

The Best Kept Non-strategic Military Secret

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Probably the best-kept non-strategic military secret is being supported by deductions from the pay of enlisted personnel and warrant officers of the active military services. It is available to all who have attained the age of 60 years; retired with twenty years or more of active service, at 50% in enlisted or warrant officer status; and are capable of living independently.

The Armed Forces Retirement Home-Washington (AFRH-W, formerly the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home), located on a 320-acre site in the heights of northwestern Washington, DC, is a home for such men and women, and as special cases, veterans with service connected disabilities as a result of wounds received in combat or injuries or illness incurred while drawing combat or hazardous duty pay. Women who served in the auxiliary branches of the armed forces prior to 1948 are also eligible for residence. At present approximately 1000 veterans, some 100 of them women, reside at the Home.

The Home provides a pleasant, safe, and secure home for the veterans equivalent to the better retirement facilities available to others. In addition to the health care, including assisted living and extended nursing care, and the basic living needs, numerous recreational and social activities, both on and off site, are provided.

The Home, established in 1851 with money received from the Mexican government at the close of the Mexican War, is supported by residents' user fees, deductions from the pay of active duty personnel, fines and forfeitures imposed by courts martial and under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and donations from supporters of the Home and the estates of deceased residents. These moneys and the interest from its investment in U.S. Treasury bonds form a trust fund controlled by Congress and appropriated annually for the operation of the Home. Tax money is not used to support the Home.

The Home has been designated a National Historic Landmark, and recently the Anderson Cottage has been designated a National Historic Monument as the "Lincoln Cottage" and is being refurbished to its 1864 state. Abraham Lincoln and several other 19th century presidents used the Anderson Cottage as a summer White House.

Another Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport, MS, (formerly the U.S. Naval Home) has some 500 residents. The Gulfport Home, while smaller than the Washington Home, has similar amenities and facilities.

For additional information about the Armed Forces Retirement Homes, see www.afrh.com and www.defenselink.mil/specials/heroes/index.html. Some of the information on these web sites may have been updated to reflect changes contained in the 2003 Defense Appropriation Act, but much of it is still generally accurate.

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