



Coming home

Courtesy photo

Members of the Yokota Air Base, Japan, Honor Guard prepare to unload caskets containing possible remains of U.S. military personnel from the Vietnam War during a repatriation ceremony at Yokota AB earlier this month. The remains, including three from Vietnam and two from Laos, were flown by a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. The remains were uncovered by members of Joint Task Force-Full Accounting in September. Since 1973, 591 American servicemen previously unaccounted for have returned home. 1,992 Vietnam Veterans still remain missing.

Adoption

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\$2,000 in qualifying expenses may be reimbursed in any calendar year for the adoption of one child, with a maximum of \$5,000 in one year. It includes U.S. and international adoptions, and special needs children.

"That program helped us greatly," Chaplain Guin said.

"The cost of adoption varies," said Sandy. "There are some as high as \$20,000, depending on how specific your requirements are. If a couple chooses to adopt a child with special needs, the costs are reduced significantly."

A law was also passed in 1991 to include adopted children in the definition of dependent children for the purposes of travel, transportation and housing allowances.

"The DOD now considers adopted children to have the same legal status as other dependents," said Chaplain Guin.

In 1994, adopted children became eligible for military health care, including CHAMPUS at that time, and now TRICARE.

"We have a primary care manager here at the clinic," said Chaplain Guin. "And we have

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-- National Military Family Association

TRICARE-approved doctors to meet our special needs. Not all of the specialized doctors we've needed here in Charleston are TRICARE providers, which means there is some out-of-pocket expense for us."

Another law, passed in 1996, provides a non-refundable tax credit of \$6,000 per year for domestic special needs adoptions, according to the National Military Family Association.

"But if you want to adopt children, money shouldn't be the biggest issue," the chaplain said. "Where there's a will, there's a way. You're only limited by your creativity and your willingness."

"When we travel, we camp," said Sandy. "The hotels want us to get two or three rooms, so camping is much more affordable for us."

Chaplain Guin said for many people the paperwork and the home study are the most intrusive aspects of adoption.

"The paperwork is really not a problem for most Air Force families because they tend to be accustomed to paperwork and bureaucracy," he said. The home study is where social workers come into the would-be parents' home for several visits to determine if they are fit to be adoptive parents.

Sandy said the frequent moves involved in military life make the adoption process difficult. "You need to start at the beginning of your tour," she said. "Each home study costs a lot of money, and you have to do a new one if you move." She said their last home study cost \$1,200, and the costs keep increasing.

Chaplain Guin and Sandy said they would do it all over again. The chaplain added, "The joy my kids bring to me on a daily basis outweighs anything I've given."

Tiger Team

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To test the Tiger Team process changes, all the Unit Deployment Managers will go through the deployment process Dec. 7.

An added benefit is UDMs will be able to provide better support for their units. "They will have a better understanding what they are sending their people and cargo through," said Getz.

The 437 MSS handles a big part of the mobility line for Team Charleston.

"We have eighty to ninety percent of our personnel at the chapel during real-world deployments and mobility exercises," said McKinley. "We sat down with all the agencies that brief personnel in the line to make the process more efficient. We have come up with a new layout in the chapel and will test it in December when the unit deployment managers go through it. We are going to time the process from beginning to end. This will afford us the opportunity to change it and better utilize the space and give us more control on the line."

The mobility process will not be going away, but rather it will pick up tempo in the coming months.

"There will be a mini-MOBEX from Dec. 11-15," said Getz. "A full-blown MOBEX will run from Jan. 21-31."

The full MOBEX will start with the deployment line at CAFB, will continue to the aircraft and end up at North Field training area.

There are many things Team Charleston members can do to ensure they are ready when the call comes.

"If you own a mobility process, ask yourself, 'what can I do to affect that person coming through my process,'" said Getz. "Make sure you are mobility ready, understand you can be deployed and follow your checklists."

McKinley echoed the words of Getz, "Personnel should be responsible for all their personal items like their shots and emergency data cards. These are things only the individual can do and only the individual knows they have changed. Our processing line is the last catch. This would help their unit deployment managers tremendously."

DeCA removes all drugs containing PPA

Cough and cold medications and appetite suppressants containing phenylpropanolamine are being removed from commissary shelves because of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warning asking consumers to stop using them. Defense Commissary Agency officials announced Nov. 8.



Commissaries carry a variety of other cough-and-cold medicines. However, nearly all appetite suppressant products sold in commissaries contain PPA with few alternative product choices available. Commissary patrons can determine whether or not a health product has PPA by reading the label.

The action comes after the FDA, citing a possible risk of stroke, issued an advisory that consumers not use any over-the-counter cold medicines or appetite suppressants that contain PPA. FDA officials urge dieters to consult their physicians concerning options.

Although the FDA notice is not a formal recall, DeCA leadership took the removal action to assure commissary customers they can have confidence in products they buy.

Commissary customers may return any unused PPA products to their store for a full refund. Customers with questions about the FDA's action can call 1-888-463-6332. (AFP)