From: Co-Chairmen, 2014 Secretary of the Navy’s Retiree Council
To: Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
Via: Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, (Reserve Affairs/Total Force Integration)
Subj: 2014 SECRETARY OF THE NAVY RETIREE COUNCIL (SNRC) REPORT

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 5420.169J
(b) Report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) Interim report of June 2014

Encl: (1) 2014 SECNAV Retiree Council Membership Roster
(2) Guest Speakers/Organizations
(3) Action Items/Issue Point Papers

1. The 2014 Secretary of the Navy’s Retiree Council met at Washington Navy Yard 11-15 August in accordance with Reference (a). This year’s Council Membership is listed in Enclosure (1).

2. The Council appreciates the support provided by the Secretariat and the excellent staff at the Gooding Conference Center to this 2014 session. Additionally, we would like to extend our thanks to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (DASN) Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) Staff, the Marine Corps M&RA Staff, Quantico and the Navy Personnel Command, Retiree Support Branch, Millington.

3. The Council received presentations, briefs, and updates as listed in Enclosure (2). A draft response to the 2013 report was discussed. We understand items remain open and that they continue to be pursued through appropriate processes and/or potential legislation. The Council respectfully requests that the Council member/liaison designated in each issue paper as the SNRC Point of Contact be informed as to the assigned Department of the Navy or other agency action officer or Subject Matter Expert (SME). This will afford the Council the opportunity to assist with clarifying the objective and assisting in working the resolution actions, etc. Proactive involvement of the Council throughout the year was very successful post 2013 Council session in the case of the Rota Commissary issue, and we believe it can make the Council’s efforts much more meaningful and productive. Each of the designated persons is a volunteer and stands ready to clarify and support the action officers in any way possible.
4. The following issues are submitted for your priority consideration and actions. The most important issues are categorized below, with the top three categories so labeled and marked by Bold / Italics font.

a. **Veterans’ Health and Welfare** - The following items are not exclusively retiree related, but are of great concern to the Council and we recommend aggressive support through liaison with the relevant agencies.

1) The extension of presumption of exposure to Agent Orange to “blue water” Navy remains our highest priority and concern. The Council respectfully requests the Secretary’s strongest endorsement and proactive support for this change. The Council is pleased to note that pending legislation, when approved, will both extend the benefit and simplify the process of determining eligibility. (Issue 2014-01)

2) Transitional housing for single parent veterans with children. There are a growing number of single parent (primarily female) homeless veterans with children, and insufficient transitional housing for them in most areas. MOUs between HUD and community housing entities are insufficient to address the need. The Hearth Act of 2009 had the following ordered priorities: chronically homeless, single veterans, and finally, families. Many shelters do not accept or service multiple-person parties. In some cases the waiting time for housing is one and one half to two years. In many cases, temporary shelters do not allow occupation during daytime hours. (Issue 2014-02)

b. **TRICARE** - While the Retiree Council was presented with a number of TRICARE related issues, the following were the consensus of highest priority.

1) The Retiree Council recommends a formal, highly directed effort to increase the acceptance rate of TRICARE by civilian healthcare providers and clinical facilities. (Issue 2014-03)

2) The Retiree Council strongly opposes TRICARE increases, enrollment fees for TRICARE for Life, and tiered fees. Specifically, tiered fees are deemed to be antithetical to the nature of retirees’ benefits (i.e. their retired ranks are not relevant in health care). (Issue 2014-04)
3) Chiropractic care is limited to active duty at designated Military Treatment Facilities. Chiropractors could serve as physician extenders for more costly providers such as orthopedists. This benefit should be extended to all TRICARE beneficiaries. (Issue 2014-05)

4) Benefit for TRICARE eye exams is not consistent with the recommendations of the American Optometric Association (AOA). The TRICARE benefit should be updated to coincide with the AOA guidelines. (Issue 2014-06)

5) There exists a shortage of mental health providers accepting TRICARE. (Issue 2014-07)

c. Retiree Volunteer Management - The Council is pleased with the optimistic update on the Navy’s effort to fund full-time Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs). We strongly believe that there is great untapped potential in the retired community that needs only the supported/managed opportunity to serve.

1) There are currently 34 world-wide RAO locations staffed with highly capable and dedicated volunteers. In 2013 alone, RAOs serviced over 5,000 retirees, surviving spouses and their dependents. Most RAOs are located within and fully supported by the Fleet and Family Service Centers or the Navy Operational Support Centers. When and if funding is available, OPNAV N170’s goal is to fund four full-time RPCs at approximately $77,500 each. OPNAV N170 has submitted Program Objective Memorandum (POM) requests in fiscal years 12, 13 and 14 and will continue to submit POMs for these billets.

5. The Council considered and discussed many other issues which were generated by or submitted to individual Council members by retirees and their families. Supplementary issues listed below were all determined to be worthy of additional research and assessment, and continuing consideration by your office and the appropriate cognizant authorities:

a. Volunteer Service and Advocacy.

1) Retirees are willing and able to assist in providing manpower and expertise to various veterans’ service organizations (VSOs). As of 2012 there were over two million retired veterans. With the current drawdown and medically retired veterans that number will dramatically increase. Establish a clearing house mechanism which matches the demand for volunteer services with the supply of willing retirees. The
clearing house would also be manned by volunteers, with access to opportunity (demand) and personnel (supply) data bases. (Issue 2014-08)

2) Improved retiree advocacy. Retirees are often not sufficiently informed about their entitlements, nor have knowledge of the organizations and convoluted processes necessary to achieve their objectives, and expeditiously remedy their issues and/or concerns. Discuss MOUs with the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and other Veteran Service Organizations on collaboration processes, as well as dialog with Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and Department of Labor (DOL) on implementation. (Issue 2014-09)

3) Leveraging retiree expertise. In recent years DoN has depended on costly contractor support on specific projects, or bringing reservists on to active duty via ADSW funding. There is significant knowledge and expertise resident in the retiree community. Many retirees would be willing to provide the benefit of their expertise pro bono if only their expenses were covered. Once a project is defined and retiree talent identified, issue invitational orders against which expenses only can be claimed. This gets work done at a fraction of the cost of current practice because there is no labor/pay component. (Issue 2014-10)

4) In an effort to communicate with our retirees, a central point of retiree information that is readily accessible is needed. An electronic central point of information is a cost effective way to establish this function and serve the retiree community. The Council recommends establishing a “Retiree's Tab” on the Department of Veterans Affairs website for retiree-specific issues. (Issue 2014-11)

5) Inadequate SECNAV or OPNAV guidance on the utilization of Navy Retirees for Funeral Honors Details (FHD). (Issue 2014-12).

b. Compensation.

1) Upon the death of a retiree, his/her pay for that month is either deposited and then removed, or there is no deposit for any of the days of the month. This creates a financial burden for the beneficiary. The Council recommends a significant change in the DFAS process for this issue. (Issue 2014-13)
2) At the 2013 meeting the Council received a briefing on the newly established Military Pay and Retirement Commission with its charter of devising fair and equitable changes to the retirement system compatible with future resources and requirements. The Council expects the Commission will offer recommendations that achieve fiscal viability, while also recognizing and respecting military retiree pay as distinctly unique and essential to recruiting and retention. The Council further requests the Commission consider the U.S. Army War College study referred to as the 10-15-55 proposal, especially paying attention to the impact of any future adjustment for delay in military pay until age 55 on the medically retired community. This most vulnerable cohort, having often incurred injuries preventing viable careers post-separation, should not be penalized for having sacrificed for their country. Any delay in commencing receipt of earned retirement pay has a high probability to impact recruiting and retention negatively. At this time the Council believes it is important that the Commission:

   a. Eliminate disparities in current regulations and policies which adversely affect surviving spouses who lose TRICARE eligibility upon remarriage.

   b. Fully evaluate the likely impact on recruiting and retention of delaying retirement pay until age 55.

   c. Consider and implement timely remedies for current inequities, including disability and retirement pay computation issues, surviving widow benefits, medically retired benefits, etc.

The Council membership requests participation in the MPRC in an appropriate manner. (Issue 2014-14)

c. Outreach.

1) Utilization of DFAS email distribution list – Utilize DFAS to distribute “Shift Colors” and “Semper Fi” to all retirees via email. Other important information could be distributed by the same means. (Issue 2014-15)

2) Add state and local benefits and resources back into the Transition Goals, Plans, Success (TGPS) Courses – State and local benefits and resources were removed from the new TGPS (formerly TAP) course curriculum. Transitioning retirees and veterans typically need additional assistance after discharge.
State and local benefits and resources are available, and the veteran should be made aware of them. (Issue 2014-16)

3) Email address for retirees and veterans – The Navy and Marine Corps lose contact with many retirees and veterans after retirement/discharge. By requiring the service member to record an email address in the comment section of the DD-214, contact can be better maintained. This email address would also then be available to state and local resource providers. (Issue 2014-17)

d. Medical.

1) TRICARE enrollment fees and premiums are not pre-tax benefits, as is the case for most private insurance premiums. Change them to be so, for consistency and not disadvantage retirees compared to their civilian counterparts. (Issue 2014-18)

2) Walgreens’ non-acceptance of TRICARE Express Scripts coverage. Remedy this for broader access by retirees to prescription drugs. (Issue 2014-19)

e. Overseas (issues of concerns to retirees living OCONUS).

1) Payments from overseas retirees should be made to TRICARE, not Medicare, since TRICARE is the first payer overseas and Medicare pays nothing overseas. Overseas-based retirees are required to enroll in Medicare Part B, and pay monthly fees to Medicare, but receive no direct benefits from Medicare. TRICARE, which provides the health care benefits, receives no share of those paid fees. (Issue 2014-20)

2) Denial of commissary and NEX privileges to retirees in Rota, Spain. This is a repeat issue from the 2013 Council report which has been the subject of extensive proactive efforts on the part of Retiree Council member, CDR Tom Brennan, as noted in paragraph 6 below. (Issue 2014-21)

3) Increase of retiree mail privileges above the current one pound limit. (Issue 2014-22)

4) Space Available air transportation for surviving spouses of retirees living overseas. (Issue 2014-23)
Continued communication and collaboration throughout the year resulted in clarification and progress on several priority issues, most notably regarding restoring commissary privileges in Spain. State Department Navy Liaison, CAPT Charles Denman, arranged for Council member CDR Tom Brennan to meet with the Senior Spain Desk Representative before the 2014 Council convening. This meeting resulting in a greater understanding and support for expediting a resolution of the Rota Commissary/Exchange issue. Other noteworthy continued Council Activities are:

a. CDR Tom Brennan continues to interface with the European Army Retiree Organization as well as the European Tri-Component Retiree Council (ETRC) to ensure mutual awareness of issues affecting other service component retirees in Europe. It is also anticipated that contact will continue with the Defense Attaché and other entities at U.S. Embassy, Madrid as well as contact with the Senior Navy Advisor and the Senior Spain Desk Officer at State Department in support of the Spain-based commissary and exchange issue.

b. CAPT Bill Henderson is an active member of the Military Retirees Association of Southern Italy and the European Tri-Component Retiree Council.

c. YNC(AW) Eric Wenzel also continued the ad hoc working group comprised of Active Duty, Reserve and Retired Chief Petty Officers from the NOSC Phoenix CPO Association to evaluate several Navy Reserve retiree specific issues.

d. New Council member, HMCS(AW) Raymond Applewhite is a member of the Camp Lejeune Military Retiree Council. In that capacity he works with 21 veteran and retiree organizations. He also is a sitting member of the Jacksonville, NC Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee. In his role as the Public Affairs Officer for Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, he communicates information to the family readiness officers throughout the Marine Corps Base and local community. He accompanies the Commanding Officer at all speaking engagements throughout the base and surrounding areas that work with civilian hospitals and serves as an ambassador for Naval Hospital and the public as a whole. In his official capacity as PAO, he is closely involved with the active, Reserve, and retiree community as well as surviving spouses.

e. CMDCM Gene Hall is an active member of the III Corps at Fort Hood Retiree Council.
f. CMDCM Joe Wright is active in both California state and local county outreach to retirees and veterans. He writes articles for eleven local newspapers on retiree/veteran/survivor benefits. He distributes information to over 3,500 veterans via a listserv email distribution list. He is also the Legislation Committee Chairman for the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers and as such is directly involved in veteran's legislation at both the state and federal level.

7. The Council will solicit issues of concern for continued assessment and consideration in 2014 and 2015.

8. The Council is tentatively scheduled to reconvene 3-7 August 2015. The Admiral Gooding Center has been reserved for the Council during those dates.

RONALD S. COLEMAN
LtGen, USMC(Ret)
Co-Chairman

JOHN HAGAN
MCPON, USN(Ret)
Co-Chairman
## 2014 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

### Navy Members

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**GUEST SPEAKERS 2014**

The Honorable Juan M. Garcia, III – Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

The Honorable Dennis Biddick – Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Reserve Affairs and Total Force Integration

Vice Admiral Norbert R. Ryan Jr., USN(RET) – President, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Colonel Philip M. Odom, USAF(RET) – Deputy Director, Government Relations, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Mr. Mark A. Ellis – Senior Health Programs Analyst, Defense Health Agency (DHA)

Ms. Margaret "Peg" Bergeron – Executive Director, National Headquarters Operations; Member Services, American Military Retirees Association (AMRA)

Captain Charles “Chip” C. Denman, III, USN – Senior Naval Advisor, U.S. Department of State

Mr. Anthony A. Wallis – Deputy Executive Director/Director Legislation, Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Mr. Rashawn Mayweather – Manager, Membership Operations, Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Mr. Thomas “Tom” McKenna – Director, Retired and Annuitant Pay, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)

Mr. Timothy R. Jackson – Navy and USMC Liaison, Retired and Annuitant Pay, and Ombudsman, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)

Colonel Tim Green, USAF(RET) – Director, Strategic Outreach, Office of the Assistant Secretary, Veteran’s Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor

Mr. Paul D. Williamson – Command Advisor, Wounded Warrior Regiment

Master Gunnery Sergeant Terrell “Terry” Jones, USMC(RET) – District Injured Support Coordinator (DISC) Program Manager, Wounded Warrior Regiment

FORCM(SW) Thomas J. Snee, USN(RET) – National Executive Director, Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
2014 SECNAV Retiree Council Discussion Items/Selected Issue
Point Papers

Issue #2014 – 01:
Extension of presumption of exposure to Agent Orange to “blue water” Navy.

Position and Desired Outcome:
This is the Council’s number one priority for action as it was in 2013.

While this issue impacts only a small number of retirees and veterans it is considered the most compelling unresolved inequity taken up by the Council because of the critical nature of the issue and urgencies involved. The Council believes that this issue requires DoN to take a strong, public and unambiguous position in support of pending legislation, some of which is summarized below under the heading of “2014 Legislative Update”. The VA currently has 5 categories of ships for which the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange is accepted:

1. Ships operating primarily or exclusively on inland waterways of Vietnam.
2. Ships operating temporarily on inland waterways of Vietnam.
3. Ships that docked to shore or pier in Vietnam.
4. Ships operating in Vietnam close coastal waters for extended periods with evidence that crew members went ashore.
5. Ships operating in Vietnam close coastal waters for extended periods with evidence that smaller craft from the ship went ashore regularly to deliver supplies or troops.

There is no extension of presumption of exposure to ships which operated for extended periods in the coastal waters of Vietnam which do not meet the criteria of #4 or #5 above. The millions of gallons of Agent Orange flowed down the rivers and wound up in the littorals where many ships operated for extended periods without sending crew members ashore. The ships operating in the “blue water” coastal areas of Vietnam desalinated the water for drinking, cooking and showering. The water was also circulated through equipment onboard for cooling purposes. This equipment was later dismantled by crew for cleaning and repair. These actions exposed crews and troops to Agent Orange just as those ships in the same waters who meet the criteria of #4 and #5 above.
2014 Legislative Update on presumption of exposure to Agent Orange for the Blue Water Navy.

Senate Bill 1629  Agent Orange Equity Act of 2011 died in committee and has been replaced by HR – 543.

HR – 543  Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2013 – Includes, as part of the Republic of Vietnam*, its territorial seas for purposes of the presumption of service connection for diseases associated with exposure by veterans to certain herbicide agents while in Vietnam.

This bill was introduced in February 2013 and has been steadily gaining momentum ever since. As of August 2014 the bill had 247 co-sponsors in the House and was being reviewed by the House Sub Committee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

Passage of this legislation will ensure the Department of Veteran Affairs considers “blue water” Sailors in the future for the effects of Agent Orange.

*Note:  Department of Veteran Affairs has not changed its definition of the “Republic of Vietnam” for purposes of presumption of exposure to Agent Orange – which is that the veteran served on land or in the immediate waters, and when tied to a pier, went on land even for a short period of time.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Extend this critical benefit to the potentially affected population of Veterans.

Point of Contact:
Col Perry Dunn, USMC (RET)

Next Steps:
The Council respectfully requests the Secretary of the Navy formally and on the record expresses his strong support for the pending legislation and take all appropriate actions to expedite its passage.

Lead Office or Organization:
Department of Veterans Affairs

Support Offices or Organizations:
Navy Office of Legislative Affairs
Issue #2014 – 02:
Transitional housing for single parent veterans with children.

(This issue is recognized as not applying exclusively to retirees but is rather a general veterans’ issue which includes an unknown number of junior medically-retired veterans.)

Position and Desired Outcome:
There is a growing number of single parent (primarily female) homeless veterans with children, and insufficient transitional housing for them in most areas. MOUs between HUD and community housing entities are insufficient to address the need. Prior to the Hearth Act of 2009 families had priority for housing. With the change the priorities are: chronically homeless, single veterans, and finally, families. Many shelters do not accept or service multiple-person parties. In some cases the waiting time for housing is one and one half to two years. In many cases, temporary shelters do not allow occupation during daytime hours.

The desired outcomes are:

1. HUD reassess their priorities such that single veteran parents with children is elevated, resulting in greater attention to their most basic needs.

2. DVA, in conjunction with the HUD realigned priorities, revise the terms of the VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) vouchers, extending beyond the current maximum of four months in commercial housing, but rather on a case-by-case needs basis.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Children will have a greater chance of achieving shelter, and be able to gain greater security and stability, which in turn promotes staying in school and reduced long-term dependency. The cost is negligible, since the existing priorities are being reordered. Extension of the VASH vouchers will have some increased cost.

Point of Contact:
CAPT Carol Harrington, USN (RET)
Next Steps:
(1) Determine feasibility of reordering HUD priorities for homeless housing recipients, and extension of VASH voucher validity.

(2) Engage with the appropriate DOD authorities to explore the potential of designating surplus housing as temporary shelter for homeless veterans with priority needs?

(3) Assess the San Diego area interfaith service center pilot program training homeless disabled personnel in various maintenance (handyman, char force) and facility management skills for lessons learned which may be applicable in a broader program directed at assisting / housing homeless veterans.

(4) Investigate the unsuccessful efforts associated with the earliest BRAC closure at Hunter's Point near San Francisco in which Navy housing was made available to homeless. Ensure that the lessons learned from this effort are applied to any new initiative.

(5) Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact in this issue.

By combining the efforts recommended above and harnessing the initiative and passion of selected high functioning veterans and military associations, interfaith charities and other organizations we may be able to help many of the most deserving veterans who find themselves in the desperate situation of homelessness.

Lead Office or Organization:
Department of Veterans Affairs / HUD

Support Offices or Organizations:
None
Issue #2014 – 03:
Low acceptance rate of TRICARE by civilian healthcare providers, clinical providers, and clinical facilities.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Surveys conducted in California and Texas confirms that 50 percent of their physicians were not accepting TRICARE. Additionally, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (April 2013) found that 38 percent of TRICARE beneficiaries were unable to find a primary care physician who accepted TRICARE and 23 percent of primary care providers surveyed had little or no TRICARE awareness. By law, when Medicare is accepted, TRICARE acceptance is mandatory. A highly directed effort is needed to increase the acceptance rate.

Navy and Marine Corps both concurred with this recommendation in the Secretariat response to the 2013 SECNAV Retiree Council report (Issue 2013-2).

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Increased medical professional participation is an integral part of the best value for military retirees and reflects great potential savings/efficiencies for DoD through preventative, TRICARE-monitored care. The current rate of medical professional TRICARE acceptance is not in keeping with achieving that savings.

Point of Contact:
CAPT E. M. Ruschmeier, NC, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Council awaits SECNAV’s response. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
DASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), TMA
Issue #2014 – 04:
TRICARE fee increases.

Position and Desired Outcome:
No further TRICARE fee increases including the enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life (TFL). Additionally, TRICARE fees should not be tiered based on retiree rank or income.

The Council fully appreciates the difficult nature of this issue in the current political climate and further understands that DoN may have limited abilities to influence the DoD wide debate but we want to be definitive on the record that it is important to keep faith with those that have honorably served, and earned their retirement benefits. Maintaining an affordable fee structure for TRICARE is essential to this task. Additionally, it should be noted that paying fees for Medicare Part B already burdens a significant portion of the TFL population.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Healthcare is a necessary entitlement for maintaining force structure. Any abrogation of this core contract will ultimately be detrimental to the morale and retention of the active force and recruiting the force of the future.

Point of Contact:
LtGen Ronald Coleman, USMC (RET)

Next Steps:
Council awaits SECNAV’s response. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
DASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), TMA
Issue #2014 – 05:
Chiropractic care, by statute, is limited to active duty service members and only at designated Military Treatment Facilities (MTF).

Position and Desired Outcome:
Chiropractic care is a health care discipline which emphasizes recuperative power of the body to heal itself without the use of drugs and surgery. In response to the 2013 SECNAV Retiree Council Report (Issue 2013-9) Navy, Marine Corps and Secretariat concurred with recommendation that Chiropractic care should be a TRICARE benefit for all TRICARE beneficiaries.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Chiropractic care is often effective for relief of neuromuscular pain not responsive to other treatments. It decreases the need for pain medication, increases mobility and productivity, and improves and extends the quality of life. In cases where chiropractic treatments are effective, medication or costly surgery can be avoided at a cost savings to the TRICARE program.

Point of Contact:
CAPT E. M. Ruschmeier, NC, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to amend TRICARE benefits. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
DASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), TMA
2014 SECNAV Retiree Council Discussion Items/Selected Issue
Point Papers

Issue #2014 – 06:
The TRICARE Eye Exam benefit is not consistent with the
recommendations of the American Optometric Association (AOA).

Position and Desired Outcome:
Currently, only TRICARE Prime enrollees are entitled to eye
exams every two years. Retirees enrolled in TRICARE Standard,
TRICARE Extra, and TRICARE Retired Reserve are afforded no eye
care coverage.

It is the position of the counsel that All TRICARE programs
fund eye care to Retired TRICARE participants consistent with
the AOA. AOA guidelines prescribe that an eye exam should be
performed once every two years up to the age of 61 and annually
thereafter.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Retirees would be afforded eye care consistent with AOA
guidelines no matter what type of TRICARE the individual is
enrolled. Early detection of eye disease could prevent more
extensive, costly treatment.

Point of Contact:
CAPT E. M. Ruschmeier, NC, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to amend TRICARE benefits. Facilitate
the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated
point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
DASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), TMA
Issue #2014-07:
Shortage of mental healthcare providers in the TRICARE Network.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Access to mental healthcare providers has always been problematic, but given current economic and medical trends, it is now one of the most intractable large scale issues in healthcare. The demand for providers is a significant concern given the broad distribution of single or small group practices. Increased efforts to inform the U.S. psychology associations on the importance of their membership participation in TRICARE are needed. The credentialing process to allow their members to become providers to TRICARE must also be addressed. This is a vital concern given the wide geographic distribution of military retirees. This increased pool of mental healthcare professionals would provide an immediate and direct benefit to the entire military community.

Navy, Marine Corps and Secretariat all concurred with this recommendation in the Secretariat response to the 2013 SECNAV Retiree Council report (Issue 2013-17).

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Quick access to covered credentialed providers can have an immediate and positive outcome for TRICARE participants. The cost/benefit analysis of early intervention in mental healthcare issues is well documented.

Point of Contact:
CAPT E. M. Ruschmeier, NC, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
DASN staff will work with TRICARE to add providers per Secretariat’s response. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
DASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), TMA
Issue #2014 – 08:
Retiree volunteer support

Position and Desired Outcome:
Retirees are ready, willing, and able to assist in providing manpower and expertise to various veterans’ organizations, but not necessarily on a full-time basis. As of 2012 there were over two million retired veterans. With the current drawdown and medically retired veterans, that number will dramatically increase.

Possibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Volunteer positions at DVA hospitals and support activities.
2. Assisting at non-profit organizations.
3. Mentoring members of the delayed entry Sailor and Marine pool.

To achieve this, the following steps are required:

1. Effective outreach communications to create awareness for potential volunteers. Establish a retiree section on the DVA website and include all applicable DVA information pertaining to retirees. Provide resources and references needed to advertise and promote volunteerism for veterans in the community.

2. Establish a clearing house mechanism which matches the demand for volunteer services with the supply of willing retirees. The clearing house would also be manned by retired volunteers, with access to opportunity (demand) and personnel (supply) data bases.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Volunteers could supply the IT support necessary to implement this suggestion.

Point of Contact:
AVCM Dan Britton, USN (RET)
Next Steps:
Engage the office of the DVA CIO to explore web site announcement placement and data base compatibility. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
Veterans Affairs, OPNAV N17

Support Offices or Organizations:
None
**Issue #2014 – 09:**
Improved retiree advocacy.

**Position and Desired Outcome:**
DoN retirees need advocates familiar with the Navy and Marine Corps structure to assist them in navigating government bureaucracy to address their issues and concerns. Retirees are often not sufficiently informed of their entitlements, nor have knowledge of the organizations and sometimes convoluted processes necessary to achieve their objectives, and expeditiously remedy their issues and/or concerns. Some possible solutions are:

1. Refer cases to organizations such as the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Military Officers Association of American (MOAA) and other VSOs to obtain their assistance and expertise.

2. Integrate retirement-specific information into the Transition Goals, Planning and Success (TGPS) briefings.

3. DVA institute town hall sessions for information promulgation for retirees.

**Benefit and Cost Analysis:**
Benefit: Retirees would be better informed, and reduce the number of calls to DoN for information, resulting in reduced staffing requirements.

Cost: DVA-incurred cost to plan and execute retiree town hall meetings.

**Point of Contact:**
HTCS Stan Kurtz, USN (RET)

**Next Steps:**
Engage FRA, VFW, MOAA and other VSOs on collaboration processes of MOUs, as well as dialog with DVA and DoL on implementation. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

**Lead Office or Organization:**
N-17

**Support Offices or Organizations:**
DVA, DoL, FRA, VFW, MOAA
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Issue #2014 – 10:
Leveraging retiree expertise.

Position and Desired Outcome:
In recent years DoN has depended on costly contractor support on specific projects, or bringing reservists onto active duty via ADSW funding. There is significant knowledge and expertise resident in the retiree community. Many retirees would be willing to provide the benefit of their expertise pro bono if only their support expenses were covered.

Once a project is defined and retiree talent identified, issue invitational orders against which only expenses can be claimed. This gets work done at a fraction of the cost of current practice because there is no labor/pay component. Also, it allows the retiree to answer the call of duty as they have in the past, and continue to serve.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Benefit: In addition to the reduced cost, mutual knowledge exchange would occur between the retiree and active duty personnel. Local commands could tap available retiree resources within their community.

Cost: Mileage, per diem, and lodging (but not pay) if needed.

Point of Contact:
HTCS Stan Kurtz, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to investigate the process of issuing invitational orders to retirees for meaningful tasking in support of relevant tasks. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
N-17

Support Offices or Organizations:
None
Issue #2014 – 11:
Retiree electronic communication and support.

Position and Desired Outcome:
As of 2012 there were over two million retired veterans. With the current draw down which includes medically retired service members, that number will dramatically increase. In an effort to communicate with these retirees it's necessary to establish a central point of retiree information that is readily accessible. Due to budget cuts, manning issues within the RDO program and the geographical dispersion of retirees, an electronic central point of information would best serve the retiree community. The Council recommends establishing a “Retiree’s Tab” on the Department of Veterans Affairs website for retiree-specific issues.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
To provide easy access to accurate and vital information that meets the increased number of retirees (including medically retired service members). Examples of information provided include but not limited to are:

1) E-Benefits link
2) DFAS My Pay for Retirees
3) Service Specific Newsletters
4) Applicable DVA information
5) NACVSO.org (National Association or County Veterans Service Officers)

Additionally, this tab could eventually serve as a clearing house for retirees and volunteer opportunities.

Point of Contact:
AVCM Dan Britton, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to ensure that CHINFO and the office of the DVA CIO fully inclusion of retiree tab on DVA website. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
Veterans Affairs, OPNAV N17

Support Offices or Organizations:
CHINFO
Issue #2014 – 12:
No SECNAV or OPNAV guidance on the utilization of Navy retirees for Funeral Honors Details (FHD).

Position and Desired Outcome:
Both 37 U.S. Code §495 (Funeral honors duty: allowance) and 10 U.S. Code §1491 (Funeral honors functions at funerals for veterans) allow for military retirees to participate with active duty and Selected Reserve personnel in Funeral Honors Details (FHD).

Neither article stipulates the requirement for the retiree to be recalled to active duty. A retired service member recalled to active duty under the provisions of 10 U.S. Code §12301 (Reserve components generally) would be entitled to full pay and allowances of their retired grade vice the $50 retiree (i.e. non recall) stipend as specified in 37 U.S. Code §495. Also, 10 U.S. Code §12503 (Ready Reserve: funeral honors duty) dictates that funeral honors duty performed by a Reserve not on active duty shall be treated as inactive-duty training.

Navy Operational Support Centers (NOSC), Navy Regions, and other active duty commands are not utilizing retirees to augment FHDs. There seems to be confusion as to who is primarily responsible for paying the $50 allowance retirees receive for FHDs. Since retirees are not in the Navy Standard Integrated Processing System (NSIPS), they have been told that it is "too difficult" for them to get paid the $50 allowance, or the cognizant Navy Region does not have the funds to pay the allowance.

A SECNAV or OPNAV instruction is needed to clearly delineate funding authorities for the $50 allowance, procedures for collecting the allowance, and documentation required when a retiree volunteers for the FHD team, etc. The SECNAV/OPNAV instruction should address the "grey area" retired reservists, and whether they receive the $50 allowance or regular drill pay. The SECNAV/OPNAV instruction should also specify that retirees who elect to participate on an FHD team will be within body fat standards, haircuts/facial hair must adhere to Navy regulations, mandate completion of Navy Region specific certifications and training evolutions, and they should be required to pass periodic medical screenings.
Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Active duty commands are spread thin due to manning shortfalls and meeting operational requirements. Our Reserve population is sparse from being mobilized and supporting contingency operations world-wide. By augmenting our retiree community into the FHD Teams, this will help our active duty and NOSC components sustain the congressionally mandated FHD support obligations.

There is a cost savings associated with this proposal. For instance, a Reserve E-5 with over 2 years of service will receive $77 per drill. Per RESPERSMAN 1001.5, FHDs pay the drilling Reservist a maximum of one drill period per day. In comparison, a retiree’s allowance is $50 per day, regardless of rank and/or length of service. The cost savings in this example is $27. When this formula is applied to the number of FHDs conducted daily across the globe, and the different ranks involved, the monetary savings could add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year, or possibly even more.

Point of Contact:
YNC(AW) Eric WENZEL, USNR(FTS)(RET)

Next Steps:
Craft SECNAV/OPNAV Instruction that allows retirees to augment FHD’s without being subjected to an active duty recall. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
COMNAVRESFOR and Navy Regions
Issue #2014 – 13:
Recoupment of retiree’s pay by Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) from the beneficiary following retiree’s death.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Currently, when a beneficiary notifies DFAS of a retiree’s death, the following occur:

1. If DFAS receives the death notification on the first through the nineteenth of the month.
   - DFAS stops retiree’s pay from being deposited in retiree’s account.
   - Beneficiary is required to file an SF-1174 requesting to recoup the retiree’s pay equivalent to the number of days the retiree was alive during the month.

2. If DFAS receives the death notification on the twentieth through the end of the month.
   - DFAS deposits full month’s pay in retiree’s account.
   - DFAS recoups the full month’s pay.
   - Beneficiary files an SF-1174 requesting recoupment of the retiree’s pay equivalent to the number of days the retiree was alive during the month.

When DFAS is notified of the retiree’s death, no action should be taken against the retiree’s account. After verification of the death of a retiree, DFAS should calculate the number of days of pay the retiree was eligible to receive, and require the beneficiary to return the overpayment to DFAS.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
This should result in paperwork reduction, cost savings to the Government, and decreased potential for financial hardship on the beneficiary.

Point of Contact:
Col Perry Dunn, USMC (RET)
Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to recommend OASN (M&RA) coordinate with DFAS to take the above recommendation for action. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
DFAS
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Issue #2014 – 14:
Retiree Council representation on the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

Position and Desired Outcome:
The Council received briefings on the MCRMC objectives, agenda and processes in 2013. Since that time we have attempted to stay informed on their work and the positions and recommendations they are taking on issues of importance to retirees. This year the Council noted that the Commission had released an interim report, which we have obtained and distributed Council wide and are reviewing. The Council understands the importance and sensitivity of the work being done by the MCRMC and greatly appreciates their on the record willingness to include retirees in their work. Given the nature of the SECNAV Retiree Council mission and the Council members’ strong commitment and interest levels, it is logical and mutually beneficial for Council representation to participate at an appropriate level in the work of the MCRMC. In light of the critical nature of this study and the importance of getting the findings of this Commission to retirees, The Council respectfully requests the DASN M&RA formally coordinate with the MCRMC Chairman to provide the Retiree Council Co-Chairs with an opportunity to organize and facilitate an appropriate Council element of participation in the current phase of the MCRMC efforts.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Cost neutral.

Point of Contact:
MCPON John Hagan, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to arrange a discussion of this issue between the MCRMC Chair (or designated representative) and the Retiree Council Co-Chairs. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC)
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Issue #2014 – 15:
Utilization of Defense Finance and Accounting Service email
distribution list.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Currently the Marine Corps distributes “Semper Fi” in both a
hard copy format and electronically on the Marine Corps
website. “Shift Colors” is available only on the NPC web site.
Improved computer-based distribution can be accomplished
through the DFAS system. Mr. Tom McKenna, the DFAS Director of
Retired and Annuitant Pay has stated that such a distribution
system is feasible. In addition to the publications, other
important information could be distributed by the same means.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
The Navy & Marine Corps retirees would benefit by receiving
“Shift Colors” and “Semper Fi” publications through the DFAS
email distribution list. This would significantly reduce
distribution costs for both services and allow more retirees to
receive information in a timely and cost effective manner.
Additional important information could also be distributed
through the DFAS email system.

This is a no cost option to both services that DFAS has offered
to provide.

Point of Contact:
CMDCM Joe Wright, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to expedite email distribution service
offered by DFAS. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV
Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA), Retired Activities Branch (OPNAV N170C)

Support Offices or Organizations:
DFAS
Issue #2014 – 16:
Add state and local benefits and resources back into the Transition Goals, Plans and Success (TGPS) Courses.

Position and Desired Outcome:
State and local benefits and resources were included in the old TAP Course and provided both retirees and non-retirees with valuable information on transition issues. Local benefits and resources are the first place veterans go to for assistance, especially non-retirees who have no base access. While the new TGPS course has been significantly improved, information on these valuable local benefits and resources has been removed from the curriculum. State and local benefits and resources need to be added back into the TGPS courses.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Most veterans are non-retirees and therefore lose base access upon discharge from the military. While TGPS helps the veteran get ready for transition, they typically need more assistance after discharge. Local resources, including the County Veterans Service Office and Veterans Service Organizations are there to provide the assistance – if the veteran knows they exist. Many states offer extensive benefits to veterans. By adding to the current course, state and local benefits and resources information could be provided. Even if the TGPS students are leaving the area at discharge, the information would be of value when they reach their homes of record. The Cost would be minimal. This modification would also help the VA by taking some of the burden of answering benefits questions from the veteran, and pushing the veteran towards CVSOs and VSOs.

Point of Contact:
CMDCM Joe Wright, USN (RET)
Next Steps:
Take appropriate action to fully evaluate the TGPS course and coordinate with Department of Labor and the Department of Defense to revise the curriculum appropriately to ensure the inclusion of local benefits and resources. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
21st Century Sailor Office (OPNAV N17)

Support Offices or Organizations:
None
Issue #2014 – 17:
Email Address for retirees and veterans.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Once a Sailor or Marine retirees, he or she can, and many times will, become invisible to military retiree and veteran service organizations. These organizations are established to assist military retirees and veterans. When there is a need to transmit important information to the retiree, it is often impossible to do so.

To maintain a communication channel open from the Department of the Navy to the retiree upon retirement, the Sailor or Marine should be required to record his or her permanent email address with the parent component. This can be accomplished by recording the subject email address on the member’s DD-214 (comment section). Local and regional military retiree and veteran offices have access to this document. By instituting this action, important communication between local and state veteran organizations and retirees and veterans can be increased.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
The cost of implementing this action would be minimal. More veterans and retirees will receive important information in a timely manner.

Point of Contact:
CAPT William C. Henderson II, JAGC, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Get approval from the Secretary of the Navy. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
NAVPERSCOM (PERS-532), Commandant of the Marine Corps
Issue #2014 – 18:
TRICARE enrollment fees/premiums are subject to federal, state, and local taxation.

Position and Desired Outcome:
TRICARE enrollment fees/premiums are not pre-tax payments. A military retiree can pay his/her TRICARE premiums through DFAS deductions. Generally, in the public and private sector, these deductions are taken on a pre-tax basis. This means the deductions are taken first and then, when the paycheck amount is lower, the applicable taxes are determined. Under current federal tax law, however, the premiums that the retiree pays for coverage does not qualify as a pre-tax benefit and the TRICARE premiums must be deducted on a post-tax basis. This is more costly to the retiree.

The current practice differs from many public and private sector employer insurance benefits packages regulated under Internal Revenue Code, Section 125.

The Council recommends that legislation be proposed that allows TRICARE enrollment fees to be a pre-tax benefit.

Navy and Secretariat both concurred with this recommendation in the Secretariat response to the 2013 SECNAV Retiree Council report (Issue 2013-10).

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
This would be a direct benefit to all retirees enrolled in TRICARE. This will soften the impact of any TRICARE fee hikes.

Point of Contact:
YNC(AW) Eric WENZEL, USNR(FTS)(RET)

Next Steps:
Identify the correct point of contact / action officer within the Secretariat / OSD / Navy OLA. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), Navy OLA
Issue #2014 – 19:
Walgreens’ non-acceptance of TRICARE Express Scripts coverage.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Over the past three years Walgreens and Express Scripts have been engaged in a discontinuation of coverage and then a resumption of acceptance of prescription benefits. When Express Scripts resumed filling prescriptions through Walgreens, TRICARE beneficiaries were specifically excluded.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
The desired outcome is for a complete return to pre-dispute coverage and benefits. This is not a trivial matter when consideration is given to the size and geographic coverage access of the Walgreens chain. The difficulty in obtaining necessary pharmaceuticals can have an immediate and negative outcome for the TRICARE participants. The cost benefit analysis of non-use of prescription drugs by patients caused by lack of access can result in a significant cost increase to the DoD budgeting. The Council seeks a response that would address this healthcare shortcoming in the TRICARE system.

Point of Contact:
CAPT E. M. Ruschmeier, NC, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
Adding Walgreens back into the mix of providers is in DoN’s best interest. The TRICARE briefer who visited the Council indicated that Walgreens corporate leadership need only to change their position and accept the status quo arrangement with providers for this to be resolved, and he agreed to make an additional appeal to the Walgreens leadership to accept the current arrangement and rejoin the provider list. The Council requests SECNAV initiate the appropriate communications with TRICARE to ensure follow-up as agreed to during the briefing. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
ASD (HA), TMA
Issue #2014 – 20:
Payments from overseas retirees should be paid to TRICARE, not Medicare, since TRICARE is the first payer overseas and Medicare pays nothing overseas.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Upon turning age 65, all military retirees must enroll in Medicare Part B to be able to receive TRICARE for Life benefits. This Medicare coverage costs the retiree a minimum of approximately $100 per month. This payment must also be made by retirees living outside the United States, even though there is no Medicare coverage outside the United States. All coverage for retiree/dependent medical services outside the United States is provided by TRICARE. TRICARE, which provides the health care benefits, receives no share of those paid fees.

It is recommended that monthly payments by overseas retired personnel over 65 should be paid directly into TRICARE, rather than to Medicare. This would provide the payment to the agency providing the services. In the event that a retiree permanently relocates to the United States, he/she would be required to inform both TRICARE and Medicare, and change payments back to Medicare.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
The direct beneficiary is the TRICARE program. This will directly increase the monetary input to TRICARE, the organization responsible for providing care to these overseas-based retirees. There are over 41,000 retirees overseas, with an undetermined number of these over 65, and paying into Medicare. If only 25% of these retirees are over 65, it would result in a net gain in overseas payments to TRICARE of approximately 12.5 million dollars annually.

Point of Contact:
CDR T. J. Brennan, USN (RET)
Next Steps:
DASN staff liaison with TRICARE to draft legislation required to shift the funds paid by overseas Retirees from Medicare to TRICARE. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
DASN, TRICARE Management Agency

Support Offices or Organizations:
Navy OLA
Issue #2014 – 21:
Retiree denial of access to commissary/NEX in Spain.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Military retirees around the world should be treated equally with respect to guaranteed privileges. Access to military exchanges and commissary stores by retirees and their dependents is authorized by DoD Instruction 1330.21, DoD Directive 1330.17 and Section 2481(b) of Title 10, US Code.

Due to wording in the Agreement on Defense Cooperation (ADC) between Spain and the United States, U.S. military retirees were left out of the portion of the treaty that addresses personnel who are authorized access to the NEX and commissary. Spain is the only country where U.S. forces are permanently stationed and exchange/commissary facilities are located, where retirees are prohibited from using those facilities. Retirees affected by this denial of access suffer financial/quality of life hardships that can be resolved by U.S. Government action at NO COST to the U.S. Government.

The relatively low number of potential retired military and dependent customers who would be affected by this change will not impose a significant impact on local businesses, or on the collection of local Value Added Tax (VAT). There is only one full service commissary/exchange complex in Spain, and that is on Naval Station Rota, Spain. There are smaller NEXMart stores located at Morón AB, and at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, but these stores serve a very small number of retirees, and only sell uniforms, health and beauty aids and other basic necessities. They are not significant competitors with the local economy in terms of their size or the scope of the products they sell.

There are just over 600 military retirees and family members living within Cadiz Province, where Naval Station Rota is located. In 2013, the estimated population of Cadiz Province was 1,238,492. Therefore, these retirees, family members and widows constitute less than 0.05% of the entire population of Cadiz Province. The loss of these retirees to the local economy would therefore be negligible.

Existing agreements dictate that 70% of the on-base civilian employees must be Spanish. This is true for the Rota commissary/NEX as the majority of jobs there are filled by Spanish employees who would benefit directly from the increased clientele. While the retiree community in the vicinity of the
base composes only 0.05% of the population, if this group were added to the approximately 6,000 potential patrons of the Rota NEX/commissary, it represents about a 10% gain in potential customers. This relatively large increase would help to ensure that Spanish jobs at the NEX/Commissary remain secure, furnishing the local economy with the fruits of these “good” jobs. Therefore, this action would represent a WIN-WIN outcome for both the retirees and the local Spanish population.

Recommendation: Action on this issue must come through the U.S. State Department/U.S. Embassy Madrid. State is not likely to take action unless the issue is flagged by the military as an important quality of life issue. It is desired that SECNAV express support for a clarification to the wording of the ADC to permit U.S. military retirees and their dependents access to the NEX and commissary as authorized under U.S. law, and as is implemented worldwide, except in Spain. It is desired that a letter be sent from the SECNAV to the State Department – it is felt that this would likely guarantee success.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Equity of retiree benefits across OCONUS locations; increased opportunity for Spanish workers to help their local economy; an end to disadvantage for U.S. military retirees and family members in Spain. The quality of life improvement and financial boost to the retiree community comes at no cost to the U.S. Government.

Point of Contact:
CDR T.J. Brennan, USN (RET)

Next Steps:
SECNAV take appropriate action to draft and deliver a formal request for a change to the current policy in Spain regarding military retiree access to Spain-based commissary and exchange stores. This letter should be sent to the Senior Desk Officer for Spain, U.S. State Department. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization:
OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations:
U.S. State Department, U.S. Embassy Madrid
Issue #2014 - 22:
Increase overseas retiree mail privileges above the current one pound limit.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Military retirees outside CONUS may send and receive letters and small parcels through the MPS/U.S. Postal System. However, they are prevented from receiving or sending parcels heavier than one pound. This policy prevents retirees from receiving potentially important items through the mail such as non-medical health care devices and other important personal items. Over the years, this issue has been discussed repeatedly. Although there seems to be little, if any, resistance to the basic idea of increasing the weight limit, no such change has occurred.

Historically, the main objection was that an increase in retiree mail weight limits would incur greater expense to the military postal system. It is recognized that any increase in mail volume or weight would be negligible since the retiree community overseas is relatively small. However, there is no specific, empirical data showing the exact cost of increasing the weight limits for retiree mail, and the precise impact on the military postal system. At a minimum, the limit should be raised to at least five pounds.

Note: The final recommendation that the limit should eventually be raised was already concurred to by the Navy, Marine Corps and Secretariat in the 2013 response to Issue 2013-8.

Benefit and Cost Analysis:
Increased quality of life for military retirees choosing to live outside CONUS who have access to military post offices, if the cost data collected is, as expected, negligible.

Point of Contact:
CDR T.J. Brennan, USN (RET)
Next Steps: SECNAV Staff engage with other Service Staffs to implement the change. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

Lead Office or Organization: OASN (M&RA)

Support Offices or Organizations: Other Service Secretary staffs; U.S. Postal Service
Issue #2014 – 23:
Utilization of Space “A” by surviving spouses living overseas.

Position and Desired Outcome:
Many military retirees who live overseas use government-operated aircraft on a space-available (Space “A”) basis to make trips to the U.S. for vacations and to visit friends and relatives. If they are married, the spouse is authorized to accompany the retiree. When the retiree dies, the surviving spouse no longer has that privilege, and, in many cases, is unable to travel to the U.S. due to the cost of commercial airline tickets. In those cases, the surviving spouse may entirely lose the opportunity to visit friends and relatives, including children and grandchildren who live in the United States.

It is recognized that if military retiree surviving spouses throughout the world were given the privilege of Space “A” transportation on an unrestricted basis, this would seriously increase the number of persons competing for these seats. However, for military retiree surviving spouses who have homes overseas where they spend more than 50% of their time, allowing them to use Space “A” transportation may mean the difference between a lonely life in their later years or a positive family relationship.

This privilege would be extended on the same basis as retirees travelling on Space “A” flights:
   a) Surviving spouses would be in Category Six for flight priority, along with retirees and their dependents;
   b) Surviving spouses could sponsor their own dependents (i.e. their own children) if they are accompanying the surviving spouse;
   c) Surviving spouses would incur the same risks as any other Space A traveler, such as the risk of being “bumped”, getting “stuck” in a remote location, and having to cover their own personal food, lodging and other expenses involved in the journey.

Recommend extending Space A privileges to all surviving spouses who can show proof that they either:
   a) Have established legal residency in a foreign country;
   or,
   b) Can show that they have spent more than 50% of the previous twelve months in a single foreign country.
Further recommend that this special privilege only be extended to spouses who were married for more than one full year prior to the death of the deceased retiree.

**Benefit and Cost Analysis:**
Surviving retiree spouses have “served” their time by being supportive members of the retiree’s career. They deserve some consideration and assistance in maintaining a positive family experience even after the death of their retiree spouse. In situations where this is made impossible by the cost of commercial airfares, the use of Space Available transportation can ensure that these deserving spouses are not consigned to a lonely life in their later years.

**Point of Contact:**
CDR T.J. Brennan, USN (RET)

**Next Steps:**
Council respectfully requests the Secretary of the Navy initiate and sponsor legislation or executive action required to implement this change or provide the strongest possible support for any relevant actions in progress. Facilitate the participation of the SECNAV Retiree Council designated point of contact.

**Lead Office or Organization:**
OASN (M&RA)

**Support Offices or Organizations:**
Commander, Naval Air Forces United States Air Force/Air Mobility Command