

TORPEDO ALLEY



Vol. 7, No.12

December 2011

Newsletter of Charleston Base, United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.

USSVI Creed

“To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of their duties while serving their country. That their dedication, deeds, and supreme sacrifice be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments. Pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States of America and its Constitution”



Base Meeting:

No meeting for the month of December

Location:

Fleet Reserve Association Branch 269
Low Country Home
99 Wisteria Rd.
Goose Creek, South Carolina. Phone 843-569-2962

Special Officers **Phone Number**

Chief of the Boat	Rick Sparger	843-553-5594
Public Affairs	Larry Starland	843 863-8474
Veterans Affairs	Jim Morrison	843-832-9716
Chaplain	John “Nick” Nichols	843-452-3189
Membership	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Holland Club	John Lookabill	843-797-2991
Scholarship	Julian Villegas	843-871-6135
Newsletter	Ervin Chase	904-327-6045
Storekeeper	Ken Hutchison	843-553-0935
Webmaster	John “Nick” Nichols	843-452-3189
Historian	George Scharf	843 873-3318

Base Officers **Phone Number**

Commander	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Vice Commander	Marty Sessler	843-871-1536
Secretary	Theron Irving	843-572-2731
Treasurer	Terry Trump	843-873-9563

Minutes of the November 2011 meeting

Attendance for the 10 November 2011 meeting was 90

Opening Ceremony: Base Commander Carl Chinn called the meeting to order. A Quorum was present and the meeting was commenced at 1900.

Introductions: One new person was introduced. Steve Morawiec. Welcome aboard!

Secretary: Base Commander asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from last month. A motion was made and the October 2011 USSVICB minutes were approved.

Treasurer: Terry Trump gave the base financial report for October 2011.

Vice Commander: No report.

Chaplain: Nick Nichols presented the chaplain report.

- Larry Rosselot had back surgery on October 4th. He is doing very well and expects to go back to work the first part of December.
- Debi Esch’s mother passed away on October 15th. Timmy and Debi traveled to Ohio for the funeral.

- Andy & Chryst Anderson's daughter, Valerie Jean Graves, passed away recently after suffering a massive heart attack.
- E'laine Power, Stacy's wife, was scheduled to have knee surgery on October 24th. A decision was made not to have the surgery as scheduled.
- Ken & Barbara Curtis are feeling much better. They had to travel to TN at the end of October due to the death of his aunt.
- Marty Sessler is recovering from his knee surgery in October.
- Jim Kimbrell is home and in some pain as he recovers from back surgery in October.
- Tom Lehman will be having hip replacement surgery on November 14th.
- Pappy Henderson is having some health issues and is having a hard time getting out of the house. He enjoys visits so if you have the time go by to see him. He is one of our few remaining WWII heroes. BZ to Ken Hutchison, George Scharf, Roger Gibson, Lee Allison and Rick Wise for recently building a new ramp with handrail for Pappy's shed.
- EMCM(SS) William Kline departed on Eternal Patrol on October 21st. He was a 30 year veteran of the US Navy and the Submarine Service and retired from the Shipyard after 20 years. He was not a Charleston Base member.
- Walt Deal's sister in law passed away recently. This was his wife, Margie's, youngest sister.
- Rich Alkire will be having lung surgery on November 16th at Roper.
- Rick Sparger (aka COB) will be having back surgery on November 18th at St. Francis.
- Darlene Graham is recovering from gall bladder surgery.

Several follow-ups were made on those who've had surgery or illnesses in the last couple of months along with the base sending additional cards.

If you know of shipmates or spouses from other bases who are having a difficult time, had surgery, etc. and would like for USSVI Charleston Base to send them a

card please send their name and address to the Chaplain via email or phone call.

Please have your pictures taken for the web site and also go there to complete your Page 2 for the Chaplain. Several follow-ups were made on those who've had surgery or illnesses in the last couple of months along with the base sending additional cards.

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Membership: Annual membership dues for next year (2012) were due by 1 October 2011. Pay your dues for next year as soon as possible to Carl Chinn.

Public Affairs: Larry Starland introduced himself as the new base PAO.

Scholarship: no report

Veteran's Affairs: no report

Little David: no report

Holland Club: no report

SUBVETS WWII: 8 December Sub Vets WWII Christmas party at Ryan's in Summerville.

Historian: no report

Recreation Committee: no report

District Commander: no report

Chief of the Boat: We had a great time at the hog roast, probably the best one yet!. Thanks for all the help! Veterans Day ceremony tomorrow at 1030, muster at 1000.

Christmas parades as follows: 1 December in Harleyville, 10 December in Ridgeville and 11 December in Summerville.

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY PARADE – Ken Hutchinson has agreed to pull the parade float to Savannah.

Base Commander: Carl reiterated the Christmas parade information.

We are still planning to participate in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Savannah. If you are going you need to look into motel reservations. March 17. USS Trigger and Grayling plaques available from new member.

One of our members has a gold dolphin hat that he donated for raffle to benefit the scholarship fund. Hat was sold to Dave Rein for \$12.

Nuclear Historian: Laying in bed test for military members.

Fleet Reserve: No report.

Old Business: none

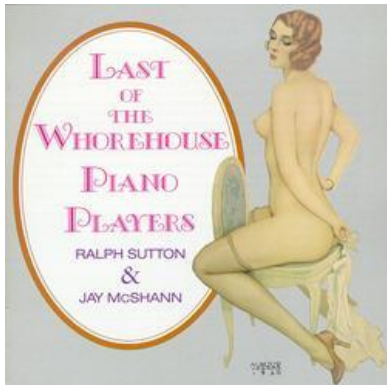
New Business: Kaps4Kids presentation will be sometime in December, working with MUSC on a date.

Good of The Order: Old family housing at MenRiv is available for rent to retirees. Ray Sparks has brochures Marine Corps birthday today

Theron Irving has accepted appointment as Base Secretary.

Ron Kozlowski won the depth charge drawing and donated \$100 to the building fund.

Meeting Adjourned: Base Commander adjourned the meeting at 1945.



"Don't tell mom I'm a submariner, she thinks I play piano in a whorehouse."



Williams	Bailey	Chinn	Dygert
Hayes	Semler	Boatwright	Helton
Standrich	Cline	Woodley	Baker
Hopkins	Evans	Schnebel	Horton
Trump	Werley	Davis	Curtis
Humbertson	Samples	Vandiver	Emerson
Rackley	Ougourlian	Collins	Scharf
Williams	Bailey	Chinn	Dygert
Hayes	Semler	Boatwright	Helton

"It's hard sometimes, but as long as we remember them around the campfire, they will live forever."

December Submarines Lost:

USS Sealion	SS 195	December 10, 1941
USS F-1	SS 20	December 17, 1917
USS S-4	SS 109	December 17, 1927

December Events

December 8 - WWII Subvets Christmas social at Ryan's in Summerville at 1130.

December 10 - Ridgeville Christmas Parade:
Line up at 1100, Parade starts at 1200.
Line up at South Main and Dorchester streets.

December 11 - Summerville Christmas Parade:
Parade will start at 1400 (2:00). Line up information, TBD.



Holland Club inductee's for 2012

Barnette	George
Hix	Carol
Hutchison	Kenneth
Lindberg	Thomas
Moore	Robert
Mueller	David
Owens	William
Paris	Larry
Rackley	Emmett
Scott	Thomas
Skorepa	Thomas
Sparks	Warren
Taylor	David
Wilson	Lloyd

If you should be on the list, and you're not, contact your Holland Club Chairman, John Lookabill.

Remembering Pearl Harbor

It began as an ordinary December day. People were gathered around the radio listening to a football game or planning holiday parties, not girding for battle. But on Dec. 7, 1941, when the first Associated Press report came over the radio at 2:22 p.m. Eastern Standard Time of a “bombing in Hawaii,” the news was electrifying. Seventy years later, every American living now who heard it then can still tell you exactly what he was doing when he learned of the Japanese attack on [Pearl Harbor](#). Even my mother and father, who are Americans of Chinese descent and were then only in their teens growing up in a war-torn and chaotic [China](#), heard of this unimaginable attack. As they tried to survive amidst the domestic upheaval and foreign invasion in the land of their birth, the attack on [Pearl Harbor](#) was shocking news in a country itself devastated by tragedy and horrors.

[Pearl Harbor](#) marked a watershed in the nation’s history and we knew it. What came after would be very different from what came before. It was the war that changed the world. “The Day of Infamy” thrust us into a conflict more than four years long that altered nearly every aspect of American life, large and small - from rationing gas and sugar to the harnessing of atomic power to the new role of women in the workplace. We united to defend our democracy. For more than 400,000, it would be the ultimate sacrifice.

That is why it is so important to remember the 70th anniversary of [Pearl Harbor](#) and all the 70th anniversaries of World War II events that follow. In 2003, [Congress](#) designated the [National World War II Museum](#) to preserve the memory of that global conflict, by telling the story of America in World War II - why it was fought, how it was won and what it means today. It is our mission to collect and hold not just the artifacts of war - the tanks, jeeps, bombers and firearms - but also the memories of the ordinary men and women who flew the planes, fought the battles and manned the factories that won for us a resounding victory.

But the [National World War II Museum](#) is more than just a memorial or a repository for this history. We are committed to studying, interpreting and conveying the priceless lessons and values of World War II to all future generations.

We work knowing that these are endangered memories. The World War II veterans are leaving us. Sixteen million Americans served in uniform in World War II. More than 90 percent are gone, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The war is moving from living memory to history. We must preserve and

pass on the legacy of the “Greatest Generation,” the details of their experiences in battle and on the home front, their service and sacrifice, so that today’s children will know and understand the price of our freedom.

I invite you to New Orleans to see this work in action. On Dec. 7-9, for example, the museum will hold a three-day public conference featuring leading historians and renowned authors discussing [Pearl Harbor](#) and the first year of combat in the Pacific. The museum is expanding to accommodate our iconic artifacts. Next Veterans Day, we will proudly open the U.S. Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center, an extraordinary addition featuring tributes to all branches of military service, six aircraft including the Boeing B-17 “Flying Fortress,” and a **“virtual” submarine experience recreating the last war patrol of the USS Tang**. Our distance education initiatives, social media and online exhibits bring the experience and memories of World War II to people far and wide.

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Navy to christen submarine Mississippi in Conn.

The Associated Press

GROTON, Conn. — The Navy is counting down to the christening of the submarine Mississippi at a shipyard in Groton.

Officials including Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus are expected to attend the ceremony on Dec. 3 at General Dynamics Electric Boat.

Construction on the Virginia-class attack submarine began in February 2007. It’s expected to be commissioned at a ceremony next June in Gulfport, Miss.

The sub is the fifth Navy vessel to carry the name Mississippi.

Electric Boat and Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia take turns delivering the Virginia-class subs, which cost about \$2.6 billion each. They have capabilities that allow them to perform better in shallow water than other subs and were designed to help provide better support for special forces, an increasingly important aspect of naval strategy.

U.S. military legacy rubs off on Iraqi youth

By Bushra Juhi - The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — After more than eight years in Iraq, the departing American military's legacy includes a fledgling democracy, bitter memories of war, and for the nation's youth, rap music, tattoos and slang.

In other words, as the Dec. 31 deadline for completing their withdrawal approaches, U.S. troops are leaving behind the good, the bad and what "Lil Czar" Mohammed calls the "punko."

Sporting baggy soldiers' camouflage pants, high-top sneakers and a back-turned "N.Y." baseball cap, the chubby 22-year-old was showing off his break-dancing moves on a sunny afternoon in a Baghdad park. A \$ sign was shaved into his closely cropped hair.

"While others might stop being rappers after the Americans leave, I will go on [rapping] till I reach N.Y.," said Mohammed, who teaches part-time at a primary school.

His forearm bore a tattoo of dice above the words "GANG STAR." That was the tattooist's mistake, he said; it was supposed to say "gangsta."

Eight million Iraqis — a quarter of the population — have been born since the U.S.-led invasion of 2003, and nearly half the country is under 19, according to Brett McGurk, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and, until recently, senior adviser to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

So after years of watching U.S. soldiers on patrol, it's inevitable that hip-hop styles, tough-guy mannerisms and slangy English patter would catch on with young Iraqis.

Calling themselves "punko," or "hustlers," many are donning hoodie sweat shirts, listening to 50 Cent or Eminem and watching "Twilight" vampire movies. They eat hamburgers and pizza and do death-defying Rollerblade runs through speeding traffic. Teens spike their hair or shave it Marine-style. The "Iraq Rap" page on Facebook has 1,480 fans.

To many of their fellow Iraqis, the habits appear weird, if not downright offensive. But to the youths, it is a vital part of their pursuit of the American dream as they imagine it to be.

"Lil Czar" Mohammed, a Shiite Muslim, says he was introduced to American culture by a Christian friend, Laith, who subsequently had to flee the anti-Christian

violence that broke out in Baghdad. "I had nothing to help my friend, he left," he said. "But when I get the money and become a rich boss, I will tell my friend Laith to come back."

Meanwhile, he said, he is trying to record a rap song in Arabic and English. "It is about our situation. About no jobs for us."

"I love the American soldiers," said Mohammed Adnan, 15, who pastes imitation tattoos on his arm. Adnan lives in the Sadr City, the Baghdad base of followers of anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who has threatened violence against U.S. troops if they stay beyond 2011.

But, surprisingly, Adnan says the U.S. gangsta look is accepted in his neighborhood.

"All young men in Sadr City wear the same clothes when we hang around," he said. "Nobody minds. And we're invited to weddings or celebrations where we perform break-dancing."

It all adds up to a taste of the wide world for a society which lived for decades under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship that deprived them of satellite TV, cell phones and the Internet, and then through invasion, terrorism and sectarian killing.

Not all Iraqis welcome the culture the Americans brought. Fawzia A. al-Attia, a sociologist at Baghdad University, says one result is that young Iraqis now reject school uniforms, engage in forbidden love affairs and otherwise rebel against their elders.

"There was no strategy to contain this sudden openness," she said. "Teenagers, especially in poor areas where parents are of humble origin and humble education, started to adopt the negative aspects of the American society because they think that by imitating the Americans, they obtain a higher status in society."

"These young Iraqi people need to be instructed," she said. "They need to know about the positive aspects of the American society to imitate."

Like many Iraqis, high school student Maytham Karim wants to learn English. But the English he hears most often from his peers — and mostly those who listen to American music — is laden with profanity.

"The F- and the 'mother' words are used a lot, which is a very negative thing," Karim said.

As U.S. forces began closing their bases Iraqis rummaged through their garbage for discarded uniforms, caps and boots to sell to youngsters who pay top dollar

to dress like soldiers. Baghdad's tattoo business is also booming. Hassan Hakim's tattoo parlor in affluent Karradah neighborhood is covered with glossy pictures of half-naked men and women showing off their ink, regardless of Islam's strictures on baring the skin.

The storefront caused a stir when it opened last summer, but complaints soon died down and the business is thriving.

"Iraqi youth are eager in a very unusual way to get tattoo on their bodies, probably because of the American presence here," said Hakim, 32, who is attending graduate school at Baghdad's Fine Arts Academy. "Four years ago, people were concealing their tattoos when in public, but now they use their designs to show off. It is the vogue now."

Most of Hakim's customers are Iraqi security guards imitating their American counterparts. They demand tattoos of coffins, skulls, snakes, dragons, bar codes, Gothic letters and crosses. Female customers prefer flowers and butterflies on their shoulders. Also, many young women now dare to wear tight tops and hip-hugging jeans with their hijabs, or head coverings. Some also sport miniature dogs.

Showbiz and military chic aside, young Iraqis agree that the American troops opened their minds to the outside world. The wait for a place in an English classes, for example, can last months.

"I found that all Iraqis want to learn English," said Nawras Mohammed, and using the Internet or watching satellite TV is fine. But users need to be selective, the 24-year-old college graduate said.

"The positive and the negative aspects of the American presence," she said, "depend on us."

Amphib CO's 'good time' ended his career

By William H. McMichael - Staff writer

The commanding officer of the dock landing ship Gunston Hall could not believe he was under the scrutiny of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service for sexual harassment.

"I was completely shocked and caught off-guard," Cmdr. Fred Wilhelm told an NCIS agent at the outset of his Aug. 2, 2010, interview.

But Wilhelm later acknowledged a free-spirited nature with a comment that, when viewed in the context of his

abuse of alcohol and numerous complaints from female officers, seemed to sum up the entire problem on the ship in 2009 and 2010.

"I will say that I enjoy having a good time," Wilhelm said, according to the NCIS investigation obtained by Navy Times.

It was too good a time and too loose a command climate for the Naval Surface Force Atlantic commander, who dressed down Wilhelm during an August 2010 nonjudicial hearing in his Norfolk office before relieving him of his command.

Wilhelm acknowledged elements of his subordinates' complaints about his off-ship partying, but said his drinking was moderate. "I do not consume more than seven beers on liberty," he said. "I may have some beers and some occasionally [sic] shots, but I always make sure either [names redacted] is with me to make sure I don't get overly intoxicated."

On at least one occasion, Wilhelm did need some help. After a hail-and-farewell event during a port call in Souda Bay, Greece, he admitted getting sick after drinking and throwing up on his shoes while riding a liberty bus back to the ship. He blamed it on inadvertently swallowing some chewing tobacco. Wilhelm was highly social.

"There was a lot of pressure to go out," a female officer said. "He would tell us that there were other people to take our [duty] positions so that we could go out with him."

"He would address the crew on managing their alcohol and not going out and drinking too much, but then would do exactly that himself," another female officer said. "In the past, he has addressed the crew with a hangover from the night before."

The Navy provided only a rough sketch of the conduct and climate when it announced Wilhelm's relief last year. But the NCIS investigation Rear Adm. Dave Thomas relied upon to mete out discipline, although heavily redacted, is almost a clinic on the wrong way for commanding officers to comport themselves, especially male COs leading female officers.

The document was released to Navy Times through the Freedom of Information Act more than a year after the initial request. All names and ranks were blacked out, but a Navy official familiar with the investigation confirmed Wilhelm's statement, providing a cross-reference to details in others' statements.

Alcohol abuse was a common thread running through the 176-page investigation. But the larger problem, and the initial basis for the investigation, was Wilhelm's apparent propensity for touching his female officers, and making or condoning others' sexually suggestive jokes and comments.

During a wardroom conversation, a female officer remarked how she'd been startled earlier by someone who had come up behind her. Wilhelm remarked, "So ... you like it from behind?" A common joke was of the "that's what she said" variety — if someone said something like, "That was hard," the response would be, "That's what she said."

A female officer said she was preparing to go on leave in June 2009 to get married. Wilhelm, she said, pulled her into his stateroom and said she "better not get f—— pregnant on my honeymoon." In May 2010, she left the ship to attend a school in Newport, R.I., but scored only a 76 — one point above passing — on her first test. The score got back to Wilhelm, who told another female officer that she'd probably scored poorly because she was "banging" her husband the night before, she said.

After the commanding officer of the dock landing ship Fort McHenry was fired in December 2009 for fraternizing with an unidentified crew member, one of Wilhelm's officers told NCIS that he called her three times in a matter of minutes to ask if she knew a certain crew member on Fort McHenry and whether "she was hot." She put him off, but a few minutes later, when she subsequently asked permission to enter the wardroom, she said Wilhelm loudly announced, "We can't have sex!" "I was stunned and felt sick and said, 'What?'" she told an agent. "He thought I didn't hear him so he repeated, "We can't have sex!" like he was insinuating that I had propositioned him. He then called her over and again asked about the crew member on Fort McHenry.

A female officer said that in early 2010, when the ship was deployed to Haiti, she made a comment in the wardroom that she was hungry. Wilhelm, she said, asked her if she was pregnant. She replied, "No sir, I'm not." She said he replied, "Good, because if you were, I'd hand you a coat hanger."

A male officer assigned to Destroyer Squadron 60 told NCIS that while he felt Wilhelm was "very professional," he also had an attitude of "work hard, play hard." He also found it "odd" that the nightly operations intelligence brief would "always start off with a joke. ... The jokes in my opinion were inappropriate."

Then there was the touching. One female officer was on the ship's bridge when Wilhelm came up behind her and

"grabbed me on my sides just under my bra line. I turned around and told him to stop." Instead, she said, "He picked me up and held me up in the air a moment before letting me down. I wasn't even in his way."

On two occasions, Wilhelm admitted that he picked up a female officer — once on the ship's bridge — and held her in a fireman's carry. No training was apparently underway at the time.

An unidentified officer told NCIS that on one such occasion, he said to Wilhelm, "Sir, you can't pick up the ensigns." Wilhelm asked him why, and the officer said that others were watching.

The touching wasn't done with a sexual overtone, Wilhelm said. "I have a coaching leadership style," he said. "I regularly put my arm around male and female staff when encouraging them. I have occasionally poked the sides of female officers to get their attention."

Wilhelm also defended the loose talk. "All of the sexual jokes and comments I participated in seemed in my opinion to encourage a free and laid-back atmosphere," he said, adding that morale was low when he took command in April 2009 and that he "wanted to create an atmosphere where officers and department heads felt comfortable and more like a family."

"I never received any complaints from any personnel that anyone was offended or uncomfortable about the jokes or comments," Wilhelm said.

RELIEVED OF COMMAND

Thomas didn't think it was funny. On Aug. 12, 2010, Thomas found Wilhelm guilty of sexual harassment, maltreatment of a subordinate, simple assault, conduct unbecoming an officer, drunk and disorderly conduct and use of indecent language, and relieved him of his command. Wilhelm was one of 17 COs relieved for cause in 2010; at least two cases were related to drinking.

Thomas also disciplined the executive officer, Cmdr. Kevin Rafferty, for dereliction of duty, and the ship's top enlisted, Command Master Chief (SS) Wayne Owings, for dereliction of duty, sexual harassment and simple assault. Both had already transferred.

Wilhelm left the Navy on Sept. 30, 2011, according to Navy Personnel Command. His whereabouts are unknown, so Navy Times was unable to reach him for comment.

The inquiry was launched by an anonymous complaint to the SURFLANT inspector general hotline regarding

sexual harassment by the Gunston Hall command staff. The IG findings led to an NCIS investigation during July and August 2010.

The difference in tone between the statements of male and female officers is striking. Most of the men generally said they saw nothing inappropriate. "Nothing that seemed offensive. ... I would characterize these jokes as 'soft core' and nothing I would be offended to have my wife hear or be told," one said.

One male officer countered the women's complaints about ribald comments, saying that the women in the wardroom "engaged in these jokes and stories more than the males." Still, he said, "the wardroom was too casual and was crossing the line for what should be acceptable."

The presence of outsiders tamped down the hijinks. "The command is completely different" with visitors aboard, one female officer said. Underway visitors in 2010 included Africa Partnership Station officers and members of the DESRON 60 command staff.

A female officer assigned to DESRON 60 embarked on Gunston Hall said she spoke with Wilhelm about a lack of professionalism within the wardroom, particularly during the evening briefs.

She said he told her that one of his goals had been to improve morale and cohesion; he "acknowledged that obviously he'd let things go a bit too far but would rectify the situation."



Russia threatens to aim missiles at U.S. sites

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia will deploy new missiles aimed at U.S. missile defense sites in Europe if Washington goes ahead with the planned shield despite Russia's concerns, President Dmitry Medvedev said Wednesday.

Russia will station missiles in its westernmost Kaliningrad region and other areas if Russia and NATO fail to reach a deal on the U.S.-led missile defense plans, he said in a tough statement that seemed to be aimed at rallying domestic support.

Russia considers the plans for missile shields in Europe, including in Romania and Poland, a threat to its nuclear

forces, but the Obama administration insists they are meant to fend off a potential threat from Iran.

Moscow has agreed to consider NATO's proposal last fall to cooperate on the missile shield, but the talks have been deadlocked over how the system should operate. Russia has insisted the system should be run jointly, which NATO has rejected.

Medvedev also warned that Moscow may opt out of the New START arms control deal and halt other arms control talks if the U.S. proceeds. The Americans had hoped the treaty would stimulate progress on further ambitious arms control efforts, but such talks have stalled over tension on the missile plans.

"The United States and its NATO partners as of now aren't going to take our concerns about the European missile defense into account," a stern Medvedev said, adding that if the alliance continues to "stonewall" Russia, it will take retaliatory action.

The U.S. plan calls for placing land- and sea-based radars and interceptors in European locations over the next decade and upgrading them over time.

Medvedev warned that Russia will deploy short-range Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, a Baltic Sea exclave bordering Poland, and place weapons in other areas in Russia's west and south to target U.S. missile defense sites.

Medvedev added that prospective Russian strategic nuclear missiles will be fitted with systems that would allow them to penetrate prospective missile defenses.

He and other Russian leaders have made similar threats in the past, and the latest statement appears to be aimed at domestic audience ahead of Dec. 4 parliamentary elections.

Medvedev, who is set to step down to allow Prime Minister Vladimir Putin reclaim the presidency in March's elections, leads the ruling United Russia party list in the parliamentary vote.

U.S., Russia spar over pace of arms talks U.S. to stop providing data to Russia on military forces in Europe

By Desmond Butler - The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States said Tuesday it will stop providing data to Russia on non-nuclear military forces in Europe, a sign the Obama administration is growing frustrated at the pace of arms

control negotiations with Moscow.

The move follows failed talks aimed at reviving a treaty that governs the number and position of troops and conventional weapons that are stationed in Europe.

In 2007, Russia suspended its observance of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. But the United States and allies had continued to meet the treaty's obligations by providing Russia with data on their forces.

The United States decided to halt that cooperation because the talks with Russia had dragged on too long. European allies, who are also signatories to the CFE treaty, were also expected to stop sharing data with Russia.

In a statement, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said the United States is prepared to resume data exchange with Russia, if Moscow meets its treaty obligations.

Nuland later said that she hoped the move would spur Russia, four years after suspension of the pact.

"We think it's important to take some countermeasures vis-a-vis Russia and maybe this will crystalize the mind in terms of our ability to get back to the table," she said. The Obama administration has made improving relations with Russia a priority and has seen some success, including the ratification of a major new nuclear arms control treaty that came into force this year.

The administration had hoped that treaty, known as New Start, would stimulate progress on a more ambitious arms control agenda with Russia. But talks have stalled amid tensions over U.S. missile defense plans in Europe. The suspension of data exchange is mostly symbolic because the United States and its allies will continue to provide the same information to other signatories of the treaty, including Russia's allies, like Belarus, which could pass it back to Russia.

The treaty, which was signed in 1990, limits the number of tanks, aircraft and other heavy non-nuclear weapons that could be deployed west of the Ural Mountains — the edge of European Russia. A new revised version was signed in 1999, but NATO countries declined to ratify it. The West had insisted that Russia must honor a promise to pull out its troops from Georgia and the breakaway region of Trans-Dniester in Moldova before they would ratify the new version.

Russia has said the original treaty became obsolete after several former Soviet republics and satellite nations joined NATO. Former President Vladimir Putin, who

now serves as a powerful prime minister, has said that the CFE treaty limited the nation's ability to respond to threats on its own territory.

Admiral Osborne Scholarship Fund

We are offering a Charleston Base Challenge Coin for sale. ALL proceeds go into the scholarship fund. Coins only cost \$7 each for an additional \$1 is a protective plastic capsule. To get your coin(s) see Julian Villegas or Carl Chinn.



Medicare Premiums 2012

On 27 OCT Medicare officials announced the new Part B premium rates for 2012 – and they were significantly lower across the board than most people had expected. And for the first time in memory, large numbers of seniors will actually see their premiums drop significantly. Most beneficiaries with incomes under \$85,000 (or \$170,000 for couples) will see a small increase in monthly premiums from \$96.40 to \$99.90 – an increase of 3.6%. But for some in that category (specifically, those who first became eligible for Medicare in 2010 and 2011) the \$99.90 rate will be less than what they paid in 2011. Similarly, beneficiaries with incomes above \$85,000 (\$170,000 for married couples) will see their premiums drop by \$20-\$50 per month.

Why the declines? Because these two groups (new eligibles and upper-income beneficiaries) were hit with extra premium hikes for the past two years. That happened because the law generally bars any drop in Social Security benefits when there's no COLA. That means most people had their Part B premiums frozen for the last two years. But new eligibles and upper-income people were exempt from the freeze, so they absorbed not only their share of the 2010 and 2011 hikes, but also had to cover the share of all of the "frozen" beneficiaries. Now that the premiums for those 75% of beneficiaries who were held harmless are able to rise, Medicare was able to lift the extra premium burden previously imposed on the unprotected 25%. The bottom line: almost every Medicare-eligible will be paying lower premiums in 2012 than had been predicted, and a significant number will be paying much less.

Military Retirement System Update

The House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee held a hearing on 25 OCT to take a look at the issue of military retirement reform. Chairman Joe Wilson (R-SC) scheduled the hearing to question the wisdom of proposals that would change the system to a civilian-style 401(k)-type program. The Pentagon's principal spokesperson, Dr. Jo Ann Rooney, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, opened her testimony noting "The primary goals of the military compensation system are to attract, retain and eventually separate members so the United States forces can support the numerous missions both here and abroad, and when called upon, succeed on the battlefield. Even though some consider military benefits far-reaching, we must remain cognizant that they support the men and women who volunteer to defend this great nation." As Dr. Rooney correctly pointed out, unlike the civilian sector, the military services must grow most of its workforce from within and it can take 15 to 20 years to properly prepare the next generation of military leaders. It is important that the benefits and services provided to service members foster their long-term commitment to serve this nation in uniform.

Dr. Rooney said the department does believe that a review of the military retirement system is both a fair and reasonable endeavor and that over the past year DoD has been reviewing the current system. In her words, the ongoing review is —deliberate, careful, and pragmatic and involves officer, enlisted and civilian leadership from each of the Armed Forces and all three components (active duty, Guard and Reserve). She also indicated that the unpopular Defense Business Board proposal was one of many concepts being reviewed modeled to determine its impact on recruiting and retention. "The Department is working to strike the correct balance" said Rooney. "This includes weighing the impact on recruiting and retention, considering the welfare of individual service members and their families which includes grandfathering current serving members who took their oath under the current system, and acknowledging our responsibility to the American taxpayer." She emphasized that the department must ensure that any proposed changes do not break faith with currently serving members or negatively impact recruitment and retention efforts; and concluded by telling panel members that the current military retirement system is —neither unaffordable nor spiraling out of control, as some would contend.

A second DoD witness, Ms. Virginia Penrod, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, shored up the observations of Dr. Rooney, noting the current system has supported the most successful all-

volunteer service in the world. The Military Coalition was invited to testify as well and the written testimony outlines the history of the military compensation system, refutes arguments put forth by various —experts and news media to change the present benefits package, and most important, draws attention to past lessons like REDUX. That mandatory retirement system, enacted on August 1, 1986, reduced the value of 20-year retired pay value by approximately 25 percent for members who entered the service on or after that date. At the time, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger warned lawmakers that the lower retired pay REDUX offered compared to the sacrifices inherent in a military career would eventually undermine retention. He was right. Retention flagged, morale dropped, and in 1999, Congress was forced to repeal the compulsory function of REDUX. It's interesting to note that REDUX was the end result of a —budget-driven exercise in the face of dwindling defense budgets. Then, much like now, there seemed to be no shortage of experts claiming the military retirement was too costly, too expensive or a drain on the department.

The most powerful argument offered for the current uniformed services retirement system is that it has worked — and worked extraordinarily well at sustaining career retention through the extraordinary variety of conditions the nation and our military have encountered over the last 60 years. Through multiple wars and budget-driven force build-ups and draw-downs, it has proven highly effective in accomplishing its intended purpose. The hard reality is that the extraordinarily arduous service conditions it was intended to offset have not changed. If anything, service conditions have been worse in recent years than at any time since the current system was created. Military service members deserve a compensation package commensurate with the high level of service and sacrifice they provide each and every day. And nothing in the civilian sector can compare to that same level of commitment. Instead of looking at what we should cut, our service members and this nation would be better served if Congress begins this discussion by talking about what this nation owes those who give 20 or more of the best years of their lives in service to our country.

In response to concerns, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta issued a public announcement of his support for grandfathering the benefits to be provided to currently serving service members. Unfortunately, Panetta has not disavowed entirely the Defense Business Board and related proposal. The hour and 16 minute hearing was taped and is now available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPhnp6X-lgU>.

[Source: AFSA On Call 28 Oct 2011 +

