge on a record sniper kill in Afghanistan made by Corporal of the Horse Craig Harrison, a British Soldier, while he was protecting his commander from a Taliban machine gun position.

(Photo above of the L115A3 Rifle)

According to an article on [the recent record shot from the UK's Sky News](#), Harrison fired his shots over 1.5 miles (8,120 ft.) and killed the two bad guys in two shots. He fired a third shot to disable the machine gun.

Speaking about the incident, Cpl of Horse Harrison said: "The first round hit a machine gunner in the stomach and killed him outright. He went straight down and didn't move.

"The second insurgent grabbed the weapon and turned as my second shot hit him in the side. He went down, too. They were both dead."

"Conditions were perfect, no wind, mild weather, clear visibility. I rested the bipod of my weapon on a compound wall and aimed for the gunner firing the machine gun."

He killed the two insurgents as he protected his troop commander, whose vehicle became trapped in a field in Helmand Province and started coming under fire.

Harrison was using the British Army's newest sniper rifle, the L115A3 chambered in .338 Lapua, which as Kit Up readers know has a heck of a following among sharpshooters both in and out of the military. We also know that the US Army is changing its precision sniper rifle to the 300 WinMag round, setting up a Battle Royal among gun nuts for boasting rights on the best round for the war zone.

The previous sniper shot record holder was a Canadian soldier who killed an al Qaeda fighter at a range of 7,972 feet reportedly with a .50 cal in the second shot. The previous record was held by The Man, Carlos Hathcock.

According to British MOD statistics, the L115A3's maximum effective range is a little over 3,600 feet for "harrassing fire" — well short of Cpl. Harrison's shot.

To compensate for the spin and drift of the bullets as they flew the length of 25 football pitches, Cpl of Horse Harrison reportedly had to aim 6ft high and 20ins to the left.

...need we say more... how about **Carlos Hathcock** (May 20, 1942 – February 23, 1999) was a United States Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant sniper with a service record of 93 confirmed kills. Hathcock's record and the extraordinary details of the missions he undertook made him a legend in the Marine Corps. His fame as a sniper and his dedication to long distance shooting led him to become a major developer of the United States Marine Corps Sniper training program. He was honored by having a rifle named after him: a variant of the M21 dubbed the Springfield Armory M25 White Feather.^[1]

He is ranked fourth, behind U.S. Marine Corps snipers Eric R. England and Chuck Mawhinney and United States Army sniper Adelbert Waldron, on the list of most confirmed kills for an American sniper.

The North Vietnamese Army put a bounty of \$30,000 on Hathcock's life for killing so many of their men. Rewards put on U.S. snipers by the N.V.A. typically ranged from \$8 to \$2,000. Hathcock held the record for highest bounty and killed every Vietnamese marksman who sought it. The Viet Cong and N.V.A. called Hathcock *Lông Trắng*, translated as "White Feather," because of the white feather he kept in a band on his bush hat. After a platoon of trained Vietnamese snipers were sent to hunt down "White Feather," many Marines in the same area donned white feathers to deceive the enemy. These Marines were aware of the impact Hathcock's death would

have and took it upon themselves to make themselves targets in order to confuse the counter snipers.

One of Hathcock's most famous accomplishments was shooting an enemy sniper through the enemy's own scope, hitting him in the eye and killing him. The sniper had already killed several Marines and was believed to have been sent specifically to kill Hathcock. When Hathcock saw a flash of light (light reflecting off the enemy sniper's scope) in the bushes, he fired at it, shooting through the scope and killing the sniper. Surveying the situation, Hathcock concluded that the only feasible way he could have put the bullet straight down the enemy's scope and through his eye would have been if both snipers were zeroing in on each other at the same time and Hathcock fired first, which gave him only a few seconds to act. Given the flight time of rounds at long ranges, both snipers could easily have killed one another. The enemy rifle was recovered and the incident is documented by a photograph.

Hathcock only once removed the white feather from his bush hat while deployed in Vietnam. During a volunteer mission days before the end of his first deployment, he crawled over 1,500 yards of field to shoot an NVA commanding general. He wasn't informed of the details of the mission until he accepted it. This effort took four days and three nights, without sleep, of constant inch-by-inch crawling. Hathcock said he was almost stepped on as he lay camouflaged with grass and vegetation in a meadow shortly after sunset. As the general exited his vehicle Carlos fired a single shot that struck the general in the chest, killing him. He had to crawl back instead of run when soldiers started searching, and later regretted taking the mission, as in the aftermath of the assassination the NVA doubled their attacks in the area, apparently in retaliation for their general being killed and leading to an increase in American casualties.

After the arduous mission of killing the general, Hathcock returned to the United States in 1967. However, he missed the Marine Corps and returned to Vietnam in 1969, where he took command of a platoon of snipers.

Hathcock generally used the standard sniper rifle: the Winchester Model 70 .30-06 caliber rifle with the standard 8-power Unertl scope. On some occasions, however, he used a different weapon: the .50-caliber M2 Browning Machine Gun, on which he mounted the Unertl scope, using a bracket of his own design.

This weapon had a Traversing and Elevating (T& E) mount that enabled precise aiming: it was accurate to 2500 yards when fired one round at a time. At one point, he took careful aim at a courier carrying a load of AK-47's and ammunition on a bicycle. He had second thoughts when he saw a 12-year-old boy in his sights, but after considering the intended use of those weapons, he decided to disable the bicycle, hitting the bike frame. The boy tumbled over the handlebars, grabbed a gun, and immediately began firing back, so Hathcock returned fire, killing him.

Hathcock's career as a sniper came to a sudden end outside Khe Sanh in 1969, when an amtrack he was riding on struck an anti-tank mine. Hathcock pulled seven Marines off the flame-engulfed vehicle before jumping to safety. He was told he would be recommended for the Medal of Honor, but he stated that he had only done what anyone there would have done if they were awake, so he rejected any commendation for his bravery. Nearly 30 years later, he was awarded the Silver Star, due to the statute of limitations being 20 years. The medal had to be approved by Congress, which downgraded it to the third most prestigious award in U.S. military.

Hathcock said in a book written about his career as a sniper: "I like shooting, and I love hunting. But I never did enjoy killing anybody. It's my job. If I don't get those bastards, then they're gonna kill a lot of these kids dressed up like Marines. That's the way I look at it."

Falsely claiming to have earned a medal from the U.S. military is a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in prison, **under the Stolen Valor Act of 2005**.

Retiree's Retreat

A RETIREE'S RETREAT YARDSTICK:

First-of-its-kind ranking highlights the best places for military retirees to maximize benefits, raise families and launch second careers.

USAA and Military.com announced today that Waco, Texas, heads the first-ever "Best Places for Military Retirement" list. USAA and Military.com commissioned a study to create the list to pinpoint places in the U.S. that offer a high quality of life and help maximize military retiree benefits as service members manage their "first retirement" from the

armed forces and begin planning their "second retirement" from civilian life. In addition to the top 10 overall places, there are lists for large, medium, small and military metros. For example, San Antonio is highly ranked on the large and military metros lists.

The remainder of the top 10 list includes:

2. Oklahoma City, Okla.
3. Austin, Texas
4. College Station, Texas
5. Harrisburg, Pa.
6. San Angelo, Texas
7. Madison, Wis.
8. Pittsburgh, Pa.
9. New Orleans, La.
10. Syracuse, N.Y.

There are approximately two million military retirees as of 2009, of whom 28 percent are officers and 72 percent are enlisted. Generally, military retirees retire relatively early in life at the average ages of 42 for enlisted service members and 46 for officers.

"Most military members face two retirements — one from a military career and one from a civilian career," said Kevin O'Fee, assistant vice president of retirement strategies at USAA. "The list gives veterans a head start on planning both the second and third acts of their lives, which likely involves a new community, a new home and a new financial plan."

Ward Carroll, editor of Military.com and also a military retiree, added, "Military.com supports our military personnel throughout their lifecycle of service, including retirement and secondary careers. Tools like our Skills Translator and helpful information like [the list of best places to retire](#) is our way of saying thank you to those who have served."

USAA and Military.com, the largest military and veteran membership organization, worked with Sperling's BestPlaces to develop the list. Researchers reviewed data on 20 different variables for 379 major U.S. metropolitan areas, which are defined as one or more central cities including the surrounding county or counties. Variables included:

- Proximity to a military base and a VA hospital or clinic, base amenities and state taxation on military pensions.
- Employment and education opportunities, including employment rates and presence of colleges and universities.
- General quality of life issues, such as affordability, housing costs, economic stability, crime rate, climate, health indicators, airport access, arts and culture and recreational activities.

Each of the identified variables was weighted based on importance to military retirees and each metro area was given a score based on its total points for each variable. The metro areas were ranked based on these scores. Metro areas where the median housing cost was 40 or more percent above the national median were excluded from the list.

In addition to the overall ranking, USAA and Military.com developed four other lists that provide service members with the top 10 places to retire in large, medium, small and "military" metro area.

