



# 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



WEBSITE: [www.2-1-196th.com](http://www.2-1-196th.com)

Volume 5

"A Soldier Once... And Always"

September 2015

**Commanders Corner:** September is here already; time sure has flown this year. It seems like the days go faster the older you get. September is a great month around here because the annual Kokomo Veterans Reunion is held and it means I'll be able to get together with some of my "old" buddies from Vietnam. It's the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual reunion and myself and a lot of my comrades have attended almost all of them. This year the reunion is to be held from September 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup>. All information is available on Howard County Vietnam Veterans Organization web site <http://www.hcvvo.org> so check it out and try to make it if possible. It's a great experience. My annual pig roast will be on the weekend of October 10<sup>th</sup> and the all you 2/1 members are invited to attend. Information is on my web site <http://www.chuckholdaway.com>. Now, my usual reminder, the Americal Division Veterans Association annual reunion will be held from October 29<sup>th</sup> through November 1<sup>st</sup> in Norfolk, VA. For those of you that have never attended; it's truly a good time and is extremely well run. As usual, our chapter will have a hospitality room and provide food and drinks. Remember, we have officer elections this year at the annual meeting in Norfolk; get your nominations ready. See page 4 for more details. Our illustrious Secretary/Treasurer, Don Hicks, is doing well after having back surgery and we are looking forward to seeing him at the pig roast and Norfolk. National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2015: The third Friday in September is designated as National POW/MIA Recognition Day every year. This year it falls on Sept. 18, veterans nationwide will be recognizing those who were captured and returned, as well as remembering the 83,000 Americans who have yet to return home from their wars, and their families who continue to hope and pray. Well, after 4 years of writing this column, I'm out of words for once.



**Chuck**

*Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!*



In George Washington's days, there were no cameras. One's image was either sculpted or painted. Some paintings of George Washington showed him standing behind a desk with one arm behind his back while others showed both legs and both arms. Prices charged by painters were not based on how many people were to be painted, but by how many limbs were to be painted. Arms and legs are 'limbs,' therefore painting them would cost the buyer more. Hence the expression, 'Okay, but it'll cost you an arm and a leg.' (Artists know hands and arms are more difficult to paint.)

**Six MIAs Recovered:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of an airman missing from World War II and four soldiers missing from the Korean War. Recovered are:

- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Stephen V. Biezis**, 23, of Chicago, Ill., will be buried Aug. 14 in Arlington National Cemetery. Biezis was assigned to the 575th Bombardment Squadron, 391st Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force as co-pilot of a B-26C Marauder that crashed after being struck by enemy fire during a bombing mission near Ahrweiler, Germany. His remains were not recovered during the war.
- **Army Cpl. Nehemiah E. Butler**, 19, of Pocomoke City, Md., will be buried Aug. 10 in Arlington National Cemetery. Butler and elements of Company C, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division were deployed near Seoul, South Korea, when their unit was attacked by enemy forces. He became separated from his unit while attempting to move toward a more defensible position.
- **Army Cpl. Donald A. Therkelsen**, 23, of Chicago, Ill., will be buried Aug. 8 in Medical Lake, Wis. Therkelsen was assigned to Medical Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action following a massive attack by the Chinese during the Battle of Kumsong along the Kumsong River in North Korea.
- **Army Sgt. Wilson Meckley Jr.**, 22, of Lancaster, Pa., was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, when he was declared missing on Dec. 2, 1950, in North Korea.
- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Robert Reager**, 20, of Alleghany, Pa., was assigned to Company C, 32nd Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, when he was declared missing on Dec. 2, 1950, in North Korea.
- **Army Cpl. Grant H. Ewing**, of Weld County, Colo., was assigned to Battery C, 38th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. He reportedly died in captivity on Feb. 28, 1951, in North Korea.

**VA May Finally Expand Disability Benefits For Camp Lejeune Veterans:** The Department of Veterans Affairs announced plans to begin granting disability benefits for veterans who lived at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, during the 30-plus years that toxic chemicals tainted the base's drinking water. The VA's move to establish "presumptive status" for these exposed veterans -- that is, to presume that specific illnesses diagnosed in certain vets are a result of their military service -- should eventually make it easier for them to win benefits. The change comes amid scrutiny over the growing rates of disability claim denials since the 2013 launch of the agency's subject matter experts (SME) program. Under the VA's pending plan, vets who meet eligibility requirements will receive disability benefits for a set of health conditions yet to be determined by the agency. The controversial SME process will no longer be necessary. Medical care for 15 different illnesses, including kidney cancer and leukemia, is already mandated by a 2012 federal bill.

**"Without ammunition the Air Force is just an expensive flying club."**

**Army's Top Enlistee Proposes 'Ike Jacket' for Army Dress Uniform:** The Sergeant major of the Army would like to make the "Ike jacket" part of the service's dress uniform. Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel A. Dailey "has suggested an optional 'Eisenhower jacket' to be added as a more appropriate indoor alternative to the black windbreaker jacket," according to a recent Army press release. Named after Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the short-waisted, slim-fitting jacket was standard issue in 1944. The Army adopted the blue Army Service Uniform, or ASU, to replace the green Class A dress uniform in 2006. Adapted from the formal Dress Blues, the dark blue jacket and light blue pants have been a part of Army history since the Revolutionary War. The proposed change to the ASU for all ranks is part of an online survey to gather soldier-feedback about several other proposed uniforms changes. Dailey and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno authorized the survey to give soldiers a chance to weigh in on Army uniform and wear policy. "The soldiers are the ones who actually wear these uniforms. The senior leaders like to be informed by as many soldiers in the field as possible [on uniform changes,]"



**Congress Approves Veterans ID Cards:** Congress passed the Veterans ID Card Act (H.R. 91), which will allow all US veterans to receive an ID card issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Under current rules, official ID cards are only issued to those who retire from the military, or who are receiving medical care from the VA health care system. Veterans who are not retirees or utilizing VA medical care must use their DD-214 as proof of military service. The new VA ID card will be available to all honorably discharged veterans. The new VA ID cards will not replace the need for a retired military ID or VA medical care identification card. Now, there are really only two situations in which proof of military ID is required: applying for jobs, and obtaining discounts on goods or services. This new ID card will not be used for verification of veteran status for job hunting, and applicants will continue to use an electronic or photocopied version of their actual DD-214. Therefore, the only purpose (that I can see) to this new ID card is for obtaining veterans discounts from private businesses that generously offer them. I will be very curious to see how many people want to obtain these new cards, and if they are actually used.

### **VFW ELECTS NEW NATIONAL COMMANDER:**

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) concluded its 116th National Convention by electing Pittsburgh-native John A. Biedrzycki Jr. as its new national commander. Biedrzycki served in the U. S. Army from 1967-1970. He served in Korea with the 7th Infantry Division, and his decorations include the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and Korean Defense Medal. He is a VFW Legacy Life Member and served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, County, District and Department (state) levels prior to his elections to national office. He has been a member of the VFW for 46 years, having first joined the VFW at Post 418 in McKees Rocks, Pa., in 1969. In his acceptance speech, the VFW's new leader called on the organization's nearly 1.4 million members to recommit themselves in service to others, which was one of the primary reasons his organization's founders formed in 1899, and formerly merged here in Pittsburgh in 1914. He also urged everyone to consider how much poorer the country would have been had the VFW never existed.



**Ex-NATO Chief Leads Push by Retired Military Brass to Kill Iran Deal:** Nearly 200 retired military leaders have signed a letter to the House and Senate leaders urging them to kill the Iran nuclear deal. The letter calls the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action unverifiable and argues it allows Iran too much notice of inspections, does not actually "cut off every pathway" to the country acquiring a nuclear weapons, but makes it more unstable and a greater threat to the U.S. "In our professional opinion, far from being an alternative to war, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action makes it likely that the war the Iranian regime has waged against us since 1979 will continue, with far higher risks to our national security interests," concludes the letter, which was spearheaded by retired Navy Adm. Leon A. "Bud" Edney, a former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO. The letter comes about two weeks after 36 retired admirals and generals released an open letter endorsing the deal that the U.S., Britain, France Germany, China and Russia reached with Iran. The agreement includes measures that would prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb for 10 to 15 years, with some requirements extending beyond that. "If the deal is rejected by America, the Iranians could have a nuclear weapon within a year. The choice is that stark," wrote the deal's advocates, among them retired Marine Corps Gen. James "Hoss" Cartwright, a former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; retired Marine Gen. Joseph Hoar, a former commander of U.S. Central Command; and retired Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Merrill "Tony" McPeak.

### **Navy: No Charges Against Officer for Weapons Violations in Attack:**

Lt. Cmdr. Tim White, the Navy officer who fired a sidearm in defense during the attack on Navy Operational Support Center in Chattanooga, Tenn., will not face charges, an official familiar with the investigation told Stars and Stripes. White was reported to be one of two service members carrying sidearms at the time of the attack, which could have led to charges. The Department of Defense prohibits all military personnel other than security forces from carrying arms while on base unless they are in a combat zone. The Navy is still investigating the shooting, where a lone gunman attacked two separate military facilities. The shootings resulted in the deaths of four Marines and one sailor. The Navy countered reports that White would be charged, which spurred a national backlash. "At this time we can confirm no service member has been charged with an offense," the Navy said in a statement. It also faced a backlash over why troops at "soft" military targets such as recruiting centers — which are often in easy-to-reach places like shopping malls — were not allowed to carry weapons. Defense Secretary Ash Carter has given his top commanders the green light to allow more troops to carry weapons at U.S. bases, with a focus on recruiting stations, Reserve centers and other softer military targets. Carter's actions came two weeks after a Kuwaiti-born gunman fatally shot four Marines and a sailor before police killed him at the Navy reserve center in Chattanooga, Tenn.

**WORLD WAR II Facts:** . It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a big mistake. Tracers had different Ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.

### President Speaks at VFW National Convention:

President Obama is scheduled to speak Tuesday at the VFW's 116th National Convention, which is this Saturday through Wednesday in Pittsburgh. VFW National Commander John Stroud said it's a longstanding VFW tradition to provide the commander-in-chief a platform to address issues of importance to veterans, military service members and their families. Stroud said this is especially important during a time of war and instability abroad, and continued economic belt tightening at home. Other special guests and award recipients include:

- The VFW Eisenhower Award to retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis
- The VFW Armed Forces Award to U.S. Army Medics (68 Whiskies), accepted by Army Medical Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Ecker
- The VFW National Teacher Awards to Ann Parker Komara of Ottobine Elementary School, Dayton, Va., Melinda Hamilton of River Bend Middle School, Claremont, N.C., and Craig Blackman of Indian River High School in Chesapeake, Va.
- The VFW Citizenship Award to the Arlington Ladies, accepted by Margaret Mensch (Army), Paula McKinley (Navy), Jean Andregg (Air Force), and Maggi Paar (Coast Guard)
- The VFW Gold Medal of Merit to Army National Military Cemeteries Executive Director Patrick Hallinan

### VA Secretary Addresses VFW National Convention:

VA Secretary Robert McDonald addressed the VFW National Convention in Pittsburgh, delivering a presentation entitled "Caring for Veterans: Progress and Transformation." In discussing the Veterans Health Administration, Secretary McDonald outlined what he believes are the three pillars of caring for veterans: Research, Education, and Clinical Care. He pointed out that the VA conducted 55 million appointments in 2014, serving 6.6 million unique patients, and remarked that the VA receives higher satisfaction ratings from veterans than private hospitals receive from their patients, per the American Customer Satisfaction Index. He also described the challenges the VA faces in providing the highest quality care. The aging veterans population, increased complexity of conditions, and a higher rate of survivability for the newest generation of veterans after more than a decade of war will all continue to fuel the demand for care. Still, with the proper funding, the Secretary believes that the VA can and will continue to provide the highest quality care for all veterans, when they need it and where they need it. Other topics covered by Secretary McDonald included VA infrastructure, the claims backlog, veterans homelessness and the MyVA initiative, designed to improve the veteran experience at VA facilities.

Your taxes and the Affordable Care Act: Most federally provided healthcare plans (Tricare and FEHB) meet the minimum essential coverage requirement of the Affordable Care Act. Military members will receive a notification letter from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) if their SSN or a family members' SSN needs to be updated in DEERS. It is important to follow the instructions in the letter to ensure information is correctly reported to the IRS. You will receive an IRS Form 1095-B or 1095-C for all healthcare plans you are enrolled. This includes Tricare and the Federal Employee Health Benefit plans, VA and other plans provided through a government agency or purchased by you for yourself and your family members. The IRS 1095 series forms include information already provided to the Internal Revenue Service. These forms contain information you need to complete your individual federal income tax return.

### Airmen Killed During Parachute Training in Florida:

Air Force officials have released the names of two special forces airmen killed in a parachute training accident in the Florida Panhandle. The Air Force said Tuesday that Sgt. Timothy A. Officer, 32, and Sgt. Marty B. Bettelyoun, 35, died from injuries they received Monday during military freefall training at the Eglin Air Force Base range. The airmen were part of a special tactics unit assigned to the Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field. Both men had multiple deployments to various combat zones. Officer was a 14-year veteran with two Bronze Star Medals for bravery in combat. Bettelyoun was a 15-year veteran combat control specialist. The deaths are under investigation.



### Meet the VFW 32015 – 2016 Buddy Poppy Child:

My name is Zane and I am 11 years old. I live in the Pennsylvania 3 House at the VFW National Home for Children with my brother, Zack, my sister, Kourtney and my mother, Robyn. I am in the 6th grade and I am on the school Honor Roll. I play on football, basketball and baseball teams and I also enjoy fishing, camping, hiking and building forts ---- I like doing anything outdoors! My goal is to be a Marine or Navy Seal. I am blessed to live at the National Home. I feel comfortable and safe here and I have my own room and don't have to share with my brother. My mother is working hard so someday we can buy a house of our own. There are tons of kids to play with and lots of room to ride my bike ---- I like to ride on the trails. The pond by the cabin has lots of fish for me to fish for. We go on lots of fun trips with other kids and families like to the Cedar Point Amusement Park and I also like State Days, when veterans come and play with us. My great grandpa was in the army and fought in the battle to retake the Philippine Island of Corregidor. He was a member of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team in WWII. My great uncle was in the army and served in Vietnam, and my grandpa is a marine and a member of the VFW. I am lucky to have had all three of them in my life. I wanted to be the Buddy Poppy because I wanted to show veterans that they are appreciated by kids and grown-ups for all they have done and sacrificed for our freedom. Thank you for your support. God Bless!



### First Two Women to Graduate from Army Ranger School:

Two female officers will make history by becoming the first women to graduate from the traditionally all-male U.S. Army Ranger School. The West Point graduates, who have not been identified, are in their final days of the grueling two-month leadership training program. The service later confirmed in a press release that two women and 94 men completed the 62-day course, which includes everything from PT and swim tests, to land navigation exercises and a 12-mile foot march, to obstacle courses and parachute jumps, to mountaineering tests and mock patrols.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2015: The third Friday in September is designated as National POW/MIA Recognition Day every year. This year it falls on Sept. 18, and VFW Posts nationwide will be recognizing those who were captured and returned, as well as remembering the 83,000 Americans who have yet to return home from their wars, and their families who continue to hope and pray.

**US Personnel Chief Resigns In Wake of Massive Data Breach:** The head of the U.S. government's personnel office resigned abruptly bowing to bipartisan calls for her to step down following a massive government data breach on her watch. Katherine Archuleta, director of the federal Office of Personnel Management, submitted her resignation to President Barack Obama, the White House said. She'll be replaced on a temporary basis by the agency's deputy director, Beth Cobert, who will step into the role. Less than 24 hours earlier, Archuleta had rebuffed demands that she resign, telling reporters she had no intention of leaving and that her agency was doing everything it could to address concerns about the safety of data in its hands. Archuleta told Obama it was best for her to step aside to let new leadership respond to the recent breaches and to improve systems to lessen risks in the future, according to a White House official who wasn't authorized to be quoted on the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity. In a statement, Archuleta made no direct reference to the data breach, saying only that she believed it was best to allow the agency to "move beyond the current challenges." She praised the agency's employees as "some of the most dedicated, capable and hardworking individuals in the federal government." "I have complete confidence in their ability to continue fulfill OPM's important mission of recruiting, retaining and honoring a world-class workforce to serve the American people," Archuleta said. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, a Utah Republican who had called for her resignation for weeks, said the leadership problem should have been addressed "much, much sooner." "In the future, positions of this magnitude should be awarded on merit and not out of patronage to political operatives," Chaffetz said in a pointed jab at Obama. The escalating calls for Archuleta to be replaced came the day after the Obama administration disclosed that the number of people affected by the federal breach -- believed to be the biggest in U.S. history -- was more than 21 million, far greater than previously disclosed. Hackers downloaded Social Security numbers, health histories or other highly sensitive data from OPM's databases, affecting more than five times the 4.2 million people the government first disclosed this year. Since then, the administration acknowledged a second, related breach of systems housing private data that individuals submit during background investigations to obtain security clearances. Although the government declined to name the hackers, officials said the same party was responsible for both hacks. Numerous U.S. lawmakers who have been briefed on the federal investigation have pointed the finger at China. Cobert, the agency's current deputy director and chief performance officer, has been confirmed by the Senate once before, which could make her an attractive candidate to be Archuleta's permanent replacement. Yet it wasn't immediately clear whether lawmakers would oppose her leadership because of her role as the No. 2 at the agency during the data breach. Prior to joining OPM, Cobert worked for nearly three decades as a consultant for the firm McKinsey & Company.

**World War II MIA Identified:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of Army Pvt. Arthur H. Kelder, 26, of McHenry, Ill., who was buried July 18 in Chicago. On Dec. 8, 1941, Kelder was assigned to the Philippine Department, U.S. Army Forces in the Far East, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. Thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members were taken prisoner and forced to endure the Bataan Death March en route to Japanese POW camps. Kelder was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor. On Nov. 19, 1942, 14 Americans, including Kelder, were reported to have died. They were buried by their fellow prisoners in a common grave in a local camp cemetery in Cabanatuan.

**Military Leaders Question Rush to Arm Troops after Tennessee Shooting:** Former senior military officers who are sharpshooters and have served in high government posts are urging caution in the wake of calls in Congress and beyond to arm domestic service members following last week's deadly rampage in Tennessee. In the days since a Kuwaiti-born gunman, Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, shot up a Chattanooga military recruiting center and then killed four Marines and a sailor at a Navy Reserve center in the city, lawmakers have pushed legislation to allow all personnel on bases inside the United States to carry weapons. Weapons were barred from military bases under President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. The prohibition was drafted by aides to his predecessor, President George H.W. Bush, a Republican. "It is clear that our military personnel have become targets, not just abroad but on American soil as well," said Rep. Scott DesJarlais, a Tennessee Republican who introduced a bill Monday to remove the two-decade-long ban. Some governors are not waiting for Congress. From Florida to Texas and North Carolina, chief executives in at least six states have authorized their National Guard units to be armed, moved them to fortified armories or taken other steps to increase security. At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter directed the five military services to give him recommendations for beefing up security at their installations. In the meantime, he ordered Marines to stop wearing their uniforms at recruiting centers, which are especially soft military targets because many are located in shopping centers and other places easily accessible to civilians.

## 2015 ADVA NATIONAL REUNION

Norfolk Virginia

October 28 thru November 1 2015

The Norfolk Waterside Marriott, 235 East Main Street, Norfolk, VA 23510 will be the main hotel for the reunion. The hotel is noted as the best place to stay. It has just recently been remodeled. The ADVA attendees are offered 3 days before and after the reunion dates based on availability. The reunion guest room rate is \$109 = tax (currently 14 % + \$2



occupancy fee) World War II members will their individual room rate reduced to no-charge when they check-in. There is also a special rate of \$129 + tax for a Concierge Level room. The cutoff date to make reservations is September 25, 2015. Book early to ensure lodging at the reunion hotel. The hotel is offering complimentary overnight parking. There is no parking for RVs in the main street garage or city streets. The hotel is offering free self-overnight parking.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29 - 9:00am - 5:00pm** Tour Ft Eustis and Williamsburg

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 - 11:30am - 2:00pm** Spirit of Norfolk Lunch Cruise

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31-9:00am - 12:00** Norfolk Botanical Garden Tour

**6:00pm - 10:00pm BANQUET DINNER.**

As requested by ADVA membership, members and guests can select seating assignments with friends/family before the banquet. We have an exceptional menu and some unique entertainment before, during, and following the banquet that will make for a memorable event that should not be missed.

**The founding fathers all agreed there are two classes of people that should not be allowed in government;**

**Witches and barristers.**

**Veterans Praise Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for Saving Cross:** Calling for an end to a lengthy court battle, Veteran organizations are praising the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for its recent purchase of land from the Department of Defense in order to preserve a 43-foot cross that was erected in 1954. "I hope this ends it," National Commander, American Legion, Michael D. Helm said of the legal case that started in the late 1980s. Helm commended Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., for writing and passing legislation that made the \$1.4 million purchase possible. The ACLU and Jewish War Veterans have sued to have the cross removed because they believe it infringes on their constitutional rights. A 2012 court ruling permitted a cross owned by the National Park Service in the Mojave Desert to be transferred in a private sale to the VFW. The Mount Soledad cross in La Jolla, Calif., is part of a larger memorial, which includes more than 3,700 plaques honoring veterans of various wars.



**Official: Not Ruling Out Charging Navy Officer Who Fired on Shooter:** A Navy official told Fox News that punishing a lieutenant commander who used an unauthorized weapon to fire back at the Chattanooga gunman who shot and killed five service members could not be "completely ruled out," and two high-profile former military officers, including presidential candidate Jim Webb, say the Navy is at least seriously considering charging the man. The Navy said in a statement that it had not charged any service members with an offense at the present time. "Stories of Navy personnel being charged with an offense are not true," the statement said. "There is still a long way to go in reviewing the facts of this tragic incident, but at this time we can confirm no service member has been charged with an offense." Military personnel are not allowed to carry weapons inside military recruiting and reserve stations. That ban is now facing scrutiny following the July 16 rampage by an Islamic extremist that killed five military members in Tennessee. But the actions of Lt. Cmdr. Timothy White are also facing scrutiny, according to a series of tweets sent by Democratic presidential contender Webb, a former Marine infantry officer and U.S. senator. "Navy charging LCDR Tim White w/ a crime for trying to defend our sailors & Marines in #Chattanooga? He deserves a medal, not an indictment," Webb tweeted Saturday.

**Raids Led by US Destroy ISIS Bridges on Iraq-Syria Border:** US-led coalition air strikes destroyed two key bridges used by the Islamic State group on the Syrian side of the Iraqi border, a monitoring group said. The Pentagon confirmed strikes in the area, and a senior US officer said they will have a "profound impact" on IS abilities to carry out operations in the neighboring and strategically important Iraqi province of Anbar. The coalition "destroyed two bridges between the Syrian city of Albu Kamal and the Iraqi border. The bridges are strategically important for IS's movements between Albu Kamal and Iraq. The Pentagon confirmed the air raids, saying they had struck IS-held bridges in Deir Ezzor province. "Coalition forces struck multiple Daesh (IS) targets in the vicinity of the eastern Syria border to reduce the freedom of movement of Daesh," said Brigadier General Kevin Killea, chief of staff of the US-led coalition. The coalition began its air campaign on IS positions in Syria in September.

**Turkey, Kurd Rebels Gear Up for Return to All-Out Conflict:** The military helicopters swooped in over the Kurdish heartland and dropped white incendiary powder on a raging brush fire -- igniting a massive conflagration that raced through the mountains, devouring orchards and livestock. For Kurds living in nearby Lice, the recent Turkish operation brought back memories of the traumatic days in the 1990s when the army twice burned the town to the ground. The military may have been trying to smoke out Kurdish militants, who had allegedly set off a car bomb near Lice killing a soldier and wounding four more. But locals in Lice, where the rebels have widespread support, see a more sinister motive: "Just like the old days," said local journalist Metin Bekiroglu, "they want to spread fear." In an abrupt reversal, Turkey and the Kurdish rebels appear to be hurtling toward the return of an all-out conflict that plagued the nation for decades, before a fragile peace process was launched in 2012. A truce that has helped bring social and economic stability to Turkey evaporated only one week into the government's new offensive against the militant Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which stretches from southeastern Turkey to northern Iraq. Old habits of militancy, killing and retaliation are returning to a region that until recently harbored hopes of joining mainstream Turkish life. Forest firebombing is not the only provocative method Turkey is using to put pressure on the Kurds. In nearby Diyarbakir, the spiritual capital of Turkish Kurds, fighter jets are taking off for dozens of sorties to hit PKK strongholds in northern Iraq. The planes screech over the city as if to send a threat of destruction. Many Diyarbakir residents have relatives in the mountains among the Kurdish targets. The conflict escalated after a suicide attack in a crowd in the town of Suruc along the Syrian border. Turkish authorities say the bomber was trained by the Islamic State group and was targeting a group seeking to help Syrian Kurds across the border rebuild the city of Kobani, which IS had destroyed. But many Turkish Kurds accused the government of responsibility for the explosion, which killed more than 30 people.

**VA Hospital Dumped Patient Records With Social Security, Personal Info:** A Veterans Affairs hospital in South Dakota has waited more than two months to notify 1,100 patients that files containing their Social Security numbers and other personal information were dumped in a trash bin. The Rapid City Journal reports that the data breach at the VA Hot Springs hospital took place in May, but it wasn't until July 29 that anyone was notified. The paper said the breach was the most recent in a string of embarrassments that has engulfed the nation's VA system over charges of doctored wait lists, poor care and wasteful spending. The VA Black Hills Health Care System blamed the breach on an employee who mistakenly tossed the patient files in a Dumpster. The records were found two days later by another employee who fished them out of the trash and notified hospital security guards. "The investigation found that during a regular office move, that the box of files were inadvertently throw in the receptacle, VA Black Hills spokeswoman Teresa Forbes told the paper, calling it "an unfortunate mistake." The VA alerted the 1,100 military veterans recently of the breach. The letter informed recipients they could request a free credit report to ensure their personal data was not being misused. Forbes defended the lag in making the notification, saying that the VA was following procedures. The files included names, Social Security numbers, phone numbers and addresses. They did not include medical histories.

**More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions, an airman's chance of being killed was 71%.**

**VA Chief Blasts 'Political' Proposal to Privatize the Department:** Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald rejected recent criticism from a political advocacy group that he claims is calling for privatizing the department. McDonald made his comments during an interview in Washington, D.C., where Politico White House Correspondent Mike Allen cited "a 10-page document of VA low-lights" given to him by Concerned Veterans for America, an Arlington, Virginia-based based organization that favors market-based federal policies. "First of all, you have to understand the political nature of the Concerned Veterans for America," McDonald said. "I've met with [CVA Chief Executive Officer] Peter Hegseth many times. I know the people that back him politically, who fund his organization. We are not in favor of privatizing the VA." The secretary didn't go into detail, though his reference to those supporting the group likely refers to reports that it has largely been funded by Koch Brothers' organizations. Hegseth hit back at McDonald's remarks, saying it was disingenuous of him to avoid criticism of VA health care by claiming the group is politically motivated. He said the group wants to give veterans a choice in using the private sector, not privatize the VA. "It is disappointing that Secretary McDonald chose to once again blatantly mischaracterize CVA's bipartisan comprehensive VA reform plan – the Veterans Independence Act, he said in an email. "However, it is not totally surprising considering that Secretary McDonald has a history of struggling with the truth," he added, referring to McDonald's statement in February that he served with Army Special Forces. What would be lost by privatization would put veterans at risk and be a significant loss to the American public, McDonald said. "If I'm sending a veteran to the private sector and that doctor does not know the military culture, does not understand how an explosion creates traumatic brain injury, that's dangerous for that veteran," he said. "The idea of privatizing the VA is antithetical to that." The CVA isn't the only group pushing for privatization of the department, McDonald. "Members of Congress have said to me, 'Why don't you just blow up VA and give out vouchers?'" he said. McDonald argued there's a role for government in providing care to veterans. It was VA doctors that performed the first liver transplant and VA researchers who developed the nicotine patch and the shingles vaccine, among other medical breakthroughs, he said. What's more, the department trains 70 percent of the doctors in the United States through its internship program and is the largest employer of nurses in the country, McDonald said. None of these roles are factored into nonprofit's plan for VA health care, he said. During the interview, McDonald also defended his efforts to hold employees, including members of the Senior Executive Service, accountable for poor performance, mismanagement and especially the wait-times scandal that rocked the department last year.

**House Veterans Chairman: VA Should Fire Bad Workers Faster:** The chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee said the troubled VA should fire problem employees faster and that Congress should make it easier for the entire government to dismiss bad workers. "I think the American people want it faster." Rep. Jeff Miller made an unusual joint appearance with VA Secretary Robert McDonald in Denver before a national convention of the Disabled American Veterans. The House passed a measure that Miller sponsored that would streamline the VA's process for firing problem workers. Democrats denounced the measure saying it would deny VA workers important protections that other federal workers get. Miller said he was open to changing his proposal. McDonald said Miller's plan would make it harder for him to recruit the best workers. He said the measure would also tie his hands by limiting bonuses and forcing him to rotate workers into new jobs periodically. "You can't motivate good people to do a good job by punishing them for things that others have done," he said.

**Carter Approves Arming More Troops at Bases and Recruiting Stations:** Defense Secretary Ash Carter has given his top commanders the green light to allow more troops to carry weapons at U.S. bases, with a focus on recruiting stations, Reserve centers and other softer military targets. Carter's actions came two weeks after a Kuwaiti-born gunman fatally shot four Marines and a sailor before police killed him at the Navy reserve center in Chattanooga, Tenn. "The tragic shooting on July 16 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, illustrates the continuing threat to DOD personnel in the U.S. homeland posed by homegrown violent extremists," Carter wrote in a memo released by the Pentagon. In the memo, Carter gave his service chiefs and regional command heads until Aug. 21 to submit "action plans" for beefed-up security of personnel, buildings and other physical facilities. "I am directing all components to consider any additional protection measures including changes to policy and procedures that protect our force against the evolving threat," Carter wrote in the memo. Armed citizen vigilante groups in a half dozen states started standing guard outside recruiting centers and other public military sites after the July 17 shooting rampage in Chattanooga. In that assault, the shooter, later identified as Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, fired shots from his car at an armed forces recruiting center, and then drove six miles with police in pursuit, crashed through the Navy Reserve center's security gate, left the car and ran through a building, firing as he moved. The government has not classified the rampage as a terrorist attack but says Abdulazeez, 24, may have been a "lone wolf" assailant inspired by the Islamic State or other militant groups. Born in Kuwait before moving with his family to Tennessee, he'd made several visits to Jordan in recent years, ostensibly to see relatives.

**Coast Guard Commandant Sees Increasing Demand for Drone Missions:** The commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard made his case recently why the Coast Guard needed to make an investment in drone technology just as much as the military services. U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft said there is any number of reasons that drones will be a regular tool for the Coast Guard. "We've only seen the tip of the iceberg." "We're the only entity that has – really – a unique compendium of authorities outside of 12 miles of U.S. waters, which is the high seas," Zukunft said. "We have over 65 agreements that deal with counter drug [operations], that deal with proliferation security, that deal with fisheries regulation." Drones could play a role in any of those missions, he said. Among vessels with drone assets is the Coast Guard Cutter Healy, the service's newest and most technologically advanced icebreaker. The cutter has used Aeryon Scout drones mounted with remote sensors to help find the easiest areas to break through. They have also flown the drones using thermal imagery to detect mammal activities in order to avoid disturbing them, Zukunft said. "It's much easier to use drone technology that would otherwise put human beings at risk," he said. "They can do the exact same thing and do it persistently." The Coast Guard also has used drones for high seas drug busts. In one instance, he said, a Coast Guard National Security Cutter launched a drone and found a refueling vessel waiting to fuel up a "go-fast" – a speed boat used to race millions of dollars' worth of cocaine to U.S. shores. "Instead of charging over the horizon [after the refueling vessel] ... they stalked this thing for 36 hours" by drone," Zukunft said. "As soon as the go-fast showed up they brought the drone back, then they launched the orange helicopters, shot out the outboards and we got several tons of cocaine out of that." Given the size of the Coast Guard, with about 43,000 full-time active duty personnel and a mission to provide coastal security and law enforcement beyond U.S. waters and deployed overseas the service needs every technological edge, according to Zukunft.

## **Here's an interesting piece of history most of us never heard about.**

When baseball greats Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig went on tour in baseball-crazy Japan in 1934, some fans wondered why a third-string catcher named Moe Berg was included. Although he played with 5 major league teams from 1923 to 1939, he was a very mediocre ball player. He was regarded as the brainiest ballplayer of all time. In fact Casey Stengel once said: That is the strangest man ever to play baseball. When all the baseball stars went to Japan, Moe Berg went with them and many people wondered why he went with the team.

The answer was simple: Moe Berg was a United States spy working undercover with the OSS forerunner to the CIA . Moe spoke 15 languages - including Japanese - Moe Berg had two loves: baseball and spying. In Tokyo, garbed in a kimono, Berg took flowers to the daughter of an American diplomat being treated in St. Luke's Hospital - the tallest building in the Japanese capital. He never delivered the flowers. The ball-player ascended to the hospital roof and filmed key features: the harbor, military installations, railway yards, etc. Eight years later, General Jimmy Doolittle studied Berg's films in planning his spectacular raid on Tokyo.

Catcher Moe Berg's father, Bernard Berg, a pharmacist in Newark, New Jersey, taught his son Hebrew and Yiddish. Moe, against his wishes, began playing baseball on the street aged four. His father disapproved and never once watched his son play. In Barringer High School, Moe learned Latin, Greek and French. Moe read at least 10 newspapers every day. He graduated magna cum laude from Princeton - having added Spanish, Italian, German and Sanskrit to his linguistic quiver. During further studies at the Sorbonne, in Paris, and Columbia Law School, he picked up Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Arabic, Portuguese and Hungarian - 15 languages in all, plus some regional dialects. While playing baseball for Princeton University, Moe Berg would describe plays in Latin or Sanskrit. During World War II, he was parachuted into Yugoslavia to assess the value to the war effort of the two groups of partisans there. He reported back that Marshall Tito's forces were widely supported by the people and Winston Churchill ordered all-out support for the Yugoslav underground fighter, rather than Mihajlovic's Serbians. The parachute jump at age 41 undoubtedly was a challenge. But there was more to come in that same year. Berg penetrated German-held Norway, met with members of the underground and located a secret heavy water plant - part of the Nazis' effort to build an atomic bomb. His information guided the Royal Air Force in a bombing raid to destroy the plant. The R.A.F. destroys the Norwegian heavy water plant targeted by Moe Berg.

There still remained the question of how far had the Nazis progressed in the race to build the first Atomic bomb. If the Nazis were successful, they would win the war. Berg (under the code name "Remus") was sent to Switzerland to hear leading German physicist Werner Heisenberg, a Nobel Laureate, lecture and determine if the Nazis were close to building an A-bomb. Moe managed to slip past the SS guards at the auditorium, posing as a Swiss graduate student. The spy carried in his pocket a pistol and a cyanide pill. If the German indicated the Nazis were close to building a weapon, Berg was to shoot him - and then swallow the cyanide pill. Moe, sitting in the front row, determined that the Germans were nowhere near their goal, so he complimented Heisenberg on his speech and walked him back to his hotel.

Moe Berg's report was distributed to Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and key figures in the team developing the Atomic Bomb. Roosevelt responded: "Give my regards to the catcher." Most of Germany's leading physicists had been Jewish and had fled the Nazis mainly to Britain and the United States . After the war, Moe Berg was awarded the Medal of Freedom, America's highest honor for a civilian in wartime. But Berg refused to accept, as he couldn't tell people about his exploits. After his death, his sister accepted the Medal and it hangs in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. March 2,1902-----May 29, 1972 Presidential Medal of Freedom (the highest award to be awarded to civilians during wartime) Moe Berg's baseball card is the only card on display at the CIA Headquarters in Washington DC.