



“I was raised to believe that we cannot be free unless we are secure.”

~ Leon Panetta, Nominee for Secretary of Defense ~

WASHINGTON REPORT

Security Team Shuffled

On Thursday, the President announced the nomination of current CIA Director Leon Panetta to be the next Secretary of Defense when current Secretary Gates retires in June. It was also announced that Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top American commander in Afghanistan, would be nominated to lead the Central Intelligence Agency.

At the same news conference it was announced that Lt. Gen. John Allen will succeed Petraeus as head of the U.S.-led international military force in Afghanistan and longtime diplomat Ryan Crocker will be nominated as the next U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan.

All of the nominations require Senate confirmation but preliminary indications from many in both parties indicate that the choices were well received and confirmation should be quick and routine.

TRICARE Issue

Dr. George Peach Taylor Jr., Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, held a teleconference meeting Wednesday with the executive directors of the Military Coalition “to discuss” the TRICARE issue.

NAUS President Bill Matz and Legislative Director Rick Jones attended the teleconference to hear Dr. Taylor expand on the President’s FY 2012 Budget plan to increase TRICARE Prime premiums 13 percent in 2012 and raise the premium each year thereafter using “an appropriate index.”

According to Dr. Taylor, the Department found “no perfect index” but settled on the National Health Expenditure (NHE) produced annually by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The Pentagon policy maker expressed hope that Congress would not prohibit the Department from going forward, so “we don’t ever have to talk about it (TRICARE

Prime) again.” However, many organizations, including NAUS, see the entire operation as a “nose under the tent” and fully expect that the Department will soon begin again its attack on the earned healthcare benefit.

The Acting Principal Deputy told the military association leaders that the NHE averaged 4.6 percent over the last 5 years, 6.4 percent over the past 25 years, and the most recent release in January 2011 reported a NHE increase of 3.1 percent for 2009.

In answer to a NAUS question, Taylor said the Department expected TRICARE Prime rates would grow 4 percent over the next five years, producing a revenue stream of approximately \$160 million.

(On the other hand, a NHE Fact Sheet projects a 6.1 percent average increase through 2019, which is closer to the original DoD recommendation for a 6.2 percent increase over the next 5 year period, increasing costs to retired military by \$250 million.)

In the absence of legislation to prohibit the Defense Secretary from implementing his plan, under age 65 military retirees will see a significant new expense for receipt of their earned health benefit. Congress must act to prevent the DoD plan.

NDAA Markups Begin

The House Committee on Armed Services (HASC) announced that its six subcommittees would begin markups of the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R.1540) for Fiscal Year 2012 on Wednesday and Thursday next week. The subcommittee on Military Personnel would consider TRICARE and related quality of life matters on Wednesday, and NAUS will be watching what they do very closely.

The entire HASC is scheduled to meet on May 11 to consider the whole bill and the full House is expected to take up the measure the week of May 23.

The Senate has not set a schedule for its consideration of the NDAA for fiscal year 2012.

Student Honors Iraq/Afghan Veterans at Arlington

It only took several months to get up and running and 17-year old Stafford High School student Richard “Ricky” Gilleland III has created the only digitized record of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. Putting to shame numerous high paid government officials.

In response to the numerous scandals brought to light over the past several years of mismanagement, mismarked grave and unmarked remains at Arlington, Ricky knew he could do better and did.

Being the great-great-great-grandson of a Gettysburg veteran, the son of a retired Army Sergeant First Class, his step-father is a retired Navy LCDR and his two older brothers

being Air Force senior airmen, he knows the closeness of being part of the military. In fact Ricky wants to be a Naval Officer and intends to apply to the Naval Academy.

Having only an old camera, his computer and a new Motorola Zoom, which he recently received for his 17th birthday, Ricky has concentrated on the 18 acres of Section 60 at Arlington where around 700 OIF/OEF veterans are currently buried. He hitches a ride with his mom every few weeks to make a record of all the new burials since his last visit.

His [website](#) is small for now but Ricky has a vision to enlist the aid of one or more of the veterans organizations to record the graves of all Iraq and Afghan veterans from all over the country. Unfortunately your loved one may not be listed especially if they are not located in Section 60. Please pass this site on to anyone you know who has someone buried in that section. **NAUS Note: When we see a young patriot like Ricky take on a “project” such as this, we are heartened and inspired. Well Done Ricky, we salute you!**

HEALTH CARE NEWS

DoD Launches TRICARE Young Adult Program

An interim final rule launching the TRICARE Young Adult program was published in Wednesday's [Federal Register](#). This new program gives unmarried dependents that do not have employer-sponsored insurance or coverage under the Continued Health Benefit Care Program (CHCBP) an opportunity to purchase TRICARE coverage up to age 26.

Monthly premiums for those enrolled in TRICARE Standard/Extra will be \$186 in 2011. A TRICARE Prime benefit is expected to be made available later this fall at a cost of \$213 per month.

TYA is now open for enrollment and coverage will start May 1, 2011, provided enrollment forms and payment are received, not postmarked, by the regional contractor before May 31, 2011. Otherwise, coverage begins the first day of the month after the required payment is received and the application is processed.

Complete information about the new program including links to the application forms can be found by clicking [here](#). Although the program has already started, the public does have 60 days to comment on the interim final rule.

TRICARE Disaster Information

In the event of a natural disaster or other emergency, TRICARE will provide you with up-to-date, critical information that may affect your health benefits on its [Disaster Information](#) page. Updates will include information gathered from a variety of sources, including other federal agencies, State and local governments and the media.

NAUS observes that a State of Emergency has been declared in seven States due to

tornado-related damage and Express Scripts has implemented [Early Refill Procedures](#) in each of these areas.

Remember that your TRICARE benefits will be maintained during any time of crisis. In the event of an emergency, dial 911 or go directly to the nearest emergency room.

TRICARE Expands Data Access

A new feature on the TRICARE Online [website](#) allows user access to expanded personal health data, including lab results, patient history and diagnoses, and provider visits. These features are an expansion of the current Blue Button capability, which already allowed beneficiaries to safely and securely access and print or save their demographic information, allergy and medication profiles. For more information, visit the [TRICARE website](#).

ACTIVE DUTY NEWS

Newest Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Selected

The Marine Corps recently named Sgt. Maj. Michael P. Barrett to succeed Sgt. Maj. Carlton W. Kent as the 17th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps is the highest ranking enlisted Marine and is chosen by the Commandant to serve as his senior enlisted advisor. Barrett most recently served as the Sergeant Major of Regional Command Southwest and I Marine Expeditionary Force in Afghanistan. He is currently serving as the Sergeant Major of 1st Marine Division at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California.

Sgt. Maj. Kent has served as the Corps' senior enlisted advisor since April 25, 2007, and will retire on June 9, 2011, following a relief and appointment ceremony at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C.

New Army Chief of Staff Looking for Feedback

General Martin E. Dempsey was sworn in as the Army's 37th chief of staff on April 11. He now has a [Facebook Page](#) where he posts his views on a variety of Army and military-related subjects, and invites readers to comment. Recently, he asked visitors to his page what they consider to be the three biggest challenges and three greatest opportunities for the Army in the future. And he is interested in hearing what you have to say, whether you're in or out of uniform. Take a moment to stop by his page and "like" it so you can offer your own thoughts and help shape the future direction of the United States Army.

New DoL Transition Tool

The Department of Labor (DoL) recently released a new online tool, [REALifelines](#), to assist veterans, service members and their families in transitioning to civilian life. The site provides quick and easy access to resources to help them integrate into the workforce and community life. The REALifelines: Transition Advisor is one of a series of "[elaws](#)" that help employers and employees understand federal employment laws

and resources. To learn more about DoL's efforts to assist veterans and transitioning service members, visit the [VETS website](#).

Military Fatherhood Award

Every year, the National Fatherhood Initiative gives the Military Fatherhood Award to a U.S. military dad who displays an ongoing commitment and dedication to children, makes an extraordinary effort to father from a distance when deployed, successfully balances military and family life, and makes an effort to mentor other service members who are separated from their families. There are currently three finalists for the 2011 Military Father Award.

You can help choose the winner. Visit the [National Fatherhood Initiative page on Facebook](#) to learn about the finalists and cast your vote. Voting ends on May 13, 2011.

Air Force Plans to Eliminate Exception to Short-tour Credit

A temporary policy established in 2003 that allowed airmen to receive short-tour credit for overseas TDYs of at least 181 consecutive days is going to be [rescinded](#). Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz approved the change, which primarily affects Airmen who deploy to a hostile fire or imminent danger pay areas. The effective date will be announced at a later date.

Longer deployments in the area of responsibility (AOR) have become the norm in recent years making the exception unnecessary. Airmen previously awarded short-tour credit under this policy will be unaffected. Those who arrive in the AOR on temporary assignment prior to the rescission date and serve at least 181 consecutive in a hostile fire or imminent danger pay area will receive short-tour credit under the old criteria. Those who arrive in the AOR on or after the effective change date will only receive short tour credit if they meet the requirements specified in AFI 36-2110.

VETERANS NEWS

Medal of Honor

President Obama will soon present the nation's highest award for valor to the families of two Korean War heroes. A White House ceremony is scheduled for May 2 to award Medals of Honor to recognize the bravery of Army Pfc. Anthony T. Kaho'ohanohano and Pfc. Henry Svehla. Their actions ultimately cost them their lives, yet saved countless others. Click [here](#) to read the official White House announcement.

Miramar VA Cemetery Begins Burials

The new VA Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego, CA, had its first scheduled casket burial this week. The 313-acre facility provides gravesites and columbarium facilities. For more information, visit the VA's [Miramar National Cemetery webpage](#), call the cemetery at [\(619\) 553-2084](#), or visit the VA's [Burial and Memorials webpage](#). To schedule a burial in a VA National Cemetery, visit the VA's [Schedule a Burial webpage](#).

VA Joins White House Military Family Initiative

Along with the White House initiative [Joining Forces](#), a community-based effort to help

lessen the burden on our military and veteran families, the VA has identified several ways it can support the initiative through its [Veteran and Military Families](#) page. For more information, visit the [VAntage Point Blog](#).

NAUS NEWS

On behalf of the entire NAUS Staff I extend our thoughts and prayers for the relief of the thousands affected by the recent devastating storms and tornadoes that hit the southern and eastern areas of the United States this week. I extend my most sincerest condolences to the families and friends of the almost 300 people who lost their lives to this massive storm.

NAUS has been in touch with some members in the affected areas, and we encourage all of our members and friends, who may be near the affected areas, to volunteer time and effort to help our fellow Americans in need of assistance. Again, our hearts go out to those affected by these storms. We hold you in our thoughts and prayers for a speedy recovery.

***Bill Matz
President***

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[Back to top](#)

Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen stand in harm's way around the globe to defend our nation and our cherished liberties. NAUS asks you to please pray for their continued strength and protection—and pray as well for their families, who daily stand in support of their spouses, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters.

GODBLESSAMERICA

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