

FLYOVER: Air Force approved 450 flyover requests this year, out of about 5,000 received

Continued from 1A

qualify as a patriotic flyover.” Carl Culham, Round-Up director of publicity, said the Round-Up usually contacts Pendleton’s U.S. congressional delegation to help them secure a flyover.

Despite the delegation’s lobbying efforts to reverse the Air Force’s decision, the numbers aren’t in the Round-Up’s favor.

According to Jennifer Bentley, the Air Force Press Office Chief of Public Outreach, the Air Force typically receives 5,000 flyover requests per year. This year, the Air Force approved 450. This follows two

years where the Air Force suspended flyovers completely due to budgetary constraints.

Previously, the Air Force planes flew over the Round-Up before the championship on Saturday.

While he understands the economic bind the Air Force is in, Culham said people unfamiliar with the Round-Up just don’t understand the impact the event has.

“This is a rodeo like no other,” he said.

For the Round-Up to qualify as a national sporting event, Bentley said it would need to be televised through traditional media like broad-

cast and cable networks.

Additionally, the Round-Up can’t qualify for the patriotic holiday requirement because it isn’t specifically held to honor National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Although the Round-Up might not get a flyover this year, both sides are amenable to possible flyovers in the future.

Bentley said the Air Force wants to expand flyovers in the years to come while Culham said the Round-Up intends to continue to apply for them.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

TAX: Pioneered nation’s first fuel tax in 1919

Continued from 1A

in the nation to adopt such a road usage charge.

Pendleton driver Tammy Dennee participated in one of two earlier pilots of the program. She plugged a data capture unit into her Ford Explorer and started driving.

“Everything was technology driven,” she said. “No fuss. No muss.”

Dennee, who recently moved to Salem to become assistant director of the Dairy Farmers Association, served for five years on the task force that looked into the feasibility of the road usage program. While the program is fairly straightforward, she said, people wrestle with the concept.

“There are no easy answers when it comes to taxes,” she said. “It’s never an easy conversation.”

Yet, she said, Oregon’s transportation infrastructure is deteriorating.

“We expect the same quality of roadways and bridges but Department of Transportation dollars aren’t there,” Dennee said. “It’s become a fairness

“... Vehicles that are 10,000 pounds and less impact the roadway about the same.”

— Michelle Godfrey, ODOT spokeswoman

discussion.”

States are looking for ways to retool the gas tax, Godfrey said. When Oregon pioneered the nation’s first fuel tax in 1919, Godfrey said “consumption was the perfect proxy for how much you use the road. That’s not the case now.”

Critics protest that smaller vehicles don’t damage roads as much as larger vehicles and should therefore pay less. Godfrey shakes her head.

“ODOT has researched this for many, many years and has determined time and time again that vehicles that are 10,000 pounds and less impact the roadway about the same,” she said. “There is a perception that a light car does so much less damage, but it’s not really the case.”

Godfrey also rejects concerns that the program would discourage people from buying hybrids or electric vehicles.

“You save so much more

in overall driving costs that there’s still a very strong incentive to purchase an EV or hybrid,” she said. “Overall (in the F-150 and Prius comparison) you’re still saving about \$800 a year by driving a Prius.”

Participants may eventually choose from a menu of services made possible by the pay-per-mile technology. The list includes such things as vehicle diagnostics, DEQ emissions testing on the fly, pay-as-you-go insurance and a geo-fence for parents with teen drivers in the family.

“These are all things that are in development,” Godfrey said.

ODOT contracts with the private sector for technology and services.

For more information about the program, visit www.myorego.org.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

DRONES: Pendleton range already had a few authorization certificates approved by the FAA

Continued from 1A

to fly.”

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, who has become one of the of the Oregon UAS test sites’ biggest proponents, lauded the FAA’s decision.

“I am gratified the FAA responded to our call and will allow UAS development to soar even higher and create more good jobs that come with this innovative industry in Oregon and nationwide,” Wyden said in a statement. “Today’s news unshackles UAS research in Pendleton, Tillamook and Warm Springs to generate even more innovation in our state.”

Steve Chrisman, the

Pendleton airport manager and economic development director, said the FAA’s announcement was a move in the right direction.

The Pendleton UAS Range already had a few authorization certificates approved by the FAA prior to the rule change.

Although the new rules could accelerate business, Pendleton won’t be able to accept paying customers eager to test their drones until it has a payment structure in place.

Chrisman said the University of Alaska Fairbanks, which acts as an administrator for the all the UAS ranges in Oregon, Hawaii and Alaska,

is negotiating a fee structure with SOAR Oregon, not for profit economic development organization focused on the development of the Oregon UAS industry.

SOAR Oregon chief operating officer John Stevens, who used to be Pendleton’s range manager, is leading negotiations on behalf of the test sites in Oregon.

Chrisman said the two sides are looking at which services the university will charge for, which will mostly likely come in the form of a percentage surcharge.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

HANFORD: 35 cubic yards of sludge to remove

Continued from 1A

nuclear weapons. It now is involved in a decades-long, multibillion dollar process of cleaning up radioactive waste left by that work.

As part of the agreement, the Energy Department agreed to pay a penalty of \$125,000 for missing the September 2014 deadline to start removing sludge.

“We’re glad we’ve reached an agreement so we can get back to focusing on cleanup and protecting the Columbia River,” said Rick Albright, director of EPA’s Superfund cleanup program in Seattle. “The K Basins should be one of the Department of Energy’s highest cleanup priorities.”

The Energy Department said the settlement “reflects the agencies’ commitment to moving radioactive sludge away from the Columbia River to reduce the risk to the river in the next few years.” The agency in the past blamed a lack of funding from Congress for the delay.

Under the settlement, 10 other milestones affected by the delay in the start of sludge removal will be extended, with all work to be completed by 2024.

The 100 K Area is one of six areas where plutonium

production reactors operated during the Cold War. Water-filled basins stored spent uranium fuel removed from the reactor cores.

All the spent fuel was removed from the basins a decade ago. But radioactive sludge, a result of corrosion of spent fuel, has been consolidated in underwater storage containers in the K West Basin. There are about 35 cubic yards of sludge that

must be removed.

The sludge will be moved from the K West Basin to transport containers that will take it to Hanford’s Central Plateau for storage at a facility called T Plant, farther away from the Columbia River. The sludge will be stored at T Plant until it is treated and disposed of off the Hanford Site, the Energy Department said.

Pentagon chief’s take on Iraqis undercuts Obama’s strategy

By JULIE PACE
AP White House
Correspondent

WASHINGTON

Defense Secretary Ash Carter’s blunt assessment that Iraqi forces lack the “will to fight” undermines a central premise of President Barack Obama’s strategy for defeating the Islamic State: that Iraq’s military can effectively handle ground operations so Americans don’t have to.

Carter’s comments in a weekend interview reflect deep concern within some quarters of the administration about the capabilities of Iraq’s security forces. Despite outnumbering Islamic State forces, the military suffered a major defeat this month in the city of Ramadi. And some officials question whether it can overcome the same sectarian divisions between Sunnis and the Shiite-dominated government that gave the Islamic State space to thrive.

“The failure, it’s not one of courage,” Marina Ottaway, a Middle East analyst at the Wilson Center, said of the Iraqi military. “It’s one of politics.”

For now, Obama is showing no sign of significantly shifting his strategy or easing his opposition to sending American forces back into combat in Iraq. Instead, the White House is essentially pleading for patience and even more time to train Iraqis.

“That’s a training process that can’t be done in a week,” White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Tuesday. “That’s not a seven-day training course. This is going to require a more sustained commitment.”

The U.S. already has spent years and billions of dollars trying to position the Iraqi military to take charge of the country’s security. As the U.S. military withdrew from Iraq in 2011 after more than eight years of war, Obama declared that local forces were indeed ready to take on that mission.

With a fresh infusion of American trainers last year and a new Shiite government pledging to be more inclusive to Sunnis, Iraqi forces had made apparent progress against



Defense Secretary Ash Carter testifies May 6 on Capitol Hill in Washington. Carter’s blunt assessment that Iraqi forces lack the “will to fight” undermines a central premise of President Barack Obama’s strategy for defeating the Islamic State.

the Islamic State in recent months. But the rout in Ramadi, the strategically important capital of Anbar province, highlighted the military’s weakness anew. Fleeing the city, Iraqi forces abandoned U.S. military vehicles, including tanks, armored personnel carriers and artillery pieces.

“What apparently happened is the Iraqi forces just showed no will to fight,” Carter said Sunday on CNN. “They were not outnumbered. In fact, they vastly outnumbered the opposing force. That says to me, and I think to most of us, that we have an issue with the will of the Iraqis to fight ISIL and defend themselves.”

His comments echoed Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey, who said the Iraqi security forces were “not driven out of Ramadi. They drove out of Ramadi.”

Iraqi officials disputed Carter’s characterization of the military’s strength, saying he had received “incorrect information.” Vice President Joe Biden called Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in an apparent attempt to ease his concerns about the U.S. commitment to his security forces, while administration officials quietly tried to clarify the Pentagon chief’s comments.

On Tuesday, the Iraqi government announced the start of a major military effort aiming to drive the Islamic State from western Anbar province. The operation involved Iranian-backed Shiite militias, sparking fears of potential sectarian violence in the

Sunni heartland.

The White House has cast the loss of Ramadi as a setback but not a reason to revamp Obama’s strategy. Since last summer, a U.S.-led coalition has been launching airstrikes against Islamic State targets in both Iraq and Syria. While more than 3,000 U.S. troops are in Iraq to advise and train the military, the president has insisted Americans will not be engaged in combat and will instead rely on local forces to carry out ground operations under cover of the airstrikes.

Obama’s strategy reflects both his aversion to deploying American combat forces overseas again and his belief that the U.S. cannot fight a war on another country’s behalf. Yet from the very start of the campaign to defeat the Islamic State group, there have been concerns both inside and outside the administration about the viability of relying on local forces.

In Syria, a country ravaged by civil war, such forces are virtually nonexistent. After months of delay, the U.S. began training about 90 rebels at a camp in Jordan, well short of the administration’s goal of a 5,000-person force.

In Iraq, the U.S. is focused on bolstering the same military it sought to strengthen during the war pursued by Obama’s predecessor, George W. Bush. Officials say the Iraqi forces were weakened after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011 in part because Sunnis didn’t want to fight on behalf of then-Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s government.

COOL: Space could accommodate 40 people

Continued from 1A

the afternoons, when the weather is usually the hottest, instead of overnight.

Since people will be standing or sitting instead of sleeping, Johnson said the fire marshal is allowing twice as many people to use the shelter in the summer. That means the space could accommodate about 40 people who need to get out of the heat and get hydrated.

The organization held a training for new volunteers last week and Johnson said they hope to see more volunteers as the summer goes on. She said finding volunteers to staff the station during the day on a weekend should be easier than finding people willing to cover middle-of-the-night shifts during

the winter.

To help out the new cooling station the Umatilla County Peer Support Network volunteered to put on a 5K walk and 10K run called Running Hot and Walking Cold on June 6 at 9 a.m. at Riverfront Park. The registration fee is a donation of supplies for the station. A list of needed supplies can be found on the

registration page at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/running-hot-walking-cold-tickets-16825991995>.

For more information on the Hermiston Cooling Station contact Johnson at warmingstation@gmail.com or 541-720-4295.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

What's that you say? Yesterday is gone, hair is gray...

Sally Kosey is 60 today!

Happy Spring

From Dr. Hibbert,
Lacey, Jessica, Bailey, Heather, and Sarah
541-612-3707

Friends Helping Friends

MARK SKINNER CANCER BENEFIT
May 29th • 7pm • Pendleton Elk's Lodge
Performance by Imperial Twang

Hors d'oeuvres • No Host Bar
Live Auction • Raffle items • 50/50
Raffle Items: Hunting & fishing gear, guns, golf trip to Eagle Crest, theme baskets, gift certificates and much more!

Reserved seating available • \$60 for table of 4
Contact: Shelli - 541-676-5478
\$10 beer wristbands • Raffle tickets • 21 & over event

Sponsored by: Hodgen Distributing, Coca Cola, Pendleton Elk's Lodge, Hamleys, Abby's Pizza, Domino's Pizza, Bucknum's Tavern, Cash 'n Carry, Elite Guns & Bows, LLC

Share us on Facebook "Mark Skinner Cancer Benefit"
Account set up in Mark Skinner's name at Banner Bank, 125 SE Court Ave., Pendleton