



“STILL SERVING”

THE RAF ALCONBURY RETIREES NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2016

Produced and distributed by the RAF Alconbury Retirees Activities Office (RAO)

The following articles are from the Director of the Defence Finance and Accounting Service

DFAS Director's Message to Retirees:

Summer has come to an end and December will be here before you know it! It's time to start thinking about raking leaves, cleaning your gutters, and winterizing your home. This year, as you prepare for the upcoming fall and winter seasons, add reviewing your pay account information in *myPay* to your to-do-list.

In this newsletter, the articles will focus on keeping you prepared for changes that may occur in your life and self-help options available through *myPay* and AskDFAS.

Make sure you check out the "Notify Us of a Life Changing Events" article to get a better understanding of when you need to contact DFAS. Keep in mind that failure to notify DFAS of these events can result in pay complications for you and your loved ones.

Read the "Prepare Your Loved Ones: What a Beneficiary Should Know In Advance of Your Passing" article. This information in this article will teach you about the ins and outs of AOP (Arrears of Pay).

Another Key article you should read is "Warning! What Could Happen If You Don't Update Your Pay Records?" It gives you a sense of what could happen if you do not audit and update your account or educate your beneficiaries so they understand their role in claiming and managing their benefits.

Lastly, tax season is around the corner so read the "Get Ready for Tax Season! Make sure your myPay Account is Active" article. This will ensure you have access to your 1099-R as soon as it becomes available. I hope you find the information in this issue useful and stay tuned for our next edition. Page updated September 23, 2016

New Feature! Use AskDFAS to Update Your Mailing Address:

Don't have access to *myPay* and need to change your mailing address? Use AskDFAS! There is a new, easy way using AskDFAS to help you update your information.

This is a fast and convenient way to make sure your mailing address is correct before the end of the year. This will help you receive your tax documents and other important account information in a timely manner.

Don't wait until January or February to find out that your 1099-R was mailed to a wrong address. This could result in you having to go through the 1099-R reissue process.

Use this opportunity to update your mailing address. Simply fill out the required information in the form and answer the identity verification questions to submit your mailing address update.

Click the link below and follow these steps:

<https://corpweb1.dfas.mil/askDFAS/ticketInput.action?subCategoryID=13824>

Agree to the DoD consent pop up

Provide your first and last name

Enter your email address

Enter a passcode to gain future access to your ticket

Enter your social security number

Enter your new mailing address

Answer all four identity questions “correctly”

Enter prior zip code

Click “submit” to send your request to a customer service representative

Affordable Care Act (Go Paperless!)

Affordable Care Act (Go Paperless!): Defence Finance and Accounting Service issues IRS Forms 1095-B (for military retirees) and 1095-C (for military members and federal civilian employees) to the IRS and each employee to report the previous tax year's health care coverage information.

How will you receive your 1095-B or 1095-C Paper Copy?

Your 1095-B or 1095-C will be mailed by DFAS, unless you opt in to receive these forms electronically via *myPay*. Traditional mail delays you getting these important tax form

but *myPay* provides instant access to your forms and it is the most secure and convenient way to access these documents.

Go Paperless:

Protecting the environment is important to us here at DFAS, so help us save a tree by logging on to your *myPay* account and selecting “Turn On/Off Hard Copy IRS form 1095” to get electronic mail distribution. With *myPay*, you can easily print these forms in the comfort of your home versus waiting 7-10 days to receive your forms by mail.

If you do not have a *myPay* account, or need help accessing *myPay*, check out the YouTube videos below:

How To: Set Up a New *myPay* Account

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6ia4D3z0XI&index=5&list=PLhx_8nsfXqVh2y-LOFIVcvcPQuztOXjYy

How To Change Your *myPay* Password:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yc_JfjghC8Q&index=1&list=PLhx_8nsfXqVh2y-LOFIVcvcPQuztOXjYy

For more information on the Affordable Care Act check out:

http://www.dfas.mil/taxes/aca.htmlhttp://www.dfas.mil/taxes/aca/aca_faq0.html

Notify DFAS of Life Changing Events

As you move through your retirement years, ensure you keep us informed whenever anything changes that could affect your retired pay. You should make sure your contact information and check payment information in *myPay* are always current. If you experience a life changing event, make sure you contact us directly at Retired and Annuitant Pay to let us know.

The following are examples of life-changing events and the parentheses describe how these events could impact your account:

Marriage (Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), arrears of pay beneficiary, federal income tax)

Divorce (SBP, arrears of pay beneficiary, federal income tax)

Death of a spouse (SBP, arrears of pay beneficiary, federal income tax)

Birth of a child (SBP, arrears of pay beneficiary, federal income tax)

Moving to a new place of residence, even if just for the winter months (general correspondence delivery, 1099-R and retiree account statement mailing, state income tax withholding)

Opening, changing or closing a bank account (net pay and allotment direct deposit)

Changing your e-mail address stored in *myPay* (*myPay* account change notifications, retiree newsletters, *myPay* notifications for 1099-R and retiree account statement availability)

Paying off and/or closing an insurance policy (net pay and allotment direct deposit)

If you keep your information current in *myPay* and submit the appropriate paperwork when a life changing event occurs, you will help us improve the service we provide to you and your loved ones. If you report these events, your beneficiaries will have fewer issues and concerns to resolve at the time of your death.

Please remember to report life changing events to our mailing address:

Defence Finance and Accounting Service

U.S. Military Retired Pay

P.O. Box 7130

London, KY 40742-7130

You can also report life changing events by using our FAX number: 800-469-6559, or by calling our Customer Care Center: 800-321-1080

<http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/newsevents/newsletter/benfyshknow.html> 1/2

Prepare Your Loved Ones: What a Beneficiary Should Know In Advance of Your Passing: Sometimes the most difficult conversations to have are the most important, like helping your loved ones be prepared for when you die. Talking to your family about this topic beforehand is a way to show that you care, and it will help to ease the financial burdens they may face.

Military retirees can have beneficiaries for their arrears of pay (AOP). This article is intended to help you prepare your AOP beneficiary to file a claim when the time comes.

First, make sure you understand what an (AOP) beneficiary is and the nature of the benefit to which they are entitled. Find more information on this benefit here.

<http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/provide/aop.html>)

Second, tell your beneficiaries who they are! Hopefully, you've designated your beneficiaries for any (AOP) that may be due. When no beneficiary is named, the payment is made to the highest person in what is known as the "Order of Precedence." The Order or Precedence is the federally mandated order of inheritance that applies to legacies without a designated beneficiary. Find more information on "Order of Precedence" here:

<http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/provide/aop/aoporder.html>)

Please keep in mind that it can take many months to locate your survivors, identify who comes highest in the Order of Precedence and then make the payment. That's why having a current, correct and complete beneficiary designation on file is important to prevent delays or errors in your arrears payments. Designating a sole beneficiary in your will does not

automatically make that person your AOP beneficiary. AOP determination is based exclusively on the AOP beneficiary election in your retired pay account. To review your current arrears of pay beneficiaries and to make changes, visit the Beneficiaries for Arrears link once you've signed in to your myPay account. For more detailed instructions on designating an Arrears of Pay beneficiary on myPay (retired military /newsevents/newsletter/mngaopenfy.html), review the article in this issue on this subject.

Third, let your beneficiary know that sometimes money that has already been deposited into your checking account needs to be returned to us. Military retired pay is only payable for as long as you are alive. Entitlement to your military retirement ends when you die. Most banks will automatically deduct any overpaid funds without warning, which can be troublesome if you share a joint account.

Fourth, tell your beneficiaries what documents they will need to send in to make their claim. One copy of the death certificate that includes the manner of death needs to be sent to us. Also, each beneficiary should complete a Claim for Unpaid Compensation (SF 1174). It's a great idea to go over this claim form with your beneficiaries to make sure they will have all of the information they need to fill it out. If you want a more detailed explanation of this process, check out the instructions on our website at (<http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/survivors/Retireedeath.html>)

Fifth, let your beneficiaries know that sometimes there is no money due. Each situation is different. It depends how up to date the account was kept. You can make sure your account is in good standing by performing a yearly audit (retiredmilitary/newsevents//newsletter/performannualaudret.html).

Sixth, when an arrears payment is made, there is a statement on the check that reads, "Retired Pay Payable only during life of Payee." Please do not let this statement alarm your beneficiaries. As long as the beneficiary's name is accurate on the check, the check can be cashed.

We want to take the best care of your loved ones when you die. You can help us by having a conversation with them to know what to expect. We know talking about it might be difficult, but hopefully this checklist gives you an idea of the things to say. Don't put it off. Have a conversation about it with your loved ones today.

Warning! What Could Happen If You Don't Update Your Pay Records? When you experience a life changing event such as death, birth, marriage, or divorce it can have an impact on your pay account. DFAS might be the furthest thing from your mind during these times, but don't forget that you have to inform us of changes so we can adjust your account accordingly.

The scenarios below are real life situations that have affected member's pay accounts. You can avoid being in these situations by keeping your account up to date. Check out the "Audit

Your Account" article at: <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/newsevents/newsletter/Audit-Your-Account.html>

Scenario 1: If you were not married upon retirement, then you will not have a beneficiary on file for the SBP (Survivor Benefit Plan). If you then marry after retirement, you have a one year window from the date of your marriage to inform DFAS of your intent to cover your new spouse with SBP. If you do not inform DFAS of your marriage and your intent to provide SBP coverage for your new spouse within a one year time frame, your request will be denied. If you contact DFAS at any time after the one year notification window has closed, DFAS will be required to deny your application for coverage for your spouse.

Scenario 2: At the time of your retirement, you are required to designate a beneficiary for any pay due at the time of your death (this is known as your Arrears of Pay, or AOP Beneficiary Designation). If you designated the spouse you had at the time of your retirement as your AOP Beneficiary, then divorced that spouse and never updated your AOP beneficiary designation, your former spouse will receive your arrears of pay. Even if you have a new spouse at that time of your death, your new spouse will not receive your AOP unless they have been designated as beneficiary for the payment and this designation has been filed with DFAS.

Scenario 3: If you elect to have SBP spouse coverage at the time of your retirement, but your marriage is later terminated due to death or divorce, you should inform DFAS of this change. If you do, and later remarry but forget to inform us of your remarriage, we will not know to restart your coverage and begin deducting any premiums that may be due. If you then die, your current spouse will be due SBP if you were married for at least a full year at the time of your death. However, since no SBP premiums will have been paid, your spouse at the time of your death will not receive annuity payments until the premium debt has been recouped. This may result in a hardship for your spouse during an already difficult adjustment period.

Scenario 4: If you were married at the time of your retirement and elected SBP coverage for your spouse, then divorced and remarried several times during your lifetime, your spouse at the time of your death will face many challenges. Because you elected SBP upon retirement, your spouse at the time of your death will be entitled to an annuity, as long as you were married for at least one year. However, since you did not keep your records updated with DFAS, your spouse at the time of your death will need to provide DFAS with death certificates and/or divorce decrees for all your previous spouses before the SBP annuity can be paid. This could create a significant hardship and considerable delay for your ultimate beneficiary.

DFAS Retired and Annuitant (R&A) Pay DFAS R&A Pay is primarily a payroll office. We establish and maintain military retired pay, annuity accounts, and issue monthly payments to both military retirees and their eligible survivors, including the following:

Regular and Reserve Retirement payments

Temporary and Permanent Disability Retirement payments

Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay

Combat Related Special Compensation payments

Survivor Benefit Plan

Related Link:

[Contact DFAS R&A Pay](#)

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides services to former members of the military, not just those who are retired from the military.

If you are disabled, the VA establishes your level of disability compensation, and handles any changes or updates. These include:

Additional (tax-free) benefit for veterans injured while in the service

Ratings for service-connected disability codes

Ratings for Special Monthly Compensation

Individual Unemployment ratings

Re-rating you if you feel your disability has increased

The VA also administers pensions, educational programs, home loans, life insurance, vocational rehabilitation, survivors' benefits, medical benefits and burial benefits.

If you have questions or concerns about any of these topics, please contact the VA at 800-827-1000.

Branches of The Service [Army](#), [Navy](#), [Marine Corps](#) and [Air Force](#) assist in the transition from active duty to retired life and make determinations for some entitlement programs; such as Combat-Related Special Compensation.

The branches issue your retirement orders. Remember, you **MUST** have retirement orders from your branch of service before we can establish your military retired pay account.

Please contact your Branch of Service for assistance with the following items:

CRSC eligibility determinations

Applying for retirement

Retirement order

(Information from DFAS Director Newsletter 11/11/2016)

VA and Social Security Partner to Speed Up Disability Decisions for Veterans

WASHINGTON — the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) launched a new Health IT initiative that enables VA to share medical records electronically with social security disability processors. This secure process will save time and money resulting in better service for Veterans and dependents who apply for social security disability benefits. The SSA requests nearly 15 million medical records from health care organizations yearly to make medical decisions on about three million disability claims. For decades, SSA obtained medical records through a manual process. This new national initiative puts in place an automated process to obtain Veterans' medical records entirely electronically.

“VA's partnership with Social Security will ultimately improve the quality of life for Veterans and their dependents by enabling Veterans to share their health information within a safe and secure health-related consumer application,” said Dr. David Shulkin, VA's Under Secretary for Health.

The joint venture is expected to significantly speed up social security disability decisions, utilizing VA's VLER Health Exchange under the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) Program. The VLER Health Exchange gives VA and participating community providers the ability to retrieve Veterans' health information from each other for the purpose of treatment. Currently, VLER Health Exchange shares health data with over 79 community health care partners, representing 775 Hospitals, 427 Federally Qualified Health Centers, 142 Nursing Homes, 8441 Pharmacies and over 11,969 Clinics. The SSA now has access for the purpose of processing benefits for Veterans and their dependents.

“This SSA-VA partnership is another example of VA's leadership in interoperability efforts among federal partners,” said VA Secretary, Robert McDonald. “Increasing federal partnerships to improve operation and resource coordination across agencies is among VA's 12 Breakthrough Priorities for 2016.” VA has partnership agreements with Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Defence (DOD), Department of Treasury (DOT) among many others. To learn more about VA health care visit: www.va.gov/health.

Social Security Announces Small 2016/2017 COLA Rise

Social Security Recipients will see a small, 0.3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase based on the percentage increase of Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers of the third quarter of this year. The 0.3% cost of living adjustment equals an average of \$4.00 monthly benefit increase for the average retiree, or approximately \$48.00 per year. We had no increase for last year. COLA impacts benefits for about 59 million Social Security recipients, 1.96 million military retirees and 4 million disabled

veterans. Military retirees, VA rates for compensation and pensions for disabled veterans and surviving families will be effective, December 2016 and payable in January 2017. Social Security Benefits will take effect on 1 December 2016 and will be payable in January 2017. Federal Social Security Insurance payment levels will be effective for payments made for January 2017.

Federal Retirees Face Increases in Premiums for Medicare Part B

Many federal retirees with Medicare Part B coverage will have to pay 10 percent more in premiums beginning next year, according to the latest data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. CMS just announced the new premium and deductible rates for Medicare Part B, which covers physician services and outpatient hospital services, among other things. For 70 percent of beneficiaries, monthly premiums will increase roughly \$4 in 2017, from \$104.90 to \$109. But for the remaining 30 percent – a group that includes hundreds of thousands of retired federal employees who are covered under the Civil Service Retirement System – the monthly premiums will rise about \$12 in 2017, from \$121.80 to \$134. National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association President Richard Thissen said that the combination of a low COLA for retirees and the Medicare Part B premium increases means that “many federal retirees will see a *decrease* [emphasis in original] in their federal annuities next year, diminishing their purchasing power and quality of life.”

For USA-Bound Retirees

Are you a veteran looking for the best cities in America to live in when it comes to housing affordability and proximity to VA health care facilities? All of them are out West, according to a new report from Wallet Hub, a personal finance website. Scottsdale, Arizona is the number-one choice. Cities that are considered favorable to veterans included Laredo, Texas; Irvine, Calif; Plano, Texas; Austin, Texas. The report compares 100 of the most populated US cities across 21 metrics, including availability of jobs, poverty rates among the vet population, and quality of life.

Where are the worst cities to live, according to Wallet Hub? Detroit, Mich; Newark, NJ; Cleveland, Ohio; Memphis, Tenn; and Boston, Mass, among others.

Thrift Savings Planning Tool

As a retired member of the uniform services who has contributed to the Federal Government’s Thrift Savings Plan Retirement fund, you have the option of choosing from several different pay out options: TSP Monthly Payments, Mixed Withdrawals, Single Life

Annuity, Joint Life Annuity with Spouse or Joint Life Annuity with Other Survivor. Your TSP income is a supplement to your military retired pay.

If you are interested in comparing all of the monthly income options, you can use the handy Retirement Income Calculator which can be found at:

<https://www.tsp.gov/PlanningTools/Calculators/MonthlyPayCalc.html>

You will also find a handy Feature Comparison Chart, which compares monthly pay outs with a life annuity payment, allowing you to determine which option is best suited to your particular financial needs.

If you were covered by the Civil Service Retirement System your TSP retirement income is a supplement to your CCRS annuity. If you were covered by Federal Employee Retirement System, your TSP is one part of a three part retirement package that also includes your FERS basic annuity as well as Social Security.

Mental Healthcare Cheaper and More Available

The cost of mental health care coverage is going down for many TRICARE beneficiaries at the same time access to more treatment is expanding, according to the military health agency. TRICARE retirees, as well as non-active duty dependents and survivors, generally will pay roughly half the co-payment for outpatient mental health care and substance abuse treatment – from \$25 to \$12 per visit – effective Oct. 3, 2016. “Co-pays and cost-shares for inpatient mental health services will also be the same as for inpatient medical/surgical care,” said a press release. If beneficiaries are overcharged by TRICARE providers who are unaware of the changes, TRICARE will correct those claims retroactive to Oct. 3, 2016.

“We are working as quickly as possible to implement these sweeping changes to the program over the next several months,” said Dr. Patricia Moseley, senior policy analyst for military child and family behavioral health at DHA.

In 2014, TRICARE announced that enrollees in the military’s health care system can choose between independent TRICARE-certified mental health counselors (TCMHC) or supervised mental health counselors (SMHC).

SMHCs provide mental health care under the referral and supervision of TRICARE doctors. RAF Lakenheath now has a Behavioral Consultant on board for anyone seeking help. To make an appointment, phone the central appointment line at 01638 5282010 and ask to make an appointment with Dr. Hough.

TRICARE Self-Referral for Retirees

Did you know that, as a retiree, covered by TRICARE Standard, you are able to refer yourself, on MOST occasions, to a specialist doctor for appointments and consultations, according to Julie Goll, TRICARE Overseas Beneficiary Representative at RAF Lakenheath? An exception to this rule is, that, in order to continue with mental health care beyond the eighth visit, a retiree must first contact International SOS (not the clinic provider).

Unlike Active Duty members of the uniformed services, retired military members do not need to see a military doctor for a referral to an off-base provider.

You are, however, still responsible for your 25% TRICARE Co-Pay, and, depending on the specialist/provider that you see, you may be required to pay 100% of the cost of the visit up front. You will then have to file your claim with TRICARE for your reimbursement of 75%. The other 25% is your Co-pay, which you are not eligible to claim back. To file a claim, you will need the itemized bill from the provider, any receipts from payment made, and the TRICARE claim form.

You will likely find that more and more off-base providers are moving towards 100% payment when you show up for your appointment, so if you choose to initiate a self-referral, be prepared for that possibility!

For any questions or concerns Please contact Julie (RAF Lakenheath TRICARE office) at 01638 528697.

myPay Password Rules

Access to your **myPay** account is protected by your login credentials (login name and password) and your online habits. **myPay** is protected by state-of-the-art security and round-the-clock monitoring. But security of your account depends on you!

The current **myPay** password requirements DoD security rules. Your password must:

- Be 9 to 30 character's in length
- Contain at least one UPPERCASE letter
- Contain at least on lowercase letter
- Contain at least one number (0-9)
- NOT include any spaces
- Contain at least one of the following special characters:

(pound or number sign)

@ (as sign)

\$ (dollar sign)

= (equal sign)

- + (plus sign)
- % (percent sign)
- ^ (caret)
- ! (exclamation)
- (asterisk)
- _ (underline/underscore)

Your password **expires every 150 days**. You will receive an email about 10 days before your password expires to make sure you to update your password and avoid any delays when you need to access your account. Make sure the **email address** listed in your profile is current and complete the **security questions** than help confirm your identify so you can update online.

RAF Alconbury Pass and ID Has New Operating Hours

RAF Alconbury Pass and ID section have new operating hours for ID card issue. The hours of operation are as follows:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
 Tuesday and Thursday.....12:00 PM to 5:00 PM
 Closed on Holidays and Family Days

RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth 2016 Holiday Mailing Deadlines

Parcel Post and Space Available Mail (SAM)	25 Nov 2016
Priority and First Class letters/cards	9 Dec 2016
Express Mail Military Service	16 Dec 2016

Notes From The RAO Director:

The New Year is just around the corner. Things to start thinking about should include, collecting the required documents for the filing of your Income Tax Returns. Do it as soon as you can, because the later you file, the greater the chance of someone else filing a fraudulent return your name. This is based on fact as many people filing later are finding that a fraudster has beat them to the refund. If you need help for basic mail in tax returns, call our office at 01480843364 and we will give you an appointment. We will use our experience to assist you. Appointments will give us the opportunity to prepare for you and make a quicker experience for you. If you have a complicated tax year, there are local tax experts willing to help for a fair price. In this case call us for a list of preparers in our area. There are also two other U.S. Treasury Reports, Form 8938, Statement of Specified Foreign Financial Assets and the FinCEN Form 114, Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts

(FBAR), that a U.S. citizen living in the UK or other foreign country, with foreign bank accounts may be required to file.

Winter is here and all that comes with it will be arriving soon. Are you ready? Have you prepared for the season? How is your car? Good tires? Winter serviced with proper antifreeze, cold weather window wash, good windshield wipers, window scrapers, powerful battery, tuned up engine, emergency kit, blanket, and flashlight? All these things help you drive and be prepared for cold weather.

It is the same way with your home. Have you topped up your oil tank, or bottled gas? Has your boiler been serviced and your chimney cleaned? Checked your windows for air leaks? Have a bucket of sand or salt for slippery, icy walkways? How about your plan to cope if the electricity goes out or the gas for heating goes off? What will you do to keep warm, to eat or drink? Do you have a waterproof pair of winter boots, raincoat, gloves and a warm hat? Be prepared and it probably won't happen, but be unprepared and face the peril of the worst winter in history. I hope that everyone out there has a safe, and sound winter and avoid the colds. Don't forget your flu shots!

From all of us here in the Retirees Activities Office, Bernie, Nancy, Scott, Larry and Rex, all wish you a very warm and wonderful Christmas and Holiday Season and may the New Year bring health, wealth and happiness to each of us.

Did You Ever Wonder

If Fed Ex and UPS merged if they would call it Fed UP?

If Lipton Tea employees ever get a Coffee break?

What color hair does a bald man put on his driver's license?

Why they post photos of criminals in the Post Office rather than putting the photos on stamps and let the mail carriers look for them while delivering the mail?

What happened to Preparation A through G?

If you put the words 'THE' and 'IRS' together, why does it spell 'THEIRS'?

Borrowed from the Guam June-July RAO Newsletter.

To Contact the RAO: 423 ABG/RAO, Unit 5623, RAF Alconbury, Huntingdon, Cambs., PE28 4DE, or at 423 ABG, RAO, Unit 5623, APO AE, 09470-5623, or send your Emails to: rao@alconbury.af.mil or phone 01480-843364 or DSN 268-3364. Open Tuesdays and Fridays 1030-1430 Hours

Note to all U.K. Retirees and Spouses

If you would like this Newsletter sent to your e-mail address or to your PSC Box number please call, email or write to us or stop by and see us, and give us your email or military address. If you receive this newsletter via British Post, it would be much appreciated if you could provide our office with 4 second class UK stamps each year. Stamps are expensive and our resources are very thin at the moment. If you can help, please do. Thank you.