



MILITARY OFFICERS CALL
Sun City Center Chapter
Military Officers Association of America
 P. O. Box 5693, Sun City Center, FL. 33571



Volume 34 Number 4 **April 2019**



President's Message
Benny Blackshire, LTC USA (Ret)

Last month I said we would be having a guest from the Florida Council of Chapters, the West Central Area Vice President, Carol Burgess, visiting our chapter for the March meeting. Unfortunately, due to health reasons, Carol was unable to attend. However, she will reschedule for a later date.

At our March meeting the membership approved the proposed revision to the chapter By Laws. The main change was changing our dues collection from 3 months to 2 months, so for next year we will collect dues in December and January. We will still make every effort to contact each member who has not renewed their membership before dropping them from the roster.

I want to thank all of you that renewed your membership for 2019. I know some of you are unable to attend the meetings but still keep your membership in the local chapter. This is commendable as it shows your continued support of our military veterans. MOAA continues to fight to retain our benefits, not just for officers, but for all veterans. If you receive the MOAA magazine, you can help by tearing out the letters to congress, included in the magazine, and mailing them. Your voice can only be heard if you exercise it.

At our March luncheon we had sign up sheets for the May 27, 2019 Memorial Day Ceremony. If you want to be a flag bearer as part of the Living Flag Tribute, or assist as an usher, you need to contact Ferris Garrett or myself as soon as you receive this newsletter. We have to turn our numbers in by the first of April to ensure we have reserved seats.

We also had registration forms for the Florida Annual Convention to be held at the Safety Harbor Resort & Spa in Tampa. If you want to attend you can register online at the Council's website; moaaf.org and click on the convention. I would love to have a big showing from our chapter to attend this conference.

APRIL SPEAKER

Tina Patch, BAS
President/Co-Founder CATE Foundation



Tina Patch has a background in Accounting, HR, IT, Energy and Business Management. She has a BAS degree in Management & Organizational Leadership. Tina is currently in an MBA program at ENMU. She is also a registered tax preparer and Quick Books trainer.

Originally from New York, Tina resides in the Tampa Bay area - which she loves!

During her time at her corporate job, it became clear that a beloved family member was abusing Opioid pills- which subsequently led to Heroin use. Having struggled through the anger, disappointment and then fear - Tina went on a mission to find the help that this family member needed. After it became apparent that there were few resources for optimal treatment, Tina wanted to tackle that issue head on! Then The CATE Foundation was created.

Tina is dedicated to the mission of - better treatment can mean a better outcome! She is also a champion to those who truly want to overcome this horrible epidemic. She is known as a problem solver in her career and she anticipates the challenge that lies ahead.

Tina Patch recently created a company called MJ Natural Resources which educates and sells THC free medicinal hemp derived CBD products.

MJ Natural Resources is an idea the owners had when they were researching alternatives to pharmaceuticals for a family member's mental health issues. The company was created to provide ALL-NATURAL products that benefit the mind, body & spirit. A portion of the proceeds are donated to THE CATE FOUNDATION - a Nonprofit Substance Use Disorder Recovery Resource & Community Center in the Tampa, FL area. As we grow- our employees will come from those challenged by their past but empowered by their recovery.

Tina will discuss CBD oil in general - the difference between that derived from hemp and from marijuana and the various methods used to administer it, i.e., tinctures, softgels, butters vapors etc. The Cate Foundation only uses CBD oil derived from the hemp plant, and it does not contain THC, the ingredient in marijuana that produces a high.

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MARCH 6TH LUNCHEON



MG Clayton Hutmacher accepts \$200 donation from LTC Benny Blackshire, chapter president.



MG Clayton M. Hutmacher USA (Ret)

Major General Clayton Hutmacher addresses MOAA

Major General Clayton Hutmacher, USA (Ret) was the featured speaker at the April 6 Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) luncheon in the Florida Room at the North Side Atrium.

General Hutmacher became the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Special Operations Warrior Foundation in September 2018.

He was a career United States Army Officer and retired in 2018 having served over 40 years in uniform. As an Army Special Operations Aviator, he commanded at every level during his three tours with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, where he served as the MH-60 Direct Action Penetrator platoon leader, company operations officer, executive officer and commander of 1st Battalion, Regimental Commander, and the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command.

His last assignment was the Director of Operations in the U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, Florida. His previous assignment was as the Deputy Commanding General of the United States Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

He was presented a check for \$200 by Benny Blackshire, chapter president, for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. One of the foundations major goals is to provide a free education, from 1st grade through college, for the children of individuals killed while on active duty.

MOAA membership is open to all military officers, both past and present. The chapter meets monthly (except July/August) at the Atrium building in the Florida room at 11:00 a.m. and includes a \$15 lunch and a guest speaker. Additional information can be obtained by calling 813-642-0801

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

The Membership Committee Chair is providing the following to update the Chapter membership regarding our Chapter LOE & MOAA rewards. Also, this article will list new Chapter members.

- 190 Chapter members
- 127 LIFE members
- 27 PREMIUM members
- 15 BASIC members
- 21 non-MOAA members

New Chapter member(s) last month:
Mrs. June Masters, Auxillary, U.S. Army

REMINDER: The Chapter reimburses \$100 to members upgrading to LIFE when LIFE certificate is presented to the Treasurer.

MOAA ACTION SITE

I have created this box to direct members to the online MOAA 'Take Action' site in order to assist MOAA in achieving their legislative goals.

[Click here](#) and select the issue(s) you would like to have MOAA discuss with your representatives. Fill in the form and click submit. MOAA will send it to your representatives. You can add your own comments if you wish.

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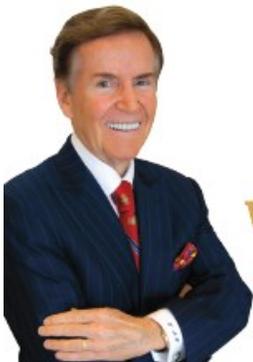


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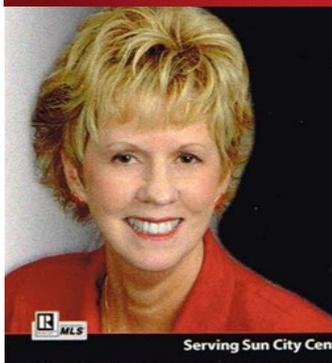
- **Financial Assistance** in critical times of need
- **PAWS for Patriots** through Southeastern Guide Dogs: MFST supports three blind veterans per year at a cost of \$5,000 per veteran
- **Service Dogs** for veterans with PTSD and other traumatic injuries
- **Homeless Prevention for Women Veterans:** help with rent, child care and licensing training
- **Operation Warm Heart**, administered by the 1st Sergeants Group at MacDill AFB, who provide commissary vouchers for soldiers in need



- **Scholarships and Leadership Programs** for students from military families
- **Operation Helping Hand:** monthly support for military families of wounded servicemen and women at the James A. Haley VA Hospital in Tampa

**For more information, call
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250014

VA eyeing new partnership with states to help prevent veterans suicide

By: Leo Shane III

WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs officials in coming weeks will roll out new partnerships with at least seven states to focus attention and resources on preventing veterans suicide, re-upping a successful tool from their earlier campaigns to end veterans homelessness.

Dr. Keita Franklin, director of VA's office of suicide prevention, said Tuesday during a congressional staff briefing on the topic that department officials will be announcing a new "governor's challenge" to expand ongoing prevention programs to audiences outside the veterans community.

VA must lead on this, and it's our responsibility to prevent veterans suicide," she said. "But when I can have a partner take our training, have them pass out our crisis number, develop peer mentoring models in workplaces, if I can help them make sure veterans have access to health care, that's when we know we're doing the work."

"We're shifting from a model that says 'let's sit in our hospitals and wait for people to come to us' and take it to them."

VA backs off suicide study that indicated thousands of unreported military deaths

By: Leo Shane III



WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs officials are walking back a new suicide study which appeared to show thousands of unreported military deaths in recent years, saying differences among classifications of service members led to confusion in the statistics.

At issue is an update last week to VA's annual National Suicide Data Report, a massive collaboration between the department, defense researchers and census analysts which has found that

roughly 20 veterans a day take their own lives. That figure has held steady from 2008 to 2015, the latest year data is available. But for the first time, this year's update to the report breaks down those figures into veterans receiving VA health care (about six individuals a day), veterans not using the department's health services (11 a day), and a group including active-duty troops, guardsmen and reservists (four a day).

Several news outlets noted the sudden data spike following the report's release. On Monday, VA officials acknowledged that their military figures are misleading.

"In our report, VA did not differentiate deaths between active duty, current never federally activated Guard and Reserve, and discharged never federally activated Guard and Reserve," said Dr. Keita Franklin, VA's national director of suicide prevention.

Fewer veterans were homeless in 2018, after a worrisome rise last year

By: Leo Shane III



WASHINGTON — The number of homeless veterans decreased by about 5 percent this year according to new estimates from federal researchers, an encouraging turnaround after disappointing results the year before.

Housing and Urban Development officials now estimate about 38,000 veterans across the country are without stable housing on any given night, roughly half the number on the streets in 2010.

The drop among female veterans in the last year was even more significant. HUD officials estimated a 10 percent drop in homelessness among that population, and credited the good news with continued commitment from federal, state and local leaders on the issue.

"Our nation's approach to veterans' homelessness is working," said HUD Secretary Ben Carson in a briefing with reporters.

Sun City Center MOAA Website

Don't forget to visit our new website. The link to the website is: <http://moafl.org/chapters/SunCity/> You will find much membership information, photos, calendar of events, past newsletters and more. If you would like to suggest topics for inclusion contact Jim Haney at jghaney1@gmail.com

Publisher/Editor

CAPT Frank Kepley, USN (Ret)

We need your input about member activities associated with MOAA and articles of interest to the military community. Contact Frank at:

dkepley@tampabay.rr.com 813-642-0801



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LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS Frank Kepley, CAPT USN (Ret)

Bipartisan House Bill Would End 'Widows Tax'

MOAA newsletter

Legislation introduced by Reps. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) and John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) would end the deduction of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities from Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid to survivors of fallen service members, also known as the "widows tax."

MOAA has long supported repeal of the widows tax, backing similar legislation from Wilson and others. The change would mean that in cases where military service led to the death of a servicemember, DIC would be paid in addition to the SBP annuity.

About 67,000 military survivors would benefit from this legislation, with the current offset costing them about \$12,000 annually. ([Click Here to go to MOAA Action Center](#))

Wilson introduced the new legislation -- H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act -- on Jan. 15, with Yarmuth as the bill's lone listed original co-sponsor.

VA Renews Pledge Vets' Health Care Won't Be Privatized

Military.com



The Department of Veterans Affairs pushed back Monday at a New York Times report suggesting that expanded community-care options under the VA MISSION Act would lead to the "privatization" of VA health care and the eventual shutdown of some VA medical centers.

"Privatization is a myth and to suggest otherwise is completely false and a red herring designed to distract and avoid honest debate on the real issues surrounding veterans' health care," Curt Cashour, a VA spokesman, said in a statement.

The MISSION Act, passed last year by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump with the support of veterans service organizations (VSOs), was intended to overhaul and continue funding for the VA Choice program on private-care options. That program was riddled with inefficiencies, both for veterans and the community-care providers.

Under the act, about \$5.2 billion in mandatory funding was appropriated for the Veterans Choice Fund. The new Veterans Community Care Program was designed to include new standards for access to care.

Cashour said that the MISSION Act now "gives the VA secretary the authority to set access standards that provide veterans the best and most timely care possible -- whether at VA or with community providers -- and the department is committed to doing just that."

The statement was in response to a New York Times report Sunday that said billions of dollars could be diverted

under the MISSION Act from the VA's hospitals and clinics -- the nation's largest health care system -- into the private sector, and could eventually lead to the closure of some VA medical centers.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie has repeatedly given assurances that he has no intention of "privatizing" the VA, but he has yet to give public guidance on the new access standards on expanding community care.

More Than 17,000 Uniformed Medical Jobs Eyed for Elimination



The Army, Navy, and Air Force are finalizing plans to eliminate over the next few years more than 17,000 uniformed medical billets - physicians, dentists, nurses, technicians, medics, and support personnel.

The reduction will allow those billets to be repurposed as warfighters or combat-support skills to increase the lethality and size of operational units. Another goal is to deepen the workload of remaining medical billets at base hospitals and clinics to strengthen wartime medical skills and also to improve quality of care for beneficiaries, defense officials explained.

One senior service official shared the latest figures he has seen showing the uniformed Army medical staff falling by almost 7,300, the Navy by almost 5,300, and the Air Force by just over 5,300.

Editor's note: This plan will undoubtedly result in more privatization of DoD and VA medical care.

VA's benefits appeals process undergoing a dramatic changeover

Veterans rejected for disability benefits now have a new slate of appeals options as federal officials have put in place an overhaul of the review process with hopes of dramatically cutting down on wait times for the complicated cases.

Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced they implemented new appeals modernization rules on Feb. 19. Work on the effort has been underway for more than 18 months, since lawmakers passed sweeping reform legislation on the topic in August 2017.

Under the new rules, veterans are given three options for their benefits appeals. All three are designed to streamline the complicated existing process for cases, which can languish for years as new evidence and arguments are introduced throughout the timeline.

Now, VA leaders are hoping the most difficult reviews can still be completed in under a year in the vast majority of cases. Their target for cases which don't go before the Board of Veterans Appeals is an average of about four months for a final decision.

A successful appeal can mean potentially thousands of dollars in monthly benefits payouts for veterans who have previously been turned down for what they believe are service-connected injuries and illnesses. VA and Capitol Hill leaders hailed the changes as a long-overdue fix. ([Click here for full story.](#))

Veterans with cases currently pending in the system can now opt-into the revamped processes or remain in the current system if they believe it will better benefit them.

Changes Coming to TRICARE's Pharmacy Benefit

MOAA Newsletter



TRICARE is planning to add a new tier of drugs to its three-tier medication formulary - one that's made up of drugs excluded from coverage by TRICARE.

Medications now fall into one of the existing tiers: Generic (Tier 1), Brand Name (Tier 2), and Generic and Brand Name (Tier 3, also known as "non-formulary"). The addition of a fourth tier (to be referred to as "Excluded" or "Not Covered"), according to officials who recently briefed MOAA on the development, "aligns TRICARE's pharmacy benefit with current industry standards among commercial health care plans."

Specific criteria for placing any drug in the fourth tier will focus on the drug's efficacy, safety, and outcome characteristics. Tier 4 drugs would include those that:

- Offer little to no relative clinical benefit from an effectiveness perspective;
- Pose a significant safety risk that may outweigh any potential clinical benefit;
- Have available alternatives; and/or
- Are considerably more expensive compared with covered alternatives.

Are there specific drugs ready to be slated for this change? Not at this time: The review process will determine which drugs meet the criteria outlined above. That process, which begins in February for the first drugs under consideration, can take up to six months from the time a recommendation is made before changes are implemented and beneficiaries are affected, officials said.

Veterans welcome? Less than 2 percent of Capitol Hill staffers have military experience



Fewer than 2 percent of congressional staffers have served in the military, despite years of warning from advocates about the need to include veterans' perspective in policy work and pledges from lawmakers to help separating service

members find work.

According to figures released this week by HillVets — a bipartisan networking group of Capitol Hill staffers with military experience — only about 200 of the 13,000-plus congressional staff have military backgrounds. That equates to about 1.6 percent of the Capitol Hill workforce, not including elected officials.

"There's a fundamental lack of knowledge in Congress in regards to what these benefits mean and what it's like to serve in the military," said Justin Brown, founder of the group. "We don't have that brain trust available."

Editor's note: Isn't that wonderful. 2% of 13,000 congressional staff decide what the military should look like and what their budget should be. What is wrong with that picture?

Veterans are committing suicide in VA parking lots: report [Click here for report](#)

Pentagon: No changes to policy on transgender troops, for now



Plaintiffs in a court case stand with supporters at a federal courthouse in Seattle in March 2018. The Supreme Court ruled Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2019, that the Trump administration may move forward with a ban on

transgender service members.

The Pentagon said it would not implement any changes to its transgender policy for now, despite a Supreme Court ruling that upheld the Defense Department's limits on which transgender personnel may be allowed to serve.

In the 5-4 decision, the justices ruled that the Trump administration may move forward with a ban on transgender service members who experience gender dysphoria, or who have transitioned to their preferred sex, from serving in the military. Four lower court cases continue to be heard.

Because there is still an injunction in place in a federal case in Maryland that is challenging the ban, no changes would be made to DoD's policy for now, a defense official said.

"There is still one national injunction in place, so nothing would change today," the defense official said.

Court ruling could extend disability benefits to thousands of injured veterans



Thousands of veterans previously denied disability benefits for pain issues related to their military service may now be eligible for that assistance, thanks to a recent federal court ruling.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit overturned a 19-year-old precedent used in more than 11,000 VA claims denials that stated veterans had to have a clear medical diagnosis connected to their pain in order to be eligible for those disability payouts.

Advocates said the ruling could be life-changing for individuals who are unable to work because of service-connected injuries but excluded from veterans assistance because of medical technicalities.

Veterans still need to show a clear connection between their pain and their military service to be eligible, but would no longer have to have a specific medical reason for the pain to apply for benefits.

Veterans who have previously been rejected for disability benefits — or who have avoided applying in the past because they assumed they would not be eligible — should now reapply to see if the new ruling will allow them to qualify.

JOIN TODAY

Not a member of MOAA? When you join MOAA, you become part of the strongest advocate for our military's personnel and their families. The stronger our membership is, the stronger our voice becomes. Consider joining today because every voice counts.

Meet the first female test pilot to fly the F-35



An officer at Edwards Air Force Base in California last month became the first female test pilot to fly an F-35.

Maj. Rachael Winiiecki, a developmental test pilot for the 461st Flight Test Squadron, flew her first test flight in the Air Force's most advanced fighter jet Dec. 14, according to an Air Force release.

Winiiecki will also be part of the 461st's team that oversees developmental testing of all F-35 variants. She was previously an A-10 pilot, who flew Warthogs in deployments to Southwest Asia, Eastern Europe and the Pacific theater, the release said. She became an F-16 test pilot and was assigned to the 416th Flight Test Squadron after graduating from test pilot school at Edwards.

Supreme Court rejects appeal from veterans in burn pit lawsuit against KBR, Halliburton



The U.S. Supreme Court has rejected an appeal in which veterans sought to hold private companies responsible for their use of open-air burn pits that have been linked to scores of often fatal illnesses, from cancers to neurological damage.

The high court let stand an appellate court ruling that decided more than 60 separate lawsuits could not move forward.

Plaintiffs allege that KBR, formerly owned by Halliburton Corporation, and other companies dumped tires, batteries, medical waste and other materials into the burn pits down-range. The smoke from those pits caused health issues in more than 800 veterans in the lawsuits, attorneys claim. At least a dozen affected have since died.

Judges with the Virginia-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, who issued the ruling in last year's appeal, said that KBR had little discretion in how to dispose of the waste, as they were under military control and the use of the burn pits was a military decision.

They said the lawsuits amounted to a "political question" that Congress and the president should resolve, not the courts.

New defense intelligence assessment warns China nears critical military milestone

Defensenews.com



WASHINGTON — In recent years, top defense officials and internal Pentagon reports alike have cautioned about the rise of China as a military power, in large part due to its investments in high-end technologies like hypersonics and its development of indigenous capabilities like stealth fighters and aircraft carriers.

But it's not a piece of hardware that's most worrisome for American interests, according to a new assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency. Instead, it's the worry that the Chinese service members behind each system have reached a critical point of confidence where they now feel that in combat, the People's Liberation Army can match competitors.

In the long term, that could be bad news for America — and especially for Taiwan.

USAA donates \$15 million to Coast Guard families



In a letter recognizing the anxiety among Coast Guard members who missed paychecks because of the partial federal government shutdown, Adm. Karl L. Schultz announced a \$15 million donation to support servicemembers.

The donation to the Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, a nonprofit charity that aids members of the Coast Guard, from USAA, a financial services and insurance company, will help the military and civilian workforce in need, said Schultz, commandant of the Coast Guard.

The donated funds disbursed as interest-free loans to Coast Guard personnel with the assistance of the American Red Cross, according to a news release from USAA. Coast Guard servicemembers with dependents were eligible for interest-free loans up to \$1,000, while servicemembers without dependents were eligible for up to \$750.

Editor's note: I knew there was a good reason why I carried my insurance needs with USAA.

'Up or out' is on its way out, and it's time for 'perform or out,' Army secretary says



"In my view, Army Secretary Mark Esper said, is, we're going to move away from 'up or out'. My shorthand is 'perform or out.' "

Over the past several years, the Army has been management, of getting the best qualified and highest performing soldiers into the positions that best fit their skills and knowledge, rather than simply moving personnel around to fill openings based on who's up for new orders first.

"The system, as I envision it, is going to be a market-based system, where talent is managed at echelon," he said.

"Some of their focus this past year has been in terms of making sure we take full advantage of the changes in law that the Congress gave us, in terms of officers," Esper said.

The change gives the services latitude to retain some highly specialized officers rather than force separations because they don't promote "on time," bring in civilian experts at ranks up to O-6, and disregard year groups in order to promote officers who are performing ahead of their peers.

To read full article [Click here](#)

Editor's note: Hard to believe it took so many years to figure this one out.

MOAA ACTION SITE

I have created this box to direct members to the online MOAA 'Take Action' site to assist MOAA in achieving their legislative goals. [Click here](#) and select the issue(s) you would like to have MOAA discuss with your representatives. Fill in the form and click submit. MOAA will send it to your representatives. You can add your own comments if you wish.

Committee to Study Health Effects of Malaria Drugs Taken by US Troops



disorders.

The committee launched an 18-month study of mefloquine, also known by its brand name, Lariam, and other malaria medications used by military personnel, Peace Corps volunteers and State Department employees over the past several decades.

U.S. troops have taken a variety of medications, including mefloquine, malarone, doxycycline and chloroquine, to prevent malaria in countries where it is prevalent, such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

The committee plans to examine the possible long-term health consequences of taking these medications, with a special focus on mefloquine and its potential "neurological effects, long-term psychiatric effects and the potential development of post-traumatic stress disorder."

Mefloquine, developed by the U.S. Army at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in the 1970s, was commercially introduced in 1989 as a once-a-week medication for preventing malaria. It is also used to treat the mosquito-borne parasite. Shortly after the drug's introduction under the brand name Lariam, some users reported experiencing hallucinations, nightmares, psychosis and delirium after taking it.

A correlation was found between marketing dollars and opioid-related deaths



Why it matters: A county-by-county study released today found there is a correlation between the amounts of money pharmaceutical companies spent marketing painkillers to doctors and the number of

opioid-related deaths in nearby counties. From a recap of the study by Wired:

"During the time period of the study, 2013 through 2015, the counties that reported more spending of ad money also had more doctors' prescriptions written and more overdoses from prescription painkillers. The association grew stronger as the amount of pharmaceutical ad money increased in each county."

It is important to note that correlation is not the same thing as causation. Plus, there are loads of pharmaceutical sales representatives who market prescription drugs responsibly and doctors who exercise extreme caution when prescribing them. But that being said, marketing works. If the US is serious about slowing the opioid epidemic, maybe more attention needs to be paid to how dollars are being spent at every point in the supply chain.

How does a fever do what a fever does?

Why it matters: Everyone knows a fever is part of the body's natural reaction to an infection. But how does a fever help fight infection? It turns out the increased tem-

perature level causes T cells to spring into action and produce something called heat-shock proteins, which in turn protect the body's cells from stress. Who knew?

As Opioid Crisis Continues, More Donor Organs Carry Hepatitis C



(HealthDay News) -- Add another hardship to the many already triggered by the opioid epidemic: More donated organs infected with the hepatitis C virus.

"The ongoing U.S. opioid crisis has resulted in an increase in drug overdose deaths and acute hepatitis C virus infections, with young persons (who might be eligible organ donors) most affected," explained a team led by Dr. Winston Abara. He's a hepatitis researcher at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Between 2010 and 2017, the number of organs obtained from so-called "increased risk" donors -- people at risk of carrying hepatitis due to behaviors such as drug abuse -- tripled, the new study found.

Burnout Rises Above 50% in Some Specialties, New Survey Shows



Responses to a new Medscape survey indicate that 44% of physicians meet the criteria for burnout, up from 42% in last year's report.

In addition, 11% are colloquially depressed (feeling down or sad), and 4% are clinically depressed, according to the Medscape National Physician Burnout, Depression & Suicide Report 2019.

The responses show that 14% have had thoughts of suicide but have not attempted it, and 6% said they preferred not to answer. Survey authors note that one physician a day dies by suicide, the highest rate of any profession. According to this survey, 1% of physicians have attempted it.

Bereavement meeting with clinicians helps families gain closure



When hospitals offer bereavement services led by physicians and nurses involved in a patient's care, the family is less likely to take legal action or lodge complaints, a study in *BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care* showed. During the bereavement meeting, families are encouraged to ask questions and receive answers, with 78% of those using the service saying they gained closure while the remainder were awaiting further information not available in the meeting.

Families who use hospital bereavement services often do so because they have unanswered questions about the diagnosis or treatment of the person who has died and/or issues around the quality of the care provided. Complaints and legal action are both more likely when relatives feel their questions have not been answered satisfactorily and/or steps not taken to stave off another similar incident.

Manufacturing Mini-Hearts for Better Health Outcomes

With a tagline of “Make a Heart. Save a Heart,” it might seem incredible that the company, Novoheart, can actually manufacture a live heart.

Founded in 2014, after 15 years of research, the company can do just that and has created what they call “heart-in-a-jar.”

“Our technology is unique in that after much testing and developing we are able to build a heart with human tissue that can be used to test the efficacy of drugs,” explains Kevin Costa, chief scientific officer. “It’s a huge breakthrough that has many future applications to ensure better health with the ultimate goal of preventing heart problems.” The company is currently working with a number of both large and small pharmaceutical companies.

Report: Naval Academy deteriorating so badly, mission to train midshipmen under threat



ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Tribune News Service) — Leaking pipes. Moldering walls. Condemned offices and balconies. Plumbing that can’t handle its load and a stormwater system dumping unfiltered rainwater into the Severn

River.

These aren’t the issues of a long-abandoned factory. They describe the current condition of the Naval Academy.

Infrastructure at the naval institution in Annapolis has degraded to the point of threatening the school’s ability to train and educate midshipman, according to a report by the Naval Audit Service. The 2018 audit, obtained by The Capital through a Freedom of Information Act request, details failing buildings, classrooms and athletic facilities – which in some cases actively leak, overheat and threaten user safety.

To dam the deluge of problems, the Navy restored the Flagship Institution designation for the academy, Naval Postgraduate School, and Naval War College. The academy will get \$15 million every other year, beginning in fiscal 2020. The Navy will also support the maintenance budget at a higher level.

New in 2019: Growing the force — the road to 386 squadrons



Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson this year laid out an ambitious plan for growing the Air Force’s operational squadrons by 24 percent as the service prepares for a possible conflict

with a major adversary.

In 2019, the Air Force will make the case to lawmakers for why it needs to hit 386 squadrons, which would be a 74 -squadron increase.

Wilson laid out the service’s “Air Force We Need” proposal, in which she described what the service needs to fight a peer adversary and win — while still defending the homeland, providing a credible nuclear deterrent, countering a medium-sized rogue nation, and fighting violent ex-

tremists such as the Islamic State.

The growth would include seven new fighter squadrons, 22 new command, control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance squadrons, 14 new tanker squadrons, five new bomber squadrons, and nine new combat search and rescue squadrons.

It would also include seven new special operations squadrons, one new airlift squadron and two new remotely piloted aircraft squadrons.

But many details on what that squadron growth would look like remain to be determined.

As More Lawmakers Back Blue Water Navy Bill, It Is Time to Make Your Voice Heard



Legislation to provide benefits to approximately 52,000 “Blue Water” veterans was reintroduced in January and now has the bipartisan support of 253 House lawmakers. Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.), chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, reintroduced H.R. 299, the Blue Water

Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.

The House unanimously passed a similar bill last summer, but it failed to pass in the Senate before the session ended. The bill would require the VA to assume veterans who served on ships off the coast of Vietnam but never had “boots on the ground” were exposed to Agent Orange and other harmful chemicals that led to rare cancers and other health problems.

A late-term effort to pass the legislation last December was scuttled due to opposition from the Department of Veteran’s Affairs and some senators who expressed concern with the cost of implementation. With the reintroduction of the legislation, however, comes renewed interest in seeing the bill through to passage. Military.com reported earlier this week that Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, has the votes necessary to pass the bill when it arrives without the same opposition that held up the bill last year. Because of the cost and difficulty in proving the medical conditions are due to “Blue Water” exposure, the VA is against the bill.

Editor’s note: If you are in favor of passage of H.R.299, go to [take action here](#) and contact your representative.

LUNCHEON

Wednesday Apr. 3rd, 2019

◆Call 642-0497◆

Florida Room, Atrium
North Campus SCC

*Reservations no later than 6 p.m.
Sunday, Mar. 31st, 2019*

Please give full names of members and guests, total number attending. Cost is \$15.00 payable at the door in cash or check. Social hour begins at 11:00 a.m. Business meeting at 11:15 followed by lunch and a speaker.

Remember, if you make a reservation and do not attend, you are expected to pay. Bring payment to next meeting or send check to:

Military Officers Association of America
Post Office Box 5693
Sun City Center, FL 33571-5693

Worse than you thought: inside the secret Fitzgerald probe the Navy doesn't want you to read

Navy Times



A scathing internal Navy probe into the 2017 collision that drowned seven sailors on the guided-missile destroyer Fitzgerald details a far longer list of problems plaguing the vessel, its crew and superior commands than the service has publicly admitted.

Obtained by Navy Times, the “dual-purpose investigation” was overseen by Rear Adm. Brian Fort and submitted 41 days after the June 17, 2017, tragedy.

It was kept secret from the public in part because it was designed to prep the Navy for potential lawsuits in the aftermath of the accident.

Unsparingly, Fort and his team of investigators outlined critical lapses by bridge watchstanders on the night of the collision with the Philippine-flagged container vessel ACX Crystal in a bustling maritime corridor off the coast of Japan.

Their report documents the routine, almost casual, violations of standing orders on a Fitz bridge that often lacked skippers and executive officers, even during potentially dangerous voyages at night through busy waterways.

The probe exposes how personal distrust led the officer of the deck, Lt. j.g. Sarah Coppock, to avoid communicating with the destroyer's electronic nerve center — the combat information center, or CIC — while the Fitzgerald tried to cross a shipping superhighway.

When Fort walked into the trash-strewn CIC in the wake of the disaster, he was hit with the acrid smell of urine. He saw kettlebells on the floor and bottles filled with pee. Some radar controls didn't work and he soon discovered crew members who didn't know how to use them anyway.

Fort found a Voyage Management System that generated more “trouble calls” than any other key piece of electronic navigational equipment. Designed to help watchstanders navigate without paper charts, the VMS station in the skipper's quarters was broken so sailors cannibalized it for parts to help keep the rickety system working.

Since 2015, the Fitz had lacked a quartermaster chief petty officer, a crucial leader who helps safely navigate a warship and trains its sailors — a shortcoming known to both the destroyer's squadron and Navy officials in the United States, Fort wrote.

Fort determined that Fitz's crew was plagued by low morale; overseen by a dysfunctional chiefs mess; and dogged by a bruising tempo of operations in the Japan-based 7th Fleet that left exhausted sailors with little time to train or complete critical certifications.

To Fort, they also appeared to be led by officers who appeared indifferent to potentially life-saving lessons that should've been learned from other near-misses at sea, including a similar incident near Sasebo, Japan, that occurred only five weeks before the ACX Crystal collision, Fort wrote.

About three weeks after the ACX Crystal disaster, Fort's investigators sprang a rules of the road pop quiz on Fitz's officers.

It didn't go well. The 22 who took the test averaged a score of 59 percent, Fort wrote.

“Only 3 of 22 Officers achieved a score over 80%,” he

added, with seven officers scoring below 50 percent.

The same exam was administered to the wardroom of another unnamed destroyer as a control group, and those officers scored similarly dismal marks.

Report: China has some of world's most advanced weapons, remains 'long way' from US military



China in recent years has poured billions of dollars into developing advanced weapons, some of which outclass U.S. weapons, but with an inexperienced military it remains years away from challenging American security interests globally, the

Pentagon's intelligence agency concluded in a report released Tuesday.

What alarms DIA officials is the increasing confidence China's military has displayed in its own abilities in recent years, and whether that could signal the country is inching toward striking or invading Taiwan, a senior defense intelligence official said Tuesday ahead of the report's release.

Court-martial of USS Fitzgerald commander no longer valid, judge says



A military judge has disqualified Navy Adm. Frank Caldwell from serving as the convening authority in Cmdr. Bryce Benson's case, effectively pausing the legal action against him and raising the possibility that the charges could be dismissed. Now it is back to the

CNO to oversee, which is highly improbable, Looks like major win for Benson. [Click for Fitzgerald story.](#)

To combat Russian subs, NATO allies are teaming up to develop unmanned systems at sea

The U.S. and its NATO allies are teaming up to more closely cooperate on the development and fielding of unmanned maritime systems, according to an agreement signed by the defense heads of 13 NATO allies.

During the July summit, the powers signed onto a plan to jointly pursue technologies aimed at mine and sub hunting, according to an October news release making the agreement public.

“The use of unmanned systems is a potentially game changing leap forward in maritime technology,” the release read. “Working alongside traditional naval assets, these unmanned systems will increase both our situational awareness and our control of the seas.”

The release, while short on details, seems to open up the possibility that development of underwater and surface drones could be even more lucrative for companies involved, as it hints at the alliance seeking common, interoperable systems. That means a proven drone might be competing for business in 13 markets simultaneously instead of just one.

Legendary Marine and actor R. Lee Ermey to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery



R. Lee Ermey, a legendary Marine and actor best known for his role as drill instructor Gunnery Sgt. Hartman in the 1987 movie, "Full Metal Jacket," was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

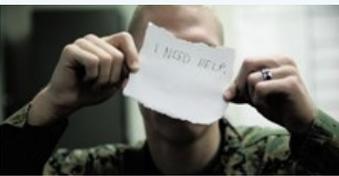
The website for Arlington National Cemetery indicated that it took place on

Jan. 18 at 10 a.m.

Ermey was buried with military honors, which include a casket team, firing party, bugler and the folding of and presentation of the American flag.

Ermey passed away in April at the age of 74 due to complications with pneumonia.

Marine Suicides Reach Highest Level In A Decade Despite End Of Large-Scale Combat Operations



Every Marine who takes his or her own life is more than a number, but the numbers tell a distressing story: the Marine Corps is losing the battle against suicide.

A total of 75 Marines killed themselves in 2018: 57 active-duty Marines and 18 Marines in the Selected Reserves, according to data the Marine Corps provided to Task & Purpose. As CNN first reported, 2018 saw the highest number of active-duty Marine suicides since 2009.

Of the active-duty Marines who took their own lives, 44 deaths were confirmed suicides while the remaining 13 are suspected as suicide pending notification from the Armed Forces Examiners System, the Corps data says. The suicide data for reserve component Marines does not include Individual Ready Reserve Marines, separated or retired Marines, or attached sailors.

By comparison, 43 active-duty and 10 Reserve suicides were reported in 2017, according to the Marine Corps data. In 2009, the number of active-duty Marine suicides was 52. No Reserve suicides were recorded for that year.

Active-Duty Military Suicides at Record Highs in 2018



The U.S. military finished 2018 with a troubling, sad statistic: It experienced the highest number of suicides among active-duty personnel in at least six years.

A total of 321 active-duty members took their lives during the year, including 57 Marines, 68 sailors, 58 airmen, and 138 soldiers.

The deaths equal the total number of active-duty personnel who died by suicide in 2012, the record since the services began closely tracking the issue in 2001.

Suicide continues to present a challenge to the Pentagon and the military services, which have instituted numerous programs to save lives, raise awareness and promote prevention. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, in

his 2019 guidance to Marines released Friday, urged them to consider the lasting impact that a "permanent solution to a temporary problem" can have. The Marine Corps active-duty deaths represent a 25 percent increase from 2017, the highest number of suicides since the service began closely tracking them in 2001.

Navy personnel. Just five years ago, when the Navy recorded 41 suicides among active-duty sailors, the suicide rate was 12.7 deaths per 100,000 sailors; now the rate is more than 20 deaths per 100,000.

According to Air Force officials, 58 active-duty airmen took their lives, while three Reserve members died by their own hands. Down from 63 in 2015 and 2017.

The Army noted in an email that 138 soldiers died as the result of suicide in 2018.

The U.S. military is not unique in struggling with the impact of suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates in the U.S. have increased in nearly every state since 1999. And while mental health conditions often are seen as the cause of suicide, it's "rarely caused by any single factor," according to the CDC.

VA Announces Access Standards Based on Drive Times, Wait Time

MOAA Newsletter



The program falls under the MISSION Act, which was signed into law by President Donald Trump in September 2018.

"Most Americans can already choose the health care providers that they trust, and President Trump

promised that veterans would be able to do the same," said VA Sec. Robert Wilkie in a statement. "With VA's new access standards, the future of the VA health care system will lie in the hands of veterans - exactly where it should be."

Eligibility criteria and final standards are based on VA's analysis of all the best practices in government and private sector, and then tailored to meet the needs of veterans, according to the VA.

Access standard will be based on average drive time and appointment wait times.

For primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services, VA is proposing a 30-minute average drive time standard.

For specialty care, VA is proposing a 60-minute average drive time standard.

VA is proposing appointment wait-time standards of 20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended care services, and 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exceptions.

Veterans who can't access care within those standards would be able to choose between eligible community providers and care at a VA medical facility.

Beyond access standards, veterans may request care outside of the VA when the services they need are unavailable, live in a state without a full-service VA medical facility, are part of the legacy/grandfathered from the Choice program, require care from a VA medical service line that VA determines is not providing care that complies with its standards for quality or in cases when outside care is in their best medical interest.

These standards will be implemented in June.

Paying the Price: The Hidden Cost of the 'Fat Leonard' Investigation



The investigation into the web of corruption spun by contractor Leonard Francis has wreaked havoc on the Navy's ability to fill senior leadership roles, unintentionally stalled hundreds of officers' careers and thinned out the service's flag ranks, USNI News has learned.

The six-year-long Department of Justice-led probe into the "Fat Leonard" scandal has resulted in 33 federal indictments, 22 guilty pleas and

Francis admitting to authorities that his company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, had overbilled the Navy by \$35 million to support port visits by U.S. warships.

But to get to that total, hundreds of personnel that served in the Pacific who had not committed any crimes had to be investigated and then cleared. That process placed a countless number of officers on hold with no information on their status and no timeline for being freed from suspicion – a process that sometimes took years – former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus told USNI News in an interview last year.

Several senior officials over the last several months have told USNI News that the damage done to Navy leadership was worse than the aftermath of the 1991 Tailhook convention scandal.

"The duration of time that the investigation covered meant that there are a lot of people that have rotated through that theater that could potentially have done something wrong. Especially the way that Francis managed his business, it meant that he tried to essentially compromise every commander, executive officer, every command triad almost that came through there," Clark said. "He tried to compromise them in a way to make them beholden to him so that he could use them in the future."

Editor's note: It is difficult to believe that the involved Navy officers did not realize that cooperating with Francis and accepting his illegal 'bribes' that allowed him to realize stunning profits would not, or could not be career threatening. For full article [click here](#)

VA Misleads Vets on Non-VA Emergency Care, Lawsuit Contends



Veterans who flooded the Department of Veterans Affairs with reimbursement claims for private-sector emergency care, in the wake of their appeals court victory in the Staab case, have been getting misinformation from the VA that likely discourages them from appealing

wrongly denied claims or from supplying the VA with follow-up documents to complete their claims.

The 2010 law stated that veterans with other insurance are responsible for "co-payments and similar payments." The revised regulation, however, took that phrase and expanded it with devastating effect to "co-payments, deductibles, co-insurance and similar payments." The practical effect is veterans with insurance remain responsible for almost every emergency cost their insurance won't cover.

That's the contention of a new lawsuit filed Jan. 1 by attorneys led by the non-profit National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP), which is trying to force the VA to heed the Staab decision and reimburse tens of thousands of veterans for non-VA emergency care that their own health insurance covered only in part.

Three years ago, in Staab, the appeals court ruled that the VA was ignoring the plain meaning of the 2010 law change, which

was intended to bring financial relief to veterans stuck with out-of-pocket costs for private-sector emergency care.

In 2017, then-VA Secretary David Shulkin conceded as much and assured Congress that the VA would rewrite regulations to comply with Staab even though, he noted, it would expose the department to billions of dollars in additional medical costs, both on claims re-filed by veterans and in payment of future claims.

Editor's note: Apparently, the new regulations have not hit the street yet.

House panel takes aim at legal roadblock to military malpractice lawsuits



A key House Democrat is targeting legislative fixes to the Feres Doctrine as a top priority this session, taking aim at the legal precedent critics say unfairly blocks troops from suing the military for medical malpractice, supervisor negligence and a host of other on-duty mistakes.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif. and the new chairwoman of the House Armed Services personnel subcommittee, listed the legal issue among her areas of focus in her first statement in the new leadership role.

In her statement, she said the panel's guiding focus will be to tackle "critical issues that impact not only our service members but their families who also bear the burden of sacrifice and commitment to our country."

Those include potential new rules for response and prosecution of sexual assault cases in the military — a topic for which Speier has been a vocal advocate for years — as well as reviewing rules for transgender enlistment, improving data usage in military recruiting and retention, and monitoring troops' pay and benefits.

The Feres Doctrine debate could lead to some of the most dramatic military policy changes to come out of Congress this year. Speier has been following a handful of court challenges to the legal precedent in recent months and is planning a hearing on the issue early this session.

Defense officials have argued that breaking the precedent would prompt a flood of frivolous lawsuits. But critics say the courts have gone well beyond the idea of preventing troops from suing for war-related injuries or on-duty accidents, and deprived military families of compensation for negligence.

Cronin said he believes amending the federal tort claims act to allow some military malpractice lawsuits won't upend Defense Department operations. Cases that clearly fall within military orders and missions can be excluded, while non-combat mistakes that would be liable under civilian law are allowed.

Florida Council of Chapters Communiqué

February 2019 Issue

See what the other Chapters are doing. The *Florida Council of Chapter's* newsletter, the "Communiqué" can be accessed by clicking on the link below. After you click the link and then click *Allow*, it may take a minute or so for the newsletter to pop up. It is worth the wait.

Apr2014.pdfhttp:www.moaafi.org/communique

Editor—Polly Parks. Send articles and photos to:

Polly Parks pparks@igc.org

Senator: Chinese buildup in South China Sea like 'preparing for World War III'



China's ongoing military buildup on islands in the South China Sea is akin to "preparing for World War III," the chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee declared on Tuesday.

The comment by Republican Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma came during a hearing to discuss the challenges posed by rising military powers China and Russia, a discussion that included ideas on how the people can better understand the threats to the world order that America built and has benefited from for decades.

While the U.S. military has a presence in and around the South China Sea and the larger western Pacific Ocean, Inhofe said America largely watched China lay claim to its rocks and islets before turning other reefs into fortifications, brimming with arms and stockpiled with materiel.

Ratner also warned Beijing's support for embattled Venezuelan strongman Nicholas Maduro should be viewed as a sign of things to come.

"I think it's a harbinger of what a China-led order would look like...in terms of protecting and defending non-democratic regimes and impeding the ability of the international community to galvanize and respond," said Ratner, a former deputy national security advisor to Vice President Joe Biden.

Inhofe and other senators, as well as experts who testified before the committee, noted that the urgency of the Chinese threat against America and today's world order may not be fully appreciated by U.S. citizens.

Inhofe alluded to studies showing that U.S. or NATO forces could potentially lose a war with Russia.

The Chinese and Russians already know that, Colby said.

"I'm more concerned that the American people understand that and have the urgency to stay ahead of this threat," he said.

Embattled VA Health Care System May Merge With Pentagon's



The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs may be considering merging parts of their two health care programs in a move that could alter how about 19 million military personnel, retirees, dependents and veterans receive

care.

In an announcement released Jan. 31, the Defense Health Agency said that an initiative known as DOD VA Health Care Staffing Services has reached the "strategy development stage." The effort is designed to merge the delivery of health care using facilities run by both agencies to serve the two populations of beneficiaries in a combined fashion, according to veterans' advocates.

"I think you have the possibility to save," said Kathy Beasley, Director of Health Affairs for the Military Officers Association of America. "Where there might be excess capacity in one area it may be utilized by beneficiaries in the other," Beasley said.

The move would offload some of the VA's burden onto the military health care system, according to Murray. VA

has struggled in recent years to provide timely care to veterans within its internal systems. Congress overhauled a community care program in 2018 that expands opportunities for veterans to receive government-subsidized care from private providers.

A merger of the two health care systems is likely to be a complex undertaking compounded by political resistance. Both veterans' service organizations and those that represent military personnel are always concerned that drastic changes to their members' health systems will have a negative impact on care. [Click here for more information](#)

TriWest takes over VA community care programs nationwide

Veterans Affairs officials announced that TriWest Health Care Alliance will take over nationwide operations for the department's main community care programs despite concerns raised last month about overpayments to the company.

For the last five years, operations for the department's primary two outside care programs — Patient-Centered Community Care and Veterans Choice Program — had been operated by TriWest and Health Net Federal Services.

The new contract extends TriWest's partnership and names them the sole provider until the two programs are replaced next year with a new overarching community care program mandated in the VA Mission Act, which President Donald Trump signed into law this summer.

VA officials praised the contract as ensuring that veterans will not see disruptions in their health care in the coming year.

Last month, the VA inspector general found that over a one-year period, TriWest officials filed more than 111,000 duplicate claims for outside care services and made mistakes in nearly 300,000 others, resulting in department overpayments of more than \$45 million dollars.

Similar errors by Health Net officials resulted in \$56 million in overpayments, investigators said.

In response, VA officials implemented new payment controls and recovered about \$40 million of that money. Additional reimbursements are being reviewed.



IN MEMORIAM

Frank Sanyour, LTC, USA (Ret)
SCC Chapter member passed 19 February 2019

Monthly Member and Board Meetings

Luncheon: Wednesday Apr. 3rd, 2019 11:00 am
Florida Room

Board Meeting: Wednesday Apr 10th. 2019
10:00 am—Trinity Baptist Church

Membership Committee Mtg. Club Renaissance
3rd Wednesday Apr 17th, 2019



Chapter 5–Star
Level of Excellence Award



Newsletter 5-Star
Communications Award

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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MISSION: The mission of Sun City Center FL chapter shall be to promote the purposes and objectives of the Military Officers Association of America; foster fraternal relation among retired, active duty and former officers of active duty, retired and reserve components personnel of the uniformed services and their dependents and survivors; provide useful services for members and their dependents and survivors and serve the community and the nation.

MEETINGS: A meeting is held monthly (except July/August) in the Atrium building in the Florida room at 11:00 a.m. and includes lunch and a guest speaker.

ACTIVITIES: Coordinate and sponsor Annual Memorial Day ceremony; provide awards and honorariums to outstanding JROTC Cadets; contributed to Operation Warm Heart and Helping Hand; contribute to My Warriors Place; provide funds for MOAA scholarships and participate in numerous community activities.

Additional information can be obtained by calling 813-642-0801 or e-mailing dkepley@tampabay.rr.com. You can also contact us by mail at Frank Kepley, 815 Freedom Plaza Circle, Apt 104 Sun City Center FL 33573.



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Military Officers Association of America
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House VA committee launches investigation into Mar-a-Lago trio

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs initiated an investigation recently into how much influence three wealthy members of President Donald Trump's private club in Palm Beach, Fla., exerted over the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The committee, now led by Democrats, sent a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie demanding documents and correspondence that could reveal the level of involvement at the VA of Mar-a-Lago members Ike Perlmutter, Marc Sherman and Bruce Moskowitz.

Perlmutter, the chairman of Marvel Entertainment, Sherman, a lawyer, and Moskowitz, a Palm Beach doctor, have no U.S. military or government experience, yet they are reported to have steered VA officials on policies affecting millions of veterans.

"The Committee on Veterans' Affairs is opening an investigation into this relationship so that Congress, veterans and the American people can better understand the scope and nature of this relationship between the department and these individuals," the letter states.

Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., the chairman of the veterans affairs committee, wants travel logs to and from Mar-a-Lago, as well as emails, text messages and phone records between the three men and former and current VA officials, among other documents. Takano asked for the information by Feb. 22.

There were attempts last year to extract information from the VA about the relationship between the three men and VA insiders. Former Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., requested travel logs and copies of correspondence involving Perlmutter, Sherman and Moskowitz, but Wilkie refused to hand them over, citing ongoing litigation.

Editors Note: As I have stated in past newsletters, this Mar-a-Lago business will continue to smolder until the matter has been thoroughly examined by Congress. [Click for full story.](#)

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