



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



Volume 35 Number 6

JUNE 2019

JUNE SPEAKER



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

WOW! What a great job Dr. Susan MacManus did as our guest speaker at the April luncheon/meeting. Her expert and incisive commentary on public opinion and inter-generational politics was amazing. She told us how and why Florida politics is so important in the national scheme of things. Also, how the demographics in Florida is rapidly changing. She gave a look back at the 2016 election, the midterm election, and a projection for the 2020 election. NO, she didn't predict the candidates. The Florida and national stage is just too uncertain at this time.

Congratulations to Carol Conklin and Harriet Jordan on receiving their Auxiliary Pin from Jane Foppe at the meeting. Thank you for continuing your support of the chapter. Also, a hearty welcome to our new members and guests who were at the meeting.

For our June luncheon/meeting, our guest speaker is scheduled to be CAPT. Richard Petrucci, USN, who will speak about the Cuban Missile Crisis and what we may not have known. Sounds interesting, hope to see you there. This will be our last meeting before we take our two-month break in July and August.

I reported last month about the MOAA National staff and Council and Chapter members "Storming the Hill" to again put the veterans benefits and other veterans issues in front of the congressional members and to lobby for passage of bills that support veterans. The effort appeared to be a great success and several more Senators and Congressmen have come on board in support of our issues. Congratulations to our team.

In closing, I want to remind you that your MOAA chapter board has been actively planning for the Memorial Day ceremony to be held on Monday, May 27, 2019 at 10:00 am at the King's Point Veterans Theater. This ceremony includes participation by almost all of the military organizations of Sun City Center and is a tribute to our deceased veterans since the last ceremony. Doors open at 9:00 am, so come early so you can find a parking spot as we are expecting around 800 people for the ceremony. I hope you will join us for this event.

Luncheon menu on page 2.



Richard J. Petrucci
Captain, U.S. Navy (retired)

Richard ("Dick") Petrucci hails from Westport, CT. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1961 with a bachelor's degree in engineering. Dick was designated a Naval Aviator in 1963 and served in the Navy for 25 years.

His flying assignments included four tours of duty in Patrol Squadrons including command of Patrol Squadron 26 in Brunswick, ME. Dick also graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA with a master's degree in Computer Science, and attended the Naval War College in Newport, RI. Following his command tour, Dick reported to Washington, D.C. where he completed three tours of duty in senior staff positions. During his career in the Navy he earned subspecialty designations in Computer Science, Computer Systems Management, Anti-Submarine Warfare Operations, and Weapons Systems Acquisition Management.

Dick retired from the Navy in 1986 with the rank of Captain and joined Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company in Marietta, GA as a senior engineer.

He retired in 1998 and moved to Tampa, Florida. In 2002 he joined the faculty at the Sarasota Military Academy (SMA), the country's first charter military high school, where he was Chairman of the Math & Science Department for three years. Dick also holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Civil Air Patrol where he served as Deputy Squadron Commander, Aviation Safety Officer, Aerospace Education Officer and Character Development Instructor for Cadets.

His qualifications include: Mission Pilot, Transport Pilot, Instructor Pilot, and Cadet Orientation Pilot. He is an FAA rated Airline Transport Pilot and Certified Flight Instructor with both Instrument and Multiengine ratings.

He has over 7,500 hours of pilot time. Dick is also the Vice President for Education and Director of Youth Programs for the Sarasota-Manatee Council of the Navy League, a member of the Silver Osprey Squadron of the Association for Naval Aviation, the Naval Academy Alumni Association, and is a Naval Academy Blue & Gold Officer. He mentors and counsels students who are interested in applying for an appointment to USNA and assists them with the nomination and application processes.

Dick will discuss the Cuban Missile Crisis.

JUNE 2019 LUNCHEON



Dr. Susan MacManus—Benny Blackshire



Jane Foppee-Carol Conklin-Harriet Jordan

Dr. Susan MacManus was the featured speaker at the May 1st Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) luncheon held in the Florida Room at the North Side Atrium. Dr. MacManus received her master's degree from the University of Michigan (1969) and her undergraduate (1968) and Ph.D. (1975) degrees from Florida State University.

She is nationally renowned for her expert and incisive commentary on public opinion and intergenerational politics and has appeared on ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, CNN, Fox News Channel, MSNBC, PBS, BBC, NHK (Tokyo), Australian Television, C-SPAN, National Public Radio, and in various print media.

She has also served as the political analyst for WFLA News Channel 8, the Florida News Channel, and WFLA News Radio. Currently, she is the political analyst for ABC Action News in Tampa, FL. Dr. MacManus is a Fulbright research scholar and has written numerous books.

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News Radio. Currently, she is the political analyst for ABC Action News in Tampa, FL. Dr. MacManus is a Fulbright research scholar and has written numerous books.

Dr. MacManus discussed various factors pertaining to the 2016 general election as well as the upcoming national election in 2020. She also discussed the recent Florida gubernatorial election, pointing out the impact the various categories of voters, i.e., black, white, Hispanic men and women had on the outcome. In addition, she commented on the fact that voters feel they can no longer find a place (social media, newspapers, TV, etc.) that they can depend on to find the truth. Commenting that even the fact checkers are being questioned. Also discussed were the various generational groups such as the boomers, millennials, greatest generation etc. and their effect on elections.

Her presentation was compelling, educational and enthusiastically received by the members. Dr. MacManus is an Honorary Member of MOAA and speaks to the group annually.

In above photo, Carol Conklin and Harriet Jordan receive their auxiliary pins from Jane Foppe .

\$15.00 JUNE. LUNCHEON \$15.00

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**Salad Bar/Condiments & Fresh Fruit with Assorted Dressings
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Dessert Bar: Chef's selected desserts**

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.

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.

- 202 Chapter members
- 120 LIFE members
- 32 PREMIUM members
- 17 BASIC members
- 29 non-MOAA members
- 4 Honorary members

New Chapter member(s) last month:

- Mr Alvin Jupiter AUX
- COL John Otis, USA
- 1LT Robert Putnam, USA

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

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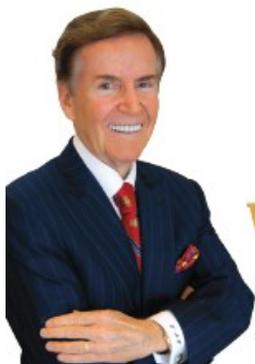


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- **Operation Warm Heart**, administered by the 1st Sergeants Group at MacDill AFB, who provide commissary vouchers for soldiers in need



- **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

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Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie is reportedly pushing an "internal campaign" to be the next secretary of defense, the Washington Post reported



According to interviews with at least one White House official, and another person familiar with the matter, who spoke to the Washington Post on the condition of anonymity,

Wilkie has thrown his hat in the ring to replace James Mattis as the military's top dog.

In Mattis' absence, Patrick Shanahan has taken over as acting secretary of defense. A former Boeing executive, Shanahan is likely to face tough questions at an upcoming Senate Armed Services Committee hearing about whether or not he'll hew to Trump's foreign policy decisions, or push back.

Wilkie served as the undersecretary of defense for personnel readiness at the Pentagon, prior to coming to the VA last year, where he's responsible for leading more than 420,000 full-time employees — an all time high for the department, Curt Cashour, the VA press secretary told Task & Purpose.

Should the rumors prove true, and Wilkie is seeking to leave the VA for greener pastures at the Pentagon, it could plunge the department back into uncertainty should he get the job.

Continuity of leadership is key for an agency like the VA, which "is a giant, lumbering vessel that requires a lot of time and energy to right its course," Griffin Anderson, a spokesman for the Democrats on the House Veteran Affairs Committee, told Task & Purpose last March.

Two senators want to revoke 'BRAC-like' review of VA facilities



Two senators are attempting to revoke a law that Congress approved last year to launch a nationwide review of VA facilities to determine which ones to close

and where to invest.

Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Mike Rounds, D-S.D., introduced legislation Wednesday to eliminate the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission. The commission, which has yet to be formed, was put into law in 2018 as part of the VA Mission Act, a major bipartisan reform bill.

The nine-member commission is supposed to review VA facilities, consult with veterans organizations and make realignment recommendations to the president. The recommendations would also be sent to Congress, as well as posted for public comment on the Federal Register. For more information [click here](#)

Sun City Center MOAA Website

Don't forget to visit our new website. The link to the website is: <http://moaaf.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)

No New TRICARE Fees in Proposed DoD Budget



In addition to including the largest proposed pay raise for active-duty troops in 11 years -- 3.1 percent -- President Donald Trump's fiscal 2020 Defense Department budget contains no increases in health care fees for troops, retirees and

family members.

In the past several years, TRICARE beneficiaries have seen significant increases to their health programs, including co-pay increases for beneficiaries who use TRICARE Select and retirees on TRICARE Prime, as well as pharmacy co-payments across the board.

But this year's budget proposal contains no additional health care fee increases for users of TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select and TRICARE for Life, meaning that if the budget passes as written and Congress does not include additional fees, beneficiaries can expect their health care costs to be stable next year.

Editor's note: finally, no new fees. Wonder how long that will last.

VA to Roll Out Community Care Expansion Even If IT Systems Aren't Ready



Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie told a skeptical House Committee that his agency is sticking with the June rollout date for expanded private health care options, even if the IT systems aren't fully in

place to handle the transition.

In testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Wilkie said the Mission Act requires the new rules on access to community health care for veterans to go into effect regardless of whether the systems are operational.

He said the main concern is the "decision support tool," which aids doctors and veterans in deciding whether the best health care option is in the private sector.

"We're going to be implementing the Mission Act even if the decision support tool is at 70% or 50%," Wilkie said under questioning from Rep. Julia Brownley, D-California.

Wilkie spoke a day after another committee hearing at which several lawmakers suggested that the planned rollout of new rules for the Mission Act should be delayed to ensure that IT systems are functioning properly.

"Our people have been trained on how to work with our veterans in setting the access standards and availability standards," he said.

VA staff, he added, will send vets to community care if the right choices are in the private sector.

Editor's note: Don't hold your breath on this one.

CNY veterans say VA Caregiver program is broken



Some Central New York disabled veterans say they are being unfairly kicked out of and shortchanged by a federal Veterans Affairs program that lets family members and friends care for them at home.

The veterans complained about the VA Caregiver program today at a news conference in Syracuse organized by Sen. Charles Schumer, D-NY.

The VA caregiver provides monthly stipends, ranging from \$660 to \$2,600, and other assistance to family members and friends who provide home care for veterans seriously injured since Sept. 11, 2001 so they don't have to be institutionalized. Tricia Smith, an Army veteran from Mexico, N.Y., who injured her back in Iraq in 2006, has been in the caregiver program three years. She said the VA arbitrarily reduced her caregiver's monthly stipend from \$2,000 to \$700 in late 2017. As a result Smith said she and her caregiver, Kathleen Dehring, are struggling to make their mortgage payments and may lose their home.

Schumer said the program, launched in 2011, has been riddled with problems since VA medical centers nationwide began dropping veterans from the program and cutting stipends two years ago without explanation.

In response to complaints from veterans, the VA imposed a moratorium in December on caregiver program discharges.

Schumer called on the VA to fix the program. "The federal government has a sacred responsibility to the American veterans who sacrificed so much for our country," he said. *Editor's note: Really hate to hear this. The program has really helped a lot of people.*

VA privatization latest battleground for Congressional rising stars



A pair of prominent freshman lawmakers offered sharply different views about the

future of the Department of Veterans Affairs health care this week, bringing the ongoing debate over fears of department privatization to the next generation of elected leaders.

The duo — Democratic New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Republican Texas Rep. Dan Crenshaw — have both built national followings since their elections last fall, and recently have sparred directly over social media concerning rhetoric surrounding Muslims and the Sept. 11 attacks.

But this week marked each legislator's first focused entry into VA policy discussions, and their comments suggested both will make those issues a key focus in months to come — with very different positions on the issue.

Editor's note: This issue is not going anywhere soon.

New Pentagon policy will bar most transgender people from serving



The U.S. Defense Department signed a memo on Tuesday that would enforce limitations on transgender people serving in the military, a policy that has been the subject of court challenges.

The policy will take effect on April 12 and will bar most transgender individuals from serving if they require hormone treatments or transition surgery.

President Donald Trump announced in July 2017 a ban on transgender people serving in the military. He later accepted Pentagon recommendations to limit the ban to individuals with a history of gender dysphoria, defined as "those who may require substantial medical treatment," and allowing some exceptions.

Trump cited military focus and medical costs for rolling back the policy.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit removed the last of four court injunctions lower federal courts had issued on the new policy, which had until today kept the Defense Department from prohibiting forces from serving who experience gender dysphoria, which is a discomfort with one's biological sex. Transgender personnel who are willing to serve according to their biological sex, or who have already completed their transition to their preferred sex and are stable would be allowed to remain in the military.

Editor's note: I have a feeling that this issue is not over. See next article.

House votes to condemn Trump's limits on transgender troops



The House delivered a rebuke to President Donald Trump by voting to condemn his administration's move to restrict transgender men and women from military service.

A non-binding resolution opposing Trump's transgender ban passed 238-185. Every Democrat supported the resolution, while nearly every Republican voted against it. Five Republicans broke ranks and voted in favor: Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Trey Hollingsworth of Indiana, Will Hurd of Texas, John Katko of New York and Tom Reed of New York.

The Trump administration's policy bars people who have undergone gender transition from enlisting. It also requires military personnel to serve as their biological gender unless they began a gender transition under less restrictive Obama administration rules. The policy is being challenged in court.

About 21,000 troops booted so far under 'deploy or get out' policy



About 21,000 nondeployable troops have been forced out of the ranks since the Defense Department's "deploy or get out" policy began last summer, Acting De-

fense Secretary Patrick Shanahan announced on Thursday.

"A key element of strengthening our military and increasing lethality is ensuring our warfighters achieve established physical, mental and security vetting standards," he told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing on the fiscal 2020 budget request.

"War is unforgiving, and our mission demands we remain a standards-based organization."

Last year, Defense Department officials estimated that about 11 percent of active-duty troops — some 235,000 — were rated as nondeployable. Almost half of that number were individuals missing medical exams or paperwork, troops nearing retirement and women service members who were pregnant.

But the remaining 126,000 faced a range of short- and long-term injuries, or simply failed to meet military fitness standards. Military officials said those individuals would be given up to 12 months to prove their deployability or be pushed out of the services.

Pregnant, recently pregnant and combat-wounded troops are exempt from the standards. Each of the services has also revamped their classification and reporting requirements, to more accurately track troops' readiness

Arlington Changes Funeral Escort Eligibility Rules in Effort to Limit Burial Wait Time



Arlington National Cemetery released new rules for funeral escorts for 2019, a change proposed by the ANC's advisory committee to address lengthy wait times for burials.

The new rules allow officers at O-4 or higher, warrant officers in the two highest warrant grades (CW4 and CW5), and E-9 enlisted members to receive full honors with an escort. Servicemembers who are killed in action or who have received the Medal of Honor, regardless of rank, are also eligible.

The change went into effect in mid-January after several months of careful consideration and input from the service chiefs, service secretaries, and the secretary of defense. Previously, any servicemember who attained the rank of E-9 and above could request this benefit.

According to the commission, the concept behind this change was to "align the most resource intensive level of honors with those who demonstrated a higher level of commitment to service and sacrifice."

Chapter Newsletter and Website once again awarded MOAA National 5-Star ratings

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.

Maryland cross: religious symbol or war memorial? Court will decide



BLADENSBURG, Md. — To some it's a blatant religious symbol, 40 feet tall, sitting on a median in the center of a busy highway intersection on government-owned land. To others, it is a 91-year-old piece of history, a symbol of honor, service and peace and a landmark to be preserved.

In the coming months, a U.S. appeals court will have to decide whether the monument dedicated to the memory of 49 local men killed in World War I — known as the Peace Cross — is in keeping with the Constitution's First Amendment and the separation of church and state.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit heard arguments in the case earlier this month, after a district court judge ruled in November 2015 against a lawsuit asking to have the monument removed. The case is one of a growing number of challenges to veterans memorials and monuments because of their religious imagery, giving rise to legal questions about how those symbols should be interpreted in a historical context.

"If the Bladensburg Memorial must come down, then so too must the many veterans memorials across the country which bear religious imagery," the First Liberty Institute, a religious freedom firm in Plano, Texas, said in an online summary of the case. The group, along with the Jones Day law firm, is providing free defense counsel on behalf of the monument. "This would require tearing down the Argonne Cross in Arlington (National) Cemetery and sandblasting the word "God" from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier."

For the non-Christians fighting the Peace Cross, demanding its removal isn't a random effort to make an example to bolster the First Amendment. There needs to be a conversation about the use of Christianity and Christian symbols to the point where people consider them nonreligious elements, said Jason Torpy, who heads the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, which advocates on behalf of nonreligious servicemembers and veterans.

The three-judge panel of the Fourth Circuit appeals court heard arguments Dec. 7. The judges did not indicate when they will make their decision.

Editor's note: These arguments over crosses located on government property will never end. Lots of crosses in lots of military grave yards and on lots of military memorials will continue to stoke these disputes.

Bill would allow last World War II Medal of Honor recipient to lie in state at Capitol



A bill that would have the last Medal of Honor recipient from World War II lie in state in the Capitol Rotunda gained bipartisan backing Monday from the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees.

"I can't think of anybody who would vote against that," Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Georgia, chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, said of the bill introduced in January by Rep. Carol Miller, R-West Virginia, which would direct a state funeral for a member of the "Greatest Generation" who earned the nation's highest award for valor.

State funerals, and lying in state at the Capitol Rotunda,

are reserved for current and former U.S. presidents and those deemed to have rendered "distinguished service." The late Sen. John McCain was granted the honor last August.

Army Gens. John J. Pershing and Douglas A. MacArthur had state funerals, but there has never been one for an identified enlisted service member. (There have been state funerals for the "Unknown Soldiers" of World War I and World War II.)

In introducing the bill in January, Miller said that honoring the last WWII Medal of Honor recipient would show the nation's gratitude to all "our veterans from the Greatest Generation."

A total of 464 Medals of Honor were awarded during World War II, 266 of them posthumously, according to government figures. Only Williams, Coolidge, Currey and Maxwell are still living.

Heather Wilson to resign as Air Force secretary, take job as university president



WASHINGTON — Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson will resign as the service's top civilian at the end of May once she is formally named the next president of the University of Texas at El Paso, she said in a letter to President Donald Trump.

In her letter to the president, Wilson, 58, said she would leave her job in May to "allow sufficient time for a smooth transition and ensure effective advocacy during upcoming" budget hearings on Capitol Hill. She said it had been a "privilege" to lead the Air Force for the last two years.

"I am proud of the progress that we have made restoring our nation's defense," Wilson said Friday in a prepared statement emailed to Stars and Stripes. "We have improved the readiness of the force, we have cut years out of acquisition schedules and gotten better prices through competition, we have repealed hundreds of superfluous regulations, and we have strengthened our ability to deter and dominate in space."

'Rotting' ships and aging tankers could compromise the military's ability to get to the fight, lawmakers warn



Lawmakers have warned the Navy that an aging fleet of transport ships — and no clear plan to replace them — means the military may not be able to get forces across oceans in the event of a fight with Russia or China.

The Pentagon now emphasizes the need to boost the combat readiness of its forces and modernize weaponry in an era of "great power competition." But with the planes and ships that would be called upon in a crisis to help ferry equipment and troops to conflict zones in disrepair, it's not clear the military could get to the fight, lawmakers said Thursday.

"With no recapitalization in place and only a distant hope that Navy will find this a priority, I continue to be perplexed how the Army and the Marine Corps expects to get to the future battlefield on these aged ships," said Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA), the ranking member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Sea power and Projection Forces.

Microsoft Stands By Its \$480 Million Pentagon Contract



Microsoft is pressing ahead with a \$480 million contract to build augmented reality technology for the Army despite strong backlash inside the company.

A group of Microsoft employees on Friday called for the company to back out of a deal to provide tech for the Pentagon's Integrated Visual Augmentation System program. In an open letter to chief executive Satya Nadella and president Brad Smith, employees said the effort amounts to "weapons development" and they "refuse to create technology for warfare and oppression."

The company, however, has no intention of distancing itself from the project, a Microsoft spokesperson told Nextgov on Monday. The decision comes amid growing tension between tech companies and the national security sector.

Editor's note: I am not a Microsoft fan, but they did the right thing in this case. These anti-military techies need to spend a tour in Afghanistan. Might adjust their perspective.

Lawmakers take first steps toward a BRAC for VA facilities



House lawmakers took the first steps toward shutting down hundreds of Veterans Affairs facilities through a process similar to military base closure rounds, saying the move is critical to keep the department from wasting millions of dollars on underused, aging buildings.

But some of the largest veterans groups said they have serious concerns with the proposal, saying it's ripe for abuse and could tempt VA officials to outsource more veterans' medical care to private-sector physicians.

Even supporters admitted the plan will be a difficult sell on Capitol Hill.

"This bill is bold, transformative and controversial," said Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. "Moving forward with it will require a significant amount of political courage and, let's face it, members of Congress are not known for that."

At issue are the roughly 6,300 facilities owned VA spread across the country. Department officials have said more than 57 percent of those locations are more than 50 years old, and hundreds of others provide little value to veterans care or department management.

DoD Restructures Management of Medical Treatment Facilities



The Department of Defense (DoD) is restructuring its medical treatment facilities (MTFs), including transferring MTF administration and management from the military departments to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), according to a new GAO report.

The changes are required by section 702 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017. They are designed to streamline the military health system

management, improve efficiency, and sustain operational medical force readiness. The act gave DoD until Sept. 30, 2021, to complete the transfer.

The DHA director will be responsible for the administration of each MTF, including budgetary matters, information technology, healthcare administration and management, administrative policy and procedure, military medical construction, and any other matters the defense secretary determines to be appropriate.

The DoD's MTFs include 51 hospitals, 381 ambulatory care and occupational health clinics, and 247 dental clinics.

Wave of elderly veterans creates financial worries for VA's nursing home services



More than one million veterans will be eligible for taxpayer-funded nursing home services within the next five years, according to the latest estimates from federal administrators trying to balance the costs of institutional

care with alternative options allowing those individuals to stay in their homes.

Already, the annual costs of nursing home care have risen to almost \$6 billion, Veterans Affairs officials told lawmakers at a congressional hearing last week. By 2024, that number could top \$10 billion, a significant portion of the department's overall budget.

"As veterans age, approximately 80 percent will develop the need for some long-term services and support," Dr. Teresa Boyd, assistant deputy undersecretary for health at the Veterans Health Administration, told lawmakers. "The aging of the veteran population has been more rapid and represents a greater proportion of the VA patient population than in other healthcare systems."

By law, VA officials must provide nursing home care for veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 70 percent or more. The department currently maintains 156 state homes across all 50 states.

But a study by USA Today and the Boston Globe last fall found that about two-thirds of those facilities scored worse than private-sector nursing homes in a series of quality indicators last year.

No delay for new veterans community care rules, despite concerns from advocates



Veterans "choice" is happening in 10 weeks, unless critics can find a way to stop it.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie this week expressed his confidence that new community care standards expanding veterans access to private-sector physicians will be in place on schedule this June, regardless of ongoing concerns over the changes.

"The statute is very clear, the timelines are very clear," he told reporters after a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on Tuesday. "The regulations are in place. I can't see them changing unless Congress steps in between now and June 6."

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Sully quickly advanced to fill critical service dog billet



Sully, the service dog who symbolized devotion lying by former President George H.W. Bush's flag-draped casket, has a new mission.

The 2-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever on Wednesday joined Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's dog program to help wounded veterans. Sully offered his paw as he was administered an oath streamed on Facebook to "support, comfort and cheer warriors and their families."

Sully received a new vest and is considered a Navy hospital corpsman second class. Sully's Instagram account posted he looks forward to continuing his mission "as my best friend wanted me to."

The service dog was named for retired airline pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger III, who became famous for landing a damaged passenger jet on the Hudson River in 2009. Sully served Bush for six months until the former president died in November.

Space Force would be by far the smallest military service



The Trump administration's proposed Space Force, which faces an uncertain fate in Congress, would be the smallest military service — by far. Details of the Pentagon's proposal show the new service would have

about 15,000 personnel, including an unspecified number of civilians, but would begin in 2020 as only a headquarters of about 200. The proposal was submitted to Congress, which must authorize the new service.

Space Force would be the first new military service since an independent Air Force was established in 1947 as part of a broad reorganization of the government's military and intelligence agencies.

Space Force would reside within the Department of the Air Force, similar to how the Marine Corps exists within the Department of the Navy. It would have its own chief of staff, a four-star general who would answer to the secretary of the Air Force, currently Heather Wilson.

Currently the smallest branch of the armed forces is the Coast Guard, which has about 40,000 active-duty members in uniform and is part of the Department of Homeland Security. The second-smallest service, the Marine Corps, has 186,000. The biggest military service is the Army, with 487,500 active-duty members.

Navy enacts almost all changes recommended after fatal USS Fitzgerald, USS McCain collisions



The Navy has enacted nearly all the changes recommended in two 2017 reports it ordered after two fatal collisions at sea involving U.S. warships, the vice chief of naval operations recently told Congress.

Of the 117 changes the reports recommended — later trimmed to 103 — 91 were put in place, according to a Feb. 25 memorandum to Congress by Adm. William Moran. Those changes were meant to address years of underfunded operations, an increased pace of operations and an erosion of safety standards, according to the reports.

Navy Secretary Richard Spencer ordered the reports to identify problems that led to the separate tragedies involving ships of the Japan-based 7th Fleet. He tasked the Navy with conducting a comprehensive review in August 2017 and the following month asked an independent team of subject matter experts to conduct a separate strategic readiness review.

A little more than year after the reports came out, Moran in his memo declared the service "currently safe to operate and a more effective Navy than we were a year ago."

While the memorandum provides the most detail yet on the changes made after the tragic collisions, some in Congress are pushing for more information to ensure safety standards are being met.

Editor's note; Time will tell.

VA recommends dropping legal challenge over 'blue water' Navy veterans benefits



Veterans Affairs leaders will not recommend appealing a federal court ruling to award disability benefits to thousands of Vietnam veterans who claim exposure to cancer-causing chemical defoliants during ship deployments off that country's coastline, officials confirmed Tuesday.

During an appearance before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said he will not ask the Department of Justice to continue to fight the legal issue. Federal officials have until late April to appeal the decision, issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in January.

Wilkie emphasized that other federal officials could still offer arguments in favor of filing an appeal. But his recommendation is likely to be an oversized factor in any decision, given the potential impact on his department.

LUNCHEON
Wednesday June 5th, 2019

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Sunday, Jun. 2nd, 2019

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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

A-Fib Tied to Higher Odds for Dementia

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

What You Need to Know



Carolyn Stone
Evelyn Trimborn

(HealthDay News) -- A common heart rhythm disorder, atrial fibrillation, may speed up mental decline in older adults, new research suggests.

If you have atrial fibrillation, or A-fib, your heart beats irregularly. This means blood can pool and form clots that go to the brain, causing a stroke.

The good news from this study: Blood thinners can reduce the odds for stroke and maybe delay or prevent dementia, researchers say.

"Our findings emphasize the need to improve the clinical management of patients with atrial fibrillation, which is very important since a considerable proportion of older people with atrial fibrillation are not using [anti-clotting] drugs," said study first author Mozhu Ding. She is with the Aging Research Center at the Karolinska Institute in Solna, Sweden.

The researchers found that thinking and memory skills declined faster among those who had atrial fibrillation. They were 40 percent more likely to develop dementia than those without the heart condition.

However, those who took blood thinners because of the heart disorder had a 60 percent lower risk of developing dementia -- 11 percent taking anti-clot drugs developed dementia compared to 22 percent not taking them. No decreased risk was seen among those taking aspirin, the researchers found.

Editor's note: Having A-fib, I found this article particularly distressing.

Herbal supplement kratom resulted in 1,807 calls to poison control centers



The herbal supplement kratom, made from the leaves of a Southeast Asian plant and used by some to manage the pain of opioid withdrawal, has been the source of a growing number of calls to poison control centers in the United States. The centers reported 1,807 calls in a seven-year span, rising from 13 in 2011 to 682 in 2017, according to research published in the journal *Clinical Toxicology*. Sixty-five percent of those calls were made in 2016 and 2017.

Besides being used to relieve pain or ease the effects of opioid withdrawal, it also is taken as a mood booster to help with anxiety or depression. It is usually taken as a pill or capsule, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, but some people chew kratom leaves or brew them into a tea.

The FDA has warned people to avoid using any kratom-containing products because of risks associated with its use, including "evidence of kratom compounds with opioid properties." The FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have both warned that a rare strain of salmonella has been linked to some kratom-containing products.

These health conditions were more common among people who used kratom with another substance, including caffeine, alcohol and cocaine.

Editor's note: That's all we need --- another lethal drug to replace Opioids.

"Alexa, Tell the Nurse I'm in Pain"

An AI-powered hospital room technology is getting rave reviews from patients and nurses



Early results from a pilot program at Cedars-Sinai show that an Alexa-powered platform called Aiva provides entertainment, connects patients with hospital staff and the outside world, and improves workflow for nurses.

The program began in February 2018 in just six hospital rooms to see if the amenity would be welcomed by patients and caregivers, says Hain. A year later, the program has expanded into 102 rooms across 4 units at the hospital.

Aiva, a voice assistant technology designed for healthcare, received early investment from Cedars-Sinai as part of the hospital's accelerator program, says Aiva founder and CEO Sumeet Bhatia. While the pilot program at Cedars-Sinai relies on Amazon Echo devices, the company's software is device-agnostic, says Bhatia: It can be used with Google Home devices and will extend to other third party products in the future. "We think of ourselves as the voice-operating system for healthcare," he says.

In each room of the pilot program, an Amazon Echo Dot attached to the wall communicates with Aiva's software, which transmits and tracks requests to devices in the room, such as the television, as well as to healthcare providers. When a patient asks for pain medication, for example, Aiva sends a text to the appropriate nurse.

Patients have been putting the system to use for music, turning on the TV, changing channels, and checking the weather and sports scores. Those activities are valuable, emphasizes Hain, because they give patients a connection to the outside world, helping them to feel less lonely.

Editor's note: Boy! What an improvement this will be.

Kansas doctor sentenced to life in prison for patient death



A Kansas doctor was sentenced to life in prison Friday for unlawfully prescribing medication blamed for an overdose death, the latest prosecution in a government crackdown on physicians amid an opioid epidemic.

The government presented evidence at trial that Henson wrote prescriptions in return for cash, postdated prescriptions and wrote them without a medical need or legitimate medical exam. Prosecutors said the doctor prescribed opioid medications in amounts likely to lead to addiction.

He also was convicted of conspiracy to distribute prescription drugs outside the course of medical practice, unlawfully distributing various prescription drugs, presenting false patient records to investigators, obstruction of justice and money laundering.

His case is the latest in a string of prosecutions across the nation targeting physicians accused of overprescribing opioids.

"I want this case to send a message to physicians and the health care community," U.S. Attorney Stephen McAllister said in a news release.

The street drug fentanyl is the top overdose killer now, displacing heroin and pain pills.

Here's How the Air Force Hopes to Train 1,500 New Pilots a Year



The U.S. Air Force in recent weeks announced plans to ramp up its pilot training to produce 1,500 pilots a year by fiscal 2022. Now, Air Education and Training Command (AETC) has divulged preliminary blueprints on how it anticipates accomplishing the task.

Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said before a Senate Armed Services readiness and management support subcommittee hearing that the service will increase its current 1,160 pilot training slots to 1,311 in fiscal 2019, aiming for 1,500 every year shortly thereafter.

The moves come as the service faces a shortage of roughly 2,000 pilots overall.

"AETC has been tasked to produce about 1,500 pilots per year ... That number includes active-duty Air Force, Air Force Reserves, Air National Guard and international students," command spokeswoman Marilyn Holliday told Military.com.

AETC is also updating its Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) curriculum to streamline how quickly the Air Force can produce new pilots, Holliday said.

"The final touches to the new Undergraduate Pilot Training syllabi were adjudicated and are now in the initial stages of execution.

US Navy, Coast Guard ships pass through strategic Taiwan Strait in message to China



The United States sent Navy and Coast Guard ships through the Taiwan Strait, the military said, as the United States increases the frequency of movement through the strategic waterway despite opposition from China.

The voyage risks further raising tensions with China but will likely be viewed by self-ruled Taiwan as a sign of support from Washington amid growing friction between Taipei and Beijing.

The two ships were identified as the Navy Curtis Wilbur destroyer and the Coast Guard Bertholf cutter, a U.S. military statement said.

"The ships' transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the statement said.

"The U.S. will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows," it added.

Bob Dole humbled by Kansas delegation effort to promote him to Army colonel



Members of the Kansas delegation to Congress are working to advance the decorated military career of Bob Dole, the former U.S. senator who was badly wounded as a soldier in World War II.

The U.S. Senate passed legislation sponsored by Sen. Pat Roberts and Sen. Jerry Moran that would promote the 95-year-old Russell native from captain to colonel in the Army.

U.S. Rep. Roger Marshall, from Kansas' 1st District, is

pushing for the bill to gain traction in the House.

"I am humbled to know that my friends in the Kansas delegation made it a priority to honor me in this way," Dole said. "I was certainly proud to serve in the U.S. Army during World War II — alongside many heroes who never returned to American soil. To me personally, this legislation is a shared honor."

Dole joined the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps in 1942 and was called to active duty the following year. He was deployed to Italy as an infantry lieutenant in the 10th Mountain Division, and he was wounded in 1945 when German machine gun fire struck him in the upper back and right arm.

Dole was cited for acts of heroism under fire and received two Purple Hearts and the Bronze Star. His injuries left him with numbness in his left arm and limited mobility in his right arm, which he minimized in public by holding a pen in his right hand.

Coastie receives heroism medal for shielding others from fire and providing medical aid during Las Vegas shooting



A petty officer currently stationed at Dutch Harbor, Alaska, is the first Coast Guardsman since 2012 to be awarded the prestigious Coast Guard Medal for heroism.

Given to military members serving with the Coast Guard for heroism in a situation not involving contact with the enemy, the medal was presented to Petty Officer 2nd Class Traci Huddleston for her "extraordinary heroism" during the mass shooting in Las Vegas on Oct. 1, 2017. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz presented it Tuesday during a ceremony at the annual USO Metro Gala in Washington, D.C.

Huddleston described her actions during the shooting as being in "just the wrong place, wrong time, but also right place, right time."

The shooting killed 58 concertgoers and injured 850 others. According to the medal citation, Huddleston disregarded her own safety to guide others to cover and then spent hours providing first aid and assisting other victims before other help arrived.

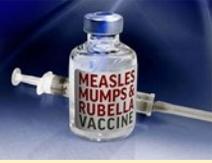
"Recognizing there was no place to take cover from the hail of gunfire raining down on the crowd, she demonstrated incredible courage and composure by immediately guiding a nearby 14-year-old to the ground, using her body to shield her from the gunfire," according to the citation. "Without concern for her own safety, she attended to the girl's mother who was suffering from bullet wounds to her neck and body."

Joe Bellino, Navy's first Heisman Trophy winner, dies at age 81

Navy football lost one of its legends when Joe Bellino died in his home state of Massachusetts at the age of 81. Bellino, the 1960 Heisman Trophy winner as a standout halfback for the Midshipmen, had been in failing health for some time.

If you are a football fan [click here](#) for full story. He was quite an athlete. In both football and baseball.

Physician-Senators Square Off on Vaccine Mandates



Two Republican senators, both physicians, clashed Tuesday over whether the government should make vaccinations mandatory. When Sen. (and ophthalmologist) Rand Paul, MD (R-Ky.), known for his libertarian views, said some vaccine mandates had "run amok,"

that drew the attention of Sen. (and gastroenterologist) Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.).

"If you are such a believer in liberty that you do not wish to be vaccinated, then there should be a consequence and that is that you cannot infect other people," Cassidy said in defending school vaccination requirements – implying that unvaccinated children shouldn't be allowed in schools.

Measles, as witnesses and senators testified, was thought to have been eradicated in the U.S. in 2000.

Six measles outbreaks are underway now in the U.S., noted Washington state's health secretary, John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH, in written testimony.

"One in Washington, three in New York, one in Texas and one in Illinois," Wiesman noted. "The current outbreak is larger and infecting people faster than those in recent history."

Paul disputed the need to make it mandatory.

Editor's note: Measles was eliminated, now it is back. What more do you need to conclude that non-vaccinated people are responsible. Incidentally, Paul and his family receive the vaccinations.

Techy toilet seat made to monitor heart patients



In the not-too-distant future, when congestive heart failure patients are being released from hospital, they may be given a special toilet seat to take home. That device would measure their vital signs every time they sit on it, sending alerts if more heart trouble were detected.

Developed by a team at the Rochester Institute of Technology, the seat is equipped with an electrocardiogram, ballistocardiogram, and a photoplethysmogram. These allow it measure the patient's heart rate, blood pressure, blood oxygenation levels, body weight and stroke volume, which is the amount of blood that the heart pumps out with each beat.

Special algorithms analyze all that data, and determine if the patient's condition is deteriorating – a diagnosis can be made even before the patient develops any noticeable symptoms. Once developed further, the seat would then transmit a notification to the user's physician.

In many cases, it's possible that a visit to the doctor's office is all that would be required, or just a change in medication. This would be less disruptive and much less expensive than a readmission to the hospital, which is currently quite common for recuperating congestive heart failure patients.

Editor's note: Hmmm.

Two Georgia veterans committed suicide at VA hospitals



Two veterans in Georgia took their own lives in separate incidents, each in front of a Veterans Affairs facility.

The first incident occurred Friday in a parking lot outside the Carl Vinson Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia.

The second, which occurred just one day later, reportedly involved a 68-year-old who shot himself outside the Atlanta VA Medical Center, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

The VA has not released the identities of those involved or any additional details of the incidents.

The two suicides signal a continuation of an alarming trend of veterans taking their own lives on VA campuses.

Between October 2017 and November 2018, 19 veterans committed suicide on the grounds of VA medical facilities, according to a report from the Washington Post.

Many believe these grisly incidents are final acts of protest by former service members who feel the country they served turned its back on them.

In December, Marine Col. Jim Turner, 55, put on his service uniform, drove to the Bay Pines Department of Veterans Affairs, and shot himself outside the medical center.

Investigators discovered a note next to his body.

"I bet if you look at the 22 suicides a day you will see VA screwed up in 90 percent," it read.

Space Force faces Senate panel's skepticism, concerns

A Senate panel raised a long list of reservations to a Trump administration plan to create Space Force. However, acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan, outgoing Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson, Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Air Force Gen. John Hyten told committee members that the new service was the best approach to U.S. security in space.

"We are all open minded on the plan, but are wrestling with different aspects of it," said Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of Senate Armed Services Committee. "This is one of those rare times where we are having a hearing where people haven't made up their minds."

Wilson, who leaves her Air Force job next month to become the next president of the University of Texas at El Paso, was vocal about her opposition before reversing her stance last year.

Florida Council of Chapters Communiqué

April 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/communiqué

Editor—Polly Parks. Send articles and photos to:

Polly Parks pparks@igc.org

Vehicle thefts near Ramstein spotlight keyless entry vulnerabilities



Hundreds of keyless models were found to be vulnerable to a “keyless hacker attack” in a recent test conducted by the German General Automobile Club, or ADAC.

Of 237 models examined, 230 could be stolen in seconds using devices found in most electronic stores or online very cheaply, said the ADAC report, published last month.

Keyless cars can be unlocked and started automatically when the fob is close by.

Thieves can build devices that extend the signal range of the key fob by hundreds of yards, allowing them to open and drive off with the car. The ADAC study noted this signal hacking is possible if the key is in the house or “in the pants or jacket pocket” of an owner.

Once the engine is running, it usually remains in operation without a key if there is fuel in the tank. The car can be refueled while the engine is running, the report said.

Hughes recommends keyless car owners park in a locked garage or well-lit area; and secure their key fob in a box or container that prevents the signal from reaching the vehicle. Using a mechanical steering wheel locking device is another suggestion, Hughes said.

USAF Academy welcomes 9-year-old with cancer as ‘youngest cadet’



Decked out in a kid-sized flight suit, Je’Moni Ford, 9, became the U.S. Air Force Academy’s “youngest cadet” this month, quickly advancing from the fourth grade straight into college, at least for a day.

Je’Moni visited the academy outside Colorado Springs, Colo., as part of its “Cadet for a Day” program, in partnership with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which since 2000 has given young people facing severe medical challenges the chance to experience life as a cadet.

Two years ago, Je’Moni’s parents noticed something on his ring finger and took him to the family doctor, who initially thought it was a friction blister caused by drumsticks — the 9-year-old is an avid drummer — the academy said in a statement earlier this week.

It turned out to be a sarcoma, a rare kind of cancer that grows in connective tissues. Je’Moni underwent six surgeries to remove the tumor and reconstruct his hand, after which he had to relearn to tie his shoes.

After being welcomed into the academy’s Cadet Wing, he checked out the airfield and fire department, tested virtual reality equipment and participated in a theater skit, the statement said. Photos also showed him hitting the gym.

Despite his battle with cancer, he continues to play music.

“He never misses an opportunity to entertain,” she said. “If there is an audience, he is going to perform.”

Last spring, Just Be Colorado, a local nonprofit for cancer survivors, helped send Je’Moni to New York to see a performance on Broadway in time for his 9th birthday. His visit to the academy came just before his 10th, his mother said.

On Twitter this week, the academy’s football team wel-

comed the school’s youngest cadet, saying “we could use a strong player like you” and inviting Je’Moni to visit head coach Troy Calhoun.

“We are so blessed to have this opportunity, and to be the parents of this young man, who makes every day an adventure,” Shameeka Ford said.

US Army commander approves Bowe Bergdahl sentence, no prison time



A senior U.S. military commander is endorsing the decision to spare Army Pvt. Bowe Bergdahl prison time for abandoning his post in Afghanistan, endangering military comrades who participated in the

lengthy search for him.

Army Gen. Robert Abrams, head of U.S. Army Forces Command, approved the court-martial sentencing handed down last November. Bergdahl was reduced in rank from sergeant to private and ordered to forfeit \$1,000 a month in pay for 10 months. The judge also gave him a dishonorable discharge.

Editor’s note: thought sure he would pull some brig time.

Trump Signs Legislation Promoting Bob Dole to Colonel for WWII Service



President Trump on Monday signed legislation authorizing the honorary promotion of former Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., from captain to colonel in the U.S. Army in recognition of his service in World War II.

The legislation, which was passed unanimously last month by the House of Representatives after going through the Senate, recognizes Dole’s time spent in the armed forces during World War II, where he earned two Purple Hearts and was twice awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

Trump last year praised Dole as a “great American” during a presentation awarding the former lawmaker the Congressional Gold Medal .



IN MEMORIAM

No reported passings during May/June

Monthly Member and Board Meetings

Luncheon: Wednesday Jun. 5th, 2019 11:00 am
Florida Room

Board Meeting: Wednesday Jun 12th 2019
10:00 am—Trinity Baptist Church

Membership Committee Mtg. Club Renaissance
3rd Wednesday Jun 19th, 2019



Chapter 5–Star
Level of Excellence Award



Newsletter 5-Star
Communications Award

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

MOAA: The SCC Chapter of The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) membership is granted to Army; Navy; Marines; Air Force; Coast Guard; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Public Health; the National; Guard or Reserve components both active or retired; and former officers and Warrant Officers who were separated under acceptable conditions.

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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5:00 P.M. UNTIL 9 P.M.

(4:30 PM to 6:30 PM complementary photos)

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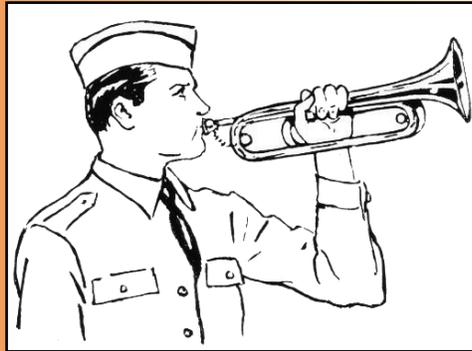
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Memorial Day Ceremony

Monday May 27th



**Formalities start at 10:00 a.m.
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Veterans Theater,
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A Public Tribute to Greater Sun City Center Deceased Military Veterans

*A Roll Call of Veterans who died during the past year will
be held concurrently with our traditional Living Flag Tribute.*

***Guest Speaker:
COL. DJ Reyes, USA (Ret)***

**A Musical Interlude will be presented by the
Trinity Singers**

**Colors will be presented by
the Hillsborough Co. Sheriff's Office Color Guard**

Doors will open at 9:00 a.m. Free entry. The public is invited.

Guests are requested to be seated by 9:45 A.M.

Sponsored by the Combined Military Veterans Organizations of Sun City Center