



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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March Program:

COL Steven Mains, Director of the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), Combined Arms Center, Ft. Leavenworth, will be our speaker. The title of his presentation will be "Iraq/Afghanistan Update."



**2006
CHAPTER
Awarded 2007**

The President's Corner . . .



On behalf of our entire Jayhawk MOAA Board, thank you for the opportunity to serve you and our great chapter this year. We will endeavor to keep moving forward with the many worthwhile programs initiated by our dedicated and committed predecessors.

The first meeting of the newly appointed Board will be on March 13th. We will discuss the areas of importance for the coming year. Some of these include: the continued growth of the General Comfort Scholarship Endowment, so ably led by Erv Hodges; obtaining ten or more new members (MOAA's Give Me Ten Program); and providing exciting programs at our meetings.

In regard to programs, Dave Darwin, our First Vice-President, has lined up Colonel Steve Mains from the Army Center for Lessons Learned for the March Program and KU Political Science Professor Burdett Loomis for the May Program. You will find both of these informative and enjoyable. We welcome your suggestions regarding programs for our meetings.

Thank you again. We hope to see you at the Lawrence Country Club on March 25th for our next meeting and social.

Respectfully,

Bernie

Volume XIII, Issue 2

1 March 2008

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*** Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
18 March.**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

Chapter Dues: Don't forget that Chapter dues (\$20.00) were payable in January. Please send your check to Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive (66049) or call him (842-7037) if you do not intend to renew your membership.

Archie and Cathy Mills are now settled into their new home:
4851 Harvard Road, Lawrence, KS 66049 Phone 344-1122

The Clayton L. Comfort Award Fund:

The fund continues to grow and now is near \$15,000. For all who have helped with our success so far, we thank you. It is now time to think of our 2008 contribution to this most worthy cause. Please consider this as one of the charities that you include in your annual giving plans.

You can include a separate check made out to the KU Endowment Fund, marked for the Comfort Fund with your reservation to our March meeting or you can send it directly to the KU Endowment. If you have any individuals who you feel would like to contribute to the fund I would be happy to contact them for you. My e-mail is ehodges@sunflower.com.

Thanks for your help. Erv Hodges

Veterans in the Classroom Program:

Our chapter is organizing a Veterans in the Classroom program with the Lawrence area school system.

The mission of this program is to bring veterans together with local schoolchildren in our area to educate schoolchildren about patriotism, service to country, camaraderie, history, and our military. This program will be especially important in Lawrence, where exposure to the military is very limited. Participants would be available to visit schools in the area and would work with teachers to make presentations, be interviewed, or answer class questions. Participants would be encouraged to bring, or wear, their uniforms to class in order to explain the significance of the different parts of the uniform to the class.

We would like to provide a list of volunteers to the schools before this next Memorial Day. If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact Jim Cooper, 842-7037 or jscooper@kumc.edu

SBP Annuity offset at age 62:

A question was asked recently about the offset of the SBP Annuity at age 62.

This is a requirement by law that when a spouse reaches the age of 62, the Annuity will be offset (unless you are currently working), because the Annuitant is "eligible" to receive the spouse's Social Security (it made no difference if you were drawing your own Social Security).

Currently, the offset is 50% of the Annuity received prior to age 62. Effective 1 April 2008, the Annuity will be the full 55% and this will be included in Annuity payments on 1 May 2008.



***Army News
LTC John Basso***

Hooah, Jayhawk Chapter!

Let me begin by thanking MOAA for their hospitality in hosting KU Army ROTC during the autumn dinner meeting. It was great fun for us and both the cadre and the cadets really enjoyed the evening - thanks! We've been very busy since that time as we wrapped up the Fall semester and have begun the

Winter semester. The highlight for everyone though was the 21 December Commissioning Ceremony. LTG (Ret) Robert Forman, who held a wide variety of important command and staff positions culminating in his final assignment as Deputy Commanding General for Training, United States Army

Training and Doctrine Command, gave our six new lieutenants sage words of advice. I am confident that each will excel as a leader in our Armed Forces. Our congratulations go to each one of them.

* Joshua Cain, University of Kansas. 2LT Tycondra Swartz commissioned Joshua who will be assigned as a US Army Reserve Military Police Officer.

* Joseph Dessert, University of St. Mary, is the son of retired Army Col. Rolland and Karen Dessert. COL Dessert commissioned his son who will be assigned as an infantry officer to the 137th Infantry, Kansas Army National Guard in Lawrence.

* Brandon Eicher, who is receiving a bachelor's degree in economics, is the son of Lawrence Eicher and a graduate of Rose Hill High School. His uncle, COL James Eicher, currently stationed at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, commissioned him. Brandon Eicher will go to Fort Benning, Ga., for Basic Officers Leaders Course training and subsequent duty in Korea.

* Jacob Kennedy, who is receiving a bachelor's degree in sociology, is the son of retired Army LTC John and Bobbi Kennedy and a graduate of Leavenworth Senior High School, Leavenworth. LTC Kennedy commissioned his son who will be assigned to the military police, Virginia Army National Guard, Manassas, Virginia.

* Daniel Roper Jr., who is receiving a bachelor's degree in political science, is the son of COL Daniel and Vicki Roper and a graduate of Lansing High School. COL Roper, based at Fort Leavenworth and serving in Iraq, will return to KU to commission his son. Daniel Roper Jr. will be assigned to the 635th Armor, Kansas Army National Guard, in Lenexa.

* Tramaine Young, Washburn University, is the son of SFC Christopher and Jacqueline Young. He was commissioned by MAJ Ted Culbertson, KU ROTC scholarships and admissions officer and Kansas Army National Guard liaison. Tramaine Young will be assigned

with the signal corps, Texas Army National Guard, Houston, Texas, and later to Fort Benning, Georgia, for Basic Officer Leadership Course training.

These new lieutenants are the future of our officer corps - we are in good hands.

Our cadets have also been very active. We are spending a significant amount of time in the woods training our cadets on leading squad size operations during our situational training exercises. Among the future highlights of this training will be a 48-hour training exercise at Fort Riley with K-State and Pitt State. Additionally, our cadets and cadre are working hard to train for and put together the Jayhawk Battalion Ranger Buddy Competition. We will host what is believed to be the largest two-cadet Ranger Buddy Competition in the country on 26 April, with 120 teams competing. We welcome anyone who would like to watch this event (you can contact LT Josh Urban at jaurban@ku.edu for details).

Finally, let me welcome three new Cadre members.

* MAJ Jim Soper is a veteran of Vietnam, Somalia, and Iraq and will take over our new programs at Washburn and MidAmerica Nazarene. Having Jim on board allows us to teach ROTC classes at those two fine universities and we hope makes our program more attractive to students at each school.

* 1LT Joshua Urban is a veteran of Iraq and an Aviation officer with the 1-108th Aviation Battalion, Topeka, KS. Josh will teach our Freshman cadets.

* Lastly, we are happy to have on board SFC (Ret) Rick Cliff who takes over as our Logistics Assistant and joins us from the staff of Leavenworth HS JROTC.

They strengthen our great team.

Rock Chalk! (and, we have several two-, three-, and four-year scholarships left if you know anyone who would make a good officer.)

LTC John Basso



Navy News

CAPT Thomas Arnold, USN



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

This promises to be another busy semester for the KU Naval ROTC Battalion. Key events include: Aviation Club field trips to Whiteman AFB and NAS Jacksonville, FL; an ROTC Drill Meet at the University of Colorado, the annual Notre Dame NROTC Leadership Conference, and the Spring Awards Ceremony. Many of our midshipmen will participate in one or more of these events.

MOAA members are always welcome to attend both the Spring Awards Ceremony and the Joint Commissioning Ceremony. They are scheduled for April 30th at 3:30PM and May 19th at 10:00AM respectively, both in the Kansas Union.

This spring we will commission ten new officers into the Navy and Marine Corps!

Please join me in welcoming a new member of the unit staff – Ms. Monique Quinton. Monique is our new HR/Admin Assistant. She comes to us with a superb background, to include spending ten years in the Air Force. She is a great addition to the Naval ROTC staff!

As a reminder, we are still seeking members of the KU NROTC Alumni Association. If you haven't joined already and are interested in becoming a member, please contact LT Laura Jeffries at 785-864-1187.

In closing, I want to again thank the MOAA Jayhawk Chapter membership for your support to the KU Naval ROTC Unit. The midshipmen and my staff especially enjoyed the opportunity to join you for the January dinner and program. Thank you again for your warm hospitality and for the efforts

you make to recognize the ROTC programs and to honor our nation's future officers.

CAPT Tom Arnold



Air Force News

LtCol Sandra Leiker, USAF

Hello, MOAA!

How is everyone surviving? I just looked back through my electronic files to see what I shared with you all LAST year at this time ... and I discovered that my first entire paragraph was nothing but a rant about the cold and snow. Hmmm...odd – unusually unbearable weather for two years in a row now, is that it? Ha ha! Ah, well, it will make me appreciate my upcoming trip to Montgomery, AL (to sit on the High School Scholarship Award board) all the more. I hear it's over 50 degrees there!

Well, while I am on the subject of our Air Force High School Scholarship Program (HSSP), I'd actually like to talk about that for a little while. It saddens me each year when the detachment gets calls from students (and parents!) who want to know about ROTC scholarship opportunities for the upcoming fall semester for students who have just graduated from high school. While there are still performance-based AFROTC scholarship opportunities offered throughout the freshman and sophomore years, the best way to earn a scholarship (and the only way to earn a full 4-year scholarship) is through the HSSP – and the deadline for applying online each year is the 1st of December! Why am I telling you this? You can spread the word – send people online to www.afrotc.com (it's easy to remember) and the rest should be clear from there. We'd love to have students come visit the detachment and talk to us about specific programs and timelines, but don't let them miss that all-too-important application deadline. And, once local high school students have applied for AFROTC scholarships via the online process, they will be assigned to the nearest ROTC detachment for an interview – which is likely us! Here at KU we get to interview students from all over the western-Kansas/eastern Missouri area and it is very enriching! I have met so many unique young men and women – each one

inspires me a bit with dreams, desire to serve, and the future ready to unfold.

Okay, so back to what's going on here ...almost a repeat of last year at this point. Capt Edmonds and TSgt Morales are out in Colorado Springs, CO, attending the 15th Annual National Character and Leadership Symposium. The US Air Force Academy brings in motivational/inspirational speakers from all over the world, and four of our cadets were chosen to attend this year as guests of the Academy cadets. While there, they also get to see what USAFA life is like (and be glad they chose ROTC instead - ha ha!)

Planning is currently underway for an exciting event just after Spring Break. Capt Edmonds will be taking 15 cadets from KU (and sister detachment at KSU) down to Vance AFB, OK, for a 2-day base visit. The cadets should get to experience a bit of life at a pilot training base, including ejection seat training and lots of simulator "rides". We're also working to schedule cadets for the many summer programs ROTC offers, including cultural immersion in foreign countries, hand-to-hand (self-defense) skills training, base visits, and officer career shadow programs. Finally, we are just about to award several 3.5 and 3.0-year scholarships to the outstanding performers in our two under classes, but I think I will leave you something to look forward to reading about next issue. Tune in for the names of the recipients of our In-College Scholarship Program!

So besides asking you all to join me in a tiny little request for the weather to turn ... that's all I've got. As always we appreciate your support!

Thanks MOAA and take care!

Lt Col Sandra S. Leiker

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for January 4, 2008:

The Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care has proposed TRICARE fee increases that are even larger than DoD has proposed, though the panel proposes phasing them

in over four years. Check out what a typical officer family could expect to pay if the task force had its way. We've created scenarios for retirees over and under age 65 as well as currently serving members.

http://moaonline.org/ct/u1z_irK1ZzIA/

GAO: Reservists Overcharged for TRS Coverage

A December 2007 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reviewed the Defense Department's cost of providing the new TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) coverage vs. its premium-setting methodology and concluded that the premiums set by the Pentagon were significantly too high -- just as MOAA and The Military Coalition have contended since the program was enacted.

When the program was first implemented, DoD based the TRS premiums on the cost of the Blue Cross Blue Shield option of the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP) -- and promptly raised those premiums by 8% even before the first enrollees made their first payment. At the time, MOAA and the Coalition argued strongly against using federal civilian program data and against the premature premium increase. Our view was that DoD had plenty of actual cost data from past TRICARE Standard claims. For the past two years, MOAA and the Coalition have convinced Congress to bar any further premium increase pending a review of the methodology.

The GAO found that DoD based the premiums on projected program costs of \$70M for FY05 and \$442M for FY06. But DoD's actual costs proved to be \$5M in FY05 and about \$40M in FY06. Beneficiary premiums were intended to cover 28% of program costs.

GAO concluded that current premiums are 72% too high for single coverage and 45% too high for family coverage. In other words, the monthly premium for individual coverage should have been \$48 instead of \$81. The monthly family premium should have been \$175 instead of \$253.

The report says, "DoD's cost projections were too high largely because it overestimated the number of reservists who would purchase TRS as well as the associated cost per plan of providing benefits through the program."

GAO recommended -- as MOAA consistently has -- that DoD stop basing TRS premiums on Blue Cross Blue Shield data and use the actual costs of providing the TRICARE benefit. DoD concurred with the recommendations, saying the Pentagon "remains committed to improving the accuracy of TRS premium projections." But the Department made no commitment to start using actual TRICARE data by any specific date.

Needless to say, MOAA will push hard for a TRS premium reduction -- and a retroactive refund for Guard and Reserve warriors and their families -- at the first legislative opportunity.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for January 11, 2008:

More \$22 Drugs

On January 10, the DoD Beneficiary Advisory Panel (BAP) met to review DoD proposals to elevate some cardiovascular disorder, prostate, and immune disease medications to the third tier, or \$22 copay level.

In the cardiovascular disorder category, the BAP concurred with keeping Zebeta, Coreg, Toprol XL, and Lopressor at \$3 or \$9 copays.

Within the prostate medications, DoD proposed a "prior authorization" requirement which would require beneficiaries to try Uroxatral before Hytrin, Cardura, or Flomax unless they had a current prescription within the last 180 days. Even after

trying Uroxatral without success, a "medical necessity" statement from a physician is still needed for Flomax or beneficiaries would have to pay a \$22 copay. The BAP agreed to the prior authorization requirement but urged DoD to move Flomax back to a lower copay.

The BAP agreed to move Exforge, a combination drug for high blood pressure, and the contraceptive Lybrel to the third tier with a 60-day implementation period. However, the BAP did not concur with moving Vyvase, used to treat ADHD, to a \$22 copay. This is the first case where DoD has recommended third tier status when there was no clinically meaningful therapeutic disadvantage or cost advantage.

The BAP concurred with DoD's recommendations to place the generic version of the hypertension drug Norvasc back on formulary at a lower copay than the current \$22 price.

All recommendations will be submitted to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) for final decision.

Beneficiaries can use the Formulary Search Tool located on the TRICARE pharmacy web site for additional information about medications, their availability and cost at:

http://moaaonline.org/ct/3pz_irK1aXpn/

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for January 18, 2008:

MOAA Outlines GI Bill Goals at Hill Hearing

MOAA's COL Bob Norton, USA (Ret), presented the association's recommendations for upgrading the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) at a hearing before the House Veterans Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee on January 17.

Norton thanked Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AR), a member of the Subcommittee and former Chairman of the Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, for his pivotal role in winning a 10-year post-service readjustment benefit for reservists who earn MGIB benefits for service on active duty. That change will take effect later this month when the FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act is signed into law.

MOAA endorsed the seven legislative proposals under consideration at the hearing, especially bills such as H.R. 2702 that would raise MGIB reimbursement rates. Such increases are MOAA's top education priority this year. The bill also would allow 15 years (vice 10) of post-service use eligibility and extend eligibility to all entering recruits, without the current \$1,200 fee. MOAA believes strongly that GI Bill benefits should be raised to cover the average cost of a four-year public college or university. They now cover about 75% of that amount.

MOAA also believes Reservists should be entitled to full active-duty MGIB benefits if they complete a cumulative 36 months on active duty. At present, that only earns them 80% of the full benefit. Norton said the principle should be "same service, same battlefield, same benefits."

Rep. John Hall (D-NY), whose district includes West Point, asked about educational incentives to retain military academy graduates. Norton noted that the Army already has lost more than half of the West Point class of 2002 and has growing shortages of mid-grade officers. He urged making service academy graduates and ROTC scholarship recipients (who are excluded on the rationale that the military funded their undergraduate degrees) eligible for the MGIB if they agree to extend their initial service commitment.

President Bush OKs Emergency VA Spending

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret), participated in a White House conference call on January 17 during which the President announced he had approved the \$3.7 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations passed by Congress in the waning days of 2007.

Under the strange rules of appropriations, Congress authorized the extra money, over and above the President's budget request. But because it exceeded the budget authority, Congress designated it as "emergency" supplemental spending.

Under the budget rules, the President has the discretion to decide whether or not to spend that extra money. In this particular case, the extra \$3.7 billion to meet VA health care and other needs would only be available if the President sent a special budget notice to Congress by January 18.

VADM Ryan expressed MOAA's great appreciation both to Congress for recommending the much-needed additional VA funding and the President for agreeing to exercise the congressional authority.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for January 25, 2008:

No Vet Left Behind in 2009

On January 17, MOAA's Deputy Director for Government Relations, CDR Rene Campos, USN (Ret) attended a House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health hearing at which several members of the full committee and subcommittee discussed bills they had introduced that were aimed at fixing unresolved issues in the VA health care system.

A number of veterans' service organizations (VSOs) and VA Health Administration officials were also present to give their perspective on the bills, which address a broad range of issues such as emergency care, health care staffing, suicides and mental health, traumatic brain injury (TBI) care in rural areas, and care for women veterans.

For the most part, VSOs were very supportive of the bills and the work the VA has done to date. In addition to addressing broad issues of funding, staffing and in-house capabilities, they offered additional suggestions, including:

Expanding the VA Vet Center Program Involving veterans in collection of data for studies and reports Providing additional caregiver benefits and services Conducting more research for diagnosis and treatment of mild TBI Standing up more research centers to address signature wounds and other environmental issues from the current war

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), the subcommittee's ranking minority member, said, "As we consider these bills, we need to develop solutions that are principle-centered, patient-centered, and complement rather than replicate existing authorities and ongoing efforts."

MOAA looks forward to working with the subcommittee's members and staff on these important issues in the coming year, with the goal of ensuring that no veteran is left behind.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for February 1, 2008:

Guard and Reserve Commission Report.

A congressionally chartered commission reports that the National Guard and Reserves are "woefully unprepared" for homeland defense, but there's "no reasonable alternative" to

relying on them for missions at home and abroad. MOAA endorses many of the group's recommendations, but was surprised to see the commission endorse a controversial overhaul of the active duty retirement system.

Military Widows Argue Their Case

Three SBP annuitants are suing the federal government to restore their annuities and avoid the harsh offset by the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). They had their day in the US Court of Claims on January 30 (Sharp v. The United States).

A 2004 law (PL 108-183) restores DIC payments to veterans' surviving spouses who remarry after their 57th birthday. Before the law change, survivors lost DIC regardless of the age they remarried. The plaintiffs in the case contend that if a survivor is also drawing an SBP annuity, PL 108-183 should be interpreted as protecting those survivors from the reduction in SBP annuities by the amount they receive in DIC.

Defense Department lawyers countered that the widows are wrong. They say a 2004 DoD legal review of the law change in question determined that it didn't, in fact, repeal the SBP offset provision. So, DoD lawyers contend, the Defense Department has no choice and it must continue to deduct DIC payments from SBP annuities.

It's interesting to note that the DoD lawyer citing the legislative history of SBP stated that Congress has attempted to repeal the "onerous" DIC offset provision for years and has now established a Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance "to ameliorate" the offset (passed in the new FY2008 Defense Authorization Act). The judge in the case said he would take with widows' and Defense Department arguments under advisement and render a decision "in the near future."

MOAA hopes for a favorable settlement and commends these determined survivors for their tenacity in seeking equitable relief. We'll keep you posted on any further updates.

TRICARE Conference Addresses Big Issues

The Military Health System (MHS) Conference in Washington DC addressed the full range of military health care programs, accomplishments, and needs. MOAA leaders participated in two particularly interesting panel discussions.

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr., USN (Ret), was one of five distinguished panelists asked to address "the future of military health care." Ryan emphasized the need to make the budget fit requirements rather than vice-versa, expressing MOAA's support for a Defense Budget at least equal to 4% of GDP. He made the case that there's too much discussion about how much military health care costs the government, and not enough into the level of benefit that career military people earn through lengthy and arduous service.

"We need to put some principles in law such as those expressed in Sen. Frank Lautenberg's (D-NJ) Military Health Care Protection Act," (S. 604) Ryan asserted. "We need to specify in law that military retirement and health benefits are the primary offset to the adverse conditions of service; that those decades of sacrifice constitute a hefty, in-kind pre-payment of premiums; and that the percentage increase in military health fees in any given year shouldn't exceed the percentage increase in military compensation."

Ryan closed by saying that Congress and the American public understand and appreciate the sacrifices made by military people. He said it is up to leadership to ensure that the budget matches their needs.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for February 8, 2008:

MOAA Tells Congress FY09 Priorities

MOAA Government Relations Director Col. Steve Strobridge (USAF-Ret) and several other association representatives testified at a beneficiary hearing before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

This was the beneficiary representatives' major public opportunity to lay out priorities for FY2009. Chairwoman Susan Davis (D-CA) began the hearing by acknowledging the significant challenge of addressing the wide variety of important compensation and benefit needs because of constraints imposed on the subcommittee by congressional budget rules, but pledged to do the utmost within their power.

When asked to help the subcommittee focus on the most important priorities, Strobridge cited the need to reject Pentagon-proposed TRICARE increases that would inappropriately penalize millions of retired and currently serving beneficiaries, noting the plan would quintuple retail copays for generic drugs (from \$3 to \$15) that Wal-Mart offers the general public for \$4. He said the proposal ignores that career servicemembers pre-pay far larger premiums for their health coverage than other Americans through decades of service and sacrifice.

Strobridge also cited other key priorities including:

- * Improved health coverage and services for wounded warriors and their families
- * Further progress in easing financial penalties for disabled retirees and military survivors
- * Guard and Reserve retirement and health insurance upgrades
- * Manpower and pay improvements for currently serving forces

He cited a recent GAO study that confirmed Guard and Reserve personnel are overcharged by \$50-175 per month for TRICARE Reserve Select coverage, and urged the subcommittee to direct premium reductions and refunds.

Asked about warning signals of stress on currently serving forces, Strobridge said he worried that government leaders are "becoming deaf from the alarms and warning bells." While some offer reassurances that recruiting and retention goals are being met, he noted that's only being achieved by paying record bonuses and extracting incredible levels of sacrifice from troops and families that everyone in America recognizes as grossly unfair and unsustainable.

"We have to grow much larger force levels as quickly as humanly possible, regardless of how long we stay in Iraq," he said. "We have an obligation to be better prepared for the next unexpected contingency than we were for this one."

Rep. John McHugh, the subcommittee's ranking Republican, concluded the hearing by thanking Strobridge and the other witnesses for their continuous work with the subcommittee on multiple priorities. McHugh said that he and Chairwoman Davis agree on the importance of seeking additional funding from the Budget Committee to be able to

address as many as possible of the priorities identified by the witnesses.

Key Committees Scrutinize Defense Budget

Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen (USN) testified on the FY2009 defense budget this week before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees.

The majority of their testimonies and subsequent questioning focused on the magnitude of the \$515 billion budget submission. Both witnesses stressed the need to establish a floor of four percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the defense budget for the foreseeable future to prevent "disarming ourselves" as done at the end of WWI, WWII, Vietnam, and the Cold War.

Both committees expressed concern over the lack of any cost estimate for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the defense budget request. When pressed, Secretary Gates estimated the additional cost could be \$170 billion, but emphasized that the final number could be different.

Other topics of MOAA interest that were addressed in the hearing included:

TRICARE fees - several committee leaders, including Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Ike Skelton (D-MO), attacked the department's proposal to increase health care fees for retirees under age 65. The proposal closely tracks the recommendations of the DoD Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care, except that it does not propose an enrollment fee for TRICARE For Life.

Troop tour lengths - the witnesses reemphasized the need to return to 12-month deployment lengths to reduce the stress on the force. Admiral Mullen stated that the ground forces are not broken, but can break.

Family support - Admiral Mullen said the budget proposes broadening federal hiring preferences for military spouses, expanding child care benefits, and allowing service members the opportunity to transfer their Montgomery GI Bill benefit to a spouse or children.

Wounded warriors - Senator Akaka (D-HI) discussed the cooperative efforts between the VA and DoD to streamline the transition of wounded warriors and solicited Secretary Gates' thoughts of creating a permanent joint DoD/VA office. The Secretary said he's "very open to this.....the bureaucracy should be the ally of the soldier, not the adversary."

Enlisted Leaders Talk Quality-of-Life

Senior enlisted advisors from the active and reserve components held nothing back in Feb. 7 testimony at a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs hearing on quality of life issues.

The top NCOs of the Army and Marine Corps said they're very concerned about stress on the force and on families. "Families' stress could be the most brittle part of the readiness equation," said Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Carlton Kent.

All of the witnesses said military families give high ratings to the quality of military medical care, but access to health care, housing and child care still falls short of families' needs, despite recent progress. They cited frustrations that shortfalls in military medical providers reduce service by military

treatment facilities and force many to go outside the system to get care. They said aging facilities and equipment are also important morale factors.

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney McKinley said it concisely, "[The troops] should never have to choose between serving and taking care of their families."

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for February 22, 2008:

More \$22 Drugs

On February 13, the Defense Department approved shifting several medications for cardiovascular disorders, enlarged prostate, and immune diseases to the third tier, or \$22 copay level.

Chronic heart failure drugs Zebeta, Coreg, Toprol XL, and Lopressor will remain on the formulary at \$3 or \$9 copays.

Exforge, a combination drug for high blood pressure, will move to the third tier, effective April 16. The copay for Norvasc will move in the other direction, dropping from \$22 to \$9.

In addition, a new "prior authorization" requirement on prostate drugs will require beneficiaries to try Uroxatral before Hytrin, Cardura, or Flomax, effective April 16, unless they have had a prescription issued for one of the latter three medications within the last 180 days. This means those three medications will carry a \$22 copay unless TRICARE approves the doctor's request that there is a "medical necessity" to take one of them. MOAA and other beneficiary representatives have asked DoD to consider moving Flomax back to a \$9 copay.

The contraceptive Lybrel, and ADHD medication Vyvase will move to the third tier effective April 16.

Preventive Care? Let's Get Serious

Medical professionals and health system studies consistently report that a large share of the exploding growth in medical costs goes for treatment of chronic or advanced conditions - diabetes, respiratory diseases, heart attacks, cancer, etcetera.

Invariably, the main prescription for action involves extra emphasis on preventive care and early detection.

What does that mean? Strict adherence to medication and regular treatment regimens for people with chronic diseases dramatically reduces their longer-term health costs. Blood pressure and cholesterol medications dramatically reduce the risk of heart attack. Stopping smoking reduces the incidence of lung cancer, emphysema, heart attacks, and a host of other life-threatening diseases.

If you knew all these things, and it was your money TRICARE was spending in treating these conditions, what kinds of changes would you be looking for in military health programs?

Here's a hint: a recent study found that introduction of a \$10 copayment requirement significantly reduced the number of women seeking annual mammograms.

MOAA believes it's time to get serious about preventive care. For too long, the response of administration officials to rising health costs has been to stick military beneficiaries with a larger share of the bill, as if the increasing costs were their fault.

But TRICARE simply isn't built to promote healthy lifestyles. At a time when private-sector studies have shown the way to promote adherence to medication guidelines is to reduce copayments for drugs that treat chronic conditions like diabetes, the administration plan is to double or even quintuple pharmacy copayments.

Doctors say the No. 1 thing a smoker can do to reduce his or her long-term health problems is stop smoking. But TRICARE doesn't even authorize coverage for smoking cessation products and services.

The medical world encourages shingles and other vaccinations, colonoscopies, mammograms, and more for prevention and early identification of serious medical conditions, but TRICARE charges beneficiaries a copayment for those services and maybe even sticks them with the whole cost if they haven't yet met their annual deductible.

If they're really serious about reducing long-term TRICARE costs, one of the first things the Pentagon and Congress need to do is stop charging beneficiaries for seeking preventive care that serves exactly that purpose.

And if that's not done, they should think twice before claiming that rising costs are such a big concern to them.

DoD Announces New Autism Program

Active duty military parents of autistic children got good news this week when Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. S. Ward Casscells announced that a new TRICARE demonstration program to help autistic children will begin no later than March 15.

The announcement came at an autism conference at Camp Pendleton, CA hosted by Marine Corps Installations West (MCIW) and Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, and drew applause from attending parents of children with autism.

The new program will recognize a special class of tutors as TRICARE providers to implement applied behavior analysis (ABA) treatment. Finding an ABA-trained provider has been a challenge for many military parents, since their numbers are limited.

"Obviously, it's always about the kids," said Maj Gen Michael Lehnert, MCIW commanding general. "But it's also a good business decision to intervene early...[to help] these children become productive citizens as opposed to institutionalizing them."

Joy Dunlap, MOAA Deputy Director for Military Family Issues, represented MOAA at the conference. "This is a very important improvement for the affected families," she said, "and Dr. Casscells and his staff deserve credit for its rapid implementation. But there's still a great deal that needs to be done to ease financial and administrative challenges imposed on military families affected by autism and other disabling children's diseases."

While the demonstration would create more access to ABA therapy for autistic military children, parents will still have to contend with TRICARE's \$2,500 monthly cap on expenses. That limit often doesn't cover the full amount of doctor-prescribed ABA therapy. That means in order to obtain the prescribed amount, many parents will still have to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket each month. MOAA believes raising the \$2,500 monthly cap on reimbursement should be a priority.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 25 March 2008**, at the Lawrence Country Club. Dinner cost is **\$20.00** per meal. Note change of meeting date to avoid conflict with Spring Break.

The Program:

COL Steven Mains, Director of the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), Combined Arms Center, Ft. Leavenworth, will be our speaker. The title of his presentation will be "Iraq/Afghanistan Update."

Social Hour: 1800 hours

Dinner: 1900 hours

The Menu: Filet Mignon, baked potato, vegetable, rolls, salad, tea or coffee and ice cream

Send your reservation and check payable to **Jayhawk Chapter MOAA**

to arrive no later than **18 March 2008**, to:

CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper - 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

**Dinner reservations are confirmed on Monday before the dinner.
Cancellations, if necessary, should be made prior to Monday noon;
otherwise, the Lawrence Country Club will charge us for those meals.**

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim at 842-7037 or John Halladay at 843-6184.

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Yes, please make _____ reservations for me and my guests. (Spouse and other guests are welcome.)

The cost is \$20.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$_____ for meal(s).

2008 Dues (\$20.00) \$_____

Clayton L. Comfort Award program contribution \$_____
(Separate check made out to "KU Endowment")

TOTAL: \$_____

Name

Telephone

***IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW HERE _____
AND GIVE US YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER _____***

***TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA***

CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org

KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.org

JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

We are still looking for members who can/will receive the Newsletter via e-mail.

Some of you may have changed carriers and are now able where you were not before.

If you can handle it via e-mail, please let us know at

jwhalladay@sunflower.com

2008 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

2008

Tuesday 25 March MOAA meeting
(note change of meeting date)

Tuesday 20 May MOAA meeting

Tuesday 15 July MOAA meeting

Tuesday 16 September MOAA meeting

Tuesday 18 November MOAA meeting

We wish each of you a very Happy Easter



Newsletter Editor
Jayhawk Chapter, MOAA
2403 Manchester Road
Lawrence, KS 66049-1646

One Powerful Voice.®

For every officer at every stage of life and career.

Meeting Date Change:

25 March 2008