



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

WEBSITE: www.b-2-1-196lib.com



Volume 5

"A Soldier Once And Always"

January 2016

Commanders Corner: Well, I survived the holidays once more. Now it's time to relax and wait for the NFL playoffs. Looks like my local team, the Colts, will be sitting somewhere watching it at the same time I am. Pretty disappointing outcome for what was a highly touted team before the first kickoff of the season. After that, it was a long downward spiral. Oh well, being a lifelong fan of the Cubs, I can always say "wait til next year!". I hope all of you enjoyed your holidays and getting together with friends and family. Hopefully, you were allowed to watch some of the holiday games between stuffing yourselves with the great food that comes with the season and taking a nap. This time of the year we should all be counting our blessings and looking forward to a new and prosperous year. As we all know, we are lucky to have survived a very traumatic period in our lives; which makes every passing holiday season even that more special. Even though the holidays are special, so is the rest of the year; remember to make every day count and be thankful and loving to your family and friends throughout the entire year not just during the holidays. During the upcoming year, I'd like get everyone motivated to be involved in getting us some new chapter members. Check your VFWs and American Legions, etc. and see if you can round up some 2/1 veterans to join us. Have a great new year.

Chuck

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



The picture depicts the delivery of 380 Thanksgiving Dinners to the new VA Clinic in Greenville, SC. (turkey and all the trimmings, desert and coffee, tea and soft drinks) It was a good day. Doug Greenlaw, South Carolina Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, on the left, VA Clinic Administrator Sgt. Major Rich Boggan, Special Forces, Afghanistan (center) and First Sgt. Harvey Craig, Vietnam (82nd Air-

borne) with MOPH Chapter 845 responsible for delivering the food).

"To be a soldier one needs that special gene, that extra something, that enables a person to jump into one on one combat, something, after all, that is unimaginable to most of us, as we are simply not brave enough."

--Rupert Everett



DOD MIA Recovery Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced burial updates for two soldiers, and the identification of remains of a third. Returned home are:

- **Army Sgt. Robert C. Dakin**, 22, will be buried with full military honors on Dec. 12 in his hometown of Waltham, Mass. He was assigned to Company L, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, when he was lost fighting near the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea on Dec. 12, 1950.
- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Billy D. Hill**, 21, of Wichita, Kan., will be buried with full military honors on Dec. 17, in Killeen, Texas. Hill was assigned as a helicopter gunner on a UH-1D that was shot down on Jan. 21, 1968. He was assigned to the 282nd Aviation Company, 14th Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade..
- **Army Pfc. David S. Burke**, 21, of Summit County, Ohio, who was lost fighting in North Korea on Nov. 27, 1950. He was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, and will be buried with full military honors on a date and location yet to be announced.

New Logo was Approved for the Soldier for Life Program: The new logo includes one variation for Retired Soldiers and another for veterans. The approval reinforces the Army

leadership's belief that Retired Soldiers and veterans are Soldiers for Life whose dedicated service to the nation should be recognized. Retired Soldiers who have already purchased the U.S. Army Retired ID Badge for their ASUs may continue to wear it or purchase and wear the new SFL Retired ID Badge. This change was incorporated in DA PAM 670-1, dtd 1Jul2015. Available at AAFES online for 12.25 each. Others (Vanguard) have them for a few bucks more. You can wear the full size (2 inch) on your mess dress coat as miniatures are not available (yet).



VFW Testifies at Senate Bill Hearing: The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing to discuss pending legislation. VFW Deputy Legislative Director Aleks Morosky testified at the hearing, offering the VFW's views and recommendations. The bills cover a wide range of topics including VA whistleblower protection, GI Bill benefits restoration for veterans who attend schools that unexpectedly close, increased access to telemedicine, a training program to allow medics and corpsmen to become VA physician assistants, and improvements to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program. The VFW supports all of the bills discussed at the hearing.

The P-38 can opener is so named because it takes 38 turns to open a can of C-rations if you don't mess up.

Nelson

VA Makes Changes to Veterans Choice Program:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a number of changes to make participation in the Veterans Choice Program easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf. "As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what needs to be refined," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve." To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014. Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:

Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program; Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran's ability to travel; Determined eligible based on the Veteran's current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.

VA Automatic benefits for Camp Lejeune vets will take a year:

The VA announced Thursday that it would grant sick veterans benefits without their having to go through the protracted and arduous claims process for receiving disability and health benefits if they had one of the illnesses and served on the base between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987.

Those illnesses are liver and kidney cancer, leukemia, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, multiple myeloma, scleroderma, Parkinson's disease and plastic anemia (myelodysplastic syndromes). "The notice and comment rulemaking process is lengthy, so even though this rule is a VA priority, we anticipate it will take 12 months or more to publish a final rule," VA spokeswoman Walinda West said in a written statement. The statement was released in response to questions submitted by the *Tampa Bay Times*. The VA response came too late to include in an earlier *Times* story on Thursday's announcement. "The devil is always in the details," said Michael Partain, who was born on the base in 1968 and later was diagnosed with breast cancer, which is rare in men. Partain sits on a panel that consults with federal scientists studying Lejeune water contamination and has been active in battling the VA to extend benefits. "This is another year for these veterans and their families to wait while the VA squanders precious time." The agency noted that veterans can still apply for benefits while the VA promulgates regulations. In an important concession for veterans, the VA said it would stay any claim denials for veterans diagnosed with the eight illnesses so they do not have to reapply for benefits once it finishes drafting rules. The VA said it did not yet have an estimate of the number of veterans who would be affected by the decision to extend benefits. Scientists believe up to 1 million people may have been exposed to a toxic brew of chemicals, including several carcinogens, that make the Lejeune contamination perhaps the worst-ever mass exposure to polluted drinking water in the United States. The contamination stretched more than 50 years, ending in 1987, and involved residents now scattered across the nation.

THE ONE WHO DRIVES WHEN HE'S
BEEN DRINKING
DEPENDS ON YOU TO DO HIS THINKING
Burma Shave

Captain Bars: Being an 81 mortar gunner whom spent all his time on remote fire bases and outposts it was very rare that we got clean clothes and other supplies because we never had an officer for our platoon and for quite awhile our top rank was an E-5. We were constantly getting extra details, three man LP'S, K.P. and poop burning details. Sometimes when we had night bunker guard we couldn't even get the three blooper rounds per three hour shift we were supposed to get because the ammo dump officer would pull rank and tell us to take a hike. Once we were in the rear and we got a pile of clean fatigues and one had a Captains bar on it which I took and kept for a special occasion. Now when we went to the ammo dump, I would don my Captains bar and tell the ammo dump officer that I wanted not only the three rounds per man, but a whole case and at first he looked at me and questioned me being a Captain because I had a baby face and he never saw or heard of me. I told him he could give me what I wanted or I would report him and we got a case whenever I went down there. We also would order LRRP rations which were only supposed to be for members of Long Range Recon Patrol personnel, but when I flashed my Captains bar they gave them to me and I also carried a black marker and would mark Bravo company mortars on things we could use or ordered and they had to give them to me because I had rank. We also would have all new guys sent to talk with the Captain and I would put on my Bar and give them a welcome to the platoon speech and then tell them what was expected of them. Some looked at me like this guy can't be a Captain

Jim Gales, Bravo CO, 81mm mortar platoon, 2/1st

Vietnam Veteran Visits the "The Wall That Heals":

I had the opportunity to accompany "The Wall That Heals" to West Point. It was being displayed as part of the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam Conflict. I was there for five days in October with the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation (VVMF). It was an amazing and unique experience. One of the highlights of the week was the opportunity to meet Gary Sinise, better known as Lt. Dan from the movie *Forrest Gump*. He was at West Point to receive the Thayer Award for his work helping active duty military and Veterans. It is the highest honor presented by the United States Military Academy. The award is given to a citizen of the United States whose character, accomplishments, and stature in the civilian community draw wholesome comparison to the qualities for which West Point strives: duty, honor, country. In *Forrest Gump*, Lt. Dan, Forrest and Bubba are fictional members of the unit I served with – they wear the 9th Infantry Division logo. I always have it on as a volunteer; in the



pictures, it is the circular red, white and blue patch on my sleeve. One place I wanted to see at West Point was their Vietnam Veterans Memorial. There is a jetty rock containing a plaque dedicated to the West Point graduates who fell in Vietnam. It is a landscaped Memorial with benches from the various graduating classes and is situated near Michie Stadium, on shoreline of the Lusk Reservoir. The chair of the effort to build this Memorial was John (Jack) Wheeler, who later became the Chairman of the VVMF during the building of The Wall.

National Guard: Service in the War on Terror: It's no secret that the National Guard played a large role in the war on terror. Guard and Reserve units made up about 45% of the total force sent to Iraq and Afghanistan, and received about 18.4% of the casualties. With hundreds of thousands of men and women having served, the National Guard has more than earned a place of remembrance for its part in the 14 year war.

Bergdahl to Face Court-Martial on Charges of Desertion, Misbehavior: The U.S. Army on Monday ordered Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl to face a general court-martial on charges of desertion and misbehavior before the enemy that could bring a term of life imprisonment for leaving his post in Afghanistan in 2009. As the convening authority in Bergdahl's case, Gen. Robert B. Abrams, commander of U.S. Forces Command, referred the most serious charges to the highest trial court venue in the military despite recommendations for leniency from a preliminary hearing officer. Abrams, the son of the legendary former U.S. commander in Vietnam, the late Gen. Creighton Abrams, had wide discretion under the Uniform Code of Military Justice to dismiss the charges, order trial on lesser offenses, or proceed to a general court-martial in the high-profile case. Bergdahl was charged specifically under the code's Article 85 -- desertion with Intent to shirk important or hazardous duty -- and Article 99 -- misbehavior before the enemy by endangering the safety of a command, unit or place, the command said in a statement. No immediate date for an arraignment hearing was set for Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where the court-martial also will take place. In a statement, Bergdahl's lead lawyer, Eugene Fidell, said Abrams "did not follow the advice of the preliminary hearing officer who heard the witnesses" and recommended against a general court martial. "We will continue to defend Sgt. Bergdahl as the case proceeds," Fidell said. However, in military law it is not unusual for a convening authority, in this case Abrams, to go against the recommendations of hearing officers. The decision by Abrams came four days after Bergdahl's first public interviews were disclosed in the first episode of the new season of "Serial," the popular weekly podcast spun off from the public radio show "This American Life." Bergdahl claimed that he sneaked away from his post with the vision of becoming a Jason Bourne-type action hero by disclosing wrongdoing in his unit to commanders.

Photo of Injured Military Dog With Purple Heart Goes Viral: A photograph of military dog A military K-9 injured in a bomb explosion in Afghanistan along with his military police officer partner now has a lot of support after a photo of the dog wearing a Purple Heart Medal in a hospital in Germany has gone viral, the Killeen Daily Herald reports. Spc. Andrew Brown, 22, and his military dog, Rocky, were searching a structure for explosive materials in southern Afghanistan's Helmand Province on Dec. 3 when the bomb exploded. "They were working with Special Operations Forces in an effort to identify explosive materials," Army spokesman Sgt. Michal Garrett told the paper. Brown and Rocky survived the blast and were taken to a military hospital in Germany. There, a photo was taken of Rocky wearing the Purple Heart and posted on Facebook. The photo had more than 89,000 likes, 118,000 shares and more than 9,500 comments. "The Army typically does not process awards for our working dogs the same way we do for our other soldiers," Garrett told a newspaper. "The Purple Heart in the photo was placed on Rocky as a sign of respect and solidarity between him and Brown during their recovery." Two days ago, another photo of Brown and Rocky in a hospital room on Facebook that said, "They are both very thankful for your thoughts and prayers and are in the process of heading back home. The post said Brown had arrived earlier Friday at Walter Reed Army Medical Center Hospital in Washington where he was met by his waiting family. The newspaper reported that Brown, of Eliot, Maine, suffered non-life threatening injuries and will undergo a series of tests for traumatic brain injury. The tests are routine for soldiers injured by roadside bombs.



Special Operations Teams to Iraq, Syria Puts More Boots on the Ground: The U.S. military in Baghdad said recently the deployment of Special Operations teams for raids and other small-scale combat missions against the Islamic State will go ahead despite Iraqi political opposition. Special Ops forces will be directly involved in combat as "trigger pullers" in the new deployment but the general thrust of President Barack Obama's prohibition against "boots on the ground" combat will be maintained, said Army Col. Steve Warren, a spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force-operation Inherent Resolve. "Some of this is semantics," Warren said in pressing back against charges that Obama had gone back on his word by approving the deployment of an "Expeditionary Targeting Force" that would be based in Irbil, the Kurdish capital in northern Iraq. "A raid is a combat operation, there's no way around that," Warren said, but raids were in no way comparable with major ground operations to seize and hold territory such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq more than a decade ago. "We're not talking about the 2003 'Thunder Run' up to Baghdad-- that's ground combat," he said. "This is something completely different, these are raids. "So yeah, more Americans will be coming here to Iraq and some of them will be conducting raids inside of both Iraq and Syria," Warren said. The ones actually conducting the raids will number in the "double digits," he said. The strength of the expeditionary targeting force was expected to be about 200 personnel, with about 100 coming from a new deployment that will add to the estimated 3,550 U.S. troops now in Iraq. Others will be assigned to the targeting force from Special Ops troops already there. The force will be tasked with conducting raids against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, to kill or capture high-value insurgents and to free hostages. The teams will also gather intelligence for coalition aircraft targeting ISIS but they will not be involved as joint terminal attack controllers, or JTACs, on the front lines to call in airstrikes, Warren said.

Stricken Vets Fight VA Over Camp Lejeune Water Poisoning: Joseph "Danny" Zambito was 18 when he trained as a Marine in 1964 at Camp Lejeune, where he -- like one million others at the base -- was exposed to cancer-causing chemicals in one of the worst water contamination cases in US history, spanning more than three decades. Zambito, now 70, lost both kidneys and his bladder to cancer, but the Florida man said he hasn't received a single disability benefit from the Department of Veterans Affairs -- whose anonymous panel of "subject matter experts" renders medical opinions on veterans' claims their diseases were caused by toxic drinking water at the North Carolina military training base. "It makes me feel very angry," said Zambito, who undergoes dialysis four times a week at a center in Zephyrhills. "They're dragging their feet on this and giving me the runaround." "You just want to give up," added his wife, Judy. "How can you fight the government?" Since the program's launch three years ago, the rate of Camp Lejeune toxic water disability claims being approved has dropped from approximately 25 percent to 8 percent, according to VA statistics. Advocates for veterans want to know who the purported experts passing judgment on the claims are, and how they arrive at their conclusions. "There's been an enormous lack of transparency and it takes various forms," Rory Minnis, 33, a former Marine and second-year Yale law student, said. "This extends far beyond the issue of Camp Lejeune," said Minnis, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Between 1953 and 1987, nearly 1 million veterans, their families and civilian employees at Camp Lejeune were exposed to drinking and bathing water contaminated with dry cleaning chemicals, degreasers and a host of other toxins. Many base residents developed illnesses -- including rare cancers -- and disabilities in the aftermath.

VA Expands A/O Ship List: VA has expanded its list of Navy ships whose crews may be eligible for disability compensation as a result of potential exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. The new additions include the survey ships Sheldrake and Towhee, attack transport ship Okanogan, submarine rescue ship Chanticleer, destroyers Frank Knox and James E. Kyes, and transport ship General W. A. Mann. VA also expanded the dates of eligibility for sailors who served aboard the destroyer Fechteler, and extended possible presumptive status to sailors who went ashore from the guided missile cruiser Dewey or attack transport ships Pickaway or Paul Revere. VA pays disability compensation to veterans or survivors for 14 medical conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure.

Troop Level Stays Constant in Afghanistan: Instead of reducing U.S. troop strength to 1,000, the president decided to keep 9,800 American forces in Afghanistan through 2016. The commander of NATO's Resolute Support Mission, Army Gen. John Campbell, called it a huge decision because of the signal it sends to the international community, which has 40 nations contributing troops to the effort to stabilize a country that still has significant threats within its borders. The decision gave the Afghan people more confidence, Campbell said, "that the international community would stay with them. There was some unpredictability there. If the U.S. stays, everybody stays. If the U.S. had left, probably everybody would have left."

Stolen Valor, a lot more prevalent than you even know: Probably 3-4 times a day people are busted for Stolen Valor. But I don't, for two reasons. One is just that after a while, it gets old. They are all horrible people who I believe steal valor from my friends who truly acted heroically. The second reason, and more pertinent lately, is that I am getting sued all over the country for outing these guys, and I get a lot of death threats. I sleep with an M4 next to my bed now, and my body armor right next to that. It's not the way a man who returned from a war zone wants to live, but I don't have many options. The lawsuits suck. Thankfully, I have the best employer in the world, and they take valor thieves seriously. So, while I pay a price mentally and emotionally, and have to be hypervigilant, I don't have to mortgage my house to defend myself, nor worry about all the complaints they lodge against me. Just the same, it's tough at times. My friend John Lilyea has no such compunctions. He's lost a lot of friends, and he's busted more people than I can even keep count of. That's John's work. Thousands of phonies busted, with help from others like Stolen Valor Facebook, Guardians of Valor and others. Many of the phonies are now in jail, others are still pulling their scams. Last week I spent time with John in DC, and we talked about the importance of what we do, and how we wish that we didn't have to do it. It takes time, it takes money, and it takes its toll. But to both of us, it's also vital work. The corollary to preserving those memories is making sure that the fake stories are corrected. If everyone had the Medal of Honor, the 78 or so living recipients Medals would mean much less in terms of being National Treasures (which they are.) It's a simple form of economics. If the supply is unlimited, the value of each individual Medal is that much less. And I have friends who have received that Medal. Ryan Pitts, a dear friend who is my personal hero. Sal Giunta who is one of my favorite people in the world to enjoy a beer with. And Kyle White who I had the pleasure of playing some leisurely (and poor) golf with earlier this year. Anyway, my point is that busting these guys is tough at times in terms of what we have to go through. If you should be aware of someone who you believe is professing Stolen Valor; Turn him into the police.

VFW Wants "Widow's Tax" Eliminated: It is a longtime VFW goal to eliminate the dollar-for-dollar offset that denies some 63,000 surviving military spouses from concurrently receiving Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments from the Defense Department, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Similar to life insurance, SBP is purchased by military retirees in order to provide up to 55 percent of their retirement pay to surviving spouses. DIC is a modest indemnity compensation benefit of \$1,254 per month that VA pays to surviving spouses whose loved ones died from a service-connected wound, illness or injury. Despite the two payments being paid for two different reasons from two different federal departments, all monthly SBP retirement payments are first offset by the \$1,254 DIC payment. In testimony this week before the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, the VFW called it the ultimate government insult to financially penalize surviving spouses just because their loved ones died on active-duty or from a service-connected wound, illness or injury after they retired.

Pentagon: Afghanistan Becoming Less Secure: Security in Afghanistan is deteriorating, violence is increasing, and the Islamic State has become "operationally emergent" in the country's east, though insurgents have not been able to exert lasting control over any major population centers, the Pentagon says in a new report. The document, titled "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan," comes as a crucial time, as it assesses the Afghan forces and the Taliban in the past summer fighting season, when coalition troops were largely absent from the battlefield. "In their first fighting season against an Afghan-led counterinsurgency, the Taliban-led insurgent threat remains resilient," says the report, which looked at the period from June 1 to Nov. 30. "Fighting has been nearly continuous since February 2015." The Afghan forces, which the U.S. funds at more than \$4 billion annually, took a record casualties at a record rate, which could have been partially mitigated through better equipment and medical evacuation capabilities, the report says. The Taliban also suffered heavy losses. "We said from the beginning that this was going to be a tough year," said Col. Michael Lawhorn, spokesman for the U.S. military coalition. While violence is up around the country, high-profile attacks in the capital, Kabul, saw a dramatic rise, by 27 percent over the same period in 2014, according to the report. Afghan attitudes about their own security are concurrently becoming more pessimistic: The report found that only 28 percent considered security in their area to be good, down from 45 percent in 2013. "The (Afghan security forces) are generally capable and effective at protecting the major population centers, or not allowing the Taliban to maintain their hold for a prolonged period of time," the report says. "At the same time, the Taliban have proven capable of taking rural areas and contesting key terrain in areas such as Helmand while continuing to conduct high-profile attacks in Kabul."

Pentagon Names 1st Female Commandant of West Point's Cadets: A veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be the first female commandant of cadets at the U.S. Military Academy, one of West Point's top positions. The academy announced Tuesday that Brig. Gen. Diana M. Holland will be the 76th commandant of the Corps of Cadets. Under West Point's superintendent, she'll oversee discipline and training for the academy's approximately 4,200 cadets. Holland will replace Maj. Gen. John C. Thomson III, who has been named commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. Holland, a 1990 West Point graduate, currently serves as a deputy commanding general with the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in northern New York. She'll start her new job on Jan. 5. The first female cadets graduated from the academy in 1980.

Chattanooga Shooting Victims to Receive Purple Heart:

The four Marines and a sailor killed by a gunman during a July mass shooting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, will receive the Purple Heart medal, as will a Marine sergeant who was wounded. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus announced Wednesday that Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Sullivan, Staff Sgt. David Wyatt, Sgt. Carson A. Holmquist, Lance Cpl. Squire D. "Skip" Wells, Sgt. DeMonte Cheeley and Petty Officer 2nd Class Randall Smith would all receive the award. The announcement comes the same day the FBI announced that the Chattanooga shooter, Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, was "inspired by a foreign terror organization." It's not clear what organization Abdulazeez, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Kuwait, might have been emulating. "Following an extensive investigation, the FBI and NCIS have determined that this attack was inspired by a foreign terrorist group, the final criteria required for the awarding of the Purple Heart to this sailor and these Marines," Mabus said in a statement, referring to Naval Criminal Investigative Service. "This determination allows the Department of the Navy to move forward immediately with the award of the Purple Heart to the families of the five heroes who were victims of this terrorist attack, as well as to the surviving hero, Sgt. Cheeley," he added. On July 16, Abdulazeez first attacked a military recruiting office in a drive-by shooting, then traveled to a nearby Navy Reserve center, where he shot five Marines, a sailor and a police officer before he was killed by police.

Court to Hear Whether Women Should Register for Draft:

Whether the recent historic decision to allow women in all combat roles may require them to register for the draft faces its first test next week when a federal lawsuit challenging the male-only registration gets its day in court. The case, *National Coalition for Men vs. the Selective Service System*, will be considered by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in Pasadena, Calif., on Tuesday. The court date coincidentally occurs just days after Secretary of Defense Ash Carter opened all military combat roles to women, a decision he said may affect whether women are required to register for the draft. "It may do that," Carter said. "That is a matter of legal dispute right now, and in fact litigation." But Carter said the outcome of the court case won't affect the Pentagon's decision to move forward.

Female Soldiers Cleared to Serve in Infantry, Rangers, Special Forces Overruled on Women in Combat, Marine Corps Prepares to Integrate Units
 GOP Lawmakers Vow to Review Decision to Open All Combat Jobs to Women. "That legal determination won't affect what I announce today -- that is, our timetable for the implementation of the decisions I've announced today," he said. "But it is an issue that's out there." Under the Military Selective Service Act, males must register 30 days after their 18th birthday with the Selective Service System, which could call upon them for compulsory military service in a time of war. They must stay registered until their 26th birthday. Coalition attorney Marc Angelucci, who will be arguing the case before the 9th Circuit on behalf of the organization, said the decision could have a big impact on the outcome of his case. "The fact that the military has now opened all combat roles for women can certainly affect this lawsuit," he said. The case was initially dismissed in 2013 as premature by a lower federal district court, Angelucci said, because the Pentagon had not yet made a final decision on opening combat roles to women. Angelucci said, "As long as there are any women in combat, there's no excuse for only forcing males to register for the draft." A senior defense official who worked closely with Carter on the decision to allow women in all combat roles called the lawsuit against the Selective Service Agency "a complicated matter."

Troops Free 900 Hostages Held by Boko Haram: A multinational force freed 900 hostages held by Nigeria's Boko Haram extremists, killed more than 100 fighters and arrested 100 others last week, Cameroon's government spokesman said. Hostages from Cameroon, Nigeria and Chad were held in several camps and were being trained as suicide bombers, fighters and thieves, said Issa Tchiroma Bakary. Joint forces from Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and Benin carried out the sweep Nov. 27 to Nov. 29, he said. Troops also arrested 100 fighters, including a group leader, from Boko Haram's strongholds in the Sambisa Forest, which straddles northeastern Nigeria and Cameroon, and in the Lake Chad area, Bakary said. The freed are being reunited with their families, he said. Trauma care is available for those who need it, including young girls and women who might have been used as sex slaves, he said. Nigerian troops have rescued hundreds of Boko Haram captives this year but none of the 219 girls kidnapped from a school in Chibok town. Their mass abduction in April 2014 sparked international outrage against the extremists and Nigeria's government for failing to rescue them. Boko Haram's 6-year-old Islamic uprising has killed an estimated 20,000 people and driven 2.3 million from their homes, according to Amnesty International and the United Nations. The militants have expanded attacks into Cameroon, Chad and Niger -- countries contributing troops to a regional force intended to wipe out the extremists. Two teen female suicide bombers detonated explosives late Tuesday in the north Cameroon town Waza, killing six people, Cameroon's Far North province governor, Midjiyawa Bakary, said Wednesday. Soldiers killed a third suicide bomber before she could attack, he said. Boko Haram has also been planting land mines in north Cameroon, said senior military official Col. Jacob Kodji. Two Cameroonian soldiers were killed Monday by a land mine in Gangse village, he said.

VA Implements Changes to the Choice Program:

This week, VA made several changes to the Choice Program in response to the VFW's advocacy, recent legislation and the work of other stakeholders. The first change requires VA to consider a veteran's health care conditions when determining eligibility. Moving forward, veterans who have health care conditions that limit their ability to travel to a VA medical facility for treatment will be eligible to receive care closer to home, regardless if they live less than 40 miles from a VA outpatient clinic. VA's examples include: "routine and simple procedures, such as simple tests or treatments like an allergy test or an immunization, may be sought through the Veterans Choice Program. Similarly, if a veteran needs repeated appointments for a course of treatment, such as chemotherapy." The second change expands eligibility to veterans who live more than 40 miles from a full-time VA primary care physician. This means that veterans who live within 40 miles of a VA outpatient clinic that does not have a full-time primary care physician will become eligible for the program. The third change requires that VA work with the Choice Program's administrators (TriWest and HealthNet) to contact veterans who become eligible for the Choice Program to schedule appointments. Before this change, veterans were required to call the Choice Program's call center (866-606-8198) to initiate their Choice Program appointments. Now, HealthNet and TriWest will contact veterans directly to schedule their appointments, similar to when a VA specialty clinic contacts a veteran to schedule an appointment when the veteran has been referred to the clinic by his or her primary care provider. Veterans with questions about the Choice Program or those who want to check on the status of their appointments should continue to contact the call center. To learn more about the Choice Program or find out if you are eligible, visit: <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>.

The Americal Division Veterans Association, prompted by 7 members of the 2/1 Inf Chapter applied and received authorization to become an active participant of the DoD initiative to commemorate the 50 Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Periodically the Commemorative Committee distributes a SITREP that informs all what has taken place. Here is a reproduction of the latest SITREP for your information
Editor:

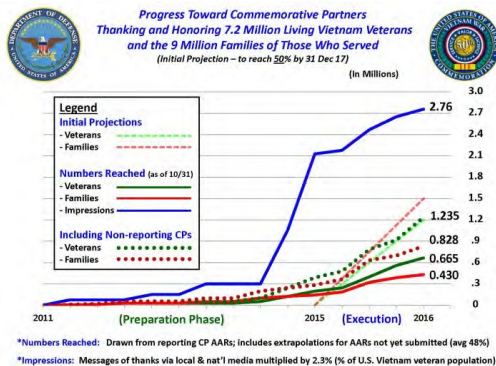
Vietnam War Commemoration "SITREP" – 2015. Issue 15

Thursday, December 10

Dear Commemorative Partners,

Congratulations! Thanks to your dedication, **665 thousand Vietnam veterans** and **430 thousand** of their **families** have been thanked & honored across America. Truly, you are uplifting and enriching the lives of our Vietnam veterans. **2,296** ... that's the number of commemorative events planned and hosted in 2015 alone. Combine that with previous years and the total is **3,558!** The remarkable part ... these numbers represent the activity of **just 23% of our CPs** – those who are requesting our support via **DD2956s** and reporting their successes back to us through **after-action reports**.

Now, can you imagine the impact actually being made by our entire CP team? We can! We believe the real numbers are double or even triple those reported above. More importantly, with only 23% of CPs requesting our support, it means that **77% of our CPs are *not receiving*** Vietnam veteran lapel pins to publicly present to the warriors who deserve one.



Working together, we can solve this, especially since our **Vietnam veteran lapel pin** is in **full production. We can supply all requests!** So, we urge all CPs to utilize our **Partner Portal** to request lapel pins and report back on their distribution after each commemorative event.

As you plan your 2016 calendar, we recommend you **request lapel pins early** via our DD2956 form.

Early submission will help us greatly, as we supported 643 commemorative events in November alone. **Vietnam Veterans Day**, recognized by 21 states on the 29th or 30th of March, is a likely focal point, along with Armed Forces week leading up to Memorial Day, and also Veterans Day. Please remember, a 30-day notice is our standard for a materials-only request; 90 days for a speaker or staffed booth. Thank you, as on behalf of the nation you continue to lead your communities in thanking & honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families!