



Monthly Newsletter

Volume 7 | 2021 | American Legion Thailand THo1 Post

Announcement

This newsletter is for American veterans, spouses and dependent children living in Thailand and elsewhere to keep up with current post news.

Please submit future article suggestions to Amerilegiontho1@gmail.com.

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Commander's Message

It is almost Independence Day, and we are looking forward to getting together to celebrate the founding of our great nation. We'll be having a gathering of family and friends after our Post meeting on the 12th, and, within the restrictions specified by our Wing 21 host, we will share food, drink, and fellowship in the best of the American tradition. Those that wish to attend, please bring a dish to share.

While it is difficult to know the future status of Covid restrictions in Thailand, we should use the assumption of 4 months to reopen as the Prime Minister has stated as his goal. This gives us plenty of time to plan events, even if we must push them out another month or two. We can use this time getting ready for activities and events involving family, community, and Americans.

“Warm welcome
to our newest
member Jatuporn
(Jack) Sungakris.”

As the Post has selected some new officers, I took the opportunity to reorganize the Post to be more effective. I am encouraged to see the immediate increase in participation. Both the Membership Committee and the Communications & Media Committee have held their first meetings. I would like to encourage more members to participate. This can be done virtually and can really push our Post forward. We have a vacancy for the Graves Registration & Memorials Committee Chair. If you think that you can take the time to help care for our veterans that have passed and the care of their families, contact me for a description and the scope of this position. It is an important one and we only get one chance to get it right for families of the fallen.

Adjutant's Corner

On behalf of the Post, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest member **Jatuporn (Jack) Sungakris**. We are happy you joined our Post and look forward to meeting you at the next membership meeting.

The migration of the myLegion.org database to the new platform is moving along and will hopefully be ready for the new membership year July 1, 2021. One of the great changes in migrating to the new platform is the change of the members address format. In the past we had to fit our lengthy Thai address into the USA format with only 50 available characters. This resulted in us abbreviating the address to make it fit. The new system address format is based on the country. When we select Thailand as the country, we get a format that is compatible with Thailand addresses.





Unfortunately, when they migrated our Thai address to the new platform, the data did not transfer to the correct address fields. I will be going in and correcting all the Thai address with the help of Google Map and you. If I have any problems, I will call you for the full address.

Once updated, the American Legion Magazine and Dispatch newsletter will be sent with the corrected address. So, if you do not get your American Legion Magazine and Dispatch newsletter, let me know. Please give it several months for the Legion's system and postal system to catch up. I received my April edition last week.

Safety Topic

July is National Fireworks Safety Month. The fourth of July is here! A time to celebrate our nations birthday and enjoy a day picnicking with friends and relatives. Of course, an evening with plenty of fireworks. In Thailand fireworks are often used to celebrate holidays such as New Years, Songkran Water Festival, Loi Krathong Day, and Rocket Festival to name a few.

The National Safety Council advises everyone to enjoy fireworks at public displays conducted by professionals, and not to use any fireworks at home. They may be legal, but they are not safe.



In 2017 USA experienced [eight people die and over 12,000 injured](#) badly

enough to require medical treatment after fireworks-related incidents. Of these, 50% of the injuries were to children and young adults under age 20. Over two-thirds (67%) of injuries took place from June 16 to July 16. And while the majority of these incidents were due to amateurs attempting to use professional-grade, homemade or other illegal fireworks or explosives, an estimated 1,200 injuries were from less powerful devices like small firecrackers and sparklers.



Safety Topic

Additionally, in the USA [fireworks start an average of 18,500 fires each year](#), including 1,300 structure fires, 300 vehicle fires and nearly 17,000 other fires.

If consumer fireworks are legal to buy where you live and you choose to use them, be sure to follow the following safety tips:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks
- Older children should use them only under close adult supervision
- Never use fireworks while impaired by drugs or alcohol
- Anyone using fireworks or standing nearby should wear protective

- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands
- Never light them indoors
- Only use them away from people, houses, and flammable material
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person
- Only light one device at a time and maintain a safe distance after lighting
- Never ignite devices in a container
- Do not try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks
- Soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding
- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks that don't go off or in case of fire
- Never use illegal fireworks



Member Message

Quality Assistance in Thailand (Part 4)

By Bruce Postel

This article is Part 4 of 4. Today, I address some common [Social Security](#) (SS) topics along with some known SS benefits misinformation and below par assistance provided in Thailand the past 15 years (much of it since 2011). There's a lot of ground to cover so let's get to it!

Social Security [reports](#) 7,906 payments to beneficiaries in Thailand as of May 2021. Method: Treasury Check - 38 | International Direct Deposit - 904 | U.S. Bank Direct Deposit - 6,964.

- [Social Security & Medicare Benefits](#) (Retirement, Disability, Survivors, Medicare & More)
- [Create Your Personal my Social Security Account](#) (U.S. address required)
- [Reporting Changes is Your Responsibility](#)
- [Stay Up to Date - Subscribe Today](#)

Foreign Enforcement Program (FEP). (Excerpt) *"The FEP is one of the integrity measures used by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify the existence and identity of beneficiaries living outside the United States. Contacts are made annually or biennially."* Note: Contact for a Thai address is annually. (The FEP is currently deferred and on hold due to COVID-19. Social Security has not yet announced an FEP resumption date.)

Learn More:

[Foreign Enforcement Program](#)

[Foreign Enforcement Questionnaire](#)

Address Change (Beneficiaries):

For SS beneficiaries moving to/from or within Thailand, email your address change information to FBU.Manila@ssa.gov and include the Beneficiary's Last Name, First Name, Date of Birth, Last Four Digits of Social Security Number (SSN), New Mailing Address (P.O. Box is acceptable) and Contact Phone Number. FBU Manila will inform you if additional information is required.

I presume that most Veterans with Thai spouses want to know if their spouse is eligible to be paid SS Survivors benefits when that sad time arrives.

Answer: "It depends."

Learn More:

- [Alien Nonpayment Provision \(ANP\)](#)
- [5 Year Residency Requirement for Alien Dependents/Survivors Outside the U.S.](#)
- [Establishing the 5 Year Residency Requirement](#)
- [Your Payments While You Are Outside the United States](#)



There are nine [Alien Exceptions](#) to the ANP. For a Veteran's surviving family members, "Deceased Veteran" is the exception I've seen most often in Thailand. For example, award of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(DIC\)](#), or a Department of Defense (DoD) active-duty military death typically meets the exception.

VA Survivors Pension (SP) Beneficiaries: Remember that [VA SP](#) is needs-based, and if a VA SP recipient later also becomes eligible for SS benefits, it's the SS "Gross Amount" that offsets VA SP dollar-for-dollar. In numerous cases, a nonresident alien's SS "Net Amount" (after compulsory tax withholding) ended up being less than their VA SP payment amount. When this happens, it's a lengthy process to stop SS benefits payments and restart VA SP.

Taxation: A portion of your SS benefits may be [taxed](#). Nonresident aliens are subject to mandatory [tax withholding](#). **Note:** The [Thai-U.S. Tax Treaty](#) does not cover Social Security.

Question: (Veteran; age 62+) *"Can I get Social Security for my adopted Thai children?"*

False: "Yes, you can get Social Security for your adopted Thai children, should be easy."

True: Adoptions are complex.

(Excerpt) *"We will not pay children adopted outside the U.S. while they reside outside the U.S., even if the child meets the residency requirement."*

Learn More:

[Your Payments While You Are Outside the United States](#) (pp 9-10)

Question: (U.S. Citizen Widow; age 60) *"My husband died. Can I get Social Security?"*

False: "You're not eligible for monthly Social Security Survivors benefits because you don't have 40 work credits under Social Security."

True: For SS Survivors benefits it's the deceased "Number Holder" that must have the requisite number of SS work credits, not the surviving spouse. In this particular case, the U.S. citizen surviving spouse is now receiving monthly SS Survivors benefits, but she lost over \$34,000 because she had initially relied on the false information and didn't timely apply.

Learn More: [Survivors Benefits](#)

Question: (Nonresident Alien Thai Widow) *"My daughter graduate high school and go university. Can I still get Social Security money for her (daughter) when she go university?"*

False: "You can still receive Social Security Child payments when your daughter attends university. Bring us proof of her university enrollment and we'll send it to FBU Manila."

True: Social Security Child benefits end at age 18 (age 19 if full-time high school student). However, benefits will continue at age 18 to a child who is disabled.

Learn More: [Benefits for Children](#)

False: (Newsletter) "If you are receiving SSA benefits and are residing outside of the U.S. for more than six months, you should update your address with SSA."

True: "A beneficiary **must use a foreign mailing address if he/she will be outside the U.S. for more than 3 months unless the address being used is an APO/FPO address or an address for a representative payee who is remaining within the United States.**" (For Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries, being absent from the U.S. too long may affect [eligibility](#).)



Four-Part Series Wrap-Up: I am an additional information resource for Veterans benefits. As Veterans, no matter our past rank or occupational specialty, we're all on the same team. In this four-part series, I shared my Veteran assistance views and covered certain VA, DoD, and SS benefits. When you reach out for assistance there's a professional expectation and an unspoken trust that you (and your loved ones) will be competently assisted. Rightly so!

Most Veteran assistance in Thailand has been spot-on, but there has still been far too much benefits misinformation and too many assistance errors over the years (much of it repetitive and uncorrected). Fittingly, the shortfalls are not associated with the American Legion.

The main point I'd like you to takeaway is that benefits self-education is the best protection against assistance shortcomings. Likewise, don't let eligibility uncertainty discourage you from applying for a benefit; apply and let the benefit provider decide eligibility. To finish, I hope you enjoyed the four articles, and most importantly, I hope you learned something new!

You may reach me at:

still_serving@outlook.com

Thanks for reading.

Have a Great Day!

July Birthdays:

- Robert Beckner
- Hal Cohen
- Philip Jones
- Daniel Kelley
- Byron Petrides
- Robert Rositer



This Month's Historical Facts

By Post historian, Ted Potyrala

With Credit to The history Channel

WHY DID THE KOREAN WAR HAPPEN?

Why was the Korean Peninsula divided in the first place? For centuries, the peninsula was a single Korea ruled by several dynasties but after the Russo-Japanese war, Japan occupied the peninsula. Five years later, Japan formally annexed Korea. They ruled over Korea until the end of WWII. after which Korea was divided into two countries. This division was not created by the Koreans but was done by the Soviet Union and the United States. They made it into two occupational zones. Over the next three years, the Soviets set up a communist regime north of the 38th parallel while in the south, a military government was formed and was supported by the United States. The Soviet policies were popular with the peasants but most of the middle class fled to the south. The end objective was for both the Soviet Union and the United States to leave and leave it up to the Koreans to work things out. Everything that was tried to unite Korea failed as neither the Soviet Union nor the United States wanted to give in to the other.

In 1945 the U.S. asked for a United Nations sponsored vote for all Koreans to determine their future. The north refused to participate so the south formed its own government. Their leader was a strong anti-communist named Syngman Rhee. The north installed a former communist guerrilla fighter named Kim Il Sung. Kim wanted to unite Korea under his regime. He went to Moscow in 1949 and again in 1950 to seek Soviet support for invading South Korea. He was able to get Joseph Stalin to commit to providing

support for an invasion. He also got a verbal commitment from Mao Zedong of China When the north crossed the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950, they were counting that the U.S. would not interfere. The north's forces were strong and quickly moved south. Initially the U.S. did not want to get involved. They did not want to tangle with the Soviet Union or China or have a WWII. Events soon changed their minds. The Soviets successfully donated their first atomic bomb. Mao Zedong formed the People's Republic of China. China sent thousands of troops to help the north and the fear of communism spreading globally.

On April 14, 1950, President Truman received a document created by the Defense Department, State Department, CIA, and other agencies. It advised the president to strengthen the defense industry to counter what they saw as a threat of global communism. **On June 27, 1950**, President Truman ordered U.S. forces to South Korea to help defend their country and to let the world know that the U.S. will not allow communism to spread and will come to the aid of her allies. The U.S. never declared war against North Korea. Instead, it was called a police action.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur's invasion landed at Inchon on September 8, 1950, turned the tide of the conflict and enabled the south to push north past the 38th parallel An Armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, ending the fighting but a peace treaty was never signed. Over 2.5 million people were killed during the conflict. 7,800 Americans are still missing. 124,000 South Koreans are still missing.

