



Houston Area
PO Box 1082
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www.moahahoustonarea.com

June 2021 Issue – Newsletter to Members

President's Message...

Dear MOAA HA Members,

Greetings, I trust that everyone's summer is getting off to a good start. It certainly is a welcome change from last summer. The first thing I want to address is our Vice President Joe Willoughby who will be leaving us in early July to take an overseas assignment. Our June chapter meeting will be Joe's last meeting. He has been an outstanding member of our chapter for a number of years and has served unselfishly in a number of Chapter leadership positions most recently as President. He will be sorely missed by all. THANK YOU, JOE!



Last month we were treated to an excellent and most informative presentation by Captain Dean Solomon of the Israeli Defense Force. Captain Solomon currently is residing in Houston, so hopefully, we may see more of him in the future. Our featured speaker for this month's lunch meeting will be Mr. Steven Volkman from the FBI Houston office. You can find his bio in this issue. This should be another very interesting discussion.

Additional good news; we have 10 new members so far this year. This is a wonderful achievement. Many thanks to all. Keep'em coming as new members are the life blood for the Chapter.

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June...

Upcoming Chapter Events:

Saturday, June 26th, 2021 @ noon

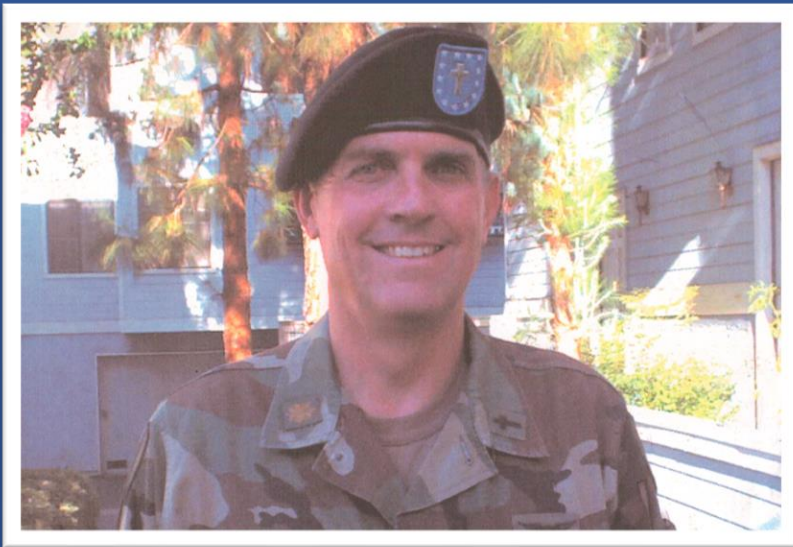
MOAA HA Chapter Meeting
Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant
2503 S Gessner Rd
Houston, TX 77063

Tuesday, June 29th, 2021 @ noon

MOAA HA BOD Meeting
Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant

Meet Our New Chaplain...

David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET



Chaplain David Essells (USAR, MAJ, RET) was born in Wausau, Wisconsin and raised in Pomona California. The family moved to Pomona when he was six years old. He is a graduate of Pomona High School. He enlisted the army in 1968 to serve our country and to fly helicopters. He graduated from the US Army Aviation School at Ft. Rucker Alabama and served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. After release from the army, he continued to serve in the Army Reserve in St. Paul Minnesota as he attended college. He is a graduate of Bethel College, (BA, 1975) and Seminary (MDIV, 1985).

After college graduation he became an elementary teacher in Isle, Minnesota. He felt called into the ministry and graduated from Bethel Seminary in 1985. He served as pastor of Alcester Baptist Church before applying for and re-entering the Army Reserve as a chaplain in 1988. During his professional career he served as an elementary and special education teacher, pastor and reserve army chaplain before retiring in 2010. During his military career in the Active Army, Army Reserve and Montana National Guard (30 years total, 10 active) he served many Army Branches including, Infantry, Artillery, Aviation, Quartermaster and Special Forces.

He is a graduate of the Army Chaplain's Basic and Advanced Officer Courses. Awards include the Army Aviator's Badge, Armed Forces Reserve Medal w/ 30 Year Device, Bronze Star, Air Medals, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal (4), Army Achievement Medal (2) Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal (5) National Defense Service Medal (3), Vietnam Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (3) and other awards.

Chaplain Essells is married and has lived in Richmond, Texas since 2014 with his wife Lois (Dahlstrom). They have a daughter, Joanna (married to Philip) May who lives in Richmond. Their son, Geoff (married to Sara) Essells lives in Fresno, California. Philip and Joanna have two sons, Micah (8) and Sam (6). Geoff and Sara have a daughter, Madelyn (15) and two sons Joshua (13) and Caleb (11). Naturally, their grandchildren are the joy of their lives. He and his wife enjoy travel, tennis, walks in the park and volunteering in the community of faith. ★

Finally, a bit of housekeeping. We are required to give a head count to our luncheon hosts and we will be charged accordingly, so if you have RSVPed for a lunch meeting and cannot make it please let us know, even if it is on the same day so we can make adjustments and not incur any unnecessary costs.

Respectfully,

Rob
Robin P. Ritchie, COL, Infantry, USAR (Ret)

★★★★★★

Chaplain's Corner...

DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY

The above heading is nothing new to any of you who are reading this. This month we'll look at Duty. I am pleased and honored to be able to serve as your chaplain at this time. As we have served our country in our armed forces during our careers, we also have the opportunity to serve both our families and our country in our professions and our retirement. As you know Duty, Honor And Country are the foundations of the Officer Corps, regardless of which branch of the military you serve(d).

As a chaplain, you know that our first Duty is to God, then to country. As soldiers, sailors and airmen we have done that. Our military careers sent us on some excellent and some (possibly) terrifying adventures. The fact is that God has traveled with us on each of these adventures and has sustained us through them, whether we choose to acknowledge that or not. The fact is that God desires that we acknowledge Him as we are on that adventure. Our duty is to be faithful in our endeavors. As I look at the experience of active and reserve service members, we need to be reminded that only one-half of one percent of America's population have chosen to serve. In my opinion that puts us as both privileged and honored servants of our country. As we care for ourselves, our families and our country, at whatever age we are, we will endeavor to continue to make wise decisions and engage in actions and conversations to continue as the leaders we have been. By the Grace of God and by His guidance may we continue to do so.

~ David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET



Standing with you
at every stage.

93569

1-800-247-2192 • www.moaainsurance.com



Sunday, June 20, 2021

Learn About MOAA's Long Term Care Insurance

JULY 20, 2021 | 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM EDT
Online Event

REGISTER NOW
ADD TO CALENDAR



Can't make the webinar? No problem. Register now and we'll send you a link to the recording.

We hear you. When it comes to Long Term Care, you worry about...

- Who to trust ("There are so many companies ...")
- What to choose ("There are so many programs ...")
- How you choose ("These programs are SO confusing ...")
- How to find long term care service providers ("Who is the best fit for me?")
- What legal documents are required ("There is so much paperwork ...")
- How to evaluate and prepare for a future need ("There is so much to worry about ...")

Tune in to learn about MOAA's comprehensive Long-Term Care Resources Plus (LTCR*plus*) program. You'll want to hear about this group benefit program providing full-spectrum support for you and your family's long term care needs.

This webinar is open to all, although MOAA Insurance programs require residence in the U.S.

Learn more about MOAA Insurance offerings of all types, including life insurance and TRICARE supplements, at MOAAinsurance.com.



EVENT SPEAKER

Dominique Lautiero
Long Term Care Funding Specialist

VA Will Soon Begin Processing Claims for 3 New Agent Orange Illnesses – MAY 29, 2021

The **Department of Veterans Affairs** will soon start processing claims for three new presumptive illnesses linked to exposure to herbicides in Vietnam and elsewhere. It also plans to automatically review all previous claims and denials for the conditions, VA officials said May 27.

According to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, the department in coming weeks will issue a policy to implement a law that added bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism -- or Parkinson's-like symptoms -- to the list of conditions considered linked to Agent Orange exposure.



*An Air Force aircraft sprays Agent Orange defoliant 20 miles southeast of Saigon during the Vietnam War. (Dick Swanson/The LIFE Images Collection via Getty Images)
Editor's note: This article by Patricia Kime originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.*

[TAKE ACTION: Ask Your Lawmakers to Support Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform]

Veterans with a listed condition have an expedited process for receiving health care and benefits from the VA.

The National Defense Authorization Act, approved Jan. 1, added the three conditions to the list of diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other defoliants used during the Vietnam War.

Veterans whose claims are approved may receive an earlier date for entitlement to benefits -- a decision that could result in more compensation.

"Many of our Nation's Veterans have waited a long time for these benefits," said McDonough. "VA will not make them wait any longer. This is absolutely the right thing to do for Veterans and their families."

The department plans to automatically review previously denied claims and will notify those veterans or their survivors via mail.

According to McDonough, benefits could be extended to roughly 52,000 veterans and 6,000 surviving family members "in the first year alone."

[RELATED: VA Moves to Expedite Benefits for Post-9/11 Veterans' Asthma, Respiratory Problems]

"This means that any Vietnam veteran suffering from one of these three new conditions can now file and receive benefits and care and, consistent with [a court ruling, *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*], their survivors who previously filed and those who were denied benefits will have their cases automatically reviewed," he said.

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2021 Officers

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*We need YOU...
to remain a
MOAA HA Member!*



Debating whether to renew your chapter membership?

Talking to a potential new member?

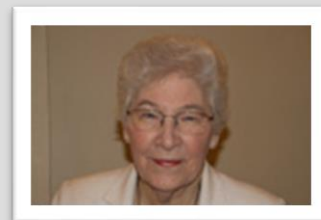
Benefits to belonging to a chapter:

- Camaraderie and Connections: when you attend chapter functions, actively serve on a committee, or take a prominent leadership role, you forge lasting ties with other MOAA members.
- Community Involvement: Membership provide opportunities to contribute to your community in a variety of ways, from providing scholarships to local students, to supporting causes that support wounded warriors and their families.
- Legislative Advocacy: We advocate for the entire military community-all ranks. Members play a critical role in advancing legislation in both Austin and Washington, D.C. This grassroots advocacy is key to MOAA achieving its legislative goals.

Chapter dues reminders will be emailed/sent out in November to those members needing renewal. We are on a calendar year for our chapter dues.

Annual renewal is \$30 for one year, \$20 for each additional year paid with renewal. Surviving Spouse \$15 initial membership; \$10 annual renewal.

Membership Application on the last page!



Defense Finance and Accounting Service

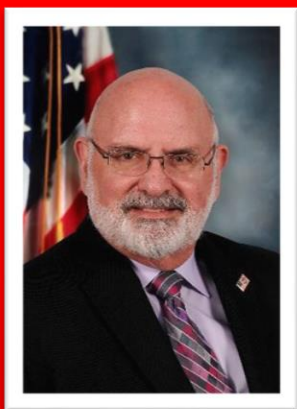
Surviving Spouse Corner

Judith Thomas
Surviving Spouse MOAA Liaison
jthomas482@aol.com

 **Survivor SBP Newsletter**

[Access the DFAS Survivor SBP June 2021 Newsletter Here](#)

June MOAA HA Guest Speaker...



Steven D. Volkman, Administrative Officer; Administrative Services Unit; Cyber, Security, Critical Infrastructure and Administrative Services Branch

Saturday, June 26th, 2021 @ noon

MOAA HA Chapter Meeting
Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant
2503 S Gessner Rd
Houston, TX 77063

Please RSVP to Joe Willoughby
Email: joe.willoughby@gmail.com
Phone 713.569.6700

Steven D. Volkman has served as the Administrative Officer (AO) and the Administrative Services Unit Chief since 2011. Mr. Volkman entered on duty with the FBI in 2008 as the AO of the Honolulu Division. Mr. Volkman has served as a member of the Director's Administrative Officer Advisory Council from 2015 – 2017 and is currently an Adjunct Faculty member for the FBI's Leadership Development Program since 2012.

Mr. Volkman has more than 32 years of military service. He retired from the United States Army in 2007 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after serving as a Military Police Soldier and Human Resources Manager. During his military career, he led soldiers and civilians in various sized units from a two-man team to an over 400 personnel combat support military police battalion. He served in over 15 different military units in the continental United States and overseas (Germany, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Cuba), to include two tours of duty with the US Army Criminal Investigation Command, three tours of duty in joint-military units, three assignments on two-star and four-star flag officer (SES Level I through III equivalent) executive staffs, and one tour as a graduate-level instructor at the US Army War College. In addition to being a practiced military police officer and investigative supervisor, his assignments have also qualified him to perform and direct logistical, personnel, financial, and administrative support operations, as well as training management.

Mr. Volkman is a graduate of the 164th Session (March 1991) of the FBI National Academy. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Law and Justice from Central Washington University, a Master of Arts degrees in Management and Human Relations from Webster University, and a Master of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College. He is a native of Riverdale (Chicago), Illinois and married with four children and six grandchildren. ★

AARP and Elizabeth Dole Foundation Announce Free Respite Relief Program for Veteran and Military Family Caregivers Going Nationwide

AARP Expands Resources for Veteran and Military Family Caregivers with Release of New Financial Workbook

WASHINGTON—AARP and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF) today announced the new Respite Relief Program for Military and Veteran Caregivers is going nationwide in 2021. This free program grants family caregivers access to no-cost, short-term assistance to help those caring for wounded, ill or injured veterans or service members at home.

“Across the country, more than 5.5 million veteran and military family caregivers have been caring for loved ones through the COVID-19 pandemic, taking on more responsibilities along with increased worry, stress, and anxiety,” said AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins. “AARP is heartened to collaborate with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to help communicate the support available to these hidden heroes. Respite relief can help lighten that emotional burden for veteran and military caregivers.”

EDF’s Respite Relief Program offers care assistance provided by CareLinx – a qualified in-home respite care provider – and national outreach support by AARP, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). Veteran and military caregivers can apply online at <https://hiddenheroes.org/respite> to receive 24 hours of respite care to help with activities of daily living, such as cooking, grocery shopping, housekeeping, bathing, and medication reminders.

“Now more than ever, military and veteran caregivers are feeling burned out and in need of a break,” said EDF Founder Senator Elizabeth Dole. “We’re proud to offer the Respite Relief program and provide caregivers the much-deserved opportunity to recharge and practice self-care.”

Research from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving finds that many caregivers believe services like respite care would be helpful, though use of these programs remains low. Just 14% report having used respite care, though 38% feel it would be helpful (up from 33% in 2015), according to [Caregiving in the U.S. 2020](#).

New AARP Financial Workbook for Veteran and Military Family Caregivers

AARP also released a free financial workbook today available for veteran and military caregivers. The workbook highlights caregiving costs to help individuals track what they spend on caring for their military veteran. Understanding out-of-pocket costs allows caregivers to plan and save, which can take significant financial pressure off the household budget.

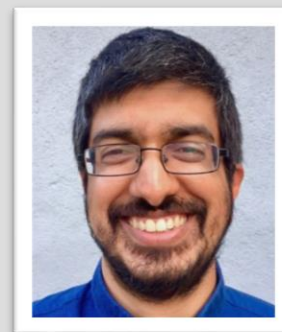
Other AARP free resources and timely information for veteran and military caregivers include:

- [Veterans and Military Family Caregiving Guide](#)
- Veterans and Military Family Caregiving Handbooks ([English](#) & [Spanish](#))
- Supporting Veteran and Military Family Caregivers in a Pandemic Fact Sheet ([English](#) & [Spanish](#))
- [“Military Caregivers Face New Challenges During Pandemic”](#): Column by Amy Goyer
- For more information on these and other resources for veterans, visit www.aarp.org/Veterans.

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MOAA HA May Chapter Meeting Recap >>>

May's Guest Speaker: **Captain Dean Solomon**
 Israeli Defense Forces



On Saturday, May 22nd, we conducted a virtual chapter meeting via Zoom. After briefing participants on the status of the chapter, MOAA Chapter President Rob Ritchie introduced our guest speaker, Captain Dean Solomon, from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

Although currently living in Houston while his wife attends graduate school, Dean is still an active reserve forces officer in the Israeli military, serving in the IDF's Home Front Command. The command's missions include preparing the civilian population for a conflict or disaster, assisting the population during crisis, and contributing to post-crisis reconstruction. In addition to speaking to the chapter about his personal experience as an Israeli military officer, Dean provided chapter members with an overview of the Israeli Defense Forces' missions and various components. Not surprisingly, based on the recent events that transpired in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, there were plenty of questions from members, and Dean answered our questions and provided valuable insight into the complexities of day-to-day life in today's Israel. ★

AARP and EDF... *Continued from Page 8...*

EDF's Respite Relief Program for veteran and military caregivers started as a pilot program in California, Florida and Texas, with support from AARP, CareLinx, VA, WWP, and Bob Woodruff Foundation. Since August 2020, the program has connected more than 500 veteran and military caregivers with these basic in-home services.

#

About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org, www.aarp.org/espanol or follow @AARP, @AARPenEspanol and @AARPadvocates, @AliadosAdelante on social media.

About the Elizabeth Dole Foundation

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation is the preeminent organization empowering, supporting, and honoring our nation's 5.5 million military caregivers – the spouses, parents, family members, and friends who care for America's wounded, ill, or injured veterans at home. Founded by Senator Elizabeth Dole in 2012, the Foundation adopts a comprehensive approach in its support and advocacy, working with leaders in the public, private, nonprofit, and faith communities to recognize military caregivers' service and promote their well-being. Learn more about the Elizabeth Dole Foundation at hiddenheroes.org.

For further information: Alex Guerin, AARP, 202-710-0472, aguerin@aarp.org; Austin Courtney, Elizabeth Dole Foundation, 703-629-8011, austin@elizabethdolefoundation.org



New, helpful DFAS status notifications start this year!

CLEVELAND — The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) is excited to announce one of the latest improvements that will soon be available to Retired Soldiers and their SBP annuitants. Over the coming year, DFAS is rolling out the use of status notifications to keep you informed as your submissions are processed through the retired pay or annuitant pay processing cycles.



How do status notifications work?

Status notifications are a three-step process that will alert you when DFAS receives forms or documents you mail or fax for processing (or in some specific cases, through AskDFAS). You will receive separate status notifications when your form or document is:

1. Received and queued in the DFAS work system
2. Assigned to be worked

What you need to do to receive a status notifications from DFAS

To be eligible to receive these status notifications, please ensure your email address is available and updated in myPay. You will receive the notification via SmartDoc email, so you must have a valid email address in myPay. To add or ensure your email address is up-to-date, please visit <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>.

What is included in the first rollout of status notifications?

The first rollout of status notifications include submissions related to the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), Direct Deposit Standard Form 1199, and change of address requests, followed by requests related to federal or state (for retirees) tax changes and the designation of beneficiary for the Arrears of Pay (AOP).

Watch for more information on status notifications and other improvements from DFAS in upcoming issues of *Army Echoes* and on the DFAS Retired & Annuitant Pay website: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary>.

Check out these convenient DFAS tools to help you manage your pay account

CLEVELAND — Since Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) announced myPay's Two-Factor Authentication last September, more than 400,000 retirees have included this new layer of online security to their myPay accounts. In late April, two-factor authentication became mandatory for all myPay users. Users need to select how to receive the random one-time PIN the first time they log in to myPay after that date.

Simply put, two-factor authentication uses your mobile phone number or email address to provide a means to verify that you are you and not someone who has discovered your myPay Login ID and password.

myPay accounts are secured with Login IDs and passwords. When an account holder enters this information, a unique one-time PIN is sent to the individual's mobile phone via text message or as an email message to an address contained in the user's myPay profile. Once the one-time PIN is entered on the myPay login screen, access to the account is provided.

The one-time PIN verification code remains valid for 10 minutes so it will be important that the user have access to the mobile phone or email account previously selected by the user to receive the information.

Information on two-factor authentication is available via the DFAS website at <https://www.dfas.mil/mypayinfo/2FA/>. There you will also find a link to the two-factor most frequently asked questions that explain the benefits of two-factor authentication and the steps needed to help you meet the new requirements.

Remember, two-factor authentication helps keep your online accounts secure and prevents thieves from stealing your personal and financial information.

Preparing your survivor

By **Patty Cruz**, Army Survivor Benefit Plan Program Manager

When you made the decision to provide the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage for your loved one you may or may not have discussed it with them. Whether you did or not, take the next step to have a conversation about how they will claim that benefit and what they might need after you die. It can be difficult but not as difficult as it will be for your survivor to navigate without you.

Prepare a folder or binder (physical or electronic) that contains all the important documents that they will need when the time comes. Take a look at the following link to a useful checklist to start your folder/binder:

https://soldierforlife.army.mil/Documents/static/Post/Retired_Soldier_Casualty_Assistance_Checklist.pdf

In the event of your death, your survivor will need to report your death to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) to stop your retired pay to prevent overpayment. Your survivor can report your death using the askDFAS online form or by calling the Customer Care Center at (800) 321-1080.

Once your death is reported, your survivor can then claim your Arrears of Pay and SBP annuity. Please see the link below for more detailed instructions on the DFAS website: <https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/Retiree-Death/>

DFAS has some helpful tools to assist your survivor through this process to include a Form Wizard for the DD Form 2656-7 Verification for Survivor Annuity, the checklist of required forms, links to the required forms, and "How To" checklists and videos. The following webpage will provide more detailed instructions for the SBP annuity claim: <https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/ApplySBP/>

Lastly, you should also let your survivor know that an Army Retirement Services Officer (RSO) is always available to assist. Contact information for the Army RSOs is located in this newsletter and on the following page:

<https://soldierforlife.army.mil/Retirement/rso?maps=all>



How to report the death of a Retired Soldier

Contact the Department of the Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Division anytime by calling (800) 626-3317. You will be immediately referred to a local Casualty Assistance Center, who will report the death to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to stop retired pay and initiate the survivor benefits process. If you reside overseas and the toll free number is not available, call your Retirement Services Officer listed on page 15 for assistance. When reporting the death, please provide as much of the information below as you have:

- Full name
- Social security number and/or service number
- Date and place of birth
- Disability Rating
- Circumstances surrounding the death
- Next of Kin (NOK) information
- Copy of death certificate
- Retirement date
- Retired rank

soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement

New Agent Orange Illnesses ... Continued from Page 5...

VA officials could not provide a timeline for adjudicating claims and providing benefits. They said the department is looking at ways to accelerate claims processing and has been chipping away at a claims backlog. As of this week, the backlog is 190,000 claims, down from 211,000 in January, according to McDonough.

He has said that veterans should file claims for illnesses they believe are service-connected even if the conditions aren't listed as presumed to be related to service.

"Oftentimes, the absence of a presumption serves as a disincentive for an individual vet to come forward with her claim, which obviously speaks to a trust issue we have on the claims process," McDonough said in late March. "So the first thing I'd say is ... if [veterans] have a claim ... please come forward with it." ★

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Military Officers Association of America – Houston Area

Membership is available to Officers who have held a Federal Warrant or Commission in any of the seven uniformed services of the United States or to the surviving spouse of such a person. Please use this form for application for membership, renewal or changes to the current directory of members. Additionally, The Chapter always welcomes donations to assist the Chapter's operating expenses and supporting our ROTC and JROTC programs.

Name: _____
(Please print) Last First Initial Rank

Branch _____ Status _____ MOAA Nat'l ID _____ *

Spouse's First Name: _____ Tel. for Directory _____

Home Address: _____

Email: _____

Dues: Regular Membership – \$30 first year; annual renewal \$30 (Discount for multiple years if paid with renewal: \$20 for each add'l. year **paid with renewal**)

Surviving Spouse – \$15 first year; annual renewal \$10 (same discount for multiple years)

Chapter Assistance Fund

\$100.00 \$50.00 \$25.00 Other _____

Make check payable to MOAA-HA and mail to:

MOAA-HA
PO Box 1082
Houston, TX 77251-1082



For more information, call COL Robin Ritchie, 713-818-0408

**If not a MOAA national member, another benefit of chapter membership is the opportunity to become a national MOAA member at the BASIC LEVEL for free! If you would like to do so, please indicate here:*

YES NO

Signature: _____