



Retiree Activities Office Newsletter

Published Quarterly
Volume 32, Issue 1

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January 1, 2010

Director's Corner

Lt Col Bruce Postel, USAF (Ret)
Director, Retiree Activities Office (RAO)



~ A Very Happy New Year to All ! ~

Thank You to Khun Pongsak and his entire team for repairing and painting the RAO! The RAO is much cleaner, brighter and more welcoming. *Chai Yo!* (Many more Thank Yous...not enough space today!)

Volunteer Request. The June 2009 RAO Newsletter contained a premature call for certain volunteers. While I certainly appreciate the hand-raisers for Newsletter Author and Librarian, what the RAO really needs is two more Benefits Advisors. Being a Benefits Advisor requires a **commitment** in time and a **dedication** to helping others. Being a Benefits Advisor requires **integrity**, reliability, patience and understanding, strong listening skills, self-motivation, attention-to-detail, computer skills, **and** a healthy sense of humor! Bottom-line, a Benefits Advisor **MUST** be able to work well with others--workplace disharmony is not an option. 2-3 days per week. **New candidates only**, please.

RAO Client Hours. We have been forced to reduce our staffing from five to three days. A lack of new volunteers prevents our maintaining a more desirable schedule. Beginning 1 Feb 10, our days for assistance are: Tues-Wed-Thurs, 0930-1430.

Telephoning the RAO. We welcome your calls, just please note that telephone calls are not answered when we're busy assisting clients. The best option is to call our office after 1300 hours, as we are usually very busy in the morning. *Thank You!*

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Tax-Time Special Request. Anyone willing to help newly-widowed and disabled clients file **basic** 2009 tax returns? Dates/Times TBD. Thanks in advance!

Survivor Assistance. Perhaps **the** most important thing **you** as the sponsor can do **now** is to identify a **trustworthy** person to assist your dependents after your passing. Do you want your loved ones falling prey to a person(s) motivated by greed? I wouldn't! Yet, those persons exist; our office has observed it. Also, please choose someone who will work **with** us, not against us. RAO Advisors and VFW Service Officers know how to **properly** assist survivors of fallen comrades, and we stand ready to do so!

***** Open Enrollment Period for Medicare Part B. *****
Open season is here! With entitlement to Medicare Part A, TRICARE Standard eligibility ends. To be **TRICARE For Life** eligible, enrollment in Medicare Part B is a must (normally 90 days before Age 65). If you're eligible for Medicare Part B, but **didn't sign up when you first became eligible** for Medicare, you now have another chance to apply. Open season for Medicare Part B runs from January 1 until March 31, 2010. If you miss the deadline you have to wait again until 2011. The current monthly premium is \$110.50 plus a penalty of 10% for each 12-months late enrollment. Contact SSA Manila (see page 3) to apply, or visit the RAO. You may also print and mail: www.jusmagthai.com/RAO/CMS-40BMedicare.pdf.

JUSMAG–THAI Gouge

By JUSMAG–THAI Staff

Retiree APO Access. The APO has informed us that mail service will continue at JUSMAG–THAI for military retirees under existing guidelines for the foreseeable future. You might have heard that mail privileges for retirees were discontinued on Dec 31st at many Embassies that were previously serviced by military post offices. In our case, the APO will retain its office here to support the US ships and troops that transit Thailand annually in support of our robust bilateral relationship and, as a result, service to retirees will continue as well.

~Mr. Loschinkohl, Deputy Chief, JUSMAG–THAI.

APO Box–R Policy. Since the RAO frequently receives questions regarding retiree APO access at JUSMAG and at the U.S. Consulate General, in Chiang Mai, we take this opportunity to reiterate main APO policy.

Per APO Policy Letter (25 Aug 09) from OL–C, Det 2, PACAF Air Postal Squadron (U.S. Embassy, Bangkok):

“The mail should not contain merchandise that is intended for resale/profit. Military retirees are authorized to mail/receive the following items weighing up to 16 ounces: Video Tapes, Voice Cassette Tapes, CDs and DVDs, Medications, Magazines, Books and Other Printed Matters.”

Moreover, medication mailing source is not limited to TRICARE or the VA:

“...meds can come from different source as long as the customer is not doing it to make any profit and it is w/in 16 ounces weight restriction.”

(OL–C, Det 2, PAPS; via email, 24 Sep 09)

Tip: There is no weight limit on medication from the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (Policy April 10, 2003).

JUSMAG further stipulates: *“Every authorized box holder **MUST** check their box at least once every 30 days. Failure to do this could result in returned mail and closure of box and/or service.”*



The Chief of JUSMAG–THAI is the U.S. Defense Representative (USDR) in Thailand.

TRICARE Partial Payment Arrangement (25-75) (Thailand).

During the in–patient discharge process, the patient will be given an HICF 1500 Claim Form to complete. Failure to complete the –1500 results in the patient paying 100% of the bill. Moreover, after utilizing a PPA, several beneficiaries have mistakenly submitted a DD–2642 claim for in–patient care. **DO NOT DO THIS!** Filing a DD–2642, in this example, brings the TRICARE reimbursement process to a grinding halt until the matter is sorted. Sorting this matter includes the patient returning all wrongly–claimed money to Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS).

Not to confuse you too much, but **DO** file a DD–2642 for “Home Medication” that a patient paid for 100% up front after hospitalization. Patients just need to make sure they don’t mix–up or include the in–patient bills with this reimbursement.

Jamming up the PPA claims process also renders you ineligible for future PPAs until the issue is resolved. Real Example: A Patient (sponsor who knew better) would **not** return the funds to WPS and instead “went to ground”, trying to be unreachable. Fast forward a couple of months, his spouse now finds herself in the emergency room and has the hospital staff call our office requesting another PPA. **D–E–N–I–E–D!**

Lastly, several beneficiaries have wrongly accused our TRICARE office of “sitting on PPA claims”. This cannot be further from the truth! Two primary things “slow” the PPA claim reimbursement process: 1) Waiting on the caregiver to return the –1500 to our office, with the attending physician’s section **properly** completed (and signed), and; 2) A patient not signing a *Consent to Release Records*. Final Note: Ensure you give us your **valid** phone #, email and street address. ~Nurse Thida, x512.

VA Benefits Assistance.

If you need help learning about VA programs or with a VA application process, approved Veterans Service Organization (VSO) are there to help. It's their job to help you at no cost. To find a VSO you may visit the VA's Directory at <http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm>. If someone approaches you to help with a VA application, claim, or appeal, check to see if they are a VSO. Chances are they won't be because VSOs don't solicit for your business, you have to find them. There are a few organizations which use the front of helping with VA benefits as a way to meet prospective customers. These groups solicit for your business. They offer to get you money from the VA for long term care cost, assisted living, or survivor benefits. On the surface, they appear legitimate, but in the long run, it could wind up costing you time and money.

(MOAA Financial Frontlines Shane Ostrom article 9 Dec 09)

New Diseases Associated with Agent Orange.

October 13, 2009 – VA Secretary Shinseki decided to establish service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease. This is based on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine showing an association with exposure to Agent Orange. Vietnam veterans with these diseases may be eligible for [disability compensation](#) and [health care benefits](#). For more information, please visit: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/

VA Foreign Medical Program (Direct Billing).

This joint VFW District V and Department of Pacific Area initiative is specifically directed toward Veterans in the Pacific Theatre with a service-connected (SC) disability rated by the VA from 0% to 100%. SC Veterans can get medical care for their VA rated SC disabilities to include medications without paying up front for it (at certain locations). PLEASE remember this: The FMP will **ONLY** pay for SC medical treatment and items that are caused by the disability or aggravate it. For more info, visit: <http://d5dpa.webs.com/vetstricarefmpinfo.htm>. Or:

Mike Holmes, Tel: 081-841-9342.

Email: cdr12074@vfwdeptpacific.org.

Chris Palombi, Tel: 081-283-5075 (11-23:00 daily).

Email: svcoff2dpa@vfwdeptpacific.org.

TRICARE Announces H1N1 Immunization Policy.

October 30, 2009 (AFRNS) – Immunizations against the H1N1 virus will soon be available, and people are eager to take precautions. TRICARE Prime, Standard and Extra beneficiaries can get their shots from network and non-network providers without paying a deductible or making a co-payment. For more information, please visit: <http://tricare.mil/flu>

DFAS – 2009 Tax Form, Pay Statement.

December 4, 2009 (AFRNS) – DFAS officials plan on mailing the documents Dec. 16-31. The 1099R and account statement will be together in one envelope. www.dfas.mil/retiredpay/taxinformation/2009tax.html

Social Security Administration – Manila PI. (Action Agency for all SSA Correspondence from Thailand.)

*** Always give your full name and SSN, and provide your mailing address and phone number. ***

Tel: Prefix +63-2-xxx-xxxx

Email: FBU.Manila@ssa.gov (or see list)

[U.S. First Class Postage to a "DPO"]
Social Security Administration Division
Department of Veterans Affairs
DPO AP 96515-1100

[International]
Social Security Administration Division
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
United States Embassy
1131 Roxas Blvd., Ermita
0930 Manila, Philippines

* Select your claims examiner by the initial letter in your last name. *

Alpha	Examiner & Email Address	Telephone #	Fax #
A-C	Arleh.Lara@ssa.gov	525-6481 x2436	522-1514
D-E	Mellissa.N.Ramos@ssa.gov	525-6481 x2607	or
F-G	Beatrice.Hipolito@ssa.gov	525-6481 x2465	525-9482
H-I	Nino.Sandil@ssa.gov	525-6481 x2410	↓
J-K	Bea.Evangelista@ssa.gov	525-6481 x2647	
L-M	Robert.Jocson@ssa.gov	525-6614 x2416	
N-O	Emmanuel.Castillo@ssa.gov	525-6614 x2580	
P-Q	Gigi.Jane.Nomil@ssa.gov	525-6614 x2461	
R-S	Emmanuel.Santiago@ssa.gov	525-6572 x2464	
T-V	Ivee.Gomez@ssa.gov	525-6572 x2669	
W-Z	Armando.Aragon@ssa.gov	525-6572 x2596	

Colonel Edward A. Swanda
Chief, JUSMAG-THAI

Mr. Victor J. Loschinkohl, YC-03
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Hours: Tues-Wed-Thurs, 0930-1430

Motto

Integrity - Service - Excellence

· HQ JUSMAG-THAI ·

· TRICARE Health Benefits Advisors (Rm. J-202)

Wed & Thurs, 0800-1100 & 1300-1500; Fri, 1300-1400

Email: nursetida.th@san.osd.mil (x512)

Email: nursepranee.ctr.th@san.osd.mil (x511)

Web: www.jusmagthai.com/medical.html



· USUS ID Card Issue & DEERS Update (Rm. E-206, x180)

Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday, 0800-1100

· Air Post Office (APO) (Rm. C-109) (x168; Call after 1300)

Monday through Friday, 1030-1200 & 1300-1600



· American Citizen Services, U.S. Embassy, Bangkok

Mon-Fri, 0730-1100, 1300-1400 (Closed Last Friday of Each Month)

Tel: 02-205-4049 / Email: acsbkk@state.gov

Web: <http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/service.html>



· American Citizen Services, U.S. Consulate, Chiang Mai

Monday through Friday, 0730-1630 (By Appointment)

Emergency Tel: 05-310-7777 / Email: acschn@state.gov

Web: <http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov/service.html>

• COLA ... 2010: 0% (-1.7% Jul-Sep 09) / 2011: +.3% (Oct-Nov 09)

• US Embassy & JUSMAG Holidays 2010: 18 Jan, 15 Feb, 6 Apr, Songkran: 13-15 Apr.

• JUSMAG Comp Days: www.jusmagthai.com/announcement.html

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EMAIL

RECIPIENTS