



SANTA BARBARA CHAPTER
Of The
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA
(MOAA)



Nov 2007

MOAA Santa Barbara Officers: **President: Ron Stronach**
1st Vice President: Steve Keller **2nd Vice President: Charley Georgi**
Treasurer: Michael Kwan **Secretary:**
Reservation Chair: Virginia Richardson
 Contact us at: moaasb@yahoo.com

The Chapter's next Board Meeting is 17 Nov (Saturday) at 1030 at 608 Cowles Rd in Montecito.
 Board members please mark your calendars and plan on attending.

MOAA Monthly Luncheon Meeting:

11:30 TUESDAY 13 Nov 07

Harry's Plaza Café
(3313-B State Street at the intersection of
State and Las Positas)
\$13

Please mark your calendar. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month, beginning with a short social period followed by lunch at noon. The price remains a modest \$13, including tax and gratuities. Choose between two luncheon selections and a choice of coffee, tea or soda along with Harry's fresh bread with salsa. Join us!

Please call Virginia Richardson at
963-2207 to reserve your spot.

November's Luncheon Speaker:

Our speaker this month is COL Robert Colbern, USA (Ret), Dental Corps. He is also the Cal-MOAA area director for our chapter, Ventura, Central Coast (San Luis Obispo), and Lompoc/Santa Maria (Vandenberg). He was born in Whittier and grew up there until his family moved to Oxnard. A dentist, he graduated from USC and dental school at Northwestern as well as the Army Command and General Staff College. He practiced in Oxnard from 1963 to 1993. An instrument rated pilot, he is an avid military historian and is going to enlighten us on the life of another local, Gen George Patton, who grew up in Pasadena until he went to VMI and then to West Point and on to military fame in World War II. We hope you'll put the date on your calendar and we look forward to seeing you there.

October's Luncheon Recap:

Our guest speaker was 35th District Assemblyman Pedro Nava, who proved to be an engaging speaker. He talked about legislation affecting the military community in California. For example, he told us that California is the only state in the Union that does not offer tuition assistance to active duty, reserve or guard members. He also answered many questions from attendees.



Assemblyman Nava speaking to the attendees



Chapter President Ron Stronach and Assemblyman Nava

Announcements

Future Chapter Dinner?

For February your Board is considering a dinner function, perhaps on a Friday night, instead of our usual luncheon. We want to ensure that those members who are unable to attend the monthly luncheon during the week will have an opportunity to interact with other members by hosting a function at a different time and day. Is this something that would work for you or appeal to you? Are you unable to attend the luncheons because of work, schedule conflicts, etc.? Email us at MOAASB@YAHOO.COM or tell a Board member and let us know.

Retired Member Appreciation Day

Vandenberg AFB will host this event at the Pacific Coast Club. The event begins at 0800 followed by the posting of colors, national anthem, POW/MIA Ceremony and the invo-

cation and welcome from Col Steve Tanous, Commander of the 30th Space Wing. The guest speaker is CDR Katherine Tracy, USNR, Deputy Director, Benefits Information Department, MOAA. Following her 0900 presentation, there will be other informational briefings and lunch (tickets for lunch can be purchased at registration that morning). Parking is free at the parade field and the base will provide a shuttle between parking and the club. The 30th Medical Group will be available for information and based on my experience at these meetings, the Military Personnel Flight will be there to help with upgrading your DEERS data.

Scholarship Committee?

We need volunteers to create a chapter Scholarship Committee. The goal would be to raise funds for to provide a scholarship to a deserving UCSB ROTC Cadet. Presenting a scholarship would be tangible proof of our support of the Army ROTC program at UCSB. Please consider taking a little time to help a worthy cause. Contact a Board member if you'd like to help.

Updates from MOAA:

Selected Legislative Goals for 2007

Keep up with what MOAA is doing to fight for the causes you care about most. The following issues, which are sorted into major categories, are MOAA's major legislative goals for 2007.

Health Care Issues

- Fully fund the Defense Health Program
- Protect against health benefit cuts and avoid disproportional cost-shifting to beneficiaries
- Upgrade TRICARE to attract more providers and improve TRICARE Standard (expedite claims, reduce administrative burdens for providers and beneficiaries)
- Fix Medicare/TRICARE payment rate formula to promote provider participation
- Ensure a broad TRICARE pharmacy formulary
- Improve seamless transition between the Defense and VA health care / benefits systems
- Provide full funding for veterans enrolled in the VA health care system

Retirement/Survivor Issues

- Preserve full-inflation cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs)
- Eliminate the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) deduction from SBP
- Authorize full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation, to include medical retirees with less than 20 years' service
- Accelerate effective date (currently 10/1/08) for 30-year paid-up SBP coverage
- Restore VA survivor annuities for qualifying widows who remarry after age 55
- Oppose changes in military retirement benefits that are inconsistent with service career sacrifices
- Expand permanent ID card eligibility for elderly / disabled beneficiaries
- Reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouse Protection Act (USFSPA)
- Authorize full-month final retired pay to survivors

Active / Reserve Force Issues

- Increase active duty, Guard and Reserve force sizes (end

strength) to match mission

- Restore full military pay comparability with private sector
- Upgrade Guard/Reserve retirement and compensation to reflect increased service-imposed sacrifices
- Strengthen financial, legal, reemployment protections for mobilized Guard-Reserve force
- Protect funding for commissary, dependent schools and other military benefits
- Raise relocation reimbursements to cover members' costs for government-directed moves
- Protect members against travel credit card interest/credit risks for late government payments
- Upgrade GI Bill benefits to cover 4-year public college costs
- Restore equitable Guard - Reserve GI Bill benefits and authorize equal post-service eligibility

Veterans, Family, Other Issues

- Improve quality, efficiency, and timeliness of VA claims-processing system
- Authorize pre-tax payment of health, dental and long-term care premiums
- Authorize equal treatment of currently serving families for pre-tax health / dependent care programs
- Provide incentives for civilian and government employers and contractors to hire military spouses.
- Authorize long-term mental counseling and support services for survivors and families of severely injured
- Win congressional approval of Flag anti-desecration amendment
- Repeal taxability of up to 85% of Social Security annuity
- Reduce Social Security penalties for certain civil service and state retirees/survivors
- Protect against disproportional Social Security / Medicare penalties for any population segment

War Funding Deserves Priority

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) joined President Bush at an Oct. 22 meeting in the Oval Office on War Supplemental funding. The meeting included leaders of several military and veterans' groups, the family of a fallen Marine, and military personnel who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan. After briefing the group on the situation in Iraq and the reasons for the supplemental, President Bush issued a statement urging Congress to provide \$42.2 billion in supplemental funding for the war in Iraq.

MOAA believes it's vitally important to provide the resources needed to ensure the safety and success of our deployed forces. "As I saw first hand during my recent trip to Iraq, General Petraeus and our troops are doing what it takes to get the job done," said Ryan. "Now, our government, both the Administration and the Congress, need to work together to ensure our troops promptly get the funding needed to carry out their mission."

MOAA Testifies on Disability Changes

On October 17, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee convened a special hearing to consider inputs from MOAA and a number of other groups on proposals to improve health care, compensation and rehabilitation benefits for disabled members and their families, with particular emphasis on problems

encountered by those wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. Witnesses included former Sen. Bob Dole and former Clinton cabinet member Donna Shalala, who co-chaired the President's Commission on Wounded Warriors; Independent Review Group Co-chairman (and former Army and VA Secretary) Togo West; Veterans Disability Benefits Commission Chairman LTG James Terry Scott (USA-Ret); and MOAA Government Relations Director Col. Steve Strobbridge (USAF-Ret). In sorting through the various recommendations of the review panels, Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Ranking Minority Member Richard Burr (R-NC) searched for common themes.

In particular, they asked every group whether there should be a distinction between benefits for combat-wounded members and those disabled by other causes. The consensus was that there should not be. "When you join the military, you're preparing for combat," said Dole. "Once you're a paraplegic, the impact on your life is the same whether your injury was caused by a bullet, a military vehicle accident, or a slip on an icy runway," said Strobbridge. Another point of consensus was that the VA should be the single agency assigning disability percentages. Strobbridge said MOAA supports the pilot program concept scheduled for implementation next month by DoD and VA, under which the Defense Department will determine what conditions render a service member unfit for continued duty, the VA will assign disability ratings for all service-connected disabilities, and DoD will accept the VA ratings in establishing the military disability retirement percentage.

MOAA has concerns about a new administration proposal that would abolish the military disability retirement system and leave determinations of health care eligibility for most service-disabled members and families to the discretion of the Secretary of Defense. While we strongly support guaranteeing receipt of service-earned retired pay in addition to VA disability compensation (for which we applaud the administration's plan), outright elimination of the military disability retirement system has the potential to reduce compensation for certain severely disabled mid-grade officers by as much as \$1,000 a month, and potentially even more for certain Guard and Reserve officers. (Congress is unlikely to consider those proposals before next year.)

Strobbridge also emphasized the need to establish a joint DoD/VA seamless transition office, with full-time staff whose specific mission is to oversee implementation and maintenance of initiatives such as a joint electronic medical record and electronic separation document. "This is too important to be someone's part-time job," he said. "We have to build a structure of responsibility that won't disappear when certain key officials or their bosses leave."

Chairman Akaka and Senator Burr expressed their commitment to doing the right thing by wounded warriors and all disabled service members. Akaka noted that many of the needed initiatives would be addressed in the defense bill already passed by the Senate. Burr, in particular, expressed a sense of urgency about completing needed legislative and policy changes. "America is the most powerful nation in the world," he said, "and I don't see why it should take us years to get these important things fixed."

Pentagon Sends Fire Aid to California

The Pentagon sent troops, firefighting equipment and humani-

tarian supplies to help California authorities overwhelmed by spreading wildfires and hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes. Defense Department officials laid out a plan early in the week for what has already been provided - and more, but more help has not yet been requested from the state, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Paul McHale said. For instance, a battalion of Marines - some 550 people - has been alerted and is training for firefighting duties, if needed.

"Whatever it takes to deal with this fire and its aftermath, we're prepared to stand with the citizens of California and the governor to provide that," Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, said at a Pentagon press conference with McHale. Both said the idea is to be forward-leaning, particularly in light of Hurricane Katrina in 2003, when federal response was woefully slow. "One of the lessons that we, as a nation, learned is that in a crisis, you don't wait to be asked; you lean forward, you prepare your capabilities and you ask, very pointedly, 'How can I help?'," said McHale, who noted that other agencies, not the Pentagon, were criticized for the hurricane response. "And that's a different mindset. It's a sense of urgency."

Asked if the commitment of more than 170,000 U.S. troops in Iraq will affect what the military can send to the domestic emergency, McHale said: "I can tell you unequivocally that the ongoing war-fighting activities ... have had no negative effect at all (on) our ability to provide sufficient forces to assist civilian authorities in fighting the wildfires.... There is no manpower shortage." McHale listed the following things the Pentagon is providing or has available, if asked:

- About 100 defense employees, including active duty military personnel and civilians, are fighting fires. That's 12 firefighting teams - mostly civilian - and their 12 fire engines.
- Some 1,500 Army National Guard and Air National Guardsmen are helping firefighters - not on the fire lines, but doing other tasks to free up the firefighters.
- 550 Marine Corps personnel at Camp Pendleton are preparing for possible firefighting duty.
- Another 17,301 National Guardsmen are available in California, if needed.
- Six C-130 aircraft fitted with firefighting systems are being sent to Point Mugu, two from the Air Force Reserve at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs and four from the Air National Guard in Wyoming and North Carolina. They were to arrive in California in time to begin flying missions Wednesday morning.
- 11 Pentagon helicopters equipped with water buckets are available to help in fire suppression.
- Local bases, under emergency assistance authority, provided some 10,000 cots to local evacuation sites.

There are about 300,000 uniformed and civilian defense employees and dependents living in the San Diego area. Fourteen hundred Navy personnel and family members have been evacuated to three U.S. Navy installations at Coronado, El Centro and San Diego - something officials said would help make room at military bases for more civilian evacuees.



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(MOAA)
Santa Barbara Chapter
P.O. Box 3001
Santa Barbara, CA 93130



Santa Barbara Chapter

**Call to sign up for this month's luncheon now –
and don't forget to put it on your calendar!**

**MOAA Membership Application
Santa Barbara Chapter**

Date: _____ Grade: _____

Full Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Branch of Service: _____

Status: Retired Regular Former Officer
 Active Duty Reserve Widow (er)*
* Fill-in own name, address, etc.
Show deceased spouse's rank and service.

Mailing Address: _____
(Number and street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

Phone: _____ email address: _____

Birthdate: _____ Spouse's Name: _____

I am ___ / am not ___ a member of MOAA; National MOAA # (if known): _____

Signature: _____ Interested in holding an office in the Chapter? _____
Dues: \$20.00 for chapter members and \$5.00 for spouses
