Plane Talk

December 2003 | 167th Airlift Wing, WVANG | Next UTAs 10-11 January

Russian Female Fighter Pilot Visits 167th Airlift Wing

By Lt. Col. Dick Jaklitch

Since her secondary school days, Maj. Svetlana Protasova dreamed of just one thing: flying. While she excelled in more traditional studies in music, painting and Russian literature, flying has always been her passion. This passion has driven her through great adversity and challenge to become the world's only female pilot of the Russian MiG-29 fighter.

Maj. Svetlana Protasova and Lt. Col. Dick Jaklitch

Protasova's started her 11-year path to military aviation as a graduate of the prestigious Moscow Aviation Institute, attending the Zaporozhye flying school and the DOSAAF, a military organization sports parachute and flying school.

Since 1994, upon graduating from aviation school in Zaporazhye (Ukraine), her career has taken her to Russia's most prestigious aviation center, Kubinka (Moscow region), where foreign military delegations are often taken for impressive air shows. She has flown several different types of Russian Air Force fighters during her career and is currently flying the MiG-29. She is based in Borisoglebsk.

167th AW Commander and Maj. Svetlana Protasova

Protasova visited the 167th during November UTA to attend the retirement of Lt. Col. Richard "Dick" Jaklitch, a traditional guardsman Quality Assistance officer. She said she was impressed to learn that much U.S. military strength comes from individuals who are motivated volunteers who work in both the civilian sector and military. In Russia, there are no reserve forces, she said.

Her visit to the U.S. also included brief stops at the Kennedy Space Center, Disney World, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Her visit to the 167th AW, along with the warm reception she was given, will provide great memories that she will take back with her to Russia.

We wish the best for Maj. Svetlana Protasova, and are happy to have had the opportunity for her to visit with us and get to know us better.

(Pictures by Staff Sgt. Emily Beightol, Multimedia Support Unit)

Lesh Promoted to Chief Master Sergeant

Chief Master Sgt. Susan E. Lesh was promoted to her current rank in November, becoming the first female promoted to Chief Master Sergeant in the history of the 167th Airlift Wing. A traditional Guardsman, she enlisted in the unit in July1983 and currently serves as the Superintendent of Nursing Services of the 167th Medical Squadron. In her civilian life, she works for Equipped for Life, a home medical equipment supplier, in Hagerstown, Md. and a volunteers her time working with a variety of community projects.

(Picture by Staff Sgt. Emily Beightol, Multimedia Support Unit)

Mountaineer Pride Worldwide

Commander's View

This will be my last Christmas with you. My retirement is immediately following the January UTA. We will conduct a Change of Command Ceremony for the new Commander of the 167th Airlift Wing during the January UTA. Though we'll have people deployed over another Christmas, the majority of the Wing will be home for the holidays. With heartfelt thanks, I want everyone to know that your performance during the War on Terrorism has been nothing less than superb. To command a Wing of this caliber has been the highlight of my professional career. Thanks for everything and have a happy holiday season.

PLANE TALK is an authorized Air Force publication for the members of the 167th Airlift Wing, West Virginia Air National Guard. Contents of ***PLANE TALK*** are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force.

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Col. Jesse A. Thomas	Commander
2Lt. Andrew Schmidt	PAO
Master Sgt. Ronald K. Newcomer	PA Specialist
Senior Amn. Steven E. Rau	Admin

CHAPEL NEWS

By Chaplain (Capt.) David Reynolds

Peace on Earth?

At this time of the year, we often hear and together sing about "**Peace on Earth**." Considering the world's situation, "**Peace on Earth**" may seem like a far-fetched ideal. Bombs and violence do not lend themselves to thoughts of peace and goodwill toward men.

Pastor Thomas Gumbleton, the Bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, tells of one particular holiday season when "**Peace on Earth**" was demonstrated to him in a very vivid way. The year was 1979. The U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran, had been under siege by militant Islamic students since Nov. 4. Fifty-three Americans were being held against their will, and the Ayatollah Khomeni had invited Pastor Gumbleton and other clergy to come to the compound to "celebrate" the season with the captives. Weary of a possible propaganda event, the clergy agreed to come.

The once "safe haven for freedom," the U.S. compound, had been transformed into a terrorist prison camp. Complete with degrading signs and symbols, guns and cruelty, the embassy certainly bore no resemblance to the season of "**Peace On Earth** goodwill toward men" … that is until the clergy began meeting with the captives. The pastors were unable to meet with all of the 53 Americans in one place at one time. Instead, groups no larger than five were escorted to where the pastors were. Together, the Word of God was shared, prayers were offered, communion was taken and tears and embraces were exchanged. "Throughout the entire time," recalls Pastor Gumbleton, "there was a *peace* that transcended the agonizing situation." Eyes and hearts that met and united in prayer and worship focused on the hope and help that the season of Advent proclaimed. Though these men and women were held against their will, their spirits were freed and hearts were filled, even peaceful in the midst of the turmoil.

Our nation and our world constantly are faced with trouble and sorrow. Peace — that is the absence of trouble — eludes us. Someone has commented that peace is not the absence of something it is the Presence of Someone. How true that was for Pastor Gumbleton and the captive Americans in Tehran. In the midst of a very troubling situation, peace was found. Peace that Someone was with them in their troubles.

This Advent season let us open our hearts to the Prince of Peace and let Him bring to us as individuals the Peace of God that passes all understanding. As we individually receive that Peace, we can collectively share it with those around us and **Peace on Earth** will be found. Shalom!

National Guard Celebrates 100th Anniversary of Dick Act

1903 Legislation Created Modern National Guard, Reserves as We Know Them

The Militia Act of 1903 — together with its 1908 amendment — was, in the words of a leading historian of the National Guard, "the most important national legislation in militia history." The act, also known as the Dick Act in honor of Congressman Charles Dick, chairman of the House Militia Affairs Committee and a long-time Ohio National Guard officer who had served in Cuba during the War with Spain, repealed the Militia Act of 1792 and divided the militia into two groups: the Reserve Militia, defined as all able-bodied men between 18 and 45, and the Organized Militia, defined as state units receiving federal support.

There was a one-time grant of $2 million to modernize equipment, and states could now use federal funds to pay for summer training camps. The War Department would now fund the attendance of Guard officers at Army schools, and Regular officers would be detailed to serve as inspector-instructors with Guard units. There would be joint Regular-Guard maneuvers and training camps. In return for all this, the act gave the President the power to call the Organized Militia — that is, the National Guard — into federal service for up to nine months' service to repel invasion, suppress rebellion, or enforce federal laws, but not for service outside the United States. Guardsmen had to answer a presidential call or face court-martial, and states had to organize, equip, and train their units in accordance with the organization, standards, and procedures of the Regular Army. Finally, if Guard units failed to meet certain standards of training and administration as set by the War Department, they would lose their federal support.

In 1908 the act was amended. The nine-month limit on federal service was deleted; the President would now set the length of federal service. The ban on Guard units serving outside the United States was dropped. Clearly establishing the Guard's role as the Army's reserve force, the amended act stated that, during a mobilization, the Guard had to be called before the Army could organize a federal volunteer force. Also in 1908, Congress agreed to increase the annual federal subsidy of the Guard to $4 million, and the War Department established the Division of Militia Affairs.

The division served as the link between the department and the state adjutants general, supervised the distribution of equipment and supplies to the states, evaluated Guard training and administration and acted as the militia's representative to the General Staff.

(Taken from Army.mil)

AIR NATIONAL GUARD Air National Guard
Americans At Their Best.

167th AW Promotions

TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL
Peter O. Westendorff ***AS***

TO MAJOR
Mark S. Rutter ***AS***
Kurk E. Turney ***AS***

TO FIRST LIEUTENANT
Tod J. Burke ***AS***

TO MASTER SERGEANT
Steven H. Baker ***SVF***
Charles J. Copeland ***CES***
Keith F. Darrell ***SFS***

TO TECHNICAL SERGEANT
Daniel S. Bowers ***AS***
Nicole Y. Branson ***MDS***

TO STAFF SERGEANT
Derk G. Slonaker ***MXS***

TO SENIOR AIRMAN
Brandon L. Creason ***LRS***
Rachel E. Franklin ***AES***
David L. Grim II ***LRS***
Krystal L. Hart ***OSF***

FAMILY FORUM

By Susan Sanders

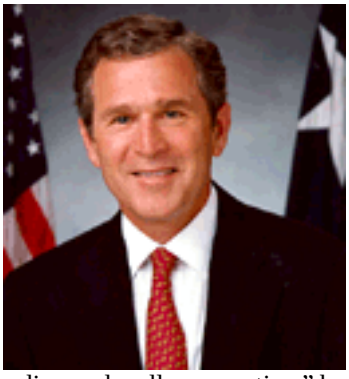
New Military Tax Act offers help

The tax bill signed by President Bush on Veterans Day provides tax breaks to reservists and National Guard serving in the war on terrorism. The bill ensures tax exclusion on military child care, saves military families money when selling their homes and expands the special extension filing income tax returns – not just to troops deployed in combat, but those serving in "contingency operations" as well.

Maybe this news will add to making your holiday enjoyable.

From the Family Readiness Group, we wish all a healthy and blessed holiday season as we pray for peace.

Bush Extols Importance of Employer Support for Guard, Reserve



By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 14, 2003 - President Bush recognized the importance of employers in making their employees' military service possible as he signed a proclamation marking National Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Week.

"In times of need, our nation counts on the Guard and Reserve members to fulfill their commitments of service," Bush said during a White House ceremony. "We value their courage and we honor their sacrifices. They're defending their nation in the war on terror and they are serving in a just cause."

The president said reserve component service members depend on the understanding of their employers for their service. "Across America where units have been activated, employers at offices, factories, schools, hospitals and other workplaces have been understanding and really supportive," he said. "They have priority to the needs of our nation."

Bush said most employers have shown great consideration for their workers. "These companies have the gratitude of our nation, they have the gratitude of the commander in chief," he said.

The tradition of the citizen-soldier began with the Minutemen at Concord, Mass., in 1775. Some of the most famous fighting divisions of World War II started as National Guard outfits.

Bush spoke of his service with the Texas Air National Guard. He said what has stuck with him was his impression of the "high caliber of the people with whom I served."

The reserve components have more than 1.2 million members. They make up almost half of the total military force of the United States. "These men and women face the difficult challenge of balancing military duty with civilian employment," the president said. "They know the call to active duty can come at any time, and they are always ready."

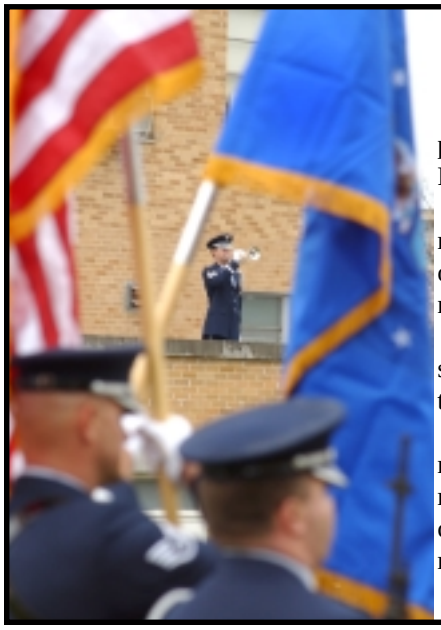
Bush said guardsmen and reservists in places like Afghanistan and Iraq are "meeting the terrorist enemy abroad so our fellow citizens do not have to face the enemy at home."

"They are part of our efforts to employ targeted and decisive force against cold-blooded terrorist killers," the commander in chief noted. "They are helping to train Iraqis and Afghans to defend their own countries. They are helping the Iraqi and Afghan people to build just and free and democratic governments. They are helping to defend the American homeland."

The president said reserve component service members rely on the support and patience of their families. "They also rely on their civilian employers to put the national interest above the corporate or self interests," he said.

"Employers of Guard and reserve members make possible the contributions of our citizens soldiers. By supporting the mobilization of patriots, employers are demonstrating their own patriotism."

The president said America needs the Guard and Reserve more today than it has in decades. "We're at war," he said. "And we're fortunate that so many of our citizens have heeded the call to serve a cause greater than themselves."



Unit Members Participates in Veterans Day Activities at Shepherd College

The Veterans Day event held at the Shepherd College Midway East Campus Nov. 11 was a great success despite the inclement weather, said Staff Sgt. Robert Hall of base recruiting.

About 200 people ignored sporadic rain to attend the event, including many unit members and local veterans. The event was highlighted by the bugling of Master Sgt. Ronald Glazer (shown above) and a C-130 flyover by unit personnel.

According to Hall, the event would never have been possible without the support of base personnel and their willingness to work and attend the event on their days off.

"I have never felt more proud than I did that day to wear this uniform representing the 167th Airlift Wing," Hall said. "Combine all the personnel who made the representation effective, from the Honor Guard presenting colors to the crew flying over in the C-130 to the buglers' closing ceremony in a state of remembrance, it was truly an awesome event."

(Picture by Staff Sgt Emily Beightol, Multimedia Support Unit)

Que Pasa!

Logistics Readiness Squadron – 2nd Lt. Chris Croson

LRS would like to wish all of our hard-working troops a Happy Holiday season as they continue to return from training and missions.

Tech. Sgts. Gerald Rhodes and Mark Jordan recently returned from Maine in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Rhodes' and Jordan's outstanding dedication contributed immensely to the mission over their four-month deployment. We truly appreciate their patriotism and volunteerism in getting the job done.

LRS also welcomes back Master Sgt. Greg Propst and Staff Sgt. Misty Creek as they return from SWA this drill weekend. We are grateful to have them back just in time for the holiday.

Congratulations to Senior Airman Tim Merrill for graduating from Airman Leadership School on Nov. 20. Great job, Tim, and welcome back.

Maintenance Squadron - Maj. Robert Barrat and Tech. Sgt. Sam Rickabaugh

As this year comes to a close and before we enter 2004, take a few minutes to contemplate the past 12 months and make a mental note of things you would have changed or done differently.

There are only a few basic driving rules to keep in mind while driving on base: wear a seatbelt at all times, never drive under the influence or while impaired, keep your privately owned vehicle reasonably well maintained and insured, drive carefully and obey all traffic control devices. These few rules, when followed, eliminate many problems before they occur.

It is really wonderful to have all the deployed troops returning just before the Christmas holiday. All the maintainers should be home for the Christmas holidays as well.

January UTA is the last drill for Base Commander Col. Jesse Thomas, who intends on retiring to the Gulf Coast area. It has been great working for him for the past several years, and we wish him all the best in his retirement.

Security Forces Member Saves Life

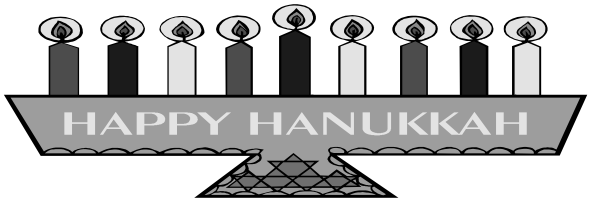
By Tech. Sgt. Todd L. Evans

Master Sgt. Ted Scott was dining at a local restaurant on Oct. 15, 2003, when he heard a sudden thump. After looking around, he noticed an older man lying on the floor choking. Scott instructed restaurant personnel to call 911 and went to help the man, later identified as Paul Pearl, who was becoming grayish in color.

Scott did a finger-sweep in the Pearl's mouth and, after not finding any obstruction, began to perform the Heimlich maneuver on him. After about five minutes of attempts, Scott dislodged a one-and-a-half inch piece of meat from Pearl's throat.

The owner of the restaurant later called the Security Forces Squadron to say that, if not for Scott's efforts, Pearl may not have survived. He wished to express his sincere thanks.

Scott, his wife and their two children live in Martinsburg. Scott plans to retire from the unit in March 2004 with 35 years' of military service.



Discrimination, Harassment Hot Line Available

A hot line for reporting unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment in the Air Force remains open for business. Officials said they accept calls from active-duty airmen, their family members, retirees, civilian employees and cadets at Air Force commissioning sources.

The phone numbers are toll free (800) 616-3775, DSN 665-5000 or commercial (210) 565-5000. People overseas without easy access to overseas lines can e-mail contact.center@randolph.af.mil, visit www.afpc.randolph.af.mil to send Web mail or chat live with a customer service representative. People can also send letters to the military equal opportunity office at HQ AFPC/DPSFOS, 550 C Street West Post K, Randolph AFB, TX 78150.

Counselors take calls Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time. After hours, voice mail takes messages. For emergencies, people should contact a supervisor, commander, command post or the police.

For more information, read the Air Force Print News article at http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006035.

Retirements

Maintenance Group
Lt. Col. Richard W. Jaklitch Nov. 1

Airlift Squadron
Senior Master Sgt. Donald Kees Dec. 1

Maintenance Squadron
Master Sgt. Amy DeHaven Nov. 3

Aerial Port Squadron
Technical Sgt. William M. Tomlinson Nov. 5
Technical Sgt. Andrew L. Tetreault
Staff Sght. George D. Penrod Nov. 5

Welcome to the 167th Airlift Wing

Jeffrey A. Baromy	AS
Briam S. Grim	MXS
Donald R. Lang	LRS
Susan L. Leonard	MDG
William D. Shepard	MXS
Stephanie A. Wahl	MDG

Military Deal of the Week: Apple Computers

Military personnel now receive discounts on all Apple products. Go here to find out more: http://www.apple.com/federal/howtobuy.

Airmen Must Report Foreign Gifts

Gifts received by Airmen from foreign governments and valued at more than $285 must be reported within 60 days of receipt. Failure to report a gift can result in a U.S. District Court penalty equal to the fair market value of the gift plus $5,000. By law, any gift received from a foreign government is technically U.S. property. However, reporting a gift does not necessarily mean the recipient will have to give up the gift.

Report gifts received in 2003 or earlier to HQ AFPC/DPPPRS, 550 C St West Ste 12, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4714. Report gifts received after Jan. 1 to SAF/AA, 1720 Air Force Pentagon, Washington DC 20330-1720.

For more information, read the Air Force Print News article at http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006061.

Military Appreciation Days For Service Members

The Myrtle Beach Area Military Appreciation Days Promotion is taking place from September to December 2003. Service members receive special discounts on attractions, lodging, dining and golf. Military personnel can stop by one of three Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce Visitor Centers and pick up a brochure and a packet of discount information that they can utilize while they are in town. This is exclusively for military personnel, which includes active duty, Guard, Reserve, and retirees. For more information, go to http://www.myrtlebeachinfo.com/military

SWA Souvenirs

MSG Mike Eshbaugh, NCOIC, Public Health

Souvenirs from the CENTAF AOR, such as unglazed/partially glazed coffee cups, pewter mugs, copper pots, etc., may not meet U.S. health and safety standards. Personnel who have acquired any of these items should be very careful about using them for food and beverages unless they are certain of their safety.

Even though some of the souvenirs that soldiers, airmen, and marines are buying in Iraq, Kuwait and other Gulf Countries, may be purchased from the BX/PX, they are from highly questionable sources. They may be poorly glazed and susceptible to leaching of lead.

These items should only be used as ornaments, and not for food or drink, especially hot drinks or acid foods, since lead could be leached out of them. Of particular concern are those items that may be mailed home to family where children could be using them for juice, etc.

AIR NATIONAL GUARD
Together We Succeed

Cash in on Your Future, Enroll in TSP

Service members wanting to make an investment in their future can cash in on the Thrift Savings Plan's open enrollment season now through Dec. 31.

According to the TSP Web site http://www.tsp.gov, "open season is the only time Marines currently on active duty are afforded the opportunity to enroll in the TSP." The federal government-sponsored retirement savings and investment program offers the same type of benefits many private corporations offer under their 401k plans.

For more information, see http://www.military.com/NewsContent?file=usmc2_102803

Red Cross Needs Assistance for Wounded Soldiers

The American Red Cross at Walter Reed Army Medical Center is looking for incidentals/comfort items for sick and wounded Armed Forces Personnel now recuperating at the hospital. When someone is stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere and is wounded or falls ill, they are immediately evacuated, and it can take weeks for their personnel effects to catch up with them. The Red Cross is asking for donations of any of the following:

- telephone cards of at least 30 minutes
- rolling luggage (small), totes, carry-ons
- individually wrapped snacks
- magazines
- notepads, pens
- playing cards and games
- sweat pants and shirts (all sizes)

All items should be addressed to: ATTN: Barbara Green, American Red Cross, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, 6900 Georgia Ave, N.W., Washington, DC 20307-5001.

Checks should be made out to the American Red Cross. For more information, call (202) 782-2080 or e-mail Barbara.Green.1@AMEDD.army.mil. For more on the Red Cross, see http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourceFileView?file=Active_Family_Red_Cross.htm

Travelors Can Donate Miles to Servicemembers

Operation Hero Miles allows travelers to donate frequent-flier miles to help service members on leave from Iraq to reach their destinations.

Service members participating in the two-week "rest and recuperation" leave program fly free to airports at Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany; Atlanta; Baltimore; and Dallas, but must pay for connecting flights from and back to those ports.

The hero miles program Web site at http://www.heromiles.org/ lists participating airlines. It also provides information on how to donate frequent-flier miles and how service members can receive complimentary tickets. According to the Web site, people have already donated more than 86 million miles.

For more information, read the Air Force Print News article at http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006070.

SRA Ayala Presented Certificate of Achievement

Senior Airman Melissa Ayala was recently presented with a White House Communications Agency Certificate of Achievement for her work as a photographic laboratory technician, audio-visual division, at the White House Communications Agency. She served on temporary duty with the agency from May to September 2002 and again from October 2002 to April 2003. She serves as a traditional guardsman in the 167th Multimedia Support Center. From left: Ayala, Col. Pat Burkhart and Maj. William "Wally" Whittington. *(Picture by Staff Sgt. Emily Beightol, Multimedia Support Unit)*

Scholarship Program For Military Children Opens Applications

The application period for children of active-duty, retired, Guard and Reserve members to apply for a $1,500 academic scholarships is underway and runs until Feb. 18.

The goal is to award at least one scholarship at every commissary location, depending on the number of qualified applicants and funding.

Last year, the program awarded 550 scholarships from among 6,500 applicants. In four years, the Defense Commissary Agency program has awarded nearly $2.5 million in scholarships to about 1,500 children of U.S. service members and retirees.

For more information, read the Air Force Print News article at http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123005944. For scholarship program and application procedures, visit www.militaryscholar.org.

Congress Agrees on Reserve Component Health Care

Congress has agreed upon a new Reserve Component health care as part of the Iraq supplemental. A one-year trial will be implemented with these four major provisions: TRICARE Buy-In, TRICARE upon Receiving Orders, Extension of TRICARE Eligibility after Demobilization, and Authorization for Additional Medical Screening.

Fore more details on each major provision, see http://www.leahy.senate.gov/vermont/national%20guard/guardcare100910.html

For information regarding TRICARE, see http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,32574—0,00.html

Update: TRICARE for National Guard and Reserve Members

Stars and Stripes reports that lawmakers have voted to allow uninsured members of the National Guard and reserves to participate in TRICARE.

According to the new law, Guard and reserve members who are unemployed or whose employers do not offer health insurance can enroll themselves and their families in TRICARE on a cost-share basis, even if they have not been activated. A single reservist would pay an annual premium of about $420, while family coverage would cost about $1,450. All reservists and their families are also eligible to enroll in TRICARE as soon as members receive activation orders, as opposed to when they are actually activated. Reservists on active duty orders of 30 days or more can stay in TRICARE for 6 months after completion of their active duty tour, compared with the current 60- and 120-day authorizations. This TRICARE offer expires after one year. For more general information on TRICARE, see http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,30822—1,00.html

Concurrent Receipt Update

With the signing of the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act (NDA), military retirees with a VA rated disability of 50% or more will finally be given their due. Section 641 of the 2004 NDA marks the phase-in of Full-Concurrent Receipt.

This means that starting in 2004 disabled military retirees will start receiving both their military pension and a flat monthly amount based on their disability rating. The phase-in will occur over the next ten years with the bulk of the phase-in being front loaded in 2004. Unlike the Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC), Concurrent Receipt will be automatic; retirees will not be required to submit an application.

For more on Concurrent Receipt see columnist John Youmans' article archives at http://www.military.com/NewContent?file=Youmans_Index

On This Day In History...

Dec. 17, 1903 — Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first sustained, controlled and powered airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, N.C.

Dec. 11, 1914 — An Army airplane received radio messages at a distance of 10 miles.

Dec. 12, 1953 — Maj. Charles E. Yeager piloted the rocket-powered Bell X-1A to a speed of Mach 2.435 (about 1,650 mph)

Dec. 1, 1959 — The first airmen assumed the top enlisted rank, chief master sergeant.

Dec. 22, 1964 — The SR-71 long-range, reconnaissance aircraft made its first flight.

Dec. 17, 1993 — The first B-2 Spirit bomber arrived at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo.

Dec. 2, 1993 — Col. Richard O. Covey, pilot and mission commander, piloted the fifth flight of the shuttle Endeavor, which set a record for the greatest number of spacewalks, five. On the same flight Lt. Col. Tom Akers became the U.S. record holder for spacewalks with 29 hours and 40 minutes.

Dec. 6, 1995 — The first airmen arrived in Tuzla, Bosnia, to prepare the airfield for some of the 20,000 U.S. and 40,000 NATO troops enforcing the peace accord reached at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

2004 Legislative Updates

2004 Pay Raises Now Official

The recently signed 2004 National Defense Authorization Act includes an active duty pay increase of at least 3.7 percent to all military members. Although the average pay raise is 4.15 percent, active duty Warrant Officers and Enlisted personnel will be receiving a pay raise that ranges from 3.7% to 6.25% with the largest percentages going to enlisted service members E-5 and above. Commissioned Officers on the other hand will receive a flat 3.7% pay raise across the board. The new raises are effective on 1 January 2004, this means service members will see the increase in their 15 January paychecks. To learn more about pay, see http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,30821—1,00.html

Retiree COLA Set at 2.1 Percent

Payments to military retirees will include a 2.1 percent cost of living allowance increase based on figures announced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The COLA also affects federal retired pay, VA disability compensation, SBP survivor annuities and Social Security. The COLA for these programs will be effective December 1st, and will be reflected in checks issues on January 2, 2004.

For more information, see http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire/COLA_Increase.htm, and for complete information on military pay and benefits, see http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,30821,00.html

Act Gives Commissary Benefits

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The fiscal 2004 National Defense Authorization Act offers reservists and their families unlimited commissary privileges.

President George W. Bush signed the defense bill Nov. 24. It allows reservists in the Selected Reserve, reserve retirees under age 60 and their families to have access to commissaries on the same basis as active-duty people, retirees and their families.

(Courtesy of Air Force Reserve Command News Service)

Future Equal Percentage Pay Raises

The 2004 National Defense Authorization Act amends the previous law, which required that the FY 2005 and FY 2006 raises be at least a 1/2 of a percentage point above the Employment Cost Index.

The new law directs the Executive Branch to set the annual military pay increases after FY 2006 to the increase in the Employment Cost Index.

Based on current private sector data, this means the FY 2005 pay raise should be at near 4.4 percent and the FY 2006 raise should be at closer to 3.9 percent across the board. However, the DOD can be expected to ask that the raises be "targeted" so that mid-level noncommissioned officers, petty offers and officers will receive the larger percentage increases. For more information, see http://www.military.com/ Resources/ ResourcesContent/0,13964,30821—1,00.html

Demobilized Reservists Get Uncharged Leave

Five days of uncharged civilian leave has been directed by President Bush for federal employees returning from Guard and Reserve duty in the war on terrorism. The Nov. 14 memorandum covers all employees activated for military service in connection with operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Agencies may grant this period of excused absence before the employee's resumption of duties or at a time mutually agreeable to the agency and the employee if the employee has already returned to duty, according to the Office of Personnel Management.

For more information, read the Air Force Print News article at http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006054 or the Office of Personnel Management Web site at http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2001/2001-09A.asp.

Tax Relief Act Aids Military, Families

The Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 increases the death gratuity payment to $12,000 tax-free, changes the capital gains exclusion for home sales by military members, increases the deduction for many travel expenses incurred during duty-related travel, and extends the deadline for filing while serving in a contingency operation.

The death benefit is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001, to provide for Service members who died in the terrorist attacks the following day and in the ongoing global war on terror. The capital gain exclusion for home sales is retroactive to 1997 so military members who have sold their homes since 1997 have one year from Nov. 11, 2003, to request a refund for any tax they did pay.

For more information, contact a unit tax advisor or read the Air Force Print News article at http://www.af.mil/stories/story.asp?storyID=123006017.

Safety Belt Use

Safety belt use has increased significantly in the past few years, but even more must be done to get the remaining non-users to buckle up. Safety belt use in the United States rose to 79% in 2003, from 58% in 1994.

Of the 32,598 passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2002, 59% were not wearing a safety belt.

An estimated 14,164 lives were saved by safety belts in 2002, and if all vehicle occupants over age 4 had been wearing safety belts, 7,153 more lives could have been saved.

Restraint Effectiveness

73% of the passenger vehicle occupants who were in fatal crash in 2002 and were restrained survived; of those who were not restrained, only 43% survived.

In fatal crashes, 73% of all vehicle occupants who were totally ejected were killed. Only 1% of restrained occupants were ejected. Safety belts are effective in preventing total ejections.

Safety Belts Save Lives And Money

In 2000, safety belts prevented nearly 11,900 fatalities and 325,000 serious injuries, saving $50 billion in medical care, lost productivity, and other injury-related costs.

In the year 2000, the total economic cost of motor vehicle crashes in the United States was $230.6 billion. This represents an amount equal to 2.3% of the gross domestic product, or $820 for every person living in the United States.

The lifetime economic cost to society for each fatality is over $977,000. Over 80% of this amount is attributable to lost workplace and household productivity.

Each critically injured crash survivor costs an average of $1.1 million. Medical costs and lost productivity accounted for 84% of the cost for this most serious level of nonfatal injury.

Overall, those not directly involved in crashes pay for nearly three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes and travel delay. In 2000 these costs, borne by society rather than by crash victims, totaled over $170 billion.

Teens And Young Adults

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 15 to 34 in the United States.

In 2002, 5,625 16- to 20-year old passenger vehicle occupants were killed and 476,000 were injured in traffic crashes.

In 2002, 64% of 16- to 20-year old passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were not wearing a safety belt. And 16% of 16- to 20-year old drivers and passengers injured in crashes were not restrained.

In 2002, 8,833 21- to 34-year old passenger vehicle occupants killed and 788,000 were injured in traffic crashes.

In 2002, 69% of 21- to 34-year old passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were not wearing a safety belt. And 13% of 21- to 34-year old drivers and passengers injured in crashes were not restrained.

The economic cost of police-reported crashes involving drivers age 15 to 20 was an estimated $40.8 billion in 2002.

Male teens continue to lag behind female teens in safety belt use. In 2001, 18.1% of high school males said they rarely wore a safety belt as a passenger, compared with 10.2% of high school females.

Rural Areas And Pickup Drivers

Safety belt use in rural areas was 73% in 2002, slightly below the 75% national average at the time.

Safety belt use among pickup truck drivers is about 69% - the lowest for any vehicle type – compared with 83% for SUVs and van drivers and 81% for passenger car drivers.

Safety Belt Laws

There are two types of safety belt laws: primary and secondary. A primary law allows a law enforcement officer to write a ticket if he or she simply observes an unbelted driver or passenger. Under a secondary law, an officer cannot ticket anyone for a safety belt violation unless the motorist was stopped for another infraction.

Primary laws are very effective in increasing safety belt use. In 2003, belt use in states with primary laws was 83%, compared with 75% in states without primary laws.

Teen safety belt use is significantly higher in states with primary safety belt laws than in states with secondary laws.

As of September 2003, 20 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had primary safety belt laws.