



# **131<sup>st</sup> BW RAO Newsletter**

**January - March 2020, 1st Quarter Issue**

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The O’Fallon Veterans/131BW Retirees Activities Office (RAO) would like to wish all Veterans, Retirees and families a safe, healthy and Happy New Year.

Our staff of former members of the 131<sup>st</sup> and tenant units, Air Force, Army , Navy and Marines have put in 2062 hours for the past year and have serviced over 381 inquires either by phone, email or personal visits to our Office.

The RAO has an on-going need for volunteers to assist and inform the retiree community.

If you are a retired military member or spouse from any military branch, and you are available 4 hours for 1 day a week from either 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or noon to 4 p.m., contact the office to volunteer. Additional volunteers are needed substituting for staff needing to miss a day for other needs. Our phone number is 636-379-5577, or, emails us at [veteransaffairs@ofallon.mo.us](mailto:veteransaffairs@ofallon.mo.us)

Our office is open from 9 AM to 4 PM Monday thru Friday.

**OUR STAFF:**

Bennett, Roger  
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Davis, Michael  
Detz, Lewis  
Dunn, Sheila  
Graves, Sandy  
Lanzik, Kenneth

Miller, Connie  
Murat, Edward  
Palermo, Mark  
Riggs, Thomas  
Riley, Stephanie  
Rowe, Melvin  
Wybierala, Thomas

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## **2019 CHRISTMAS AIR GUARD/REUNION GATHERING**

Thanks to everyone for another successful Christmas Party Reunion.

We had 103 people who enjoyed lunch and socialize. It appeared fun was had by all. Col Leeker (Ret) gave a talk on the 131<sup>st</sup> Airman’s Association (INC.) about the use of the money from the 131<sup>st</sup> Reunion Dinner Party held on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

The Veterans Museum in O’Fallon MO had a display and Renee Essary gave a talk about the museum.

I’d like to thank Vic Muschler & Jim Wonsewitz for their help checking people in again this year. Once again, they did a terrific job!

We don’t have email addresses or phone numbers for everyone, if you know someone that isn’t receiving an invitation that might be interested in coming, please ensure we get their contact information. Preferred method of contact is email & Facebook when we send out announcements; however, we know not all have the internet or computers. So,

again, if you know of anyone not being notified have them/you shoot us an email to:  
[131christmas@gmail.com](mailto:131christmas@gmail.com)

Also, please keep us updated on your contact information.

Everyone, save the date for next year's party which is already scheduled at the Elks Lodge. It will be held on 09 Dec 2020, 11-3, as always. Please get the word out. Ask anyone who hasn't received an email invitation in the past to send Lisa an email to [131christmas@gmail.com](mailto:131christmas@gmail.com) to be added. If they don't have email, maybe suggest that they ask one of their children to do it for them.

Lisa Muschler [lisa.muschler@yahoo.com](mailto:lisa.muschler@yahoo.com)

Morris Swofford/Scooter [swoff757.scooter@charter.net](mailto:swoff757.scooter@charter.net)

Any Christmas Party emails: [131christmas@gmail.com](mailto:131christmas@gmail.com)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW FOR NEXT YEAR – 09 DEC, 2020  
ELKS LODGE O'FALLON MO

Thanks to everyone who participated. To those who weren't able to make it, hopefully you can make it next year.

Merry Christmas!

Lisa & Morris (Scooter)

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## **Veterans Health Library**

Veterans have access to a 24/7 online health library that provides information and education about treatments and conditions offered by VA. The [Veterans Health Library](#) (VHL) has over 1,500 health sheets and 150 videos in both English and Spanish. It gives Veterans access to health information to help them make informed decisions on their care. VA clinicians are also aware of the VHL. The medical content in the library aligns with Department of Defense and VA clinical guidelines. Becky Hartt Minor, a health educator and program manager for the VHL, said the program has grown. "The VHL is nearly eight years old, and we average nearly a million page views a year," she said. "We know Veterans want a source for medical information that is relevant and provides easy to read information on health conditions ranging from PTSD and Mental Health to Chronic Pain and Heart Disease." What Veterans are saying about the Veterans Health Library

- "I was preparing for cardiac surgery and wanted more information. Something to supplement what my provider and nurse practitioner had already given me. I stopped by the VA facility library, got on the computer and got into the VHL. It was easy to find the trusted health information I needed.
- "Within seconds, I was able to view several cardiovascular videos, download a few online guides, and print out several educational pamphlets. I was amazed with the quantity and quality of the information I found on my heart condition and pending procedure."

The VHL both is mobile friendly and offers links to other VA resources. It can be also be accessed on the MyHealtheVet web site where Veterans use secure messaging to communicate with their VA care providers and order their prescriptions for home delivery. Unlike other health web sites, the Veterans Health Library is free of advertisements and pop up ads. Visit [veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov](http://veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov) today to stay well and well-informed. [Source: Vantage Point Hill | November 26, 2019 ++]

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## **Medal, Decoration & Award Replacement**

### **How To Do It**

The military recognizes that military medals are often a cherished part of family history and makes replacement medals, decorations, and awards available to veterans or their next of kin if the veteran is no longer living or able to make the request on his or her own behalf. Requests for replacement medals, decorations, and awards should be made to the veteran's respective branch of service, with the exception of Army and Air Force (including Army Air Corps) veterans; requests should be sent to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis where the records will be reviewed and verified. The NPRC will then forward the requests to the respective service where the medal, decoration, or award will be issued.

### **Who Can Request Replacement Medals or Decorations?**

The military won't issue replacement medals or awards to just anyone. You typically need to be the veteran or next of kin to receive a replacement medal or decoration. When it comes to military records requests, there are three categories of people who can make a request. They include the veteran, Next-of-Kin (NOK), and the general public. It is important to note that Next-of-Kin doesn't include all familial relationships. According to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), NOK includes:

- For the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps & Coast Guard, the NOK is defined as: the un-remarried widow or widower, son, daughter, father, mother, brother or sister.
- For the Army, the NOK is defined as: the surviving spouse, eldest child, father or mother, eldest sibling or eldest grandchild.
- If you do not meet the definition of NOK, you are considered a member of the general public.

### **How to Submit a Request**

You can request replacement military medals, decorations and awards via form SF 180, Request Pertaining To Military Records. This form can be downloaded from <http://www.va.gov/vaforms>. Each request should be filled out neatly, and should include the veteran's branch of service, social security number, dates of service, and it should be signed by the veteran or the next of kin if the veteran is incapacitated or deceased. Supporting documentation such as discharge paperwork or the veteran's DD Form 214 or

other military records can help speed the process. Additional information on where to send the form and who is eligible to make the request can be found at the NPRC [website](#).

### **How Much Does it Cost?**

In general, military records requests made by the veteran are fulfilled at no cost. This includes requests made by family members who have the signed authorization of the veteran. There may be an associated fee for requests made by next of kin, especially if the request involves archival records (records are considered archival records 62 years after the veteran's date of separation from military service). Members of the general public may be able to request a copy of the servicemember's military records, but are not able to receive a medal issued by the service. However, they would be able to purchase these from commercial sources (see below for more information on where to buy replacement military medals, rank insignia, and other military decorations).

### **Where Can I Get Copies of Other Military Records?**

Your military personnel file is part of your legacy. It is recommended maintaining a copy of your military records forever. This can help you prove your military service, help you support a VA disability claim, serve as a record of when and where you served, and provide your family with something to commemorate your military service. Most military records are maintained at the National Archives. These records include your service contracts, separation paperwork, records of military awards, decorations, and medals, records of your duty stations, and possibly more. The following links offer additional references for obtaining these military records:

- [Request copies of military records or perform historical research](#) (click this link for more information about pictures of servicemembers in uniform).
- [Request copy of DD Form 214](#).
- [Get a Veterans ID Card](#).

### **Where Can I Purchase Replacement Medals, Ribbons, Rank Insignia, or other Military Items?**

If you are a service member or retiree, you can purchase them at your base clothing sales store. Everyone else should look at military surplus stores, or any of the many online stores that specialize in military rank, insignia, medals, ribbons, uniform items, and similar military gear. A quick online search should bring up many results. It's always a good idea to shop around for quality and price. A good place to start is [USAMilitaryMedals.com](#), which guarantees the quality of the products they sell.

### **What about replacement dog tags?**

The military, the VA, and the National Archives do not reissue dog tags to veterans. The military does issue them to currently serving military members. Refer to <https://themilitarywallet.com/replacement-dog-tags> to learn how to proceed to obtain them. [Source: The Military Wallet | Ryan Guina | November 13, 2018 ++]

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## **Veteran Benefit Finder**

### **State Programs & Benefits for Veterans Catalogue**

The Veteran Benefit Finder – and corresponding Center for a New American Security (CNAS) report “State-Level Benefits for Veterans,” is a **new online tool catalogue** that displays benefits offered by each state across the U.S. According to CNAS, a total of 1,814 unique benefits exist across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, but there is significant variation across states in terms of available benefits, who is eligible to access them, and their value. For more information or to locate benefits that may pertain to you, visit the [Veteran Benefit Finder](#). [Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | November 27, 2019 ++]

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## **VA VET CHOICE**

### **Budget Deal Advances Private Care Program**

President Donald Trump’s expansion of a program aimed at steering more veterans to private health care is getting an \$8.9 billion boost as part of the massive government spending bill approved by the House, setting up a potential battle over the direction of the Veterans Affairs Department. The deal provides \$81 billion for VA medical care to treat 9.3 million veterans, including the \$8.9 billion for private care under a law passed last year expanding the Veterans Choice program. Another \$11.3 billion is on tap for private care in 2021. Major veterans groups have cautioned against "cannibalizing" VA programs to pay for Choice, which they worry could lead to privatization of VA. The program gives veterans wider access to private care when they have endured lengthy wait times or the treatment was not what they had expected. The price tag could soar as the expanded program takes hold, putting the VA at risk of future budget shortfalls.

Democratic presidential contenders including Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren have urged reinvestment in the VA over expanded private care options. Former Vice President Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg, a mayor of South Bend, Indiana, have said they will roll back or change some of the Trump administration's rules on Choice. “As the increasing need for medical care by wounded, ill and injured veterans and their family caregivers is being forced to fit under tight budget caps, we are concerned necessary resources could be shifted away from the VA healthcare system, which independent research has shown provides higher quality care than the private sector,” said Joy Ilem, national legislative director for Disabled American Veterans. “While community care programs are vital to fill and supplement VA in many locations, we believe the value to veterans and the taxpayer of every dollar spent in the VA health care system is greater than if it were spent in the community,” she said.

House Democrats had pushed for Choice money to be exempt from budget caps, to avoid the risk of cuts to core VA programs as costs grow in the coming years. Ultimately, however, the money was kept under budget caps after the White House resisted. The added money for Choice is part of a 6% increase to the total VA budget for the fiscal year ending next September. It also includes \$9.4 billion for mental health care. About 20 veterans die by suicide each day, a rate unchanged during the Trump administration.

The spending bill, which still needs Senate approval, also requires the VA to report to Congress within 30 days the reasons for a two-year delay in announcing whether it plans to provide health care coverage for additional Vietnam War veterans exposed to Agent Orange. Former VA secretary David Shulkin in 2017 tried to get additional diseases such as Parkinson's on a VA list of conditions that are tied to Agent Orange, but the White House opposed that recommendation. A National Academies report in 2016 said there was suggestive evidence to link some of the diseases to herbicide exposure. "The VA and the Office of Management and Budget now have 30 days to deliver a plan detailing how they'll get veterans suffering from Agent Orange exposure the coverage they need," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), who pushed the provision. [Source: Associated Press | Hope Yen | December 18, 2019 ++]

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## **VA DENTAL BENEFITS**

### **New Pilot Program Pending Congressional Approval**

The Department of Veterans Affairs plans to launch a pilot program that would provide all veterans with free or discounted dental care. VA currently only offers dental care to veterans with a service-related dental problem, former POWs, or veterans who are totally disabled — that excludes roughly 92 percent of veterans. However, VA is operating "near maximum capacity" just offering this small demographic of veterans dental care. In 2018, VA spent approximately \$1.1 billion on veteran dental care or \$2,185 per veteran. VA wants to expand its ability to offer dental care to veterans — even if it does not have the budget to do so. The proposed five-year pilot program would connect all veterans — not just those eligible under the current dental care program — with free or discounted dental care in their local communities. "The objective of this pilot demonstration is to improve overall health by increasing access to dental services for enrolled veterans currently ineligible for dental services through VA," VA said in a notice published in the Federal Register. VA expects its pilot program to reduce spending without reduce quality of care for veterans. The plan is currently pending Congressional approval. [Source: ConnectingVets.com | Elizabeth Howe | December 17, 2019 ++]

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## **MILITARY BLAST EXPOSURE**

### **Pentagon Directs Inclusion in Troop's Medical Histories**

Congress has directed the Pentagon to document troops' blast exposures in combat and training and include the information in their medical histories to help determine whether they are eligible for treatment and service-connected benefits. According to language in the \$738 billion defense bill signed into law last Friday by President Donald Trump, the histories will also "inform future blast exposure risk mitigation efforts of the Department of Defense." The legislation also requires the DoD and service branches to report to Congress within a year on their progress compiling the histories.

According to a provision in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, the histories should include the date of the blast exposure and its duration. If possible, "the measured blast pressure experienced by the individual during such exposure" should also be included. The "covered incidents" to be part of the histories under the legislation refer to "a concussive event or injury that requires a military acute concussive evaluation by a skilled health care provider." Numerous reports and studies by the DoD, the

Department of Veterans Affairs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and others have pointed to links between blast exposure and traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress.

According to the DoD, about 22% of all combat casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan involve brain injuries, compared with 12% of combat casualties in Vietnam. Traumatic brain injury (TBI), often labeled the "signature wound" of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, can go undiagnosed in its milder forms and result in issues for returning service members ranging from "headaches, irritability, and sleep disorders to memory problems, slower thinking, and depression," according to the VA. "These symptoms often lead to long-term mental and physical health problems that impair veterans' employment and family relationships, and their reintegration into their communities," it added.

A VA study released last month stressed the need for long-term rehabilitation for chronic TBI symptoms. "It's new information that ongoing rehabilitation needs to exist in these chronic stages of TBI," Dr. Risa Nakase-Richardson, a clinical research neuropsychologist at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, Florida, said in the report. She explained that there is a common misperception among caregivers, providers and patients themselves that rehabilitation services for TBI are relevant only in the short term after the injury. [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | December 26, 2019 ++]

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## **VADIP UPDATE – DENTAL PROGRAM REVIVED & EXTENDED THROUGH 2021**

The VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) is a private dental insurance program that offers discounted dental insurance to certain veterans and their dependents. It began as a pilot program in 2013 and ended as scheduled in January 2017. However, recent legislation revived the program and extended it through 2021. Veterans who are enrolled in VA healthcare and their dependents enrolled in CHAMPVA are eligible to enroll in the VADIP program. Those enrolled in the previous pilot program are required to re-enroll in the new one if they want coverage, re-enrollment is not automatic. VADIP is only available in the U.S. and its territories.

Like all insurance programs there are many options available at varying costs. The VA says VADIP covers "diagnostic services, preventive services, endodontic and other restorative services, surgical services and emergency services." The VA also says "while the insurance providers will remain the same [as under the pilot program], plan options, fees and other factors may have changed from those offered under the pilot program." We did some research and found that the monthly premiums for 2018 are nearly double the 2016 premiums, but they are still cheaper than many other dental insurance plans.

VADIP is being offered by Delta Dental of California [<https://feds.deltadentalins.com/vadip>] and MetLife [<https://www.metlife.com/vadip>] you can check out their websites for more information, including costs, services, participating dentists and to enroll in a program. For more information check out our VADIP details page or the VA's VADIP page <https://www.military.com/topics/benefits>. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | December 13, 2017 ++]

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## **MEDICARE HOSPITAL COVERAGE**

**Update 04: Inpatient vs. Outpatient | If You Have It – Ask!!!**

Did you know that even if you stay in a hospital overnight, you might still be considered an “outpatient?” Your hospital status (whether the hospital considers you an “inpatient” or “outpatient”) affects how much you pay for hospital services (like X-rays, drugs, and lab tests) and may also affect whether Medicare will cover care you get in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) following your hospital stay.

- You’re considered an inpatient starting when you’re formally admitted to a hospital with a doctor’s order. The day before you’re discharged is your last inpatient day.
- You’re an outpatient if you’re getting emergency department services, observation services, outpatient surgery, lab tests, X-rays, or any other hospital services, and the doctor hasn’t written an order to admit you to a hospital as an inpatient. In these cases, you’re an outpatient even if you spend the night at the hospital.

**Note:** Observation services are hospital outpatient services given to help the doctor decide if you need to be admitted as an inpatient or can be discharged. Observation services may be given in the emergency department or another area of the hospital. The decision for inpatient hospital admission is a complex medical decision based on your doctor’s judgment and your need for medically necessary hospital care. An inpatient admission is generally appropriate for payment under Medicare Part A when you’re expected to need 2 or more midnights of medically necessary hospital care, but your doctor must order this admission and the hospital must formally admit you for you to become an inpatient.

Read on to understand the differences in Original Medicare coverage for hospital inpatients and outpatients, and how these rules apply to some common situations. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO), your costs and coverage may be different. Check with your plan.

### **What do you pay as an inpatient?**

- *Medicare Part A* (Hospital Insurance) covers inpatient hospital services. Generally, this means you pay a one-time deductible for all of your hospital services for the first 60 days you’re in a hospital.
- *Medicare Part B* (Medical Insurance) covers most of your doctor services when you’re an inpatient. You pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for doctor services after paying the Part B deductible.

### **What do you pay as an outpatient?**

- Part B covers outpatient hospital services. Generally, this means you pay a copayment for each outpatient hospital service. This amount may vary by service. Note: The copayment for a single outpatient hospital service can’t be more than the inpatient hospital deductible. However, your total copayment for all outpatient services may be more than the inpatient hospital deductible.

- Part B also covers most of your doctor services when you're a hospital outpatient. You pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount after you pay the Part B deductible.
- Generally, prescription and over-the-counter drugs you get in an outpatient setting (like an emergency department), sometimes called "self-administered drugs," aren't covered by Part B. Also, for safety reasons, many hospitals have policies that don't allow patients to bring prescription or other drugs from home. If you have Medicare prescription drug coverage (Part D), these drugs may be covered under certain circumstances. You'll likely need to pay out-of-pocket for these drugs and submit a claim to your drug plan for a refund. Call your drug plan for more information.

To learn more about the rules that determine whether someone's Medicare hospital status is observation or outpatient versus admission or inpatient, you might want to start by reviewing Medicare's "Are You a Hospital Inpatient or Outpatient?" handout (<https://www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/11435-Are-You-an-Inpatient-or-Outpatient.pdf>). For more detailed information on how Medicare covers hospital services, including premiums, deductibles, and copayments, visit <https://www.medicare.gov>. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Chris Kissell | December 29, 2019 ++]

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## **INFORMATION ON TRICARE, COLA AND OTHER HEALTH ISSUES**

Other newsletters have covered the new TRICARE and COLA CHANGES AND UPDATES that we felt would be redundant to show them in our newsletter this quarter. Please refer to the other Retiree Newsletters Links including "NEWSWIRE".

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## **TAPS FOR 131ST MOANG PERSONNEL AND SPOUSES WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2019**

BRANNUM, Irma L., wife of Bobby L., December 31, 2019  
 CHANCELLOR, Jr., Paul Arnold, October 31, 2019  
 COLE, Ronald Brent CMSGT., March 13, 2019  
 COUNTS, Michael Charles, November 19, 2019  
 CRISCIONE, James R., MD December 14, 2019  
 DAILY, David, August 30, 2019,

DI LORENZO, Gerald Peter "Gerry", March 29, 2019.  
 EDWARDS Sr., William Harrison Edwards, Sr. TSGT., November 7, 2019  
 ERHART, Clarence Raymond "Ray", July 3, 2019  
 COL. FINLEY, Howard H., Col., May 11, 2019.  
 FLOYD, Eugene, MSGT., January 10, 2019  
 HOLDEN, Roger, Lt. Col., October 16, 2019  
 HORST, William Frank, October 27, 2019  
 HUNNIUS, Calvin, CMSGT., November 10, 2019  
 JEWELL, Delbert E.W., COL., March 4, 2019  
 KELLAM, Jr., Frank M. Jr. col. June 7, 2019  
 KLAUS, Kenneth M., July 19, 2019.  
 KUNSTMAN, Warren R., LT. COL., November 11, 2019  
 MOGERMAN, Donald Marvin, Dr., November 8, 2019  
 RIPLEY, Grover C., COL., August 17, 2019.  
 ROTHMAN, Kenneth J., April 26, 2019.  
 SHEPHERD, Richard J., CMSGT, February 16, 2019  
 ZUBER, Sr., John, CMSGT., May 17, 2019

Note: These are the only people that we know passed away. If you have any knowledge of others, contact Larry Kelley with the information at [lk001@mail.win.org](mailto:lk001@mail.win.org).

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## **LINK TO RETIREE PUBLICATIONS**

<i>Army Echoes</i>	<a href="http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement">http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement</a>
<i>Navy Shift Colors:</i>	<a href="http://www.shiftcolors.navy.mil">www.shiftcolors.navy.mil</a>
<i>Air Force Afterburner:</i>	<a href="http://www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner">www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner</a>
<i>Marine Corps Semper Fidelis:</i>	<a href="http://www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME_MM/H_SR">www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME_MM/H_SR</a>
<i>Coast Guard Evening Colors:</i>	<a href="http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/psc/ras">http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/psc/ras</a>

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**INPUT:** If you have any suggestions for any type of additional articles you may like to have included in the future newsletters please email us. We look forward for more input from you and other agencies.  
 We will publish this newsletter four times a year if the supply of information is available.

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Ed Murat, MSgt, USAF (Ret)  
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