



“To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.”

~ George Washington ~

WASHINGTON REPORT

SASC NDAA Markup

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) began its markup of the Senate version of the fiscal 2012 defense authorization bill with Subcommittees finishing work on Tuesday and full Committee completing the job on Wednesday. With the exception of the SASC Readiness Subcommittee markup, all the markups are closed.

In a press release summarizing the bill, among other provisions, the Committee authorizes a 1.6 across-the-board pay raise for all members of the uniformed services; allows the Pentagon plan to go forward for increases in pharmacy copayments; and, does not prohibit TRICARE Prime enrollment fee increases but limits future increases to the percentage increase in retired pay. NAUS awaits a press conference to hear what the Committee has approved.

On these matters, the Senate bill is consistent with the House version of the defense policy measure. The bill now goes to the full Senate and then, following passage, to a House-Senate conference where any differences will be ironed out.

The bill also provides authority for \$12.8 billion to enhance Afghan security forces and \$1.75 billion in Coalition Support Funds to reimburse key partners supporting U.S. military operations in Operation Enduring Freedom. It would also support \$524 million for DoD operations to oversee and implement foreign military sales to Iraqi security forces.

As a side note, traditionally SASC markups have been closed to the public. However, for the first time in 15 years the Readiness Subcommittee held an open discussion. It was the first time that any part of the Senate defense authorization bill had been marked up in public witness. Panel Chairwoman Claire McCaskill of Missouri, who has campaigned in the past against what she considers excessive secrecy in the process, calls it "a victory" for transparency.

NAUS agrees with the Missouri Democrat. It, too, would like to hear the

arguments for or against certain proposals. While we understand the importance of holding certain discussions on America's defense in secret, we believe that a more open process would be beneficial and especially informative in a representative democracy.

House Approves MilCon/VA Appropriations Bill

The House approved Tuesday the fiscal year Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill (HR 2055) by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 411 to 5.

The House bill would provide a total funding level for military construction \$14,014,047,000, a 15.7 percent decrease below the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. A significant portion of this decrease is attributed to the reduction in BRAC 2005 appropriation as that program completes its requirements.

The total funding level available for fiscal year 2012 for the Department of Veterans Affairs is \$127,796,852,000, an increase of 5.8 percent over the fiscal year 2011 enacted level. The recommendation provides funding increases for several mandatory veteran benefits programs, as authorized by current law.

In addition to appropriations for fiscal year 2012, the Committee recommendation includes \$52,541,000,000 in advance appropriations for fiscal year 2013 for the three health care accounts of the Department.

The House bill now goes to the Senate for its consideration. The Senate schedule for review is uncertain at this time.

Leon Panetta and TRICARE: Confirmation Process for Defense Secretary

As readers know, current Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is scheduled to retire at the end of June and President Obama has nominated CIA Director Leon Panetta to replace Gates and lead the Pentagon as Secretary.

Tuesday, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved Panetta's nomination by voice vote and the full Senate is likely to consider the nomination before week's end. The full Senate has scheduled its confirmation vote with speeches for next Tuesday, June 21.

In response to a series of policy questions requested prior to the SASC consideration, Director Panetta wrote regarding TRICARE, "I believe the modest increases in beneficiaries' costs are reasonable." Panetta also called the proposed 13 percent increase in TRICARE Prime fees a "first step."

Politico reports, Secretary Gates once again defended the controversial increase in TRICARE fees for retirees before members of the **SASC**, saying it was a necessary cost-saving measure. Then out-going Admiral Mullen, who accompanied Sec. Gates at the SASC hearing, added, "These increases are

modest and manageable ... sincerely hope you will see fit to pass it. It (TRICARE) is clearly eating us alive."

Some may be concerned that certain of these statements may have crossed the line in violation of the Hatch Act, which prohibits administration officials from lobby activities, or various related statutes (e.g. 18 USC 1913) that proscribe executive lobbying for their agenda.

Though the statutes apply to all executive branch agencies and are aimed to prohibit activities that directly or indirectly are "intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, to favor or oppose ... any legislation or appropriation by Congress," in practice these statutes have not been applied literally, in practice none of the statutes has been applied to limit the lobbying activities personally undertaken by the President and his assistants in the Executive Office of the President, Vice President, cabinet members, and other Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed officials (PASs) acting within their areas of responsibility.

Perhaps simply saying one "hopes" for passage has also kept the Secretary within the bounds of various provisions on this matter

HEALTH CARE NEWS

Humana Named South Region TRICARE Contractor

Tuesday, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) upheld the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) award to the current South Region contractor, Humana Military Healthcare Services, denying a protest, filed March 7 by UnitedHealth Military and Veterans Services.

UnitedHealth won the contract in July 2009, but Humana protested soon afterward to the Government Accountability Office, claiming discrepancies between the award criteria in the bid documents and those actually used to make selections.

TRICARE serves 3.1 million South Region beneficiaries in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and eastern Texas. In addition to service coverage in these States, the Fort Campbell area of Kentucky, currently with the North Region, will be added to the South Region under the contract.

TMA Deputy Director, Rear Adm. Christine Hunter said TMA would immediately begin a transition period leading up to the start of services set to begin April 2012.

For additional information and updates, go to this [website](#).

DoD Reports Increase in Provider Access for TRICARE Standard

According to the Department of Defense (DoD) Survey of Civilian Physician Acceptance of TRICARE Standard, almost 93 percent of responding physicians in 53 areas were aware of the TRICARE program in fiscal year 2007; and almost 85 percent of those physicians accepted new TRICARE Standard patients.

Today, more than 325,000 providers across the United States are in the TRICARE network, with over 1 million providers accepting TRICARE beneficiaries.

The campaign to increase the number of providers accepting TRICARE patients started several years ago, led by the TRICARE Regional Office-West and TriWest Healthcare Alliance, the TRICARE managed care support contractor serving 21 western states.

Recently, Colorado's leadership announced the number of providers in the state increased from 4,830 to more than 7,920. Hawaii's leadership announced the number of providers in the state increased from 2,885 to close to 4,000.

At the same time, Idaho's number of providers in the state increased from 2,190 to more than 3,820 and Utah's number of providers increased from 2,200 to more than 3,600.

The most impressive report thus far comes from South Dakota, where the number of providers in the state increased from 900 to more than 3,000.

Moving Families Can Transfer TRICARE Prime Enrollment

Active duty military members and their families who are moving to a new location have a new option for transferring their TRICARE Prime military health plan enrollment. It's a simple phone call.

TRICARE Management Activity officials said moving service members should call their current regional health care contractor to transfer their family's enrollment, and include a cell phone number and email address. The new regional contractor will contact them within five business days after the relocation date to finalize the TRICARE transfer.

TMA informs that active duty service members and their families will not have to worry about coverage during the transfer process, because they are continuously covered under TRICARE. Once settled, officials said, they can confirm coverage on the Beneficiary Web Enrollment website.

Other options include transferring during military base in-processing, using the Beneficiary Web Enrollment site or downloading and completing an enrollment application, DD Form 2876, to mail. Service members and their families also can

visit a local TRICARE Service Center.

Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Pocket Guide Mobile Application Now Available

As a reminder, the Department of Defense announced June 8 the release of a new mobile application for health care professionals, the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Pocket Guide.

The application, developed by the National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2), gives providers a comprehensive, quick reference that includes clinical practice guidelines for assessing and treating service members and veterans who have sustained a mild traumatic brain injury, commonly referred to as a concussion.

According to Pentagon officials the mobile application provides clinicians with quick and convenient access to clinical guidelines for concussion care.

The mobile application is free and available for download on Android smart phones at this [website](#). Hard copies of the pocket guide can be ordered by contacting the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center at info@dvbic.org or [1-800-870-9244](tel:1-800-870-9244).

ACTIVE DUTY NEWS

New CNO Nominated

Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert, currently Vice Chief of Naval Operations, has been nominated to become the next Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) when current CNO Admiral Gary Roughhead retires, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced on Thursday.

Adm. Greenert, a submariner, served as commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command from 2007 to 2009. From 2004 to 2006, he served as commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

Army Brings Back the Soft Patrol Cap

The Army News Service reports the Army will replace the black beret with the soft patrol cap for wear with their combat uniforms. The beret will still be worn with the service uniform.

The new policy will make the patrol cap the standard. But the beret will remain as the standard for the Army service uniform, and as an optional uniform item with the ACU – at the discretion of commanders.

Army Chief of Staff Martin E. Dempsey made the change after receiving input from soldiers in the field. Dempsey also indicated that soldiers soon would be able to sew on name tapes, service tapes, rank insignia and skill badges, instead of using Velcro.

NATO Libya Air Raids

NATO air forces conducted 149 sorties on Monday, of which 62 were strike sorties and conducted 136 sorties on Tuesday, of which 48 were strike sorties. That brings the total to 11,107 sorties and 4,212 strike sorties since March 31.

Raids were conducted near Tripoli, Waddan, Misurata, Yafran, Brega, Zlitan and Sirte. Key targets hit included a surface-to-air missile launcher and radar site near Tripoli and a command and control site near Misurata.

Twenty-two vessels were hailed and four were boarded Monday in arms embargo enforcement activities. Fourteen vessels were hailed and two boarded Tuesday. Since March 31, 1,344 vessels have been hailed, 95 boarded and eight diverted.

Lawmakers Sue White House Over U.S. Involvement in NATO Libyan Mission

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers sued the Obama administration on Wednesday over its use of U.S. military forces in Libya. Led by Reps. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) and Walter Jones (R-N.C.), the members contend the White House broke the law when it launched military operations against Libyan strongman Col. Moammar Gadhafi in March without congressional authorization.

The 1973 War Powers Resolution requires presidents to get congressional approval for military operations within 60 days, or withdraw forces within the next 30. Congress has not authorized the current operations in Libya.

As reported by [The Hill](#), a Capitol Hill newspaper, eight House members joined Reps. Kucinich and Jones in the effort, including GOP Reps. Howard Coble (N.C.), John Duncan (Tenn.), Roscoe Bartlett (Md.), Ron Paul (Texas), Tim Johnson (Ill.) and Dan Burton (Ind.), and Democratic Reps. John Conyers (Mich.) and Michael Capuano (Mass.).

White House Faces Opposition on U.S. Involvement in NATO Libyan Operation

This week, the President provided members of Congress with a 32-page report to justify U.S. involvement in the NATO-led Libyan operation. In receipt of the document, House leadership wanted more answers to a number of serious questions about compliance with the 1973 War Powers Act.

According to the White House document, **U.S.** forces are not the type of "hostilities" covered in the War Powers Act. But lawmakers are not in agreement either with the founding of the operations or the costs to American taxpayers.

Regarding costs, SecDef Robert Gates said taxpayers would be astounded to learn that America pays 75 percent of the bill for the NATO operation's growing costs, likely amounting to more \$850 million by September's fiscal year's end. With the House scheduled to consider the defense-spending bill next week, there

may be additional concerns and possibly restrictions on the President's decision to war in Libya. It is a serious matter and an important topic during this era of persistent conflict and U.S. debt.

According to House leadership, the President has until Sunday night, under provisions of the War Powers Act, to gain Congressional approval to allow our Armed Forces to stay involved in Libya.

Senate Delays Vote on Libya Operation

Late last week, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) and Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) delayed presentation of a resolution to endorse the President's NATO decision on the Libyan engagement. At press time, the anticipated Senate vote remains in limbo.

VETERANS NEWS

Looking for a Job, looking for a Hire

This is a friendly reminder to please visit the Office of Personnel Management Feds Hire Vet's website. This week FY 2010 HIRING DATA was posted today on its [website](#).

More Vets Hired by Government

Despite a decrease in overall hiring, the federal government brought on more veterans in fiscal 2010 than in fiscal 2009, according to [a report](#) released Wednesday by the Office of Personnel Management.

The number of veterans hired rose by about 2,000 to 72,133 in fiscal 2010, OPM said. Veterans also accounted for a higher percentage of new hires, the personnel agency said, rising 1.6 percentage points from 24 percent of new employees in fiscal 2009 to 25.6 percent in fiscal 2010.

OPM emphasized increased hiring of disabled veterans, noting the percentage brought on grew 1.2 points, from 7 percent of new hires in fiscal 2009 to 8.2 percent the following year.

The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments saw the most new veterans hired, while the Transportation Department had the highest percentage point increase, going from 25.4 percent to 30.1 percent. Most agencies saw small increases, but the Commerce and Energy departments and the General Services Administration hired fewer veterans. While OPM itself hired more veterans than it did during the previous year, veterans as a percentage of new employees decreased by 0.5 percentage points from 27.3 percent to 26.8 percent.

NAUS NEWS

NAUS on the Road

USPHS Symposium: NAUS Marketing Director Steve Hein will be at the annual [Public Health Service Scientific and Training Symposium](#) in New Orleans, LA, June 21-23. If you're attending the Symposium, be sure to stop by the NAUS table in the exhibit hall, booth 306, and say hi to Steve. Bring a friend to join NAUS, and you'll be eligible for the [I Got Mine Member-get-a-Member Campaign](#) prize drawing in the fall. You may also want to join Steve and many other attendees for the Surgeon General's 5K on Wednesday morning at 7:15!

Tinker, AFB: The Oklahoma NAUS Wiley Post Chapter will be manning tables at the Tinker, AFB RAD in Oklahoma tomorrow. General Billy Bowden, Chapter President said, "Chuck and Linda Murphy, our new Region VPs, will help me man the NAUS booth." Presentations will be at the base theater and chapel. Everything kicks off at 0800.

Matz Farewell

This week NAUS President Matz sent an email to his fellow military and veteran association chief executives. We would like to share his words with you. We know his words back up his and all NAUS actions for the entire duration of his leadership. We will miss President Bill Matz here at NAUS HQ, and at the same time we look forward to the leadership of LtGen Klimp, who takes the reigns on Monday.

"As I 'retire' and turn over the reins of the National Association for Uniformed Services to Jack Klimp, LtGen, USMC (Ret), on 20 June, I wanted to say how much I appreciated working with you and your organizations over these past several years. While I know we didn't always agree on every issue, I do know we agree that the men and women who serve, and have served, our country in uniform, and their families deserve our best efforts to advocate on their behalf. I am proud to have been a partner with you in this noble work...and I will remain an active advocate in their behalf. With all best wishes, Bill Matz "

The entire staff wishes fair winds and following seas to Bill and Linda and their entire family.