

RAO NEWSLETTER  
May 29, 2020

Hi, just wanted to update everybody on our status and also send the latest from VA. As Olongapo is continuing in GQC, and their rules regarding workers to be Olongapo residents, we are still **unable to reopen**. Please don't come to the office. Hoping that will change if we go into MGCQ on the 15 of June. We continue to operate our Mobile Mailroom, so you will continue to get your mail and meds. You need to be sure we have a **current contact number** for you so we can call and arrange to meet to get your mail to you. If you have not sent an email please do so now. Please don't assume we have your number as many have changed since you first joined the rao. Those living in areas north of San Antonio or in Bataan, we will contact you and send via courier, unless your community is not permitting deliveries. This also applies to our distant members. We also are taking out going mail and I will shortly send that info out on a separate email. Basically we will publish a schedule for when you can meet with our staff and give them your outgoing. For all our other services which don't require VA, SSA or ACS assistance you can either call or email me at this email or cell 047-603-0764. Please be safe, we want to see your smiling faces when we open the doors!

From VA...

VA MANILA OUTPATIENT CLINIC  
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS  
May 29, 2020

Important Updates from VA Manila

Good afternoon from VA Manila.

I wanted to take a few minutes to share important updates about VA Manila's scheduled operations for the month of June.

VA Manila Outpatient Clinic Operations:

1. As I mentioned in my last email update on May 17, the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic will remain closed for scheduled and walk-in health care appointments through July 5, 2020. We hope to begin to resume limited in person appointments on July 6, 2020, but this date is subject to change. Do not travel to Manila for any scheduled medical appointments between now and July 5. There are no doctors who are currently reporting to the Clinic who would be able to see you in person.
2. VA Manila will be temporarily providing telephone based primary care and mental health appointments. Veterans who had primary care or mental health appointments scheduled between May 22 and July 3, 2020, should expect to proceed with their scheduled appointment by telephone. A VA staff person will attempt contact you before your appointment to confirm your scheduled appointment time and ensure VA Manila has a good contact number for your doctor to reach you at. If you would prefer to reschedule your appointment for a face-to-face clinic visit when the OPC reopens, please advise the VA Manila staff person at that time. All specialty care appointments, such as Orthopedics, Audiology, and Cardiology, will remain cancelled until we resume in-person operations.
3. VA Manila's Outpatient Pharmacy continues to process medication refills. Veterans can request prescription refills through the Automated Pharmacy Refill Line ([#MyVA](#), Option 8), or online at MyHealtheVet Pharmacy Portal. Currently, most areas of the Philippines are served by either Air21 or LBC for medication deliveries, although some delays should be expected.
4. Veterans with medical questions should continue to contact your providers via Secure Messenger on MyHealtheVet. Unfortunately, because the OPC is closed, we do not have staff available to answer incoming calls. Secure Messenger is the fastest way to get help. You can also email the Clinic Manager if you have issues or concerns, at [daniel.gutkoski2@va.gov](mailto:daniel.gutkoski2@va.gov).

VA Manila Regional Office Operations:

Although the Inter Agency Task Force has recommended changing the status for the National Capital Region to General Community Quarantine as of June 1, 2020, the VBA Manila Regional Office will remain closed until June 15, 2020. While VA Manila is closed, this does not mean that your claims are not being

worked; the rest of the VBA Regional Offices in the US are still working, and VA Manila's workload has been transferred to other offices during this period. The fastest and easiest way to interact with VBA's claims process is by sending evidence to our Evidence Intake Center. It is not advisable to send evidence or claims paperwork to our local address. The address of the Janesville, WI, Center is included as an attachment to every letter we send to Veterans, and is as follows:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Evidence Intake Center  
P.O. Box 4444  
Janesville, WI, 53547-4444  
Fax: 844-531-7818

Veterans can continue to get information about benefits or file a claim for benefits by visiting our website at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). Veterans with claim-specific or other questions may request information via Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS) <https://iris.custhelp.va.gov> or by calling the National Call Centers at 1-800-827-1000 as the Call Centers in the US remain open (US Time Zones Apply) and are a great way to provide simple claims information (e.g.: dependency verification.).

Another good source of information for Veterans who reside outside of the continental United States is the VA OCONUS Connection bulletin. You can access the latest bulletin by clicking on this link, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/.../bulletins/282f3e5>. If you wish to continue receiving this bulletin, there is a "Subscribe here" button at the bottom of the page.

Updates from the US Embassy:

Health Alert - U.S. Embassy Manila (May 29, 2020)

Location: The Philippines

Event: Special May 31 Flight to JFK International Airport, New York City

U.S. Citizens and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents in the Philippines: Philippine Airlines (PAL) still has seats available for a flight departing Manila for JFK International Airport in New York City on Sunday, May 31. Call the special PAL hotline at 02-8855-1000 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to buy your ticket. Please have your credit card and passport details readily available prior to calling. Please be patient, as PAL has a limited number of staff available to answer calls due to the quarantine restrictions in Manila. Do not call the Embassy for booking or ticketing.

Economy tickets are USD \$1,378 (plus taxes and fees). Premium Economy is USD \$1,807 (plus taxes and fees) and Business is USD \$3,218 (plus taxes and fees).

This is a morning flight, so there will NOT be any sweeper flights. If you are interested in this flight, call the PAL hotline TODAY.

Assistance:

U.S. Embassy in the Philippines

1201 Roxas Boulevard

+63(2) 5301-2000, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is +(63)(2) 5301-2000.

Remembering Memorial Day 2020

I would be remiss if I also didn't take this opportunity to reflect on Memorial Day. Under normal circumstances, VA and members of the Embassy community would have gathered at the American Cemetery in Manila and at Clark Veterans Cemetery in Pampanga to honor and commemorate the thousands of Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our Nation. As many of you know, this year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of World War 2, with many of the US military losses occurring right here in the Philippines. While the COVID pandemic didn't allow us to gather together in person, both the US Ambassador to the Philippines, Sung Y. Kim, and Major General Delfin Lorenzana, Secretary of National Defense for the Republic of the Philippines offered their remarks virtually. So I wanted to take a second to share their message, which is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80CcnbfuRQ>.

As always, I hope you and your family are healthy and safe. If VA Manila can assist with anything, you are always welcome to contact me directly: [daniel.gutkoski2@va.gov](mailto:daniel.gutkoski2@va.gov). We look forward to resuming our normal operations in the coming weeks and welcoming Veterans back to your VA soon.