

The AMERICAN LEGION

Department of France



Volume 11 / Issue 9

September 2013

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DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

James Settle

My Fellow Legionaries,

The National Convention went well. I was able to meet up with many Legionnaires, and made new acquaintances, many which offered assistance to my first National Convention. Many thanks, to the following, for organizing and assisting with the program, Comrades, Doug Haggan, Robert Fuelling, John Miller, H. Ownby, and Bill Marshall. Also a very big thanks to the wife's for their assistance in keeping us all in order, and ensuring restaurants were selected on a daily basis.

I felt the Committee meetings were well organized and very professional handled. There were many resolutions to be processed and voted on. The resolution submitted by the department of France did not make it out of the Committee. I along with NECMan Miller, and AltNECMan H. Ownby had a very short meeting with the newly elected National Commander Daniel Dellinger; he is scheduled to visit the Department of France on or about the 26th of May till 31 May 2014.

The IRS is in the process of checking American Legion Post, a word of warning, they are checking for DD Forms 214 on the members. If you do not have these forms on hand from your members I would suggest you start working on them. My understanding is that the IRS is imposing a \$1,000 dollar a day fine for not having DD Forms on hand. More on this, issue, at the 2nd DEC in October, along with, other information, from the Department NECMan John Miller.

For your information Madame President is in the hospital. She had major surgery on the 3rd of September. I was just notified that **NO CANCER** was found, a relief to us all. Please keep her in your prayers and thoughts for a speedy recovery.

Department Officers

Continued from Page 1

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From the Editor...

Please send all input for the Department Newsletter to my e-mail address by the 25th of the month. Please use Word document format. Constructive suggestions to improve the Newsletter are also welcome.

If you want to stay informed on what is happening with **YOUR** Department you can also visit the following sites,

www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org

www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance

www.legion.org/fodpal

Thank You.

David N. Greaux

davidgreaux@t-online.de

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MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP. I cannot stress membership enough. It is the bloodline of our organization. It enables us to perform our missions to the Veterans and their Families, and supports not only National Programs but ours also. While you are out there recruiting, new members do not forget your current members, get them to renew in a timely manner. If you have any questions on membership do not hesitate to contact the Membership Chairman Comrade Brown, at joedan.pascall@googlemail.com. He can answer your questions and resolve any problems you are having with membership.

In closing I hope all of you had very happy and safe summer vacation period. Please keep those in harm's way and their families, in your thoughts and prayers also.

James M. Settle
Department Commander

Phone: 07138-67359

E-Mail: Please use this E-Mail address temporarily until I can register a new one.
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The Department Web Page is: www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org
The department has a Face Book page at the following www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance. Please visit and like this page. Thanks

DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER AT LARGE / MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN **Joe D. Brown**



My fellow Legionaries,
I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for having the trust and faith in me to properly perform the duties as your Department VCAL. I will not let you down. Next, I would like to congratulate the new Commander, Michael Soares of Post PO01 PORTUGAL. Remember, each post has a Vice Commander assigned and they should have already contacted your Post by now. The Vice Commanders are there to assist you in all matters, if you are having difficulties, please contact them.

I visited GR03 annual Grill Party at Commander ED Sherman's home, the food was great and Gr 03 members came out of the woods for this Grill Fest. Gr 79 came with full force with 9 members. I visited Gr 07 Annual meeting and the Department Finance Officer at his home, we discussed legion activities and I picked up the check for the Transmittal.

I spoke to the Department Commander James Settle on the phone, Adjutant Maxwell Rice, Service Officer Hall, Chaplain Gino Cantu, Vice Commander Casby Logan, Vice Commander Jerry Aman and Vice Commander Stephen Ward.

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I also talked to post Commanders from GR 13 Rick Cervenka, Gr 07 Casy Logan, Gr 06 Derek Van Duyne, Gr 30 James Dennis, Gr 03 Ed Sherman, Gr 01 Stephen Ward, Be02 Joseph Schram, Fr01 Carl Hale, GR 1982 CHRIS BUCHANAN and Gr 14 Adjutant Carl Hackworth.

Department had a IA meeting in Heilbronn and it went well. The outcome will be presented at the 2nd Dec on Oct 26th in Heilbronn.

Remember if you need to contact me, I am just an E-mail or a phone call away, joedan.pascall@googlemail.com . M-0170-1888034. In closing, please keep those in harm's way and their families, not only in your thoughts but your prayers as well.

If you are having any kind of functions, membership meeting, elections, ceremonies or any type of fest let your vice commander know when you schedule such events.



IA Meeting in Heilbronn



GR07 General Membership Meeting



GR03 Grill Party



GR03 Grill Party, 9 members from GR79



40&8 Grande du Germany Grill Party, Heilbronn



GR07 Fish Day



GR07 Fish Day



BE02 Welcomes New Member

2014 TAL Membership Report as of: September 2, 2013

* All-Time-High's					
Department	Department Year-End Goal	2014 Actual Mbsp.	% of Goal	Needed To Meet 50% Target 11.09.2013	
1	TENNESSEE	25.054	14.354	57,292%	-1.827
2	MASSACHUSETTS	40.604	23.097	56,884%	-2.795
3	MISSOURI	43.809	24.754	56,504%	-2.850
4	WISCONSIN	59.500	33.527	56,348%	-3.777
5	MAINE	20.861	11.694	56,057%	-1.264
6	OHIO	105.800	59.088	55,849%	-6.188
7	VIRGINIA	46.253	25.791	55,761%	-2.665
8	INDIANA	88.298	48.160	54,543%	-4.011
9	SOUTH DAKOTA	20.847	11.327	54,334%	-904
10	DELAWARE	11.044	5.933	53,721%	-411
11	WEST VIRGINIA	18.917	10.160	53,708%	-702
12	CONNECTICUT	20.591	10.869	52,785%	-574
13	ILLINOIS	93.775	49.415	52,695%	-2.528
14	NORTH DAKOTA	16.170	8.494	52,529%	-409
15	KANSAS	34.193	17.935	52,452%	-839
16	HAWAII	2.271	1.190	52,400%	-55
17	FLORIDA	111.525	58.346	52,317%	-2.584
18	COLORADO	20.669	10.736	51,943%	-402
19	MARYLAND	56.445	29.278	51,870%	-1.056
20	LOUISIANA	23.005	11.929	51,854%	-427
21	MONTANA	11.371	5.877	51,684%	-192
22	VERMONT	13.393	6.919	51,661%	-223
23	NEVADA	7.762	3.990	51,404%	-109
24	MINNESOTA	84.542	43.298	51,215%	-1.027
25	WYOMING	6.561	3.323	50,648%	-43
26	CALIFORNIA	96.269	48.489	50,368%	-355
27	IDAHO	9.165	4.604	50,235%	-22
28	NORTH CAROLINA	39.841	19.668	49,366%	252
29	NEW JERSEY	50.213	24.271	48,336%	835
30	WASHINGTON	27.602	13.272	48,083%	529
31	FRANCE	2.970	1.424	47,946%	61
32	IOWA	52.646	24.794	47,096%	1.529
33	OREGON	18.899	8.845	46,801%	604
34	PHILIPPINES	795	367	46,164%	30
35	MEXICO	878	405	46,128%	34
36	NEW MEXICO	11.347	5.230	46,091%	443
37	PUERTO RICO	4.781	2.188	45,764%	202
38	GEORGIA	42.749	19.528	45,681%	1.846
39	MICHIGAN	71.157	32.068	45,067%	3.510
40	ARKANSAS	13.958	6.221	44,569%	758
41	TEXAS	66.328	29.531	44,523%	3.633
42	RHODE ISLAND	5.447	2.420	44,428%	303
43	ARIZONA	40.492	17.917	44,248%	2.329
44	MISSISSIPPI	15.892	7.024	44,198%	922
45	SOUTH CAROLINA	20.755	9.163	44,148%	1.214
46	NEBRASKA	36.071	15.865	43,983%	2.170
47	NEW YORK	123.042	52.981	43,059%	8.540
48	UTAH	7.361	3.163	42,970%	517
49	PENNSYLVANIA	172.747	74.043	42,862%	12.330
50	DIST OF COL	1.871	801	42,811%	134
51	KENTUCKY	24.094	10.042	41,678%	2.005
52	ALASKA	6.003	2.451	40,830%	550
53	NEW HAMPSHIRE	18.555	7.169	38,636%	2.108
54	ALABAMA	18.334	6.426	35,050%	2.741
55	OKLAHOMA	18.284	2.870	15,697%	6.272
	Grand Totals	2.001.806	982.724	49,092%	18.162

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN THE AMERICAN LEGION

**IMPORTANT: EVERYONE MUST SUBMIT A COPY OF
DD 214 OR DISCHARGE.**

NEW MEMBERSHIP

Eligible veterans applying for first time membership must submit the following information to Post Membership Committee:

1. Complete American Legion Membership application.
Applications are available at the Post Home
2. **COPY OF DD214 OR DISCHARGE**
3. Membership Dues Payment. Dues. (Amount Shown on Application). Make checks payable to your Post ..
4. If the information is correct, membership will be approved and then a membership card will be mailed to you.
5. Please see eligibility dates below.

TRANSFERS

Veterans applying for transfers from your current Post to our Post must submit the following:

- a. Completed Member Data Form.
 - b. **COPY OF DD214 OR DISCHARGE**
 - c. COPY OF MEMBERSHIP CARD
6. Membership dues payment, if current year dues are not paid. If current dues are paid, please pay dues for next year's membership.

ELIGIBILITY DATES

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY in the American Legion is based on honorable service with the U. S. Armed Forces between:

(April 6, 1917 -November 11, 1918) World War I
(December 7, 1941 - December 31, 1946) World War II
(June 25, 1950 - January 31, 1955) Korean War
(February 28, 1961 - May 7, 1975) Vietnam War
(August 24, 1982 - July 31,1984) Lebanon/Grenada
(December 20, 1989 - January 31, 1990) Operation Just Cause
(August 2, 1990 - Today)* *Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm*

Because eligibility dates remain open, all members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to join The American Legion at this time, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States. Must have served at least one day of active military duty during one of the dates below and honorably discharged or still serving honorably. :

For any questions please contact our membership chairman,
joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com M-0170-1888034
Membership Chairman
Charlie Joe BROWN



DEPARTMENT
VICE COMMANDER
Jerry Aman

August was kind of a slow month as most of us tried to find a spot of shade but I was able to get out early one cool morning and had the good fortune to visit the David Chavez Post No. 1982's youth fishing event on 3 August.

Approximately 40 of our soldier's children participated in this event, co-sponsored with the Ansbach Community Outdoor Recreation Activity whose Chairman, Fred Lane, is also a Legionnaire. As Post Commander Chris Buchanan escorted me around the area I couldn't help but be amused at the sight of those kids staring intensely at the water while waiting for fish to bite. "Dad, when will I catch one" or "can you put that thing on my hook" was frequently heard.

A more "American scene" could hardly have been put on canvas as parents were sitting on the grass either reading, relaxing or just enjoying the idyllic conditions. The American flag and the Post colors were prominently displayed and the walkway leading to the lake was lined with American flags. Americanism at its finest. At least ten GR 1982 members were

present to assist Commander Buchanan and help the kids with baiting their hooks or casting the lines.

The event ended at noon and all of the kids were presented with a medal certifying their participation and then enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs prepared by Post GR 1982 on their smoker grill.

As I drove away I couldn't help but think of how fortunate the Ansbach Military Community was to have an American Legion Post in their midst whose members were working with the youth and playing a role in developing future citizens of America. Good job GR 1982.

I tried to visit one of GR 79's meetings but arrived a day earlier in order to attend an Internal Affairs meeting and could not stay the extra day, however Post Commander Brown stated that he will ensure that I get an invitation to their fish fry.

I established contact with Rick Cervenka, Commander, Dwight D. Eisenhower Post GR 13, Augsburg and agreed to attend their General Membership meeting on 21 September.

Jerry Aman
Vice Commander
GR 06, GR 13, GR 79, GR 1982

"Can an expatriate American be a patriotic American?"

How many of you like being called an expatriate? I don't, but that is what many who don't know better consider us.

Websters defines an expatriate as "to withdraw from ones native land or from allegiance to it." Living overseas, away from our native land applies to all of us here in this room but we have not abandoned our allegiance and loyalty to our country. As a matter-of-fact it has been my experience that before 9/11 those American ex-service members living overseas were usually more aware of our country's many benefits and were just as "American" as their fellow countrymen in the US.

I base this on the fact that looking at our country from outside its borders and comparing it to the country we reside in or its borders gave us a better appreciation of what our flag and country stands for, whereas many just took it for granted.

I feel that we “expatriates” have demonstrated our allegiance to America first of all by serving in the armed forces during a period when we were either deployed in combat zones or stationed in Europe facing down the Russians and working long and arduous hours in keeping America’s forces in constant alert. By volunteering to serve in our Armed Forces we also accepted that we would be separated from family and loved ones. Now that I consider Patriotic.

When we completed our service obligations many of us had German or European spouses which influenced our decisions to live overseas, but that did not mean that we “*withdrew from our native land or allegiance to it*” rather we remained close to US military installations, why? Because we wanted to be near other “patriots” who had served. We further demonstrated our allegiance to our country when we joined the American Legion, an organization that is open only to those veterans who served during periods where the US was in a conflict situation and the possibility existed that you may be called upon to risk your lives for your country, whether in Europe during the Cold War, Viet Nam or other areas of conflict.

Eligibility to join the American Legion is very strict and belonging to this fine organization alone radiates an inspiration of patriotism. Not everyone qualifies for membership but “expatriates” if they served during the periods prescribed, do. This doesn’t mean that someone who wore the uniform and served honorably is not patriotic it’s just that he or she can’t automatically join the legion. We can. The American Legion is one of the strongest ties that we who live overseas have to our country, and our membership should not be taken lightly.

Those of us seated here are very fortunate to have the Department of France. Membership not only demonstrates our patriotism but supports the American Legion in numerous programs for veterans, families of those serving and many aspects of the lives of our men and women in uniform and those who previously served. Commander Koutz’s pet program is Operation Comfort Warrior, a program to assist soldiers wounded in battle. His goal was to collect 500,000 dollars but he has now received over 750,000. For more information on Operation Comfort Warrior please view the Legion’s web site

What can the Department of France do for us? The answer is easy. They can only do what we want them to do for us. Only this way can it meet our expectations. We have a fantastic monthly newsletter. I hope that everyone reads this publication but more importantly that it is passed on to all of the members in your posts. Posts need to ensure that information from the department gets down to every last one of their members, i.e., newsletter and FOPAL information. And then we should add a personal note so that these members feel that they really belong. What the Department of France publishes monthly with their newsletter, other organizations publish quarterly, or even semi-annually. However we as a department need to do more to “reach out” to our existing members so that they can then in

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turn “reach out” to other new members. Also, perhaps the Department should see if it needs a better outline of the duties of its officers in addition to what is in the Officers Guide, i.e. VCAL duties.

What else can we do? Membership, and we hear it said almost constantly. Membership is critical. With members, the American Legion has clout. National Commander Koutz stated at the recent Commanders Ball that whenever he goes to Washington the fact that we have over 2.4 million members causes the politicians to pay attention to what he has to say. Since assuming command of National Commander Koutz has had 2 meetings with President Obama. We know that with the drawdown of the military in Europe it gets much harder to find new members, but they “are out there.”

And the posts: The posts should look for ways to support our Department. If you see something you like, or don’t like, feed the information up to the Department via your chain-of-command. Don’t have your post members sit around and “bad mouth” the Department only because they know very little about it. Post Commanders should get some of your members to travel with you to the DEC’s and department officers should always try to ensure that you conduct your meetings in a professional manner or you will “turn off” the attending individuals. (I speak from firsthand experience having brought many of my post members to DEC’s).

The Department of France is now approaching its 90th birthday. That may be old but with dedicated “expatriates” such as us, we will hit the 100 year mark and continue serving those who have served our country.

Stay loyal to the American Legion, the Department of France and your posts.

Thank You

Jerry Aman
Vice Commander

DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER *Stephen A. Ward*



Greetings, Commanders & Legionnaires,

As the Department of France Vice Commander, I have been assigned the following Posts: Riley Leroy

Pitts Post GR07, Thomas W. Barnett GR14, John F. Kennedy Post IR63 Facebook site: www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionIRL NOTE: Michael Coyne tells his story on the Post IR63 Facebook his service in the American military Vietnam. George S. Patton Post GR45, Rotterdam

Post NL01, and Portugal (Nunv Alvares Pereira) Post PO-01. The Portugal Post submits their Post Newsletters to the FODPAL site. Doug Haggan (FODPAL Secretary) is asking the Department and Posts to submit pictures and small articles to the FODPAL website: <http://www.legion.org> Click FODPAL site listed below the Legion Homepage. FODPAL (Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion) is asking for traveling tips in Germany and other Countries, special programs and events from the Department and Post, and facebook sites. The Department of France Newsletters is posted on

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the FODPAL website. Click Newsletters. Also, listed in the FODPAL Newsletter site is Post IR63 and Portugal Post PO01.

The next Leroy Riley Pitts Post GR07 Post meeting is: 3 Sept.13/6:30 P.M. NOTE: Post GR07 is

moving to Funari Barracks (Mannheim-Kafertal), Bldg. 188. I attended the Mannheim Post meeting (5 August), and the final Open House provided by Post GR07 (Coleman Barracks) 10 August. The next TWB Post 14 meeting is: 11 Sept.13/7 P.M. (Buedingen) at the Gastatte Schroth (Buedingen Orleshausen). Please send your Post Americans Reports, to Carl Hacksworth. Planning to visit Vilseck (George S. Patton Post GR45) this coming September, date to be determine by VCAL Brown. Also, I'm planning to visit Portugal Post PO01 (Jan. 14). Post Adjutant Gilbert Wells (Post PO01) and I talk on Skype every Monday evening. You can reach me on Skype: stephenallenward Post Adjutant Wells provides me information on the internet. I appreciate the updates. I haven't received any information from Rotterdam Post NL01. I received information from the Post IR-63 Facebook site.

I stress the importance of membership in the Posts, Department, and the National Organization. Membership is our Voice on Capitol Hill. I haven't received any membership status updates from the Department of France Membership Chairman (Brown). But received the Online Renewals report as of 19 August 13, Riley Leroy Pitts Post GR07 (10), Thomas W. Barnett

GR14 (5), John F. Kennedy Post IR-63 (1), George S. Patton Post GR45 (0), Rotterdam Post NL01 (0), and Portugal Post PO01 (7). It's a new Recruiting Year; please send your Post transmittal to the Department Membership Chairman as soon as possible. I encourage the Posts to transmit each month to the Department Membership Chairman (Joe Dan Brown).

The National Commander program this year is Operation Comfort Warrior. The National Commander asks the Posts to be active with the program (Operation Comfort Warriors). It's posted in the National website: www.legion.org Posts and individual members can donate to this program. The Posts are asked to have collection cans for this program and the monies sent to NEC Miller. The Department of France website is being updated by Cale Hale. Please contact him, if you have any questions. If your Post has Facebook, please contact the Department Webmaster Carl Hale.

I received information from AFN (Kaiserslautern) interview with the National Commander (James Koutz). The story is posted on the AFN Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=534562629931259>

Commanders & Fellow Legionnaires, many thanks for what you do for your Posts and the communities you serve.

STEPHEN A. WARD
VICE COMMANDER
DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE

DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER *George Hall*

I am now set up at my home for VA, DAFS, SSA, ACG, CA.
The address is AmKirchwald 3, 69251 Gaiberg

Phone H 06223 5475
Phone M 0176 7227 6350
Email hallgt@yahoo.com





Dan Dellinger

National Commander

The American Legion

Dan Dellinger of Vienna, Va., was elected national commander of the 2.4 million-member American Legion on Aug. 29, 2013 in Houston, during the 95th national convention of the nation's largest veteran's organization.

He became an Army Infantry officer after graduating with a degree in criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He served at Fort Benning, Ga., during the Vietnam War and entered the U.S. Army Reserve in 1972, separating from the service in 1984 at the rank of captain.

A member of the Dyer-Gunnell American Legion Post 180 in Vienna since 1982, he was made a life member in 1990. He has served as post, district and department commander and chaired numerous committees. At the national level, he chaired the Legislative, National Security, and Economics commissions as well as the Aerospace Committee. He served as chairman of the Legislative Council and Membership and Post Activities Committee. He has been a member of the Foreign Relations Council, Policy Coordination, Veterans Planning and Coordinating committees as well as the Legislative Council.

Dellinger is a member of the Sons of the American Legion, Past Commanders and Adjutants Club, Past Department Commander's Club, ANAVICUS and the Citizens Flag Alliance. He has served as a presidential appointee on the Federal Taskforce on SBA Hiring and as vice mayor of the Town of Vienna, Virginia as well as serving three terms as town councilman. He is a member of the Loyal Order of the Moose and the Loyal Order of the Kentucky Colonels.

He owned and operated a construction management and general contracting firm for twenty years specializing in commercial, institutional and industrial construction.

Dellinger and his wife, Margaret, reside in Vienna. Margaret served as American Legion Auxiliary Unit 180 President for four years; daughter, Anne, is a 23-year member of Unit 180; and son, Scott, is a 28-year member of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 180.

Cmdr. Dellinger's theme is "Building for Tomorrow – Today."

DETACHMENT COMMANDER *Joshua J. Settle*



My fellow Comrades

National Convention was great. I really learned a lot, and Comrade Odom Sr. helped out a bunch with the entire Convention. I had a great chance, to meet with other members of other Detachment's especially Texas, Virginia, Alaska, Pennsylvania, New Mexico and some more. I also had a great time talking to the SAL Past National Commander Chris Huntzinger, and the new SAL National Commander Joe Gladden. I also had the opportunity to talk with a few Past National Commanders (SAL and Legion), and Past National Auxiliary President, the conversation we had, were very informative, and interesting. I would like to thank the following Legion Members Comrades Haggan, Fuelling, NECMan John Miller; AltNECMan H. Ownby, and past NECMan Bill Marshall also for the assistance they gave to me, and of course to their wives for looking out after me. It was a great time, and all in all it was a learning experience I will never forget.

By now all Squadrons should have their 2014 Membership Cards. I encourage all squadrons to start their Membership renewals NOW. Remember the Detachment has a Membership fund which will allow Squadrons to do a transmittal now and then reimburse the Detachment once the dues are collect from their members.

Has posted in last month's Newsletter, the Detachment is trying to organize a fishing event for the Detachment and its members. We are thinking of going to GR1982's area, it is also possibly to make it a weekend camping trip if desired. We are considering the 1st or 3rd weekend in April. Please send your thoughts on this to the Detachment Adjutant; this can also be discussed at the upcoming SAL DEC in October.



I still encourage SAL Members in the Detachment that are Dual Members to carry your SAL Cap to events, this will show SAL support to the Post, Detachment, and the Department.

Those post desiring to start a squadron, please contact me or the detachment Adjutant and we will help you to get started. Attached to this Newsletter is FAQ sheet for SAL.

In closing I hope all of you had a happy and safe summer vacation. Please keep those in harm's way and their families in your prayers.

Joshua J. Settle
Detachment Commander
Phone: 07138-67359
E-Mail: josh.sal@hotmail.com

NEWS BLAST...

The tourist office of Saint Mere Eglise just released the initial plans for the 2014 memorials and ceremonies honoring the 70th year after the D-Day arrival of Allied Forces liberating France and re-establishing Peace in Europe.

See the below link for the calendar of events which will be frequently updated as more plans are confirmed:

<http://www.sainte-mere-eglise.info/en/70%20th%20%20anniversary%20dday.html>

Submitted by Carl Hale GR01

GR 09 HOSTS EVENT WITH GERMAN ARTILLERY PARTNERS

On Saturday, 17 August, the William D. Nelson Post GR 09, hosted an American BBQ party for their German partner unit, the 1906 established Traditional Ulmer Artillery Verein. GR 09 established a friendship with this unit in 2009 and participates annually in a joint wreath laying ceremony at a memorial dedicated to soldiers lost in battle. In addition to this solemn ceremony both groups participate in a yearly "Grill fest" with the group hosting the event alternating each year.

GR 09 was "up" this year and the Post volunteers arrived early on Saturday to fire up the grill and set up the food and beverage tables and by 4:00 p.m. sixty Germans and Legionnaires were lining up in front of the grill to feast on the hamburgers and BBQ ribs superbly cooked by GR 09's talented chefs. Each spouse was kind enough to bring a salad or other dish and the selections were overwhelming and with enough available that second and third helpings were possible.

GR 09 was fortunate that the Department Commander James Settle, his wife, Auxiliary President Isolda and son Joshau, SAL Commander could join us. Our German guests were impressed that the Department Commander attended and his presence also provided an opportunity for GR 09 members to talk "first hand" with the Department's leaders.

With the presence of the American flag, Americans proudly wearing their GR 09 baseball caps and a speech by the Post Commander on the functions of the American Legion, this event was a fine example of the American Legion furthering proper relations with members of our host country.



GR09 Combustion Crew



**Department and SAL Commander getting ready
To "chow down"**

Retiree Appreciation Day in Wiesbaden for 26 October 2013

Hello Folks, the command is busy planning the **Retiree Appreciation Day in Wiesbaden for 26 October 2013**. Please mark this date on your calendar so it will be well attended. Let's help make it the 'most attended one yet.'

I only know that it is a special day for the retirees and their families. You can get info on retirement rights, benefits & privileges and other subjects. The purpose of the day is to foster good will between active and retired communities.

There will be representatives there from different areas, ie, ID Cards, passports, customs and several offices from the Consulate. They will have speakers also. We will be able to have medical checkups and other medical appointments. (I believe that these will be by appointment on that day.)

We will send details later. Just be sure to mark the date on your calendar. It would be a great day to meet at the dining facility if we have enough requests for it.

If there are enough people coming from Hanau/Budingen that would support a bus, I would be willing to check into it. Of course there would be a small charge. I'm sure we could stop by the commissary before departing Wiesbaden.

Best,

Joyce Schloesser
American Veterans' Center Hanau
06128-489202

Submitted by Carl Hackworth GR14

GR1982 FISHING EVENT



Continued from page 14



I NEED PICTURES...I NEED HISTORY

I have a BIG problem; I have run out of pictures to post on The Department of France Website. I know there are Legionnaires in the Department that have pictures that need to be posted on the Website. We NEED to preserve this part of our Department History.

If you have pictures for me, send me an e-mail, I will send you a link to a photo sharing program called "DROPBOX", when you get it go to "get started" and it will tell you step by step on how to use it. It is a program that National uses and it works great when you want to send a large amount of pictures. It's easy to use, I have

setup a folder called The Department of France, just create a file drag it into the Department folder; send me an e-mail with a short story plus date, the function, and location. I will pull it out of Dropbox and post it on the Website, it's that easy.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at dhaggan@sbcglobal.net

If you have a couple of minutes login into The Department Website and checkout the Photo Gallery.

LET'S PRESERVE OUR DEPARTMENT HISTORY FOR THE FUTURE

VA Reaches Out to Veterans about the Health Care Law

WASHINGTON (Aug. 6, 2013) - The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an awareness campaign and a new website, www.va.gov/aca, to let Veterans know what the Affordable Care Act means for them and their families. Veterans receiving health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs will see no change in their benefits or out-of-pocket costs when portions of the Affordable Care Act take effect next year.

"VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "If you are enrolled in VA health care, you do not need to take any additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time."

"VA encourages eligible Veterans who are not enrolled in VA's health care system to take advantage of the world-class care we provide to the men and women who have served this Nation in uniform," Shinseki added.

Veterans can apply for VA health care at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or visiting their local VA health care facility. Full details on eligibility are available at www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book

VA's health care system for Veterans has no enrollment fee, no monthly premiums and no deductibles. Most Veterans also have no out-of-pocket costs, though some may have small copayments for some health care or prescription drugs.

"VA will continue to provide Veterans with high quality, comprehensive health care and other benefits they have earned through their service," said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's chief physician and under secretary for health.

The Affordable Care Act was created to expand access to coverage, reduce rising health care costs, and improve health care quality and care coordination. The Affordable Care Act creates new opportunities for coverage for uninsured Veterans and their families.

There are more than 1.3 million Veterans and more than 950,000 spouses and children of Veterans without health insurance. Most uninsured Veterans are eligible for VA health care. For those who are not eligible for VA care - such as Veterans' family members - the law created a new Health Insurance Marketplace.

In 2014, the [Marketplace](#) will be a new way to shop for and purchase private health insurance. People who purchase insurance through the Marketplace may be able to lower the costs of health insurance coverage by paying lower monthly premiums. For more information, visit www.healthcare.gov.

For information about VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, VA encourages Veterans and family members to visit the new website at www.va.gov/aca, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11a.m. to 3 p.m., Eastern time. The new website includes a Health Benefits Explorer, where Veterans can learn about the benefits they can receive if they enroll in VA care.

VA Has Converted Over 30 Percent of Disability Claims into Digital Files

165 Million Pages Have Been Scanned and Uploaded to Help Transform Paper-Based Claims Process to Digital Environment

WASHINGTON—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reached another milestone in its disability claims transformation process – over 30 percent of the current disability claims inventory is now digital and accessible to claim raters in VA’s electronic claims processing system, which has now been fielded ahead of schedule at all 56 Regional Offices across the country. This effort is a key part of transforming outdated paper processing into an electronic system that is delivering disability claims decisions for Veterans more quickly. In addition, all incoming paper claims are transformed into digital records for electronic processing using VA’s new claims processing software and electronic repository.

“A key element that slows our process is the thousands of tons of paper documents we handle each year related to Veterans’ claims,” said Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “While we continue to expand our ability to process claims electronically, we still have to handle those we receive in paper form— the Veterans Claims Intake Program (VCIP) is our answer to this and helps us move into a fully digital environment.”

On Sep. 28, 2012, VA established the VCIP program to maximize the use of electronic intake for all claims, creating digital, searchable files. The document conversion service, part of VCIP, has now been implemented at all 56 VA regional claims processing offices across the country. VCIP is a capability that enables high-speed document scanning to help VA end its reliance on paper-based claims. With VCIP, a new paper claim that is received at a regional office is recorded in VA’s electronic claims processing system—called the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS)—and shipped to one of three document conversion locations to be scanned and converted into digital images. The document images, which are made keyword searchable in the conversion, are placed into a VBMS electronic folder for use by the VA employees who work the Veteran’s claim.

Digital conversion improves processing timeliness by eliminating paper folder transport, reducing manual data entry, streamlining the review of medical records, and standardizing correspondence with Veterans and beneficiaries. To date, VA has converted more than 165 million pages of claims documents to digital images, and continues to add over 1 million images into VBMS every day.

“Finding a key piece of evidence in a thick paper file folder takes time,” said James Thomas, a claims specialist at the Salt Lake VA Regional Office. “With digital claims records, we can find all the key information related to the claim with a key stroke.”

At the same time, VA is working closely with the Department of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Service Organizations to urge Veterans and separating Servicemembers to file their disability claims electronically and, when possible, to file a [Fully Developed Claim](#) through the joint DoD/VA online portal, eBenefits (www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits). Registered eBenefits users with a Premium account can file a claim online, track the status, and access information on a variety of other benefits, including pension, education, health care, home loan, and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs. Additionally, eBenefits users can take advantage of 50 self-service features that both VA and DoD have made available.

VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet Secretary Shinseki’s goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. In May, VA announced that it was mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices to increase production of compensations claims decisions, which will continue through the end of FY 2013. In June, VA announced that under an initiative launched in April to expedite disability compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited a year or longer, more than 65,000 claims nationwide – or 97 percent of all claims over two years old in the inventory – had been eliminated from the backlog.

Today, VA’s total claims inventory remains at lower levels not seen since August 2011 and the number of claims in the VA backlog – claims pending over 125 days – has been reduced by nearly 12 percent since the “oldest claims first” initiative began.

VA continues to prioritize disability claims for homeless Veterans, those experiencing extreme financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims, which is the quickest way for Veterans to receive a decision on their compensation claim (<http://www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/>).

Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with DoD through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES).

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits, and register and/or upgrade to a free Premium account on the joint Department of Defense/VA web portal eBenefits at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

DoD, VA Establish Two Multi-Institutional Consortia to Research PTSD and TBI

WASHINGTON -- In response to President Obama's Executive Order, the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) highlighted today the establishment of two joint research consortia, at a combined investment of \$107 million to research the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) over a five-year period.

"VA is proud to join with its partners in the federal government and the academic community to support the President's vision and invest in research that could lead to innovative, new treatments for TBI and PTSD," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We must do all we can to deliver the high-quality care our Service members and Veterans have earned and deserve."

The Consortium to Alleviate PTSD (CAP), a collaborative effort between the University of Texas Health Science Center – San Antonio, San Antonio Military Medical Center, and the Boston VA Medical Center will attempt to develop the most effective diagnostic, prognostic, novel treatment, and rehabilitative strategies to treat acute PTSD and prevent chronic PTSD.

The Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium (CENC), a collaborative effort between Virginia Commonwealth University, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and the Richmond VA Medical Center will examine the factors which influence the chronic effects of mTBI and common comorbidities in order to improve diagnostic and treatment options. A key point will be to further the understanding of the relationship between mTBI and neurodegenerative disease.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 2.5 million American service members have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Military service exposes service members to a variety of stressors, including risk to life, exposure to death, injury, sustained threat of injury, and the day-to-day family stress inherent in all phases of the military life cycle.

To improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions, the President released an Executive Order directing the Federal agencies to develop a coordinated National Research Action Plan. The Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of Education (ED) came forward with a wide-reaching plan to improve scientific understanding, effective treatment, and reduce occurrences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, co-occurring conditions and suicide.

VA Partners with American Bar Association and Legal Services Corporation to Launch a Pilot Program to Help Veterans Receive Decisions Faster and Reduce Claims Backlog

Pro-Bono Pilot Program to Assist Veterans with Developing their Disability Claims

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs, the American Bar Association (ABA) and the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) announced today a new partnership and pilot program aimed at reducing the claims backlog and making it easier for unrepresented Veterans to receive assistance developing their claims for disability pay.

“Ending the backlog is an ‘all hands on deck’ effort that requires teamwork, both in and out of government,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “This partnership between VA, ABA and LSC is aimed at surging resources to deliver earned benefits to Veterans more quickly.”

In the coming months, ABA and LSC attorneys will provide free assistance to a targeted group of unrepresented Veterans who request their help gathering and obtaining evidence required by law to support their disability claims.

The development of the claim is often the longest part of the process that determines whether a Veteran is entitled to VA compensation. These steps can take more than 200 days in the rating decision process. The pilot will offer pro bono attorney assistance to Veterans with claims pending at the St. Petersburg and Chicago Regional Offices who do not currently have an authorized representative.

Veterans will choose whether to accept this pro-bono assistance. Similar Veterans with claims pending at other VA regional offices may also be considered for the pilot, if warranted.

“The ABA is proud to take the lead in connecting veterans with pro bono attorneys who will help them receive the aid our nation owes them for their selfless courage,” said ABA President Laurel Bellows. “We hope that our initial focus on Chicago and St. Petersburg can swiftly be expanded across the nation.”

The claims selected for this pilot program, which are currently -- or will soon be -- part of the claims backlog, will vary in terms of complexity and degree of completeness. VA will accredit the attorneys who choose to participate, and the ABA and LSC will provide them with specialized training that will enable them to help evaluate and develop Veterans claims and make those claims ready for a rating decision. The two initial pilot sites were selected based on proximity to ABA headquarters, and the opportunity for the biggest impact on the backlog.

In the coming months, VA will identify eligible Veterans to participate in the pilot program and send letters advising them of all their options for representation to help them advance their claims - from Veteran Service Organizations, attorneys and claims agents, to pro bono attorneys participating in this pilot.

The VA letter will inform Veterans of a 1-800 hotline and website to connect them to an attorney who is willing to assist with their claim, free of charge.

Under the partnership, the ABA and LSC will match interested Veterans and attorneys on several factors, including geographic location, complexity of the claim and the Veteran’s and attorney’s preferences on the nature and scope of representation.

VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet the Department’s goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. As a result of these initiatives, VA’s total claims inventory has dropped to its lowest levels since March 2011.

The number of claims in the VA backlog – claims pending more than 125 days – has been reduced by 18 percent, compared to the highest point in March 2013.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense-VA web portal, *eBenefits*, at www.ebenefits.va.gov/.

President Obama Applauds Community Colleges' and Universities' Efforts to Implement 8 Keys to Veterans' Success

More than 250 Institutions of Higher Education Embracing the Administration's "8 Keys to Success"

WASHINGTON -- As part of the Obama administration's ongoing effort to foster postsecondary educational opportunities and dramatically improve employment outcomes for returning service members, the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today a challenge to education institutions to adopt best practices supporting educational success. More than 250 community colleges and universities across the country have immediately answered the call to implementing the "8 Keys to Success" to help Veterans on campus.

President Obama introduced the "8 Keys to Success" on Saturday at the Disabled American Veterans National Convention in Orlando, Fla.

"We're announcing what we call '8 Keys to Success' -- specific steps that schools can take to truly welcome and encourage our Veterans," President Obama said. "And so far, more than 250 community colleges and universities have signed on, and today I'm calling on schools across America to join us in this effort. Let's help our Veterans get that degree, get that credential and compete for the high-skilled jobs of tomorrow."

With the more than 250 institutions leading the way, the "8 Keys to Success" can aid Veterans in their effort to afford and complete their college degrees, certificates, industry-recognized credentials and licenses in preparation for jobs in high-growth sectors of the economy.

To help draft the "8 Keys to Success," ED convened more than 100 experts to review approaches that could be scaled and replicated to foster Veterans' success on campus and via distance learning. A wide range of stakeholders participated in the discussions including non-profit organizations, foundations, Veterans service organizations and, importantly, Veterans who had recently completed postsecondary education in a range of disciplines. Best practices learned from existing programs at ED and VA provided the foundation for the "8 Keys to Success," specifically best practices from the highly successful VA "VetSuccess on Campus" programs.

"This is a major step forward in the administration's work to encourage institutions of higher education to support Veterans with access to the courses and resources they need to ensure that they graduate and get good jobs," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

The "8 Keys to Success" include the following:

1. Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for Veterans.
2. Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
3. Implement an early alert system to ensure all Veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
4. Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all Veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).
5. Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for Veterans.
6. Use a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on Veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.
7. Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to Veterans.

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8. Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for Veterans.

More than 250 community colleges and universities in 24 different states and D.C. will fully adopt the “8 Keys to Success” and more are expected to rise to the challenge in the coming months. At Western Nevada College, for example, the school hosts a “Veterans Orientation” to make sure returning service members begin college on the right track, and that every Veteran has a counselor assigned to work with him or her on adjusting to the classroom environment, performance expectations, personal challenges and program completion.

“This commitment made by colleges and universities will help Veterans better transition from military service into the classroom, graduate, and find a good job to help strengthen our economy,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Given the opportunity, Veterans will succeed because they possess exceptional character, team-building skills, discipline, and leadership.”

Another example of postsecondary institutions working to implement the keys is Virginia’s Community Colleges, where schools are leveraging partnerships to connect Veterans with jobs and careers in high-growth, high-demand fields.

“These partnerships bring together local businesses, community colleges, workforce investment boards, the Virginia Employment Commission, other state government agencies, and nonprofit providers of social services all in support of Virginia’s Veterans,” said Glenn DuBois, Chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges. “The keys to success provide a helpful set of recommendations for moving forward.”

The keys build on the administration’s work to provide Veterans and military families with a high-quality, affordable education. In April 2012, President Obama signed an executive order establishing the Principles of Excellence (POE), which provide protections for our nation’s military, Veterans, and their families.

To further Veterans’ success in higher education and employment, the VA is also expanding its [VetSuccess on Campus](#) (VSOC) and Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) programs, which connect Veterans to VA resources. Thousands of colleges and universities are developing or expanding their Veterans Success Centers as a result of the VA’s VSOC and VITAL investments. VSOC is currently located at 32 campus sites in 16 states and is expanding to additional campuses in 2013.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill has also played a large role in helping returning service members attend college. VA has issued approximately \$30 billion in Post 9/11 GI-Bill benefit payments since its inception in August 2009, and helped nearly one million service members, Veterans, and their families pursue an education. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive educational assistance program since the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill, was signed into law.

The administration will continue to build on its work to ensure Veterans’ success by acting on our nation’s commitment to place higher education within reach for all who are willing to work for it. Federal agencies, colleges and universities, and their many partners are united in their determination to make sure this generation of Veterans, active-duty service members and their families are aware of and take advantage of all the benefits and resources provided by a grateful nation.

Click [HERE](#) to see the list of more than 250 community colleges and universities working to implement the “8 Keys to Success.” Click [HERE](#) to see the administration’s new fact sheet on the President’s commitment to honor our military families and Veterans.

National Security / Foreign Relations Division

Week in Review
Week ending 8/16/2013

1. Judges from 49 states urge Congress to avoid more sequestration cuts

Federal judges in 49 states are urging lawmakers to avoid another round of automatic spending cuts that they say would have a “devastating and long-lasting impact” on the federal courts.

The unusual letter from the chief judges of trial courts in every state but Nevada says that the \$350 million reduction in the judiciary’s lower budget for this year has dramatically slowed court proceedings and jeopardized public safety. The judges say there are fewer probation and other law enforcement officers to deal with record numbers of convicts who have been released from prison or given alternative sentences.

The letter was sent this week to congressional leaders in both parties in the House and the Senate.

2. Florida-based Navy Squadron Completes First F-35C Sortie

This week, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 101, the Navy's first F-35C Lightning II carrier variant aircraft squadron completed its first flight in its new aircraft at the squadron's home at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

VFA 101 is the F-35C Fleet Replacement Squadron, training Navy aircrew and maintenance personnel to fly and repair the F-35C, a 5th-generation fighter that combines advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and advanced sustainment.

The F-35C will enhance the flexibility, power projection, and strike capabilities of carrier air wings and joint task forces and will complement the capabilities of the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, which currently serves as the Navy's premier strike fighter.

By 2025, the Navy's aircraft carrier-based air wings will consist of a mix of the F-35C, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growler, E-2D Hawkeye, Unmanned Carrier Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike air vehicles, MH-60R/S helicopters and Carrier Onboard Delivery logistics aircraft.

3. Asian Aircraft Carrier Race -- China vs. India vs. Japan

Two aircraft carriers have been launched in the past two weeks on both sides of China. Last Tuesday Japan unveiled its biggest warship since World War II, a huge flat-top destroyer that has raised eyebrows in China and elsewhere because it bears a strong resemblance to a conventional aircraft carrier.

This week, India launched their own carrier. However, the Indian carrier will not be fully operational for another five years. The carrier is a 37,500-ton Vikrant and is the first “indigenous” aircraft carrier, entirely engineered and produced in India at a shipyard in Cochin on the southeastern coast.

As for China’s carrier the Liaoning, the new name of a Soviet Navy ship that was launched 25 years ago, it’s been rebuilt and sailing around the Yellow Sea for more than a year, but it’s relegated to the role of a training vessel. Chinese shipyards are expected to try to produce home-made models in the next few years, advancing on much the same technology. At 55,000 tons, the Liaoning’s got a flight deck 999 feet long – not all that much longer than the 860-foot flight deck of the Vikrant or the 814-foot flight deck of the Izumo— and can carry maybe 50 fighter planes compared with 36 on the Vikrant.

4. DoD Announces Same-Sex Spouse Benefits

After a review of the department’s benefit policies following the Supreme Court’s ruling that Section Three of the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional, and in consultation with the Department of Justice and other executive branch agencies, the Defense Department will make spousal and family benefits available no later than Sept. 3, 2013, regardless of sexual orientation, as long as service member-sponsors provide a valid marriage certificate.

Entitlements such as TRICARE enrollment, basic allowance for housing and family separation allowance are retroactive to the date of the Supreme Court’s decision. Any claims to entitlements before that date will not be granted. For those members married after June 26, 2013, entitlements begin at the date of marriage.

5. Hagel Announces New Anti-Sexual Assault Initiatives

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced on Thursday seven new initiatives to strengthen and standardize the department’s sexual assault prevention and response effort.

Among other moves, the secretary directed the services to improve victim legal support. He also directed the service secretaries to create a legal advocacy program to provide legal representation to sexual assault victims throughout the judicial process. He set Nov. 1, 2013, as an initial operating capacity for these measures and for it to be fully functional by Jan. 1, 2014.

Additionally:

-- Hagel directed that pre-trial investigative hearings of sexual assault-related charges are conducted by Judge Advocate General officers.

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-- The secretary directed service secretaries to enhance protections calling on them to develop and implement policies allowing for the reassignment or transfer of members accused of committing sexual assault or related offense. Hagel wants this done in order to eliminate continued contact while respecting the rights of both victims and the accused.

-- Hagel is requiring timely follow-up reports on sexual assault incidents and responses to be given to the first general or flag officer within the chain of command.

-- He also directed the DoD Inspector General to regularly evaluate closed sexual assault investigations.

-- Hagel ordered the service secretaries to standardize prohibitions on inappropriate behavior between recruiters and trainers and their recruits and trainees across the department.

-- And, Hagel directed the DoD general council to develop and propose changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial that would allow victims to give input during the sentencing phase of courts-martial.

Lawmakers from both parties largely praised the Pentagon's rollout of new initiatives to address sexual assault in the military — while making sure to note their own ideas were also apparent in the military's proposals.

Many of the new initiatives that Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced on Thursday are similar to legislative measures that have been included in the House and Senate's Defense authorization bills.

6. Hagel Issues Statement on Call to Egyptian Defense Minister

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel issued a statement describing his phone conversation yesterday with Egypt's Minister of Defense to discuss the U.S.-Egypt defense relationship.

Secretary Hagel's statement reads as follows:

Today (Thursday) I called Egyptian Minister of Defense Al-Sisi to discuss the U.S.-Egypt defense relationship. Since the recent crisis began, the United States has made it clear that the Egyptian government must refrain from violence, respect freedom of assembly, and move toward an inclusive political transition. Recent developments, including the violence that has resulted in hundreds of deaths across the country, have undermined those principles. As President Obama has announced, the United States military will not conduct the Bright Star training exercise scheduled for later this year.

In my discussion with Minister Al-Sisi, I reiterated that the United States remains ready to work with all parties to help achieve a peaceful, inclusive way forward. The Department of Defense will continue to maintain a military relationship with Egypt, but I made it clear that the violence and inadequate steps towards reconciliation are putting important elements of our longstanding defense cooperation at risk.

7. Air Force Nuclear Wing Fails Inspection

An Air Force unit based in Montana that operates intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) failed a safety and security inspection on Tuesday.

The 341st Missile Wing at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana received an "unsatisfactory" rating in a test of the unit's operations, Air Force Global Strike Command said Tuesday.

Tactical-level errors were made during one of several exercises that were conducted, resulting in the failed grade for the entire so-called surety inspection, the command said. It did not elaborate on what mistakes were made.

Lt. Gen. Jim Kowalski, commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, said the failed test did not put the safety of the nuclear arsenal at risk.

The failed inspection comes after 17 officers were stripped in May of their responsibilities to control nuclear missiles at Minot Air Base in North Dakota.

The 341st Missile Wing operates 150 Minuteman III ICBMs. The unit also failed inspections in 2008 and 2010, according to the [*Air Force Times*](#).

John Stovall
Director, National Security / Foreign Relations Division
202-263-2984

VA Grants up to One Year Retroactive Benefits for Veterans Filing Fully Developed Claims to Help Reduce the Backlog

New Benefit Takes Effect August 6 for First-Time Filers

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that Veterans filing an original Fully Developed Claim (FDC) for service-connected disability compensation may be entitled to up to one-year of retroactive disability benefits. The retroactive benefits, which are in effect Aug. 6, 2013, through Aug. 5, 2015, are a result of a comprehensive legislative package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama last year.

“VA strongly encourages Veterans to work with Veterans Service Organizations to file Fully Developed Claims and participate in this initiative, since it means more money in eligible Veterans’ pockets simply by providing VA the information it needs up front,” said Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits. “At the same time, it helps reduce the inventory of pending claims by speeding the process.”

Filing an FDC is typically the fastest way for Veterans to receive a decision on their claims because Fully Developed Claims require Veterans to provide all supporting evidence in their possession when they submit their claims. Often, this is evidence that VA legally must attempt to collect on the Veteran’s behalf, which is already in the Veteran’s possession, or is evidence the Veteran could easily obtain, like private treatment records.

When Veterans submit such evidence with their claims, it significantly reduces the amount of time VA spends gathering evidence from them or other sources -- often the longest part of the claims process. While VA will still make efforts to obtain federal records on the Veterans’ behalf, the submittal of non-federal records (and any federal records the Veteran may have) with the claim allows VA to issue a decision to the Veteran more quickly. Typically, VA processes FDCs in half the time it takes for a traditionally filed claim.

FDCs can be filed digitally through the joint, DoD-VA online portal, *eBenefits* (www.ebenefits.va.gov). VA encourages Veterans who cannot file online to work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) who can file claims digitally on Veterans’ behalf. While submitting an FDC provides a faster decision for any compensation or pension claim, only Veterans who are submitting their very first compensation claim as an FDC are potentially eligible for up to one-year of retroactive disability benefits under the newly implemented law.

FDCs help eliminate VA’s claims backlog because they increase production of claims decisions and decrease waiting times. Also, VA assigns FDCs a higher priority than other claims which means Veterans receive decisions to their claim faster than traditional claims.

VA continues to prioritize other specific categories of claims, including those of seriously wounded, terminally ill, Medal of Honor recipients, former Prisoners of War, the homeless and those experiencing extreme financial hardship. As part of its drive to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015, VA also gives a priority to claims more than a year old.

In May, VA announced a new partnership with Veterans Service Organizations and others known as the “Community of Practice,” an effort that seeks to reduce the compensation claims backlog for Veterans by increasing the number of FDCs filed by Veterans and their advocates.

VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet the Department’s goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. In May, VA announced that it was mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices to increase production of compensation claims decisions through the end of FY 2013. In April, VA launched an initiative to expedite disability compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited a year or longer.

As a result of these initiatives, VA’s total claims inventory remains at lower levels not seen since August 2011. The number of claims in the VA backlog – claims pending over 125 days – has been reduced by 17 percent compared to the highest point in March 2013.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal *eBenefits* at www.ebenefits.va.gov, and the FDC program at www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/.

The American Legion Washington DC Office

HOT ISSUES

Thursday August 8th, 2013

ACTIONS –

- On Monday, August 5, staff met with National Governors Association (NGA) staff, to discuss a pilot program that will test and evaluate strategies to create accelerated credentialing processes for separating service members in high demand occupations. Credentials attainment refers to licensure or the attainment of certification necessary for licensure in a particular occupation. Working together, we plan on outlining strategies to address barriers to licensing and certification in the following occupations: truck drivers (transportation), EMT/Paramedics (medical), telecommunication equipment installers/repairers (telecommunication), and line worker/power plant operator/engineer (energy).
- On Monday, August 5, staff met with Senate Committee on Armed Forces, to discuss DOD's pilot program to test and evaluate strategies to create accelerated credentialing processes for separating service members in high demand occupations. We also discussed The American Legion's involvement and progress on a national, state, and local level in collaboration with DOD on military credentialing.
- On Tuesday, August 6, staff met with Department of Energy (DOE) staff to begin working on creating a framework to build a "better buildings workforce" (residential, commercial, industrial, and federal) for energy sector employment. The primary goal of this program is to engage the services of an industry nonprofit organization to develop voluntary national guidelines for commercial advanced energy professionals that will increase the quality and dependability of the commercial buildings workforce. The American Legion along with other members of the working group (DOE, National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS), SOLID, etc.) are in the beginning stages of assessing occupation job task analyses and scheme committee to match-up occupations in the energy sector and military. Please note - The American Legion is the only VSO on the working group.
- On Friday, August 9, staff will meet with the SBA and Syracuse University to discuss the progression of the two-day For HEROES Entrepreneurial Course that will be piloted at our National Convention in Houston. Discussions will continue regarding legal matters, logistics, data collection and capabilities.
- On Tuesday, August 6 - Wednesday, August 7, staff participated in the Rapid Results Veterans Boot Camp sponsored by Community Solutions and Rapid Results Institute. The Boot Camp is designed to increase the monthly housing placement rate among targeted 100,000 Homes Campaign communities to 2.5 percent to ensure they are on track to end chronic and veterans' homelessness by 2015.
- On Friday, August 9, staff will meet with Veterans Entrepreneurship Task Force (VET-Force) regarding support and comment on Representatives Michael Fitzpatrick and Cheri Bustos' Fairness to Veterans Infrastructure Investment Act. If enacted, this bill would permit automatic enrollment of veteran-owned small businesses within state set-aside contracts for construction projects. Currently, the block grant going to the states for infrastructure improvement is derived from the budget of the Department of Transportation (DOT). However, once the money is in the states hands, the money is no longer susceptible to federal standards for small business goals. This legislation seeks to rectify this by including veteran-owned small businesses in the states' small business contracting program when using federal dollars coming from DOT.
The Senate on August 1st approved the Helping Heroes Fly Act (H.R. 1344), originally sponsored by freshman Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (HI). The measure is designed to ease wounded and disabled veterans' movement through air passenger screening. The amended Senate version, which contains text of the Senate bill introduced by Sen. Mark Pryor (AR), was approved by the House on August 2, and will now go to the President for his signature. The original House version passed the House on May 21st.
- A new Legislative Action Alert will be issued shortly calling again for the repeal of sequestration. Continued sequestration threatens readiness, pay, family programs, and earned health care and retirement benefits for retirees and survivors. The cuts will require massive force cuts and involuntary separations. ACTION NEEDED: Pass an alternative debt reduction deal - don't put debt reduction burden on the backs of those who have served.
- Staff attended a Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) hosted Korean War/Cold War annual briefing. Two briefings are held annually in the Washington D.C. area. One is for Vietnam War families and the other is for Korean and Cold

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War families. The location of these events makes it possible for senior government officials to attend and for families to access Washington-based offices related to POW/MIA matters. At these briefings, family members have the opportunity to meet with numerous civilian and military specialists of the government whose expertise includes: foreign government negotiation formulation of national policy remains recovery and identification, DNA science, archival research and intelligence analysis.

This follows last week's Congressional hearings on reported mismanagement within the DoD's remains recovery efforts. The American Legion submitted written testimony for the Senate subcommittee hearing.

- The Navy's decision to scrap one of its nuclear-powered attack submarines is a clear sign that sequestration is already having a damaging effect on the service's readiness, according to one House defense lawmaker.

Plans to scuttle the USS Miami is indicative of "the razor-thin margin for error" Congress, the White House and the Pentagon face in attempting to maintain military readiness while making the massive, across-the-board budget cuts called for in the administration's sequestration plan, Rep. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) said on Wednesday.

"We are currently facing a self-inflicted readiness crisis, with sequestration forcing maintenance deferrals and, in the case of the [USS] Miami, the inactivation of a vital naval asset," Forbes, who heads up the House Armed Services Seapower subcommittee, said in a statement.

Navy leaders opted to deactivate the USS Miami rather than pay the repair bill to fix damages caused by a pair of fires aboard the boat, service officials announced on Tuesday. Committing millions from the Navy's sequestration-capped budget to repair costs for the USS Miami would have meant deferring maintenance work on several other submarines and warships in the fleet, Rear Adm. Rick Breckenridge, director of undersea warfare, told The Associated Press.

"The Navy and the nation simply cannot afford to weaken other fleet readiness in the way that would be required to afford repairs to Miami," Breckenridge said in a statement.

In line with our long-standing opposition to sequestration cuts, NSFR staff are working with the legislative division to craft a new, update legislative alert for Legion members.

- On Monday, July 29, staff met with Congressman Al Green (D-TX) and participated in a conference call with veterans groups and the Congressman regarding his proposed initiative to provide discounts to veterans who utilize public transportation.

- On Monday, July 29th, staff met with Daniel Carey, president of Edgewood College in Madison, WI to discuss ongoing issues regarding veterans' and higher education, and to examine ways in which The American Legion can continue to work as a partner with the higher education sector to ensure that veterans are receiving the best possible value for their G.I. Bill benefits.

- On Monday, August 5, staff met with Senate Committee on Armed Services staff to provide an update on military licensing and certification initiatives, DOD's pilot program to test and evaluate strategies to create accelerated credentialing processes for separating service members in high demand occupations and the National Governors Association's two-year veterans licensing and certification project. American Legion collaborative efforts in these initiatives was emphasized.

- Staff has approached Senator Mark Pryor's office with reference to his possibly sponsoring a Senate version of Representatives Michael Fitzpatrick and Cheri Bustos' Fairness to Veterans Infrastructure Investment Act (H.R.2906). The Fitzpatrick/Bustos bill would provide veterans with access to existing contracting preferences authorized for transportation projects.

- National Commander Koutz issued a release on the bonuses awarded to VA executives in Pennsylvania where Legionella was blamed for patient deaths. It is the subject of a Sept. 9 HVAC hearing in Pittsburgh. Staff is working with the House Veterans Affairs Committee to ensure The American Legion has a representative on the witness Panel to testify at the field hearing.

HEARINGS-

- September 10, 2013. The American Legion National Commander's Testimony before a Joint Session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees" 10:15 A.M.; G-50 Dirksen

Internal Revenue Service: Update Report

In the face of reports that The American Legion and other veterans service organizations (VSOs) are being targeted by the Internal Revenue Service, delegates to the Legion's national convention in Houston recently passed three resolutions that include calling for Congress to look into the IRS' field investigations into Legion posts chartered under 501(c)(19) – or nonprofit – status.

Auditors with the IRS reportedly are starting to fine Legion posts around the country for not keeping records of veterans' DD-214s, the separation document given by the military to prove honorable service, or other valid documentation. The DD-214 reveals Social Security numbers, dates of birth and, in some cases, places of birth and medical information. The American Legion and IRS do not need this information; the information may be "blacked out" and a copy filed by the post. The Legion and the IRS only need your name, dates of service and character of service. Documents with this information need to be kept securely.

Legion members still serving in the U.S. Armed Forces won't receive a DD-214 until they are discharged.

Legion Post 447 in Round Rock, Texas, was fined \$12,000 for lack of compliance before finding documents to satisfy inspectors; the IRS said it can't comment on individual taxpayers or organizations.

As a result, national convention delegates passed three resolutions regarding the IRS:

- Resolution 62 seeks an amendment to Section 501(c)(19) of Title 26 U.S. Code to either remove the minimum percent of veterans in the post or to provide clarifying language that the minimum percentage be based upon the aggregate enrollments based on the entire national organization of the VSO, rather than on a local community-based post.
- Resolution 63 calls for Congress to rectify the problems with Chapter 4.76.26.1 of the IRS Exempt Organizations Examination Guidelines regarding wartime service periods.
- Resolution 64 calls for Congress to rectify problems with Chapter 4.76.26.2.2(2)b. of the Jan. 27, 2011, IRS Exempt Organizations Examination Guidelines so it shall provide for at least 75 percent of the members of which are past or present members of the U.S. Armed Forces and substantially all of the other members of which are individuals who are cadets or are spouses, widows, widowers, ancestors, or lineal descendants of past or present members of the U.S. Armed Forces, and that all of its members are either members of a veterans post or organization who are related to a member of such post or organization.

Legion posts must maintain a list of members and the category of membership (veteran, degree of relation or nonveteran or non-relative). If a post receives deductible contributions, it must also maintain a list of members, their dates of service, whether they are war veterans and, if not, whether they are spouses, widows, or widowers of war veterans, veterans or cadets.

Legion posts and departments have been in compliance and have kept appropriate records, and in good faith, with these directives as set forth by the IRS, and the Legions feels it is being wrongly targeted by the IRS, and is being held to arbitrary and capricious requirements that are inconsistent with IRS's own publications.

Lawmakers agree. Since the reports surfaced, U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., and Rep. Jeff Miller – chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs – both have written letters requesting that the IRS respond to complaints its inspectors are asking posts to provide discharge papers or service records during reviews of their tax-exempt status.

"Even after they return home from war, veterans in America continue to fight battles," Moran said in a letter to Acting IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "Many struggle to find a job, face difficulties accessing quality health care services, or wait senselessly long periods of time for their benefits claims to be processed by the federal government. The last thing veterans should have to worry about is their privacy within veteran service organizations, or the ability of those organizations to endure seemingly arbitrary IRS audits and the severe financial penalties that could ensue. This news is deeply concerning to me and the thousands of veterans I represent in Kansas."

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Miller also wrote a letter to Werfel.

"Congress has already provided for the tax exempt status of many veterans' organizations in recognition of both the selfless service of their members and the important role VSOs play in honoring, remembering and assisting some of the most vulnerable and worthy among us – wounded warriors, disabled veterans, military families, and the widows, orphans, survivors, and dependents of the fallen," Miller said in a statement. "Allegations that VSOs are now being unfairly targeted by the very government they sought to protect and defend are nothing short of unacceptable to me."

Taken from the American legion Page.

