The Knox County Joint Veterans Council Honor Guard is looking for volunteers!!!

The Knox County Joint Veterans Council is located at the Knox County Veterans Service Office located at 105 E Chestnut St. Mount Vernon, Ohio. The post conducts regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month. The meeting time is 7:00 P.M. Contact Eddie Stage @

740-504-1597 if you are interested in volunteering.



They stand guard silently, vigilantly through whatever Mother Nature dares throw at them. They do so with great pride to honor one of their own. For them, honoring a fallen brother-in-arms is compensation enough.

For the families of the deceased veteran, they are the ever-watchful sentinels, and their selfless act is a much-appreciated tribute.

VA to resume collecting pharmacy co-pays for thousands of vets

Veterans Affairs officials will resume collecting some pharmacy co-payments for thousands of patients at hospitals in Ohio and Washington starting next month, but won't pursue past debts related to the medications for now.

That decision came after advocates raised concerns about the financial impact of those past bills for veterans, some of which could reach over $1,000.

The affected veterans all receive care at sites that are using the department's new electronic health record. Those include the Washington-based White City VA Medical Center, Roseburg VA Medical Center, Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center, and Jonathan M. Wainwright VA Medical Center. The Chalmers P. Wylie Veterans Ambulatory Care Center in Columbus, Ohio, is also impacted.

Co-payments for outpatient pharmacy services have been paused there for several years as officials have worked through complications with the new medical records system and the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VA leaders this week sent out notifications to veterans using the services to warn them of the upcoming change.

"The letter will provide Veterans with advance notice that we will begin collecting copays on Oct. 1, 2024 and that they will see those charges on their November statement," VA press secretary Terrence Hayes said in a statement.

"From then on, pharmacy copayment charges will be seen on the next month's statement – just as would happen for veterans receiving care and pharmacy benefits from any other VA medical center."

Hayes said a final decision has not been made on when or whether to collect the paused co-pays retroactively, but that officials are working with "Congress and veterans service organization partners on potential relief for veterans."

VA caps yearly co-pay totals for veterans at $700. The department offers a variety of financial aid assistance programs, and has shared contact information on those services with the affected veterans.

Vets wait decades for help on military toxic exposure issues

Troops exposed to toxic chemicals during their time in service wait on average more than three decades for full veterans benefits related to those injuries, according to a new study released by advocates on Wednesday.

Officials from Disabled American Veterans and the Military Officers Association of America called the current toxic exposure system "flawed" and said their findings point to a critical need to overhaul how federal agencies identify, research and respond to the hazardous conditions faced by troops, for both vets already separated and those currently serving.

"Scientific, policy, political and fiscal challenges have too often delayed the establishment of [disability] presumptives, effectively denying justice for some veterans, their families and survivors," report authors wrote. "While there have been some significant leaps forward, such as the enactment of the Agent Orange Act of 1991 and the PACT Act of 2022, significant obstacles have left — and will continue to leave — too many toxic-exposed veterans waiting for the health care and benefits they have earned."

The study lists 16 military toxic exposure events eventually recognized with presumptive benefits status for veterans. That status is key, because it recognizes all veterans who served in a certain area or certain time frame to skip complicated documentation of their illnesses, and instead concedes that their medical issues were likely caused by military service.

The list includes problems like exposure to the chemical defoliant Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, toxic burn pit smoke during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, poisoned water at Camp Lejeune in from the 1950s to 1980s, and radioactive materials at various sites throughout the Cold War. In some cases, the link between the toxins and veterans health problems was known within a few years, researchers found. But getting benefits fully sorted out took much longer.

"A veteran who served in Vietnam in 1962 and later developed hypertension had to wait 60 years from first exposure for the government to concede presumptive service connection," the report stated. "Toxic-exposed veterans are waiting too long for the establishment of presumptives to ease their path to the benefits and health care they have earned."

The groups are advocating for a clearer process of identifying military toxins, researching their effects and implementing care and benefits for veterans exposed to the chemicals.

"We're already getting more accurate information about service members and their specific exposures," said Cory Titus, MOAA's director of government relations for veteran benefits. "Codifying some of those best practices that we are seeing will help ensure that we have a true system to take care of veterans into the future."

Advocates briefed VA leaders and members of Congress on their findings ahead of Wednesday's report release. Peter Dickinson, senior executive advisor for DAV, said advocates hope to turn the report into legislation early next year.

"[The current White House] has run very hard and fast on part of this issue under their control," he said. "But there is a historical waxing and waning of attention focused on veterans. We need to set up a system where … we acknowledge problems early on, rather than saying we're not going to acknowledge it until we're ready to pay the bill."

The proposed reforms include a clear framework with specific timelines for when VA officials must publicly acknowledge environmental hazard incidents, inform veterans about possible health impacts and begin the process of establishing presumptive rules surrounding those conditions. Report authors also noted that "expanding scientific understanding of toxic exposures and environmental hazards is essential to support the VA's efforts to provide timely, comprehensive benefits and health care to exposed veterans."

Army deploys to Alaska island amid rise in Russian military activity

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The U.S. military has moved about 130 soldiers along with mobile rocket launchers to a desolate island in the Aleutian chain of western Alaska amid a recent increase in Russian military planes and vessels approaching American territory. Eight Russian military planes and four navy vessels, including two submarines, have come close to Alaska in the past week as Russia and China conducted joint military drills. None of the planes breached U.S. airspace and a Pentagon spokesperson said Tuesday there was no cause for alarm. “It’s not the first time that we’ve seen the Russians and the Chinese flying, you know, in the vicinity, and that’s something that we obviously closely monitor, and it’s also something that we’re prepared to respond to,” Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said at a news conference.

As part of a “force projection operation,” the Army on Sept. 12 sent the soldiers to Shemya Island, some 1,200 miles southwest of Anchorage, where the U.S. Air Force maintains an air station that dates to World War II. The soldiers brought two High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, with them. U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, said the U.S. military also deployed a guided-missile destroyer and a Coast Guard vessel to the western region of Alaska as Russia and China began the “Ocean-24” military exercises in the Pacific and Arctic oceans Sept. 10.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command said it detected and tracked Russian military planes operating off Alaska over a four-day span. There were two planes each on Sept. 11, Sept. 13, Sept. 14 and Sept. 15. The planes operated in the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone, a zone beyond U.S. sovereign airspace, but within which the U.S. expects aircraft to identify themselves, NORAD said. The Russian Embassy in the U.S. did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

NORAD has said the number of such incursions has fluctuated yearly. The average was six to seven intercepts a year. Last year, 26 Russian planes came into the Alaska zone, and so far this year, there have been 25.

Often in such encounters, the military provides photos of the Russian warplanes being escorted by either U.S. or Canadian planes, such as during a July 24 intercept of two Russian and two Chinese planes. However, none was released in the past week and a NORAD spokeswoman, Canadian Maj. Jennie Derenzis, declined to say whether jets were scrambled to intercept the Russian planes.

The U.S. Coast Guard said Sunday its homeland security vessel, the 418-foot Stratton, was on routine patrol in the Chukchi Sea when it tracked four Russian Federation Navy vessels about 60 miles northwest of Point Hope, Alaska. The Russian vessels, which included two submarines, a frigate and a tugboat, had crossed the maritime boundary into U.S. waters to avoid sea ice, which is permitted under international rules and customs.

Two years ago, a U.S. Coast Guard ship about 85 miles north of Alaska’s Kiska Island in the Bering Sea came across three Chinese and four Russian naval vessels sailing in single formation.

Ryder, the Pentagon spokesperson, said the recent spike is “something that we’ll continue to keep an eye on, but doesn’t pose a threat from our perspective.”

Sullivan called for a larger military presence in the Aleutians while advocating for the U.S. to respond with strength to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping. “In the past two years, we’ve seen joint Russian-Chinese air and naval exercises off our shores and a Chinese spy balloon floating over our communities,” Sullivan said in a statement Tuesday. “These escalating incidents demonstrate the critical role the Arctic plays in great power competition between the U.S., Russia, and China.”

Sullivan said the U.S. Navy should reopen its shuttered base at Adak, located in the Aleutians. Naval Air Facility Adak was closed in 1997.

Pictures of the Month



A Falcon 9 rocket carrying the Polaris Dawn crew launches from the Kennedy Space Center, Fla., Sept. 10, 2024



Puerto Rico Army National Guardsmen stand on an improved ribbon bridge during water rescue training with the Coast Guard in Ponce, Puerto Rico, July 18, 2024.