



VBA TODAY

V E T E R A N S B E N E F I T S A D M I N I S T R A T I O N

Happy 236th Birthday, U.S. Army!



General George Washington

This month marks the 236th Birthday of the United States Army. Today's army is the embodiment of its founding principles. An all-volunteer organization, working successfully with its Reserve and National Guard components in the service of maintaining our nation's founding principles of freedom and liberty.

The Second Continental Congress created the Continental Army on June 14, 1775, for the purpose of common defense. It included troops from all of the original 13 colonies, all with a one-year enlistment because of the general mistrust of standing armies among the colonists.

Congress's next act was to appoint George Washington the rank of Major General and make him Commander-in-Chief of the new army on June 15, 1775. In spite of Washington's military experience, and his study of military tactics, he was never considered more than a mediocre military strategist. Washington's strength as a commander came from his commitment to training and his devotion to the troops he com-



Infantry Soldiers in the Continental Army

manded. His leadership and political skills allowed him to navigate successfully through the turbulent relationships between Congress, the army, the French, the militias and the states, keeping the goals of liberty and freedom firmly fixed in the mind of his troops.

By the end of the Revolutionary War, Washington's commitment to establishing a well-trained army, and his insistence that well-disciplined, professional troops are far superior to untrained militia went far in overcoming the colonist's fear of a standing army. Congress did not adopt the plan Washington had submitted for a peacetime standing army composed of a small regular army, supported by a trained militia and a system of arsenals for support, and a military academy. Instead, Congress relied on four states to raise a total of 700 men for a one-year enlistment. The First American Regiment, under the command of Josiah Harmar, achieved permanent status as an infantry unit in the Regular Army, eventually becoming the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, also known as the Old Guard. Happy Birthday U.S. Army!

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Remembering D-Day

D-Day was the beginning of the end for Axis forces. Allied forces planned the largest amphibious invasion in world history, and on June 6, 1944 successfully launched Operation Overlord. The invasion was conducted in two waves. The first wave was the airborne assault. It sent 24,000 British, American, Canadian and Free French airborne troops behind enemy lines. The mission of the airborne troops was to slow the enemy, or eliminate their ability to counterattack once the beach landing began.

The U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions composed the American contingent of the airborne assault. Between the two divisions, 13,000 paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines, but because the massive parachute drop was made at night, the units were

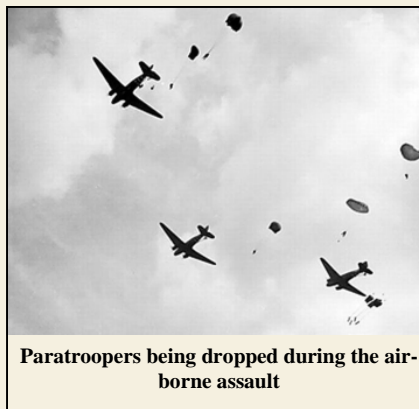
widely scattered and many were unable to rendezvous as planned. Twenty-four hours into the operation, only 4,500 troops were under the control of their respective divisions. The remaining 8,500 paratroopers consolidated into small groups and fought behind enemy lines, causing confusion within the German army for days after the initial assault. Although this was not the original plan, it did have the effect of hampering the Germans' response to the beach landings that quickly followed the air assault.

The second wave of the operation was the landing of troops on the Normandy coast. Over 160,000 troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, over a 50-mile stretch divided into 10-mile sectors: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword.



Troops in a LCVP just before landing on Omaha Beach

because the massive parachute drop was made at night, the units were



Paratroopers being dropped during the airborne assault



Troops landing on Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944

American troops landed at Utah and Omaha beaches, with the English, Canadian and Free French forces landing at Gold, Juno and Sword beaches. As with all large scale operations, some operations did not go as planned. Difficulties with navigation, and the channel current resulted in troops missing their assigned landing areas on both beaches. However, the dedication of the troops involved in the landings to complete their mission supplied them with the initiative and stamina needed to ultimately be successful.



Prisoner of war enclosure on Utah Beach, June 6, 1944

San Diego Regional Office Hosts Former POW Exhibit



Left to Right: Ralph King, Frank Burger and Jack Roland, Members of San Diego POW Chapter 1



Exhibit of an internment camp. It includes maps and pictures of the camp and the surrounding area.

On April 14, 2011 the San Diego Regional Office hosted an exhibit created by the San Diego POW Chapter 1, in honor of POW/MIA Recognition day. The exhibit included maps and information about POW camps during WWII in both the Pacific and European theaters, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Members of San Diego POW Chapter 1 were on hand during the exhibit to speak with visitors about life as a POW. They shared their stories in the hope that no one else will ever have to endure the deprivation, cruelty and hardships they survived. Their stories stand as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit,

a sober reminder of the depths to which humankind can sink, and a cautionary tale to guard against committing the atrocities they themselves endured at the hands of others.

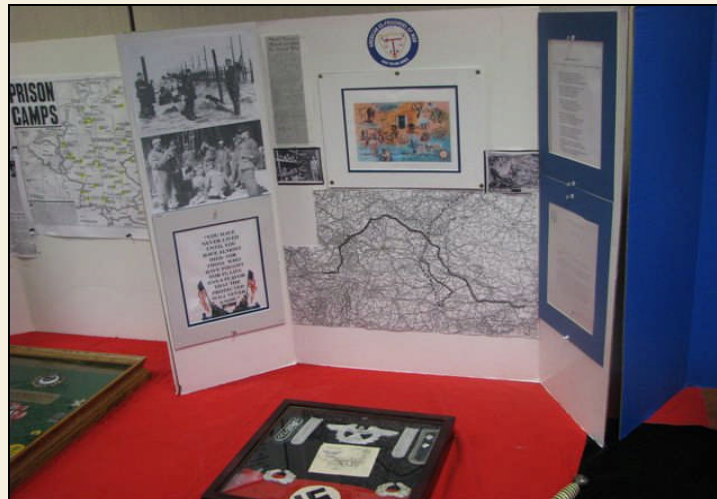


Exhibit of an internment camp in the European Theater. It includes maps and pictures of the camp and the surrounding area.

Currently, there are an estimated 116,000 American former Prisoners of War in the U.S. These men and women have fought in WWII, Korea, Vietnam and in the Middle East. The majority of former POWs fought in WWII. To read accounts of captivity from former Prisoners of War, visit the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project at www.loc.gov/vets/.

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Benefits In Brief

Automobile Allowance, Auto Adaptive Equipment, Clothing Allowance and Home Improvement and Structural Alterations (HISA)

Disability compensation is by far the most well known monetary compensation provided by VA, but less well-known grants can provide much needed assistance to eligible Veterans. The Automobile Allowance, Auto Adaptive Equipment, Clothing Allowance and Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) Grants provide important benefits to a select group of Veterans.

The **Automobile Allowance** is a one-time grant provided to eligible Veterans to purchase a new or used vehicle. To be eligible for this grant a Veteran must be service-connected for the loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands or feet, permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a certain degree, or immobility of one or both knees, or one or both hips. Currently, the maximum grant available is \$11,000. On October 1, 2011, Veterans with severe burn injuries will also be eligible for the benefit, and the maximum grant amount increases to \$18,900.



To apply for the Automobile Allowance complete VA Form 21-4052, *Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment*, and submit the completed form to your local regional office.

The **Auto Adaptive Equipment** program provides the means to adapt vehicles to accommodate a Veteran's disability. To be eligible for the benefit a Veteran must be:

1. Service-connected for the loss, or loss of use of one or both feet or hands, or service-connected for immobility of one or both knees or hips
2. Service-connected for permanent impairment of vision of both eyes that have a central acuity of 20/200.
3. Non-Service connected Veterans are eligible for equipment/modification that will allow ingress and egress from a vehicle only.

To apply for this benefit contact the Prosthetics Service at your local VA Medical Center prior to purchasing any equipment. A VA Form 10-1394, *Application for Adaptive Equipment*, will then be completed and submitted for approval. For further information on this program visit <http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/AAE.asp>.

The **Clothing Allowance** benefit is paid annually to Veterans who are rated for a service-connected disability that requires the use of a prosthetic or orthopedic appliance. Veterans who are service-connected for skin conditions that require the use prescribed medication that permanently damages clothing may also be eligible for this benefit. The current annual allowance is \$716.

To apply for the clothing allowance, complete VA Form 10-8678, *Application for Annual Clothing Allowance*. Information on where to submit the claim is found on the form. Further information is available at http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/Clothing_Allowance.asp.

Finally, the **Home Improvement and Structural Alterations (HISA)** provides financial assistance for home improvements necessary for the continuation of treatment, or for disability access to the home and essential lavatory and sanitary facilities. HISA grants are available for both service-connected and non service-connected disabilities; however, the amount of the grant will vary depending on service-connected status.

To receive a HISA grant, the Veteran must have a prescription from a VA or fee-basis physician stating the specific items required, the diagnosis with medical justification and the Veteran's name, address, SSN and phone number. The Veteran must then complete VA Form 10-0103, *Veterans Application for Assistance in Acquiring Home Improvement and Structural Alterations*. Further information on this program is available at <http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/HISA2.asp>.

In addition, short information videos are available for both the Auto Adaptive Equipment (AAE) and Home Improvement Structural Alterations (HISA) programs at http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/PSAS_Videos.asp.

Having the opportunity to serve those who have served our country is an honor each of us at VA cherishes. Ensuring every Veteran is informed of the complete range of programs available through VA, and assisting them in accessing the assistance they need to move forward with their life, is our way of expressing our commitment to them.



Resources for Caregivers

NEW PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF POST-9/11 VETERANS



Caring for a loved one who is ill or injured is a labor of love. However, those who have accepted the role of caregiver also need care so they can continue to perform the important work they have chosen to do. Each VA Medical Center has a Caregiver Support Coordinator to assist Veterans and their caregivers with accessing available resources. Caregivers of Veterans from all eras are eligible for respite care, education and training on being a caregiver, how to best meet the Veteran's care needs, and self-care when in a caregiver role. Caregiver Support Coordinators also provide assistance in accessing community resources outside of VA.

In addition to the general caregiver support provided by VA, a new program was launched on May 9, 2011 to assist caregivers of eligible Post 9/11 Veterans. Now Post 9/11 Veterans may designate a primary, and in some cases a secondary, family caregiver. Caregivers found eligible for the new program are eligible for mental health services, access to health care insurance if they are not already entitled to health care services, and a monthly stipend. Caregivers will also receive comprehensive caregiver training and medical support. To apply for the program Veterans must complete a VA CG 10-10 at www.caregiver.va.gov. Assistance with completing the form is available by calling 1-877-222-8387.



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DISASTER RELIEF

The recent outbreak of severe weather has left many parts of the southeastern United States devastated. If you have a VA home loan, and find yourself dealing with the aftermath of tornado damage to your residence, help is available. Check out VA's new Circular 26-11-6 at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/new.asp>. If you have specific questions you need answered, or for additional assistance, contact your nearest VA Regional Loan Center toll-free at 877-827-3702.

VBA Today is an official publication of the Veterans Benefits Administration. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent that of the Veterans Benefits Administration

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BENEFITS
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