



News for U.S. Military Widows in Korea

1. Benefits Increased By 3.5%: Effective December 1, 2000, all benefits are increased by 3.5%. For example the VA DIC, currently \$881 for a widow without children, will increase to \$911. The VA pension, currently \$502 for a widow without children, will increase to \$519. SBP, Social Security and other benefits are different for each person, but also increase by 3.5%. You will see the increase in the check you receive in January.

2. Ration Control Purchase Limit Increased: The ration control purchase limit for Commissary purchases increased on November 1 from \$350 to \$450 for individuals.

As a reminder, all purchases at all Commissaries in Korea are recorded and saved in a central computer system. Each person's record can be reviewed for buying patterns that show purchases in excess of personal needs. It is very important to remember that the Commissary is for personal use, and purchases that appear to be more than you need for yourself and your immediate family are indicators of illegal use of the Commissary, such as for black marketing.

3. Social Security Claims Will Be Slower: On November 18 I learned that my contact at Social Security was retiring and that was his last day. It was very sudden, and we were not able to plan for someone else to provide the same service that he has provided. Because of this, I will have to start working through the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, which means that all Social Security claims and problems will be very much slower to complete. I will be working very hard to try to get a new person to provide the same type of service, but it may take a long time. Please be patient.

4. Income Tax: By the end of January 2001, all tax statements must be mailed. If you are required to file U.S. income tax, you should have your tax statements by the end of February. If you have not received them, then contact the RAO to obtain a replacement.

As a reminder, if you are receiving SBP, and you are not a U.S. citizen and you live in Korea, you should not be paying tax on the SBP. If tax is being withheld from your SBP, contact the RAO to complete a tax exemption form.

On the other hand, if you are receiving Social Security benefits and you are not a US citizen and you live in Korea, you should be paying tax on your Social Security benefits. These benefits are taxed at 25.5%

As always, VA benefits are not taxable.

5. RAO Vacation Schedule: The RAO will be closed for Christmas vacation from Monday, December 25 and reopen Wednesday January 3. I will still be checking the answering machine every day, so if you have an emergency please call 031-661-1441 and leave a message. Be sure to include your name and phone number.

6. Seoul Visit Schedule for 2001: Once each month on the second Tuesday, the RAO is conveniently available to Seoul area residents. We are located in the Community Room of the Army Community Services Center, Room 118, Building 4106, between 9am-noon. Following is the schedule for 2001:

January 9
February 13
March 13
April 10
May 8
June 12
July 10
August 14
September 11
October 9
November 13
December 11

7. RAO Holidays in 2001: Following is the RAO holiday schedule for 2001.

Monday-Tuesday, January 1-2
Monday, January 15
Tuesday-Thursday, January 23-25
Monday, February 19
Monday, May 28
Wednesday, July 4
Monday, September 3
Monday-Tuesday, October 1-2
Monday, October 8
Monday, November 12
Thursday and Friday, November 22-23
Monday, December 24 - Tuesday, January 2

8. Retiree Activities Office (RAO): The RAO is located at Osan AB in Building 936, Room 114C, behind the Base Exchange.

The office hours are 0800-1500, Monday-Friday.

The telephone number is 031-661-1441, or 784-1441 from a military phone.

The fax number is 031-661-3894, or 784-3894 from a military phone.

If you have e-mail, the e-mail address is retact@osan.af.mil.

A 24-hour answering machine is available. You can leave a message in English or in Korean, and please be sure to leave your name and telephone number.

9. Tax Centers: Here is the information on the tax center in your area:

Tongduchon, Uijongbu	730-8693/031-869-8693	Bldg S-62
Seoul	724-1040/02-7914-1040	Bldg 1167
Osan	784-6829/031-661-6829	Bldg 788
Anjong-ni	753-8053/03-691-8053	Bldg 323
Taegu	768-66680/053-620-6680	Bldg 1805
Kunsan	782-4284/063-470-4284	Bldg 755
Pusan	763-3571/051-801-3571	ACS Bldg

10. VA Expands Agent Orange Claims: The Veterans Administration has added two additional diseases to the list of diseases probably caused by Agent Orange. The two diseases are Prostate Cancer and Diabetes. If your husband suffered from either of these diseases and you are not currently receiving the VA DIC (\$881), contact the RAO to file a claim. The VA will approve your claim only if this disease caused your husband’s death. However, the VA will consider claims where the disease contributed to the death. For example, if your husband suffered from Diabetes and died from hypertension (high blood pressure), it may be possible to show that the Diabetes was a factor in the hypertension and was a secondary cause of death.

If you have any questions, please contact the RAO at 031-661-1441. It would be very helpful if you are able to provide your husband’s medical records. If you don’t have them, we can obtain them from the records storage center in St. Louis.

11. Credit Union Beneficiary: Many of you have been opening credit union accounts so that you can take advantage of direct deposit. Several ladies asked how they can be sure that, when they die, the money in their credit union account will go to someone such as Korean relative. I checked with the credit union and the answer is to go to the credit union and ask for a Beneficiary Request Form. It requires the name and social security number (SSN) of the person that you designate to receive the money. If the person is a Korean citizen, put the Korean ID number in place of the SSN. Be sure to include the address and phone number of the person on the back of the form, and don’t forget to keep the information up to date.

12. Check Your Mailbox, Check Your Mail: You should be checking your on-base mailbox at least once each week. When you pick up your mail, look at each letter to be sure it’s addressed to you. If it has someone else’s name on it, return it to the postal clerk.

13. Holiday Wishes: We have been serving the retirees and widows of Korea for three years, and it continues to be a rewarding experience. In the past year, we lost some good friends among both the retiree and widow communities as age and illness take their toll. Even as we remember them, our focus must always be on our community how we can help make life better for you. Our goal is to help you get and keep all the benefits to which you are entitled. And we pledge in

2001 to continue working for you. We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Jack and Puneer Terwiel

*A Very Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year*

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MPS