



### **It's all about the money: CROmnibus passes House and Senate**

National Military Family Association

Besides preventing an overall government shutdown (as we witnessed in 2013) the bill contains legislative provisions of interest to military and veterans families. The bill restores funding to the commissary of \$190 million to maintain operations. The restoration of funding is significant for this year but was largely due to the intent of legislators to wait on the report from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) before making further fiscal decisions. We will have to take up the battle again in the new year to defend the commissary benefits and savings...

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### **Obama thanks troops as Afghanistan war ends**

The Hill

President Barack Obama on Saturday urged Americans to express their gratitude to active troops and veterans who have served in combat zones around the world to defend the nation's interests. "No one sacrifices more to preserve our blessings than our extraordinary men and women in uniform," he said. His address marks the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, which is the longest war in American history.

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### **Survey reflects troops' dissatisfaction with deployment tempo**

Military Times

Most U.S. troops surveyed say the frequency of their deployments has either increased or stayed the same during the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. And with both budgets and force size shrinking, many service members say they are doing the same amount of work with fewer people and less money.

The end of the wars, combined with mounting pressure on the Pentagon's budget, is forcing the military to make steep reductions in the size of the force. The Air Force is cutting 20,000 airmen this year. The Marines are whittling an end strength north of 200,000 down to 174,000 by 2017. In the Army, nearly 22,000 soldiers departed in 2014. The Army has shed more than 60,000 soldiers since it began a drawdown in 2010 and faces the possibility of losing 80,000 more by the end of the decade.

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### **Thousands gather to honor fallen Veterans for Wreaths Across America Day**

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

Thousands gathered at Arlington National Cemetery to lay remembrance wreaths on veterans' headstones to mark National Wreaths Across America Day, and in doing so drew one of the annual event's largest turnouts in its 23 year history. The organization has expanded to include more than 1,000 fundraising groups in all 50 states representing more than 900 cemeteries, military memorials, and other sites. Volunteers from local American Legion and VFW Posts, veterans and military service organizations, civic organizations, and more than 80 volunteer trucking companies participate each year.

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### **President, First Lady encourage Toys for Tots donations**

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

First Lady Michelle Obama reminded the public that time still remains to donate to Toys for Tots as she introduced her newest "helper," President Barack Obama, during a toy sorting and packing drive at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. Over its lifespan, the Marine Toys for Tots Program has distributed more than 469 million toys to over 216 million less-fortunate children.

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