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VETERANS

POST

SERVING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN RETURN FOR THEIR SERVICE TO US

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## Nighttime Fueling Station



An F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft from Joint Base Balad, Iraq, refuels from a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft from the 763rd Expeditionary Refueling Squadron during a mission over Iraq on Sept. 3, 2008. DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon II, U.S. Air Force. (Released)

## Black Hawk Unit Heads Home



Crews from 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment (Assault) prepare to load the last of their battalion's UH-60 Black Hawks onto an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III. Task Force Storm, prepare to leave Camp Striker, Iraq after their Nomadic Iraq Tour. Sept 29, 2008. Photo by Sgt. Maj. Phil Prater

## Veteran's Travel Pay Update!

Back in April 2008, we wrote about the VA putting new rules and restrictions on travel pay for appointments. Each Veteran started out the month with a \$54 negative balance. If your regular round trip pay was \$10, on your sixth scheduled visit you would receive \$6. There was of course a waiver, but you had to jump through fiery hoops and have a total income of \$5,500 less than the national poverty level.

But for those of us, who wrote letters, faxed, emailed and phoned our congress... The rules were changed.

The waivers are gone says VA official, at the Bay Pines VAMC, near Saint Petersburg, FL, but after your third scheduled appointment of the month, you will receive your travel pay.

If you are a walk in and don't have an appointment, you will be paid half of the round trip fee. Remember, if you **don't** go to the Travel check out window at your local VA after each appointment, no matter if it is the first or tenth appointment, you get nothing.

For those not yet aware or new to the system, you can spend a few extra minutes at the window and have them go back a maximum of 30 days to catch up your travel pay.

## Marine Veteran Re-Enlists To Cover Nephew's Back



When Andrew Moericke, of West Bend, WI, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on his 18th birthday in 2003, his uncle, Chris Moericke, knew Andrew would be going to war. Chris, a former Marine, wasn't about to let his nephew go without some back-up.

Chris joined Andrew in Fox Company, the Corps's Milwaukee reserve infantry unit, in 2005 at age 38. It was unusual, Chris said, to be among Marine's young enough to be his kids. He said, his re-enlistment was a hard sell to his family, some of whom felt Chris had already done his part by serving in Desert Shield & Desert Storm.

For Chris, the decision was straightforward. "I reassured them I was going to go and keep an eye on [Andrew]," Chris said.

Uncle and nephew deployed to Anbar Province in Iraq in January, serving there for seven months. The two are close - Andrew remembers asking Chris all about the Marine Corps as a child - but Chris made it clear that Sgt. Christopher Moericke was not going to play favorites with Cpl. Andrew Moericke.



"FIRST TEAM"

## Two Soldiers Reunite In Kuwait

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait - "We're just two Lockhart, Texas boys meeting overseas in the desert," said deployed Soldier Michael A. Castillo.

They had not seen each other in quite awhile, Castillo was a Private and Gary G. Bunch was a Major.

Now more than a decade later, Castillo is a Staff Sergeant and Bunch a One Star.

"I was coming off a [combat logistical patrol] and going to eat breakfast, and I got a magazine that had Brig. Gen. Bunch's picture in it and I said to my buddies, 'Oh my gosh, I know this guy,'" Castillo explained.



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