A publication of the 502nd Air Base Wing – Joint Base San Antonio

WINGSPREAD

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH

No. 9 • MARCH 4, 2016

From left: Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, Texas Sen. Donna Campbell and Lt. Col. Emil Bliss, 12th Flying Training Wing Community Initiatives director, discuss encroachment issues at an air traffic control tower Feb. 24 at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

Texas state legislators visit 12th FTW

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Photo by Joel Martinez

Photo by Johnny Saldivar

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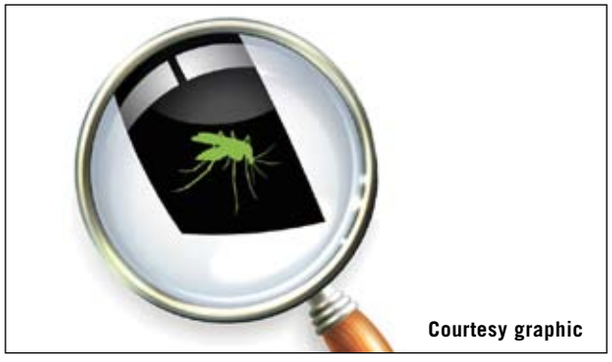

Courtesy graphic

Know the facts about Zika virus, pages 8-9

Courtesy graphic

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COMMENTARY

You don't need cell phone to be distracted driver

By John McLaughlin
502nd Air Base Wing Safety Office
Traffic Safety Program manager

"In 2014, more than 3,500 people died on Texas roads. There were 100,825 traffic crashes during this time and 468 of the fatalities have been attributed to distracted driving. The big picture here is that nothing should be more important, while behind the wheel, than driving."

Distracted driving has become the number one cause of fatal car accidents and pedestrian deaths due to motor vehicles in the United States.

In 2014, 4,223 pedestrians in the United States were killed by vehicles, with 487 of those in Texas.

Here is my story about how distracted driving affected me.

Back in 1997, I was in high school and life was going great. I had a pretty girlfriend, lots of good buddies to hang out with and a wonderful 1988 Chevy S-10 pickup truck. I loved that truck.

My uncle worked for the local cable television company and they would auction off their old inventory every year.

One Saturday afternoon, my dad, uncle and I went and purchased two S-10s. Our intent was to combine them into one great looking and running vehicle. It took us about a month to get the trucks taken apart and put back together. Finally, after a lot of hard work, I had my beautiful S-10.

Two months go by and my friend George and I are hanging out at his place playing video games, when hunger strikes. We ventured out to the local pizza place.

It was raining and overcast, but we got in and out of the store quickly and started driving back. We didn't have time to wait; that pizza was so enticing that I had to get a slice of it right away.

There I was, slice of pizza in one hand and steering wheel in the other; on a rainy day heading through the busy streets of Cleveland. I didn't like the song playing on the radio, so I went to put in a CD.

George yelled, "STOP!" An F-350 had slammed on its brakes in front of me.

In my current state of pizza and CD-induced distracted haze, I was unable to react with enough time to stop. We rear-ended the F-350; the trailer hitch went through my engine block and my beautiful truck was totaled.

The F-350 had stopped abruptly to avoid running over a child playing in the street. I was lucky. Yes, I destroyed my beautiful truck, but I am happy that I had that accident. If that truck had not been there that day, I would have killed that child.

Courtesy photo

Distracted driving is the act of driving while engaged in other activities, such as looking after children, texting, talking on the phone or to a passenger, eating or reading.

All of this could have been avoided if I had not been driving while distracted. Thankfully, that didn't happen, but it happens all too often on our roads.

In 2014, more than 3,500 people died on Texas roads. There were 100,825 traffic crashes during this time and 468 of the fatalities have been attributed to distracted driving. The big picture here is that nothing should be more important, while behind the wheel, than driving.

As pedestrians and parents of small pedestrians, we need to also keep in mind the dangers of distracted drivers and roadways. Here is where the pedestrian numbers come into play.

In San Antonio alone, 54 pedestrians were hit and killed by motor vehicles in the past year. Over the past six years, 135 pedestrian-vs.-motor-vehicle mishaps have been recorded in the Air Force mishap database. Of those, 58 were on duty, 77 were off duty and 18 were fatal. Here at Joint Base San Antonio, we have had eight pedestrians hit by motor vehicles recorded.

While crossing streets, running, jogging, biking or walking in and around roadways, be mindful of traffic. Wear reflective clothing at low-light times, don't wear headphones around traffic and make sure that oncoming traffic is aware of you and reacts to you when crossing a street.

Do not blindly enter a roadway just because you are in a crosswalk. In 10 years of investigating accidents, in every pedestrian-vs.-motor-vehicle accident I have investigated, the pedestrian was in a crosswalk. This year, we have already had two such accidents on JBSA-Lackland.

Be careful out there. Pay attention while driving and be mindful of traffic when you are on the road.

WINGSPREAD

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Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office of JBSA-Randolph. All photos, unless otherwise indicated, are U.S. Air Force photos.

The deadline for submissions is noon Wednesday the week prior to publication. All submissions can be emailed to randolphpublicaffairs@us.af.mil.

PERSEVERANCE: SUCCESS THROUGH FAILURE

Chargin' Cheetahs host Freedom Flyers today at 43rd annual reunion

By Lt. Col. Joel DeBoer
560th Flying Training Squadron commander

After the U.S. military rescue mission on the Son Tay prison camp on Nov. 21, 1970, American prisoners of war were consolidated at the Hoa Lo Prison, more commonly known as the Hanoi Hilton. Morale soared as the POWs were placed in large groups and were able to communicate directly with fellow prisoners.

They met and were in complete agreement to conduct church services knowing full well there may be punishment by their North Vietnamese guards. In one instance, at the agreed upon time and under the watchful eyes of their captors, the senior ranking officer stood up and began reciting the Lord's Prayer. Immediately, the North Vietnamese responded and dragged the officer away for a torture session.

Without hesitation, the second-ranking member stood and he too began to recite the Lord's Prayer. Before he was halfway through, the guards grabbed him and took him away as well. This continued again for the third and fourth-highest ranking officers. The guards were using the butts of their guns to strike and silence the Americans. The prisoners persevered. As the fifth-highest ranking officer stood and made his way to the center of the room, the cell grew quiet. The guards did not return and the POWs finished their church service.

Those POWs were being challenged physically, mentally and spiritually. While most of us will never find ourselves as POWs in a foreign land, we can learn from their experiences. We all face challenges in our lives. Whether it is work related, health concerns, family difficulties, financial hurdles or myriad issues, we can learn to persevere despite the failures and heartaches.

The dictionary defines perseverance as "steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success." In one of its definitions of perseverance, Webster's 1828 dictionary describes it this way: "Perseverance keeps honor bright."

Today, we have the rare opportunity to meet and hear from those who have personified it.

The Chargin' Cheetahs of the 560th Flying Training Squadron have the distinct honor of hosting the 43rd annual Freedom Flyer Reunion today.

The Freedom Flyers are Air Force pilots who were POWs in Vietnam that were returned to flight status after their release in 1973. The Air Force continued this tradition by offering one more sortie to Air Force pilots who were shot down and held captive.

To date, the 560th Flying Training Squadron has returned 195 POWs to the air and continue to honor their legacy.

Join us as we honor these heroes on Friday. The wreath-laying ceremony will host a missing man flyby and begins at 10:15 a.m and will last until approximately 11 a.m.

From 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., five POWs will recount some of their harrowing experiences in the Fleenor Auditorium, building 100 at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. This will truly be an incredible event as we hear their stories of how their perseverance, as Webster's dictionary defines, "kept honor bright!"

NEWS

JBSA fire response crews red-hot at AETC's annual awards

By Jeremy Gerlach
Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Public Affairs

Joint Base San Antonio's fire response community won big at the Air Education and Training Command 2015 annual awards, which were announced in February, with the 502nd Civil Engineering Squadron's fire emergency services flight and two individual firefighters taking home some top honors.

The fire emergency services flight won the Fire Department of the Year in the large department category, while Darren Fehlinger, 502nd CES firefighter, took home Civilian Firefighter of the year and Senior Master Sgt. Timothy Walsh, 502nd CES deputy fire chief, was the Military Fire Officer of the year.

The departmental award didn't come as a surprise – seeing as the squadron was the only one in the running for the "large" category – but the 502nd CES still had an exceptional year, said Mark Ledford, fire emergency services flight chief.

The 502nd CES, comprised of 211 firefighters that support eight wings, protected 86,000 personnel at more than 3,000 emergencies in 2015, all with $0 in facility fire loss.

"That's a pretty huge deal considering the amount of property and resources we provide protection for at all the locations," said Ledford, who also praised JBSA's corps of civil engineers for helping prevent fires in the first place. "We've got such a fantastic fire prevention program here with the civil engineers doing such a great job building facilities with fire safety features."

Ledford's team came in above standard in training hours, advanced courses taken and certifications earned. The unit was also involved in several public education efforts, fundraisers, and innovation initiatives centered on enhanced drone, security camera and robotic detection capabilities, according to a department release.

"We've got such a unique, diverse workforce," Ledford said. "There are civilians, military, female firefighters here and while many outside departments are specialized, we're well-rounded. We all are CPR certified, Hazmat trained, so it's really neat that we can respond to a number of situations from any of our locations."

Ledford said Fehlinger and Walsh represent the strength of this civilian-military partnership.

Courtesy photo

Senior Master Sgt. Timothy Walsh
502nd Civil Engineer Squadron deputy fire chief
Air Education and Training Command
Military Fire Officer of the Year

Courtesy photo

Darren Fehlinger
502nd Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter
Air Education and Training Command
Civilian Firefighter of the Year

Walsh, who is deployed and was unavailable for comment as of press time, has worked at JBSA-Lackland since 2014. He led the successful, multi-department response to a large steel mill fire in 2015, while also helping his squadron secure funding for several educational courses. Walsh was one of about 25 individuals nominated for Military Fire Officer of the Year, Ledford noted.

"He's a great leader, a great role model, and a great example for all our personnel, both military and civilian, to emulate," Ledford said of Walsh. "He does a great job of keeping both our civilian and military workforces engaged and working together."

Fehlinger, in his 12th year at JBSA-Randolph, has led a number of successful responses to emergencies in 2015. He helped shut down a natural gas hazard at a residential complex, mitigated a T-1 Jayhawk aircraft fire while preserving both the crew and aircraft and helped save an anaphylactic patient.

"Mr. Fehlinger is extremely positive," Ledford noted. "He volunteers a lot, and does a great job working with the military for their qualification training – helping people prepare for careers down the road."

Despite a successful 2015, Ledford said his department needs to continue to improve in the face of "unique challenges" the future will bring.

"We just want to continue with a very aggressive and progressive fire prevention program," Ledford said. "We also want to continue to have our response times down to the lowest possible (time) for all those who live and work at JBSA, and that's about seven minutes. That's pretty dadgum outstanding – the guys do a great job on that."

Washington Circle closed

Washington Circle will be closed Friday from 8-10 a.m. for the Freedom Flyer Reunion wreath-laying ceremony. Any routes not immediately reopened for use will be reopened at 12:30 p.m.

JBSA-Randolph Main Gate closure

The Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Main Gate will be closed beginning at 6 a.m. March 12 for the remainder of that day. Both the East and West Gates will be open all of March 12 to accommodate traffic needs.

Sen. Campbell, Commissioner Bush visit JBSA-Randolph

By 2nd Lt. Avery Larkin
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Public Affairs

Texas Sen. Donna Campbell and Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush visited Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Feb. 24 to tour 12th Flying Training Wing facilities and learn about its mission.

The 12th FTW hosted the officials during an afternoon visit that included a mission brief, air traffic control tower tour and a T-38 static display.

Campbell and Bush were greeted for the tour by Col. Michael Snell, 12th FTW vice commander; Col. Michael Gimbrone, 502nd Security Forces and Logistics Support Group commander; Meg Reyes, JBSA installation encroachment manager; and Lt. Col. Emil Bliss, 12th FTW community initiatives director.

The tour started with a mission brief in building 100, 12th FTW headquarters. During the brief, Campbell and Bush learned about the vast reach of the 12th FTW and how its leadership spreads across several different airframes in three different geographic locations.

At the East air traffic control tower, Bliss explained to Campbell and Bush why increased development near JBSA-Randolph may come with obstacles to flying mission success.

"The community around JBSA-Randolph is growing. As more businesses come to the area, we have to be prepared for things that might affect our flying mission. If a restaurant is built close to a runway, it could attract birds and pose a safety threat to our pilots," Bliss said. "We have been working with the community to make sure local officials understand how development outside of our gates can affect our training and mission readiness."

> *"The community around JBSA-Randolph is growing. As more businesses come to the area, we have to be prepared for things that might affect our flying mission. If a restaurant is built close to a runway, it could attract birds and pose a safety threat to our pilots. We have been working with the community to make sure local officials understand how development outside of our gates can affect our training and mission readiness."*
>
> **Lt. Col. Emil Bliss**
> *12th Flying Training Wing community initiatives director*

After learning about the many factors that affect flight operations at JBSA-Randolph, Bush and Campbell had the chance to see the JBSA-Randolph flying mission up close with a static display of a T-38, which is used to train fighter pilots and instructor pilots.

As a T-38 pilot, Bliss understands the various factors that can affect flying operations and uses that knowledge to educate members of the community.

"The Community Initiatives Office promotes a better understanding of what we do in the 12th Flying Training Wing. Sometimes we work with community leaders, other times with local residents," Bliss said. "I'm glad that Commissioner Bush and Sen. Campbell got to see how we get the mission done every day. We are proud to have their support and the support of several others throughout San Antonio."

Green Dot training gives Airmen tools to prevent violence, sexual abuse

By Jeremy Gerlach
Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Public Affairs

More than 100 program implementers wrapped up Green Dot training at Joint Base San Antonio–Lackland Feb. 25 as part of the Air Force's newly-implemented violence and abuse prevention initiative.

These implementers, along with 1,400 other Airmen who have attended 22 Green Dot prep sessions worldwide, are on the front lines of a five-year strategy to decrease interpersonal violence across the Air Force.

This program isn't the first step the Air Force has taken to address issues of sexual abuse and violence, but it is the most promising one so far, said Steven B. Mayfield, Air Force Personnel Center, Directorate of Airmen and Family Care community readiness analyst.

"The goal here is to curb instances of violence, sexual abuse, assault and things of that nature that are occurring within the Air Force," Mayfield explained. "We've had a number of programs to address these issues - some with a modicum of success - but this is a new initiative, a new tool to put in our toolbox to address these violence-related issues."

Green Dot training is built on a grassroots, or ground-up, method of decreasing instances of violence.

In this initiative, program implementers use a mapping system of green and red dots to keep track of positive and negative actions at each installation.

Green dots represent positive actions and behaviors of every Airman – as opposed to top-down actions from leadership – who are trying to correct and intervene in negative situations, such as stalking and domestic or sexual violence.

Red dots, on the other hand, represent negative actions. From there, the program simply aims to increase the ratio of green dots to red ones, according the Green Dot website.

During fiscal year 2016, most Airmen will get about 50 minutes of training, while about 10-15 percent will receive four hours of Green Dot training, as mandated by the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office because this new curriculum will now fulfill the annual SAPR training requirement. This training will consist mostly of group discussion and a variety of interactive scenarios where Airmen learn how to identify and stop abuse.

This time requirement actually represents a decreased training load across the board compared to SAPR requirements from fiscal year 2015, Mayfield said.

"This is a different approach – it's not death by PowerPoint, and it's really more about trying to get community involvement," Mayfield noted. "We're having everybody recognize that they play both an individual and collective role in intervening and addressing violence-related issues."

That's what makes the Green Dot effective: emphasis on small but vital action from the ground up, rather than the top down, Mayfield said.

"In the Air Force, we talk about wingmen concepts and taking care of our wingman," he explained. "This program coincides with that."

Master Sgt. LaTonya Parker, 802nd FSS MPS superintendent, is one of many program implementers who will be tasked with bringing the Green Dot's message to their respective units.

"The biggest piece for me is to help bystanders know how to intervene," she explained. "People see things that happen all the time and they don't really know how to interact. This training will help people know what to say and what to do, whether it's in a dorm room, workplace, movie theater or in any kind of environment. This will help the individual know how to react."

Photo by Johnny Saldivar

Tech. Sgt. Michelle Falcon, Master Sgt. Rebekah Virtue, Mary-Catherine Grinda, Staff Sgt. John Toms and Araceli Mendoza participate in a Green Dot training exercise Feb. 25 at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland's Arnold Hall.

Essie Whitworth-Nurse, JBSA community support coordinator and violence prevention strategist, compared the Green Dot program to a public health model for innoculation.

"We're training implementers who go talk to their section." Nurse said. "Eventually, you reach everyone and the (disease) stops growing. The message of Green Dot, that everyone can intervene, is a message you can take anywhere. That's how we give you the 'vaccination.'"

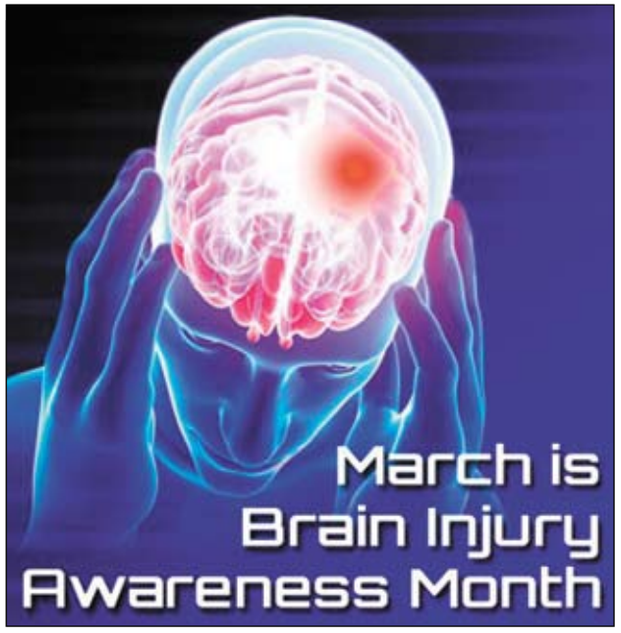
Even Airmen who don't experience these problems can recognize how they affect the Air Force's mission to fly, fight and win, Nurse said.

"In order for us to be ready, we have to stamp out anything that's causing an issue that keeps us from meeting that mission, and this kind of violence keeps us from being mission-ready," she concluded. "The programs we've implemented in the past haven't gotten us to zero. Domestic violence, suicide, sexual assault and workplace violence all still have statistics. We have to get these to zero."

For more information on the Green Dot program and SAPR standards, visit http://www.livethegreendot.com and http://sapr.mil.

JBSA Sexual Assault Prevention, Response

To report a sexual assault, call the 24/7 Joint Base San Antonio Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Hotline at 808-7272 or the Department of Defense Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247.



Graphic by Steve Thompson

Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is the result of a blow or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. March is Brain Injury Awareness Month.

By Karen S. Guice, M.D., M.P.P.
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs

Often called one of the "invisible wounds of war," traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is the result of a blow or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. Anyone can suffer a TBI, it can happen on the sports field, in your home, or on the job.

During March, the Military Health System is focusing its talent and efforts on the issue of TBI. We will provide tools and resources to educate service members, their families, retirees and Department of Defense civilians about the prevention and treatment of TBI, while highlighting ongoing MHS research and breakthroughs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year 1.7 million people are diagnosed with a brain injury. The most common form of TBI, even for the military, is mild TBI (also referred to as a concussion) and the vast majority occur at home.

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center reported that from 2000-2014, more than 313,000 service members were diagnosed with TBI and most of these were mild.

MHS research has produced several breakthroughs that improve the lives of our patients, beneficiaries, and all Americans who sustain TBIs. The MHS' work is even examining the impact of TBIs on college athletes. The NCAA and the DOD are currently sponsoring the "Mind Matters Challenge," a landmark initiative to enhance the safety of student-athletes and service members. The partnership is the most comprehensive study of concussion and head impact exposure ever conducted.

For TBI patients, TRICARE covers rehabilitative services provided by physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists. The DOD offers a variety of products such as clinical recommendations, tool kits, and mobile applications to assist health care providers in the diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of patients with mild TBI.

One of the most important steps in TBI treatment is rest, which allows the brain to physically and mentally recover, and removes the risk of suffering another concussion while the brain is healing. Early diagnosis of TBI, as well as evaluation, and treatment can shorten return-to-duty time and lead to the best possible outcome for those entrusted to our care.

Along with our partnerships and cutting-edge research, MHS is making great progress in improving and prolonging the quality of life for those living with TBI.

359th Medical Group's Fit Kid event focuses on nutrition, physical activity

By Robert Goetz
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Public Affairs

Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph's 359th Medical Group is planning an event this month that will emphasize the role proper nutrition and physical activity play in shaping healthy lifestyles for children.

The Fit Kid 5K and Health Fair, set for 9 a.m. March 12 at Airmen's Heritage Park, will feature a walk/run along the park's perimeter and more than a dozen helping agencies and organizations providing an array of information that benefits families.

"The Fit Kid 5K and Health Fair is a National Nutrition Month event," said Gina Ramirez, JBSA outreach and resiliency professional. "If we can teach our children healthy habits related to eating and fitness, they'll take those habits with them into adulthood. In addition, research backs up the fact that there is a food-mood connection. Part of promoting a healthy mind is exercise and healthy eating. The message we're trying to get out with this event is that these elements are all connected."

The importance of parents modeling a healthy lifestyle – eating nutritional foods and exercising regularly – for their children is underscored by a warning from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that one in three U.S. children born in 2000 will become diabetic unless many more people start eating healthier and exercising more, she said. The CDC also estimates that obesity affects one in six children and adolescents in the U.S., with potential risks ranging from high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type-2 diabetes to breathing problems, joint problems and low self-esteem.

Ramirez said the family-friendly 5K will promote overall health and wellness.

See FIT KID P11

Courtesy graphic

Air Force monitoring Zika virus infection

From Air Force Surgeon General
Public Affairs Office

The Air Force is closely monitoring the emergence of Zika virus infection in the Americas, Oceania, and Africa to help inform and protect Airmen and their families.

The Department of Health and Human Services, with its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is leading the U.S. response to the worldwide Zika outbreak with support from multiple other U.S. federal departments and agencies including Department of Defense.

"What we know about Zika virus continues to evolve, and we're focused on providing consistent, science-based guidance to protect our Total Force Airmen and their family members," said Col. (Dr.) John Oh, Chief of Preventive Medicine, Air Force Medical Support Agency.

For example, CDC recently reported that sexual transmission of Zika virus is possible. Oh said Zika virus updates have been communicated to Air Force Medical Service staff to quickly prevent, detect, and respond to any potential cases in patients.

Humans become infected by Zika virus primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Only about one in five persons infected with Zika virus becomes ill.

Symptoms may include fever, rash, joint pain, conjunctivitis (red eye), muscle pain, and headache. Most infections are mild, lasting several days to a week, with complete recovery the norm, according to CDC.

There is new evidence of a potential link between Zika virus infection during pregnancy and a particular birth defect.

"There may be a link between Zika virus infection during pregnancy and the baby having microcephaly, which is a birth defect where the baby's head is smaller than expected. Babies with microcephaly often have smaller brains that have not developed properly," Oh said.

"It's understandable that people are concerned. You have a virus that people have never heard of, it's spread by mosquitoes, which makes all of us feel vulnerable, and there may be a link with a devastating outcome in babies," he said.

The CDC recently advised women who are pregnant to consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing, and women who are trying to get pregnant should consult their healthcare provider before traveling.

So far, the few Zika virus infections diagnosed in the continental United States have occurred in travelers to countries or territories with ongoing Zika virus spread, according to CDC, and there has not been local Zika infections spread by mosquitoes in CONUS.

For those who are in areas with ongoing Zika virus spread, Colonel Oh said the best way to prevent infection from Zika virus and other mosquito-borne viruses, such as dengue and chikungunya, is to prevent mosquito bites by using air conditioning or window and door screens when indoors, wearing long sleeves and pants, using permethrin-treated clothing and gear, and using insect repellants when outdoors.

When used according to product label, insect repellants registered by the Environmental Protection Agency are safe to use in pregnant women and children.

To prevent Zika virus from spreading to CONUS, particularly in the southern states that have the mosquito species which carries Zika, dengue, and chikungunya, Oh said we must remove standing water where mosquitoes can breed, such as buckets, birdbaths, dog bowls, old tires, gutters, and other containers.

To prevent sexually transmitted Zika infection, according to CDC, men who live in or have traveled to an area with Zika infection and who have a pregnant partner should abstain from sexual activity or consistently and correctly use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy.

For more information and the latest public health updates on Zika virus, visit the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/zika. CDC Travel Health Notices are updated on their travel notices page at http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel.

Miltary members urged to learn how to prevent Zika virus

By Capt. Audra Blasi
359th Aerospace Medicine Squadron
Public Health officer

Have you ever heard of the Zika virus?

Up until about a month ago, unless you were studying rare tropical diseases, probably not. Now, you can't turn on the TV or surf the web without seeing an article. So what's the real story behind this virus that is spreading in South, Central America and the Caribbean?

Zika Virus is closely related to dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. It was first discovered in the forests of Uganda in 1947 and in early 2015, it made its way to Brazil.

Since then, it has continued to spread with local transmission now confirmed in most South and Central American countries and the Caribbean. For the most up-to-date listing of affected countries, visit http://www.cdc.gov.

An infection by the Zika virus typically goes unnoticed by 80 percent of people that become infected and is usually non-fatal. Those that do show symptoms generally have a mild illness lasting a week or less and rarely seek medical attention. Once a person recovers from infection, they are likely to be protected from re-infection.

The virus is typically spread through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitos commonly known as the Asian Tiger Mosquito and Yellow Fever mosquito. These mosquitoes are aggressive daytime biters and prefer to live in and around homes where they can easily feed on people. The virus, while rare, has also been demonstrated to spread from mother to fetus, through blood transfusion and through sexual activity.

The CDC recommends women who may be pregnant or are trying to become pregnant avoid or postpone travel to areas that may have current Zika transmission.

This is out of an over-abundance of caution as the relationship between the virus and microcephaly is uncertain. Microcephaly occurs when the baby is born with a small brain and skull due to abnormal brain development. Zika virus, similar to other viruses, is also suspected to be linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome.

There are currently studies underway to characterize the relationship between Zika virus, congenital microcephaly and GBS.

How can you protect yourself and others? Prevention is the first and vital step.

If you are planning on being outside for any length of time, wear long sleeves and pants, ideally one that have been treated with permethrin and use an EPA-registered insect repellent on exposed skin. This combination has been shown to reduce mosquito bites by 99 percent.

Look around your house and remove any mosquito breeding sites. This species is a master of exploiting man-made breeding areas and will lay eggs and develop in things such as abandoned tires, flower pots, buckets, cans and even bottle caps.

If you are traveling to an affected country, along with following the recommended mosquito personal protective measures, stay in accommodations that are air-conditioned and have screened windows and doors.

If this is not possible, sleep under a treated bed net. When you return, if you do feel ill, rest, drink lots of fluids, take Tylenol for fever or pain and stay indoors to avoid being bitten by mosquitos.

While no local mosquito-borne transmission has been identified in the United States, we do have the mosquitos here that can transmit the virus. Because the virus remains in the blood of an infected person for up to 10 days, returning travelers will most likely be the source of introduction of this virus to the country.

If you are pregnant, and you or your spouse has traveled to an affected country, talk to your healthcare provider. They can provide guidance with the most up -to-date recommendations.

The CDC also recommends that men who have lived in or traveled to an area with active transmission should abstain from sex or consistently use condoms, especially if their significant other is pregnant. It currently is not known how long the virus remains in the semen, possibly up to 10 weeks, but the CDC does not recommend screening of men at this time.

U.S. health officials do not anticipate widespread local transmission of the virus in the U.S. This is in part due to the lifestyle and culture here in the United States, and based on our experiences with dengue and chickungunya.

Every year, we see cases of these viruses in returning travelers with very limited local transmission. We anticipate Zika will act in the same way. The American Association of Blood Banks is also preventing spread through blood transfusions by deferring any donations from anyone who has traveled to an affected country with 28 days of donation.

Joint Base San Antonio, in coordination with the city, will continue to protect members at all locations. Mosquito trapping and testing for not only Zika virus, but West Nile, dengue and chikungunya will resume in late March when mosquito populations start to rise and the risk of transmission is the greatest.

Education is a top priority and all deployers are briefed on how to protect themselves and their families. JBSA health care professionals are also educated and remain ready to address any concerns.

Courtesy graphic

Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph News Briefs

RESC spouse scholarships

The Randolph Enlisted Spouses' Club is accepting applications for scholarships to be awarded to Enlisted military spouses in the amount of $1,000 per recipient. Applications are available at the Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Education Center and the Military & Family Readiness Center. Applications must be postmarked no later than April 1. Questions or requests to receive an application by email should be sent to Randolphesc@hotmail.com.

ROSC spouse scholarships

The Randolph Officer's Spouses' Club is accepting applications for scholarships to be awarded to military spouses in amounts ranging from $1,000-$2,000 per winner. Applications are located at the Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Thrift Store, Education Center and the Military & Family Readiness Center. applications are due by March 11. For questions or to receive an application by email, send a request to roscscholarships@gmail.com.

Glow in the Park 5K Run

A "Glow in the Park" run is scheduled for 7 p.m. Saturday at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston's MacArthur Park. The run starts on the east side of MacArthur Field, near the intersection of Worth and Stanley Roads. A pre-race party begins at 5 p.m., people will start lining up at 6:45 p.m. and the first wave of runners start at 7 p.m. Runners will be released in waves of 250 people. Packet pick-up will be at the Fort Sam Houston Golf Clubhouse at 1050 Harry Wurzbach from 3-7 p.m. March 4 and there will be a limited number of packet pickups available at the event at 4 p.m. March 5. Cost is $15. All participants need a Department of Defense ID card or to be sponsored by a DOD ID card holder. Visit http://nsplit.com/glow-run-jbsa/eventdetails/ for more information.

Munitions offices closed

Munitions offices and munitions storage area will be closed to normal business Monday through March 11 to conduct a semi-annual 100 percent inventory of ammunition and explosives. Only emergency issues can be honored during this period. Call 652-6780/3361 with any questions or concerns.

15-mile bike ride

Bikers are invited to participate in the 15-mile bike ride at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Eberle Park Saturday at 7:30 a.m. For more information, call 652-7263.

Intramural volleyball season

The intramural volleyball season starts Monday at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. To start a team for your unit or for more information, call 652-7272.

PACE seeks volunteer

The Air Force Profession of Arms Center of Excellence at JBSA-Randolph seeks San Antonio Air Force families to share their story that will be videotaped. To participate, call 652-1712.

Child safety seat class

Almost 75 percent of all car seats are installed incorrectly and car crashes are the leading cause of preventable death in children. A car seat safety seat clinic is taking place March 21, April 18, May 16 and June 20 at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. Prior to taking part in the car seat safety clinic, participants must complete the car seat 101 class at one of the JBSA locations. For more information on the car seat 101 class or the car seat safety clinic, call 221-0349 or 652-6308.

Street construction planned

The 502nd Civil Engineer Squadron is conducting a re-pavement project on 5th Street West, including replacement of existing pavement, curbs and sidewalks from F Street West to C Street West. Demolition and construction will occur in various phases and will require street and parking closures on 5th Street West for the time periods below:

- Saturday and Sunday: Asphalt will be milled off the roadway from F Street to C Street.
- Phase I, through Feb. 26: 5th Street West will be closed from F Street to E Street.
- Phase II, Feb. 29 – April 1: 5th Street West will be closed from E Street to D Street.
- Phase III, April 4 – May 13: 5th Street West will be closed from D Street to C Street.
- Repaving, May 21: 5th Street West will be closed from F Street to C Street for paving. Detour routes will be marked.

For more information, call 652-1224.

DOD: Training, awareness critical in human trafficking fight

By Lisa Ferdinando
DOD News, Defense Media Activity

The signs of human trafficking could be all around Department of Defense personnel: a subcontractor withholds passports and delays payment to its employees or a company forces potential workers to pay a large fee to obtain a contract job on a DOD installation.

The DOD is highlighting the issue and its efforts to fight trafficking, said Army Col. Joshua Burris, deputy chief of staff for Mission and Installation Contracting Command at Joint Base San Antonio-Sam Houston, and the executive director for DOD's Operational Contract Support Joint Exercise 2016.

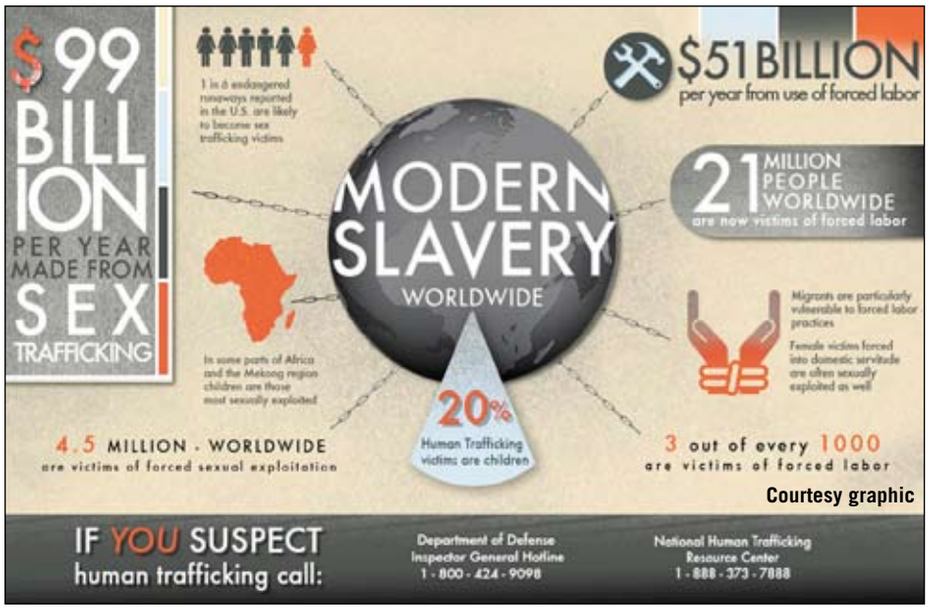
Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, Burris said, adding that Defense Department has zero tolerance for violations.

DOD wants its service members, civilians, contractors and others associated with the agency to be able to recognize the signs of human trafficking and know how to report suspected violations, he said.

Human trafficking includes using force, fraud or coercion to compel a person to provide labor, services, or sex, Burris said. It is a violation of basic human rights, he said. It is a global problem; it happens in the United States and around the world.

"This is a heinous, awful thing that happens. It's very important that we eradicate it," he said.

The three most common forms of trafficking, according to the DOD's Combating Trafficking in Persons office, are labor trafficking, sex trafficking, and child soldiering.



Courtesy graphic

DOD relies on contractors at installations around the world, Burris said. The human trafficking violations the agency sees most often, he said, are labor abuses involving debt bondage.

Debt bondage is when a person is required to pay a large fee to obtain a job, putting the person in extreme debt in which the individual works a year or more just to pay off the debt, Burris explained.

The contract workers on bases are the ones who make meals, pump gas, or do other tasks to support the military, he pointed out. They face dangers as well, he said, including indirect fire at installations in warzones. They must be treated fairly and in accordance with laws and DOD regulations, he said.

Five hundred people, including service members from Army and Air Force South, U.S. Special Operations Command and the 1st Armored Division and Acquisition and Financial Management professionals, will take part in a joint, interagency exercise in March and April 2016 at Fort Bliss, Texas.

A focus of the Operational Contract Support Joint Exercise includes scenarios in human trafficking, Burris said. The exercise will evaluate current policies and approaches via the DoD supply chain.

"It's especially important because it is happening worldwide," Burris said. "It's something that we need to take a look at and make sure our people know."

The exercise includes Army South partner nations. They will observe human trafficking and Operational Contract Support training to incorporate lessons into next year's U.S. Southern Command's PANAMAX, he said. Scenarios are based on coalition forces responding to an armed conflict and follow-on stabilization operations.

The exercise will use role player scenarios so participants will better recognize signs of human trafficking, and what actions should be taken, Burris noted.

"We have to keep an eye out and be able to identify these signs, and that's why the training presents this in our exercise," he said.

The signs of labor trafficking include an employer confiscating identification documents or forging legal documents, subjecting a person to unsafe working conditions, providing inadequate living conditions, or denying the worker medical care, Burris said.

Members of the military and DOD civilian personnel are required to take at least one Combating Trafficking in Persons training course every fiscal year. Specialized training is available for service members, law enforcement personnel, senior leaders and contracting professionals.

Signs are posted around military bases so workers know their rights, Burris said. DOD has supplemental exercises each year on fighting human trafficking.

DOD officials emphasize that everyone can do their part in fighting trafficking. Incidents of human trafficking can be reported to the DoD Inspector General hotline at 1-800-424-9098, 703-604-8799 or DSN 664-8799, or at http://www.dodig.mil/hotline.

FIT KID from P7

"We encourage families to come out with their strollers and pets," she said. "It will be a completely relaxed atmosphere."

Among the health fair vendors will be the 359th MDG's dental, pediatrics and family advocacy/mental health clinics; Brooke Army Medical Center and Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center auxiliaries; the Exceptional Family Member Program; Safe Kids; and Military OneSource.

In addition to the 5K and health fair, the event will feature activities coordinated by JBSA-Randolph Youth Programs.

The theme of this year's National Nutrition Month, a campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, is "Savor the Flavor of Eating Right."

Aracelis Gonzalez-Anderson, 359th Aerospace-Medicine Squadron health promotion programs coordinator, said parents can set a good example for their children by preparing meals that are flavorful and nutritional and giving them healthy snacks.

"There are fun, healthy ways to prepare meals that are appealing," she said.

An example is substituting zucchini noodles or spaghetti squash for pastas made from refined grains, Gonzalez-Anderson said.

"That will give you a dish packed with tons of vitamins," she said. "You will get so much flavor from adding things that are healthy. We want people to step back, close their eyes and savor their food."

Gonzalez-Anderson said parents can also serve as good role models for their children by avoiding fast foods that are high in calories and fat content.

"We have busier lifestyles, so we look for what's convenient," she said. "We have fast-food franchises everywhere, but they may not be the healthiest choice. Fast food can also be healthy – like a banana, an apple or peanut butter."

Gonzalez-Anderson also said healthy food need not be expensive.

"People associate healthy eating with expensive food, but it doesn't have to be that way," she said. "Fast food seems cheaper, but you're consuming food that is pre-packaged and full of additives."

The Fit Kid 5K and Health Fair begins with check-in at 9 a.m. March 12, followed by the 5K at 9:30 a.m. Participants may also register and purchase a T-shirt at http://www.FitKid5K.com. All shirts must be purchased before Tuesday.

Falsifying income to claim tax credits on IRS 'Dirty Dozen' list of tax scams

By Lea Crusberg
Internal Revenue Service Media Relations

The Internal Revenue Service warned taxpayers to avoid schemes to erroneously claim tax credits on their returns, which is on the annual list of tax scams known as the "Dirty Dozen" again for the 2016 filing season.

"Taxpayers should not falsify their income or other information on their tax returns to improperly claim tax credits," John Koskinen, IRS Commissioner, said. "Misrepresenting facts is cheating and taxpayers are legally responsible for all the information reported on their tax returns."

Compiled annually, the "Dirty Dozen" lists a variety of common scams that taxpayers may encounter anytime but many of these schemes peak during filing season as people prepare their returns or hire professionals to do so.

Illegal scams can lead to significant penalties and interest and possible criminal prosecution. IRS Criminal Investigation works closely with the Department of Justice to shut down scams and prosecute the criminals behind them.

Some people falsely increase the income they report to the IRS. This scam involves inflating or including income on a tax return that was never earned, either as wages or as self-employment income, usually in order to maximize refundable credits.

Just like falsely claiming an expense or deduction, claiming income you did not earn in order to secure larger refundable credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit could have serious repercussions. This could result in taxpayers facing a large bill to repay the erroneous refunds, including interest and penalties. In some cases, they may even face criminal prosecution.

Taxpayers may encounter unscrupulous return preparers who make them aware of this scam. Remember: Taxpayers are legally responsible for what's on their tax return even if it is prepared by someone else. Make sure the preparer you hire is ethical and up to the task.

It is important to choose carefully when hiring an individual or firm to prepare your return. Well-intentioned taxpayers can be misled by preparers who don't understand taxes or who mislead people into taking credits or deductions they aren't entitled to in order to increase their fee.

Every year, these types of tax preparers face everything from penalties to even jail time for defrauding their clients.

Here are a few tips when choosing a tax preparer:

• Ask if the preparer has an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). Paid tax return preparers are required to register with the IRS, have a PTIN and include it on your filed tax return.

• Inquire whether the tax return preparer has a professional credential (enrolled agent, certified public accountant, or attorney), belongs to a professional organization or attends continuing education classes. A number of tax law changes, including the Affordable Care Act provisions, can be complex. A competent tax professional needs to be up-to-date in these matters.

> *"Taxpayers should not falsify their income or other information on their tax returns to improperly claim tax credits. Misrepresenting facts is cheating and taxpayers are legally responsible for all the information reported on their tax returns."*
>
> **John Koskinen**
> *Internal Revenue Service Commissioner*

Tax return preparers aren't required to have a professional credential, but make sure you understand the qualifications of the preparer you select.

• Check the preparer's qualifications. Use the IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications at http://irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf. This tool can help you find a tax return preparer with the qualifications that you prefer. The Directory is a searchable and sortable listing of certain preparers registered with the IRS. It includes the name, city, state and zip code of:

• Attorneys
• CPAs
• Enrolled agents
• Enrolled retirement plan agents
• Enrolled actuaries
• Annual filing season program participants

• Check the preparer's history. Ask the Better Business Bureau about the preparer. Check for disciplinary actions and the license status for credentialed preparers. For CPAs, check with the State Board of Accountancy. For attorneys, check with the State Bar Association. For enrolled agents, go to http://www.IRS.gov and search for "verify enrolled agent status" or check the directory at http://irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf.

• Ask about service fees. Preparers are not allowed to base fees on a percentage of their client's refund. Also avoid those who boast bigger refunds than their competition. Make sure that your refund goes directly to you – not into your preparer's bank account.

• Ask to e-file your return. Make sure your preparer offers IRS e-file. Paid preparers who do taxes for more than 10 clients generally must offer electronic filing. The IRS has processed more than 1.5 billion e-filed tax returns. It's the safest and most accurate way to file a return.

• Provide records and receipts. Good preparers will ask to see your records and receipts. They'll ask questions to determine your total income, deductions, tax credits and other items. Do not rely on a preparer who is willing to e-file your return using your last pay stub instead of your Form W-2. This is against IRS e-file rules.

• Make sure the preparer is available. In the event questions come up about your tax return, you may need to contact your preparer after the return is filed. Avoid fly-by-night preparers.

• Understand who can represent you. Attorneys, CPAs and enrolled agents can represent any client before the IRS in any situation. Non-credentialed tax return preparers can represent clients before the IRS in only limited situations, depending upon when the tax return was prepared and signed. For all returns prepared and signed after Dec. 31, 2015, a non-credentialed tax return preparer can represent clients before the IRS in limited situations only if the preparer is a participant in the IRS Annual Filing Season Program.

• Never sign a blank return. Don't use a tax preparer that asks you to sign an incomplete or blank tax form.

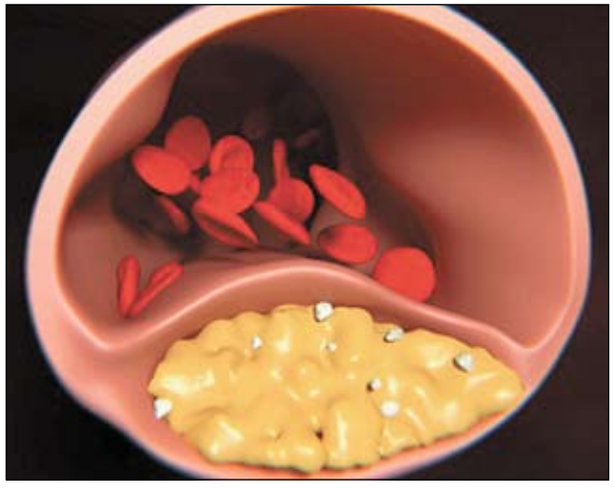
• Review your return before signing. Before you sign your tax return, review it and ask questions if something is not clear. Make sure you're comfortable with the accuracy of the return before you sign it.

• Report tax preparer misconduct to the IRS. You can report improper activities by tax return preparers and suspected tax fraud to the IRS. Use Form 14157, Complaint: Tax Return Preparer. If you suspect a return preparer filed or changed the return without your consent, you should also file Form 14157-A, Return Preparer Fraud or Misconduct Affidavit. You can get these forms on IRS.gov.

To find other tips about choosing a preparer, better understand the differences in credentials and qualifications, research the IRS preparer directory and learn how to submit a complaint regarding a tax return preparer, visit http://www.irs.gov/chooseataxpro.

Remember, taxpayers are legally responsible for what is on their tax return even if it is prepared by someone else. Make sure the preparer you hire is up to the task.

Buildup of cholesterol may adversely affect heart health



Graphic courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Coronary artery disease is caused by plaque buildup in the wall of the coronary arteries that supply blood to the heart. Plaque is made up of cholesterol deposits. Plaque buildup causes the inside of the arteries to narrow over time. This process is called atherosclerosis.

From Defense Health Agency

Cholesterol plays an important role in the health of your heart. A build-up of cholesterol and other deposits can block arteries and lead to coronary artery disease – the most common type of heart disease in the United States.

Knowing if you have high cholesterol is important because it is one of a number of factors that determine your risk for CAD.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for some people, the first sign of CAD is a heart attack. Certain lifestyle choices such as smoking, physical inactivity and diet also increase your risk.

Currently, TRICARE covers cholesterol testing every five years in adults age 20 and over, as recommended by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. Beneficiaries should talk to their primary care manager for more information on preventive screenings, and what their specific needs are in order to stay heart healthy.

Beneficiaries using TRICARE Standard should note that cholesterol screenings are covered only when combined with an immunization, breast, cervical, colorectal or prostate cancer screening. Prime beneficiaries may receive clinical preventive services from their primary care manager or any network provider without a referral or authorization at no cost.

Your liver makes enough cholesterol for your body's needs, but we often get more from the foods we eat. If we take in more cholesterol than the body can use, the extra cholesterol can build up in the walls of the arteries, including those of the heart. A blood test can detect the amount of cholesterol and triglycerides (a related kind of fat) in your blood.

Plaque is made up of deposits of cholesterol and other substances in the artery. Plaque buildup causes the inside of the arteries to narrow over time, which could partially or totally block the blood flow. This process is called atherosclerosis.

For more information about coronary artery disease, visit the CAD page on the CDC's website at http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/coronary_ad.htm. For more information about your covered preventive services, visit the TRICARE website at http://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/PreventiveServices.aspx.

DOD: Tax changes could affect service members, families

By Terri Moon Cronk
Department of Defense News, Defense Media Activity

Several tax law changes could significantly affect how service members and their families file their 2015 income tax returns.

"It's probably the biggest set of changes in many years" said Army Lt. Col. Samuel W. Kan, executive director of the Department of Defense's Armed Forces Tax Council, which oversees the military's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

For example, this is the first year service members received an IRS Form 1095-C, which documents their 2015 minimum essential health care coverage and shows their compliance with the Affordable Care Act.

"People haven't seen these forms before," Kan said, adding that service members must keep the 1095-C with their tax records, and bring it with them if they use a tax preparer.

Service members who entered or left the military in 2015 or had other life-changing circumstances that created a health care coverage lapse have an issue that must be addressed with a tax preparer, he added. Those members might have multiple 1095s, depending on their individual circumstances.

Taxpayers without minimum essential health care can incur IRS penalties, Kan said. In addition, taxpayers who enrolled in the Health Insurance Marketplace and had advance payments of the Premium Tax Credit paid directly to insurance companies on their behalf, such as members who worked in the civilian sector and then joined the military in the middle of the year, will need to file their tax return to reconcile those advance payments.

Service members should be aware that certain "tax extenders" – once temporary measures to stimulate the economy – have become permanent, Kan said.

Some of those important permanent changes include the state and local general sales tax deduction, especially for those members from states without a state income tax, the educator expense deduction for members who teach and incur expenses, and the American Opportunity Tax Credit, for members with college expenses, he said.

Many resources exist for service members to file their 2015 tax returns, whether they are stateside or deployed, Kan said.

The online IRS Publication 3, the Armed Forces Tax Guide, addresses a wide range of issues that might affect members of the military, Kan said. In addition, state tax guides will soon be available through Military OneSource, installation tax centers and legal assistance offices.

Visit a tax center and learn what documents to bring to a tax preparer before scheduling an appointment, Kan advised, adding that it's essential to bring last year's income tax return to ensure that members get all the tax benefits to which they may be entitled.

Free tax-filing and preparation assistance for service members is available in a variety of ways, he said. First, "brick-and-mortar" tax centers on installations educate military members, while VITA certified tax preparers accurately prepare and file the member's income tax returns while they wait. Legal assistance offices also can give advice on other tax services provided at nearby installations, even though they may be operated by other armed services, Kan said.

Second, Military OneSource tax kiosks are available at some installation tax centers and offer self-service computers so service members can prepare and file their own tax returns, assisted by VITA certified tax preparers who are onsite to help.

Third, members can use Military OneSource from home, assuming they are filing very simple tax returns without such deductions such as passive loss carryovers on rental property, he noted. Service members who want to use Military OneSource from home should be sure to read the instructions before starting a return to make sure they don't waste their time by starting a return and then realizing that the return cannot be properly prepared, Kan noted.

Although service members can prepare their own tax returns and do the necessary research by using search engines and the IRS web site, Kan said, due to the many changes in this year's tax code, self-filers should show their returns to an tax preparation expert at an installation tax center to make sure they haven't missed any benefit to which they are entitled. Few things are worse than leaving your own money on the table, he added.

At Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, appointments for the Military Tax Assistance Center can made at 652-1040.