

# OFFduty

ADVENTURE, GEAR, MOVIES & MORE

**NEW THIS WEEK**

Terrific acting, a brilliant soundtrack and outrageous outfits surround an unrecognizable Christian Bale in **American Hustle**, a hilarious and sad tale of ambition and greed. List price: \$30.99 for DVD, \$40.99 for Blu-ray.



The brains behind "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare" unleash giant player-controlled robots and frenetic, leaping soldiers in **Titanfall** — and do away with the single-player campaign entirely. List price: \$59.99 for Xbox One, Xbox 360 (out March 25) and PC.



**SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS RAMPANT IN BARS**

It's official: Men drinking in bars often get grabby, make lewd remarks and otherwise sexually harass women, a new study shows.

Researchers made more than 1,300 visits to bars in Toronto and used trained observers to watch bar-goers interact. Out of more than 1,000 incidences, about 25 percent involved some sort of unwanted sexual behavior. Ninety percent of those involved men harassing women.

On average, women tried about four different things to signal that the attention was unwanted. Still, more than half of the instances were classified as persistent, meaning the guy wasn't taking no for an answer. Bar staff only intervened in 10 of 258 "aggressive" incidents, and in only one case was a guy tossed out of the bar.

**GEARSCOUT**

Leupold has updated the DeltaPoint mini red dot sight, adding a kill switch to the **DeltaPoint 2** that overrides the motion-sensing power activation that would turn the unit on and drain the battery when it was riding in a car or knocked during storage. The field of view has been increased, and the surface coating has been reformulated to reduce glare on its black surface. The likely most appreciated change is a new battery placement that no longer requires the unit to be unmounted from the host weapon for a battery swap. Available with either a 3.5 MOA dot or 7 MOA triangle reticle. \$499



# Credit unions compared

Get the best deals on car loans, mortgages, checking & more

**HOW THEY STACK UP**

The organizations chosen for this chart are in the National Credit Union Administration's top 50 federally insured credit unions, in terms of the size of their assets, based on the most recent listing from 2012. Fourteen defense credit unions are in the top 50. All rates are as of early March and are subject to change. For an **explanation of membership eligibility**, see Page 28.

Credit union	Members	Branches	Branches on bases	Mobile banking	Shared branching	Minimum deposit	ATM fee	Non-network ATM fee	Monthly checking fee	Checking interest rate
Alaska USA Federal Credit Union	489,805	68	1	✓	✓	\$5	None	None	\$5	0.05%
America First Credit Union	635,000	107	3	✓		\$25	None	\$1.50	None	0.05% to 0.2%
Ent Federal Credit Union	233,244	29	3	✓	✓	\$5	None	\$1.50	\$0 to \$5	0% to 0.05%
Navy Federal Credit Union	4.5 million+	245	72	✓		\$5	None	\$1	\$0 to \$10	0.05% to 0.45%
Pentagon Federal Credit Union	1.2 million	28	13	✓		\$5	\$0 to \$1.50	\$3	\$0 to \$10	0%
Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union	460,000	46	1	✓		\$5	None	\$1	None (plus cash back)	0.05%
Redstone Federal Credit Union*	350,000	24	3	✓		\$5	\$3	\$1	None	N/A
San Antonio Federal Credit Union	251,162	17	0	✓	✓	\$5	None	\$1	\$0 to \$10	0.1%
Security Service Federal Credit Union	949,000	70	2	✓	✓	\$5	None	\$1.50	\$0 to \$10	0.05% to 0.75%
Space Coast Credit Union	237,033	57	1	✓	✓	\$5	None	Up to \$1.50	Not provided	0.08%
Tinker Federal Credit Union	291,841	28	5	✓	✓	\$5	None	Up to \$0.75	None	0% to 1.49%
Tower Federal Credit Union	132,000	18	5	✓		\$5	None	\$1	None	0.05%
Vystar Credit Union	453,199	31	1	✓		\$5	None	None	None	0.1%
Wright-Patt Credit Union	273,112	26	3	✓	✓	\$5	None	\$0.60	\$0 to \$5	0% to 0.08%

\* Information compiled from credit union's website. N/A indicates the data was not available.

Stories by Karen Jowers  
kjowers@militarytimes.com

If you think you're not eligible to join a credit union, think again.

If you think credit unions don't offer the same services that banks do — often with better rates — think again.

More than 96 million people belonged to federally insured credit unions of all sizes in 2013, up 2.6 percent from 2012, according to the National Credit Union Administration, the government's credit union regulator. Some of those credit unions specifically gear their services to the military community, and they are among some of the largest credit unions in the country.

The fundamental difference between banks and credit unions: Banks exist to make a profit for

their shareholders, while credit unions return surplus income to their members in the form of dividends, according to the NCUA. Credit unions are owned and operated by members as not-for-profit organizations.

Looking at the national averages of interest rates, the differences aren't always large, but a few hundred extra bucks never hurt anyone. For example, a five-year car loan for \$15,000 at the national credit union average of 2.61 percent would cost a total of \$1,016.32 in interest; the same loan at the banks' average rate of 3.82 percent would cost \$1,501.86 in interest, according to calculations using Bankrate.com. You'd pay \$485.54 less with the average credit union rate.

On the other hand, the national average for 30-year fixed mort-

**[CONSUMERWATCH]**

gage rates currently is only 0.01 percent higher for credit unions than for banks. Over those 30 years on a \$150,000 loan, you'd pay \$319.45 more. One more reason to shop around.

Banks generally don't limit who they allow to be a customer, but not everyone can join every credit union. Each institution's membership focuses on certain groups of people, based on where they work, live, worship or other criteria, such as memberships in organizations.

Just about anyone in the military community is eligible to join some credit union. The Defense Credit Union Council comprises 207 credit unions operating on 212 military installations, said council president Roland "Arty" Arteaga, a retired Army colonel.

To operate on a military base, credit unions and banks must follow rules set by the Defense Department and the individual services, in addition to federal rules and laws. Such requirements include providing financial education on bases, for example.

## CREDIT UNIONS VS. BANKS

A comparison of national averages:

	Credit unions	Banks
Checking interest (\$2,500 balance)	0.35%	0.15%
Regular savings (\$1,000 balance)	0.22%	0.1%
Overdraft fee	Commonly \$25-\$30 (2012)	Commonly \$35 (2012)
Car loan interest rate (5-year loan, new car)	2.61%	3.82%
Credit card interest rates	9.07% to 9.89%	10.82% to 12.1%
Car loan interest rate (4-year loan, 2-year-old car)	2.76%	4.01%
Max credit card late fee	\$22.23 to \$25.74	\$32.93 to \$33.11
Bounced check fee	\$27.73	\$30.70
30-year fixed, conforming mortgage loan	4.43%	4.42%

SOURCE: INFORMA RESEARCH SERVICES VIA CREDIT UNION NATIONAL ASSOCIATION. RATES AS OF MARCH 12.

From the largest, Navy Federal Credit Union, to the smallest, Fort Dix Federal Credit Union, military-affiliated credit unions "know who they're supporting," Arteaga said. "I don't know of one credit union that voluntarily terminated its lease [on a military installation] because it wasn't making a profit. They aren't there to make a profit. ... They do make money, but they

return it to their owner-members, not to stockholders."

In one example of meeting members' needs, a number of credit unions offer mobile banking. Pentagon Federal Credit Union has seen "a huge movement" to its new mobile app, said James Schenck, vice president of the credit union. There were

See **CREDIT UNIONS** Page 28

## CHART DEFINITIONS

**Mobile banking** allows customers to conduct transactions using mobile devices.

**Shared branching** allows members to conduct transactions such as cashing checks at other credit union branches.

An **ATM fee** is charged for using ATMs owned by the member's credit union or in a participating network of financial institutions.

A **foreign ATM fee** is charged by the member's credit union for using an ATM owned by another financial institution outside the credit union's network. This is in addition to any fee charged by the other financial institution.

**Monthly checking account fees** are charged on certain accounts, sometimes when the balance falls below a

certain threshold.

**Low balance alerts** may be sent electronically.

A **bounced check fee** is charged when a check is returned unpaid because of insufficient funds in an account.

An **overdraft fee** is charged when a check, debit card or other transaction is paid even when there is not enough money in an account, thus creating an overdraft or negative balance. Most credit unions have alternatives, such as a link to a savings account or line of credit.

**Maximum number of overdraft fees per day:** If a number of transactions are paid in one day that result in a negative balance, some financial institutions limit the number of overdraft fees they charge. Some don't.

**Car loan interest rates** vary depending on the creditworthiness of the borrower, length of the loan and price of the car.

**Credit card interest rates** vary depending on factors such as the creditworthiness of the borrower.

**Credit card late fees** may be charged if a payment is even one day late.

**30-year mortgage rates** are the annual percentage rate (APR) of a 30-year, fixed-rate, conventional, conforming loan. A conforming loan satisfies the requirements of the federal regulator, and limits are usually \$417,000 for mortgages. With a fixed rate, the interest rate stays the same for 30 years. Interest rates vary based on creditworthiness and other factors and can change daily; rates in this chart are based on credit unions' websites as of March 14.

Low balance alerts	Bounced check fee	Overdraft fee	Maximum overdraft fee per day	Car loan interest rates	Car loans in 2013	Credit card interest rates	Credit card late fee	30-year mortgage rates (can change daily)	Mortgages in 2013	Mortgage approvals in 2013
	\$20	\$5 with overdraft protection	No limit	2.25% to 15%	57,946	10.5% to 14.5%	5% of minimum payment (\$1 min., \$35 max.)	As low as 4.375%	6,199	74.41%
✓	\$25	\$25	Varies	2.99% to 18%	71,937	6.99% to 18%	Up to \$35	As low as 4.3083%	3,808	72.14%
✓	\$25	\$25	N/A	As low as 2.99%	15,764	As low as 9.99%; intro rate 0% for first 6 billing cycles	Up to \$35	As low as 4.491%	3,221	Not provided
✓	\$29	\$20	\$60	1.49% to 5.29%	298,203	7.99% to 18%; 0% for 12 months	Up to \$25	As low as 3.625%	46,554	Not provided
✓	\$30	\$30	No limit	0% to 2.49 % online; 1.99% to 3.99% offline	81,701	6.99% to 13.99%	Up to \$25	As low as 4.343%	15,150	Not provided
✓	\$24	\$24	Varies	1.65% to 15.75%	40,000	7.7% to 17.9%	Up to \$20	As low as 4.25%	5,400	Not provided
✓	\$25	\$25	No limit	As low as 2.6%	N/A	7% to 11.5%	N/A	As low as 4.25%	N/A	N/A
✓	\$25	\$25	No limit	3.65% to 11.7%	14,882	8.9% to 15.5%; intro rate 2.9% to 10.9%	\$25	Not provided	173	26%
✓	\$27.50	\$27.50	No limit	3.45% to 13.45%	119,135	6.49% to 15.75%	\$25	As low as 4.25%	949	54%
✓	Up to \$30	Up to \$30	Not provided	1.89% and up	Not provided	5.99% to 17.99%	\$30	As low as 4.125%	Not provided	Not provided
✓	\$22.50	\$22.50	\$135	2.99% to 10.99%	32,766	3.99% to 10.75%	\$22	As low as 4.625%	571	57%
✓	\$25	Up to \$25	No limit	1.99% to 13.30%	5,158	10.9%	Up to \$20	As low as 4%	1,623	Not provided
✓	\$32	\$32	No limit	As low as 1.35% to 7.25%	35,307	As low as 9.1% to 9.5%	None	As low as 4.5%	4,530	59%
✓	\$25	\$5 with overdraft protection	No limit	2.39% to 11.39%	37,137	6.25% to 17.25%	\$20	As low as 3.75%	3,339	79%

OFFduty

WHO CAN JOIN

Eligibility to become a credit union member depends on each one's stated common bonds, which may be related to employers, geographic areas, places of worship, or other factors. Once you're a member, you can keep your membership when you leave the area, employer, etc. The headquarters and eligibility for those on our list:

**Alaska USA FCU:** Anchorage, Alaska; most residents of Alaska, Washington state and San Bernardino County, Calif.; www.alaskausa.org

**America First Credit Union:** Ogden, Utah; those who live, work, or attend school in Utah's Salt Lake, Utah, or Juab counties or Clark County, Nev., and some others; www.americafirst.com

**Ent Federal Credit Union:** Colorado Springs, Colo.; civilian and military personnel at Buckley Air Force Base, Colo., Colorado Army National Guard and Colorado Air National Guard members and their family members; and all who live, work, worship or attend school in Colorado's Denver, El Paso, Pueblo and Teller counties; www.ent.com

**Navy Federal Credit Union:** Vienna, Va.; active-duty and retired service members (including Coast Guard), reserve component members, government civilian employees, DoD contractors assigned to U.S. installations, and family members; www.navyfederal.org

**Pentagon Federal Credit Union:** Alexandria, Va.; service members (including Coast Guard), employees of DoD or the Homeland Security Department, employees or volunteers of Amer-

ican Red Cross, numerous other groups and organizations; www.penfed.org

**Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union:** Live Oak, Texas; those who live, work, worship, volunteer or attend school within many south-central Texas communities, including San Antonio; www.rbfcu.org

**Redstone Federal Credit Union:** Huntsville, Ala.; government employees (including military) of Redstone Arsenal, a number of Alabama National Guard units, more than 1,400 other employee groups or other organizations in Madison County, Ala., and their family members, immediate, eligible family or household members of RFCU members, members of eligible clubs or organizations that offer RFCU membership, employees of companies offering RFCU membership

**San Antonio Credit Union:** San Antonio; active, reserve, retired service members and their dependents, government civilian employees, government contractor employees, and others. Must work in, be paid from or supervised from these Texas counties: Bexar, Kendall, Comal, Guadalupe, Wilson, Atascosa, Medina, Banderita or Kerr; www.sacuu.com

**Security Service Federal Credit Union:** San Antonio; active or retired service members or DoD civilian employees and their family members assigned to military installations in San Antonio and Fort Carson, Colo., Utah National Guard members, others; www.ssfcu.org

**Space Coast Credit Union:** Melbourne, Fla.; those who live or work in the Florida counties of

Brevard, Broward, Flagler, Indian River, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Seminole, St. Johns, St. Lucie or Volusia; www.sccu.com

**Tinker Federal Credit Union:** Oklahoma City; military or civilian personnel assigned to or working at Tinker or Vance Air Force bases; members or employees of more than 600 groups; www.tinkerfcu.org

**Tower Federal Credit Union:** Laurel, Md.; employees of the National Security Agency, their families and household members, chapter members (in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.) of Association of the U.S. Army and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, other selected employers and associations; www.towerfcu.org

**Vystar Credit Union:** Jacksonville, Fla.; those who live or work within the Florida counties of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Suwannee, Union and Volusia; www.vystarcu.org

**Wright-Patt Credit Union:** Fairborn, Ohio; military and civilian employees of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, military personnel residing in a 14-county area adjacent to the Fairborn, Ohio, area who do not have a credit union available, retired military and government civilian personnel, government employees residing near Wright-Patt who do not have a credit union at their places of employment, members of other groups, spouses, children and certain family members; www.wpcu.coop

Credit unions

From Page 27

60,000 new downloads the week of Feb. 24, with more mobile checking deposits in the past few weeks than in the whole prior year, he said. "Time is important to everybody. The mobile app has made it easy to take a picture of the check, front and back, make the deposit and go about their business."

Last year was unusual for defense credit unions and their members in terms of military budget cutbacks under sequestration, Artega said. But credit unions stepped up with programs to mitigate problems for those affected, ranging from delayed payments to low-interest loans.

Another unique aspect of credit unions: Once you join one, you're always a member. So when you make a permanent change-of-station move, you can take your membership with you. Even if there's not a physical branch nearby, it's generally easy to bank online and by phone.

While on these pages we've

provided information on defense credit unions listed among the largest federally-insured credit unions, many smaller and mid-size credit unions have programs that are comparable to or may exceed those of larger institutions.

"Most credit unions have a greater understanding of the needs of their members because they were 'built' to serve the financial needs of those members," said Brad Smith, vice president for strategic development of Pacific Marine Credit Union in Oceanside, Calif.

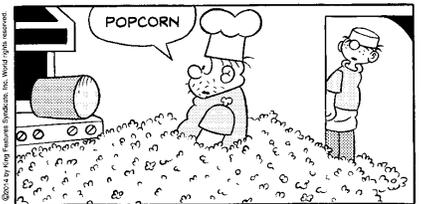
That credit union has about 79,000 members and 12 full-service branches, including branches at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

This credit union may be smaller than some, but it offers unique programs tailored to meet the needs of its population of young, active-duty troops. "Sometimes it's the little things that really add up for young members," Smith said.

For example:

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT AND GREG WALKER



■ Its "Primary Checking" account has a \$20 forgiveness for overdrafts — the balance can go negative up to \$20 before any overdraft fees are charged.

■ Its payday loan alternative, dubbed "Ready Cash," offers loans of up to \$500 for active-duty members with low credit scores. If the credit score is really low, Smith said, the service member can get a "credit rebuild loan" that can be used to pay off other debts and begin rebuilding their credit score.

■ Its "Zero Credit Score Auto Loan," also available only to active-duty members, is designed for those who have never had credit. Most lenders won't loan money to someone with no credit score. These loans allow active-duty members "to get the wheels they want and begin building their credit score at the same time," Smith said. The interest rate is higher than a standard auto loan because the members are an unknown risk, he said, but the credit union has a member loyalty program that automatically reduces the loan rate by 2 percent every 18 months if all payments are made on time, until

it's reduced to the lowest possible rate.

On the other side of the country is Belvoir Federal Credit Union, which offers "Compass Checking" for active-duty troops. That checking account features a 2.02 percent annual percentage yield on all balances, rebates of any ATM surcharge fees, a 0.25 percent interest discount on new consumer loans, automatic qualification for a \$500 line of credit and a 25 cent credit for each bill paid through its bill-pay program.

Belvoir FCU, like Pacific Marine FCU and many others, also offers free financial counseling.

When it comes to banking, troops and their families have lots of choices these days, so it makes good sense to check out credit unions as an option. They can offer the same types of products and services to their members as banks, said Pacific Marine's Smith, "because they don't have to worry about maximizing profits for their shareholders."

Credit union leaders "are sophisticated professionals that understand how to build financial products that meet the needs of their members," he said. □

## Look at the whole picture when choosing

It's not easy to decide where to stash your hard-earned cash. You need to look at a bank or credit union's overall package so that in the end, you don't lose money to fees and other costs. Ideally, you'll come out at least a few bucks ahead.

So do you want mobile banking? High interest rates on checking accounts? A branch office that's close to your work or close to your home?

According to Bankrate's 2014 Credit Union Checking Survey, about 72 percent of the country's largest credit unions offer free checking. Only about 38 percent of banks do so, according to Bankrate. You may want a checking account that pays interest, but if the financial institution charges a fee when your balance drops below a certain amount, you'll probably lose money.

The 2014 Consumer Action Handbook USA suggests considering all the products and services an institution provides as well as the location of branches,

size, fees and interest.

You don't have to maintain all your accounts at one financial institution; you can have accounts at different institutions to get the best rates on various products, says the handbook, published by the General Services Administration.

Some things to consider:

■ Make sure the bank is a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures your deposits up to \$250,000; or that the credit union is a member of the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund, with the same protection.

■ What fees does the financial institution charge? Do you have to maintain a certain amount in a checking or savings account to avoid being charged a fee? Are you charged for each check you write, or for each debit card purchase? Does the institution set limits on the number of checks you can write each month before being charged?

■ What's the institution's pol-

icy on overdrafts? If you overdraw your account, how much will you pay in overdraft and other fees? What options are offered, such as a link to a savings account, or a line of credit, to help you avoid overdrafts and paying fees? If you have multiple transactions in one day that result in overdrafts, will you pay multiple fees?

■ Does the checking account pay interest? Do you have to maintain a certain amount in the checking account in order to qualify for interest payments?

■ How easy is it to get access to your money? Does the financial institution offer mobile banking, online banking, banking by phone, a robust network of ATMs? A number of financial institutions allow you to deposit checks simply by taking pictures of them on your mobile device. Easy access is also something to consider if you travel a lot, or if you're considering staying with the financial institution when you make a permanent change-of-station move. □

# TAKE A STAND AGAINST FEES.

**COMPASS CHECKING**

earn

**2.02** % APY\*

on all balances

**ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY**

- Every ATM is FREE
- FREE Online Bill Pay
- FREE eStatements
- Instant \$500 line of credit
- Get paid when you pay your bills online
- Automatic .25% APR discount on consumer loans

★★★★★

**CUXCEL CHECKING**

earn

**2.53** % APY\*

on BALANCES UP TO \$15,000

**EVERY ATM IS YOUR ATM**

Enjoy a FREE checking account that pays you! Plus, FREE online bill pay with eStatements!

\*APY = Annual Percentage Yield. To qualify for this account, Active Duty Direct Deposit of Net Pay must post to your COMPASS Military Checking account within 60 days of account opening. If the Active Duty Direct Deposit stops for more than 60 days, the account converts to a Basic Checking account. Rates as of March 7, 2014 and are subject to change without notice. .25% APR loan discount applies to new consumer loans only. Valid email address and eStatements are required. No minimum balance required. Free Online Bill Pay and Overdraft protection. No monthly service charge. This account does not earn reward points for debit card usage.

\*APY=Annual Percentage Yield. 2.53% APY paid on balances (\$0.01-\$15,000), and 0.05% APY paid on all amounts above \$15,000 each qualification period all requirements are met. Minimum requirements must be met to receive account rewards. If you do not meet requirements during the qualification period, your account will still earn 0.05% APY. ATMs fees will be reimbursed at the end of each qualification cycle if all requirements are met. Qualification cycles will be calculated on a calendar month. Qualifiers can be viewed in real time on Online Banking. Rates and tiers as of March 7, 2013, and subject to change without notice. No Minimum Balance Required. Available to Personal Accounts only. Free Online Bill Pay and Overdraft protection. No monthly service charge.

**Membership is open to all armed forces — active and retired.**

703.730.1800

[www.BelvoirCreditUnion.org](http://www.BelvoirCreditUnion.org)

[ContactCenter@belvoirfcu.org](mailto:ContactCenter@belvoirfcu.org)

Find Us On:

Federally Insured by the National Credit Union Administration.