



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



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“A Soldier Once And Always”

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Commanders Corner: By, the time you are reading this monthly newsletter, I'll be losing golf balls and drinking beer in Pattaya, Thailand with my Norwegian, Swedish, and English friends. Luckily, both golf balls and beer are cheap there. Overall the last few months have been pretty good for me. I finally got a claim settled with VA that had been under appeal for 5 years. I urge all of you to get any claims you may have on record with VA and, by all means, follow up on them and make an appeal if necessary. They seem to try to discourage initial claims with blanket denials but, be sure to appeal and pursue all avenues open to you. If you do file an appeal, hound them about it and provide as much documentation as you can find to support your claim. I have spent several hours this month going through the “Links” pages on our web site and have deleted several outdated or non-working links. I have added some new ones and cleaned up the pages as well. If any of you have any suggestions as to links I can add, please let me know. For all you fellow “Shake and Bakes” out there I have added an NCOC Graduates Locator. This is invaluable in locating guys you may have graduated with and lost contact with since graduation. Also, there have been updates on all Agent Orange related topics both on our site's “Agent Orange” page and the “Related Links” page in the left column of our sites home page. It finally looks like the VA is honoring more Agent Orange claims and have added more to the list of symptoms they recognize. I have also added the web site of 2/1 Vietnam vet Charlie Wilke ; check it out. Rich Heroux, our Vice-commander, sent me a list of 2/1 Americal members that don't belong to our chapter and I will follow up by contacting them and inviting them to join our fold. We were cordially invited to have our annual reunion in conjunction with the Eastern Region Chapter in April at Cleveland, OH. But, I declined since we always have our annual chapter at the annual Americal reunion. However, any of you living out east are welcome to attend and join the fun. It's April 26-30, 2017 and will be held at the Cleveland Airport Marriott Hotel. Contact Dave Taylor if interested at dave.taylor@zoominternet.net . I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend the annual chapter meeting this year in Minneapolis as we will be electing officers for the upcoming 2 years. At the meeting I am going to propose that we don't have an election for the Secretary/Treasurer office and let Jesse Mendoza continue in the job until the following elections. Since he took over for Don Hicks when Don had to relinquish the office because of illness, Jesse has done an excellent job and, in my opinion, deserves to continue. Also, get your candidates in line for nominations; it's never too early to get the ball rolling.



I am definitely not running for re-election this year. I feel 6 years as Commander is enough and we need to have some other guys step up to the plate. I'll continue to do the web site and assist wherever I can in the future. Well, the sun just popped out for the first time in several days and I'm going to take my butt outside and get some work done around the old homestead. It's been too cold to work outside for the past couple of weeks or so. Spring is just around the corner, I hope. All of you take care and have an enjoyable 2017.

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

Chuck



Vets Slam Obama's Decision to Shorten Manning's Sentence: Many vets wasted little time registering their disapproval of President Barack Obama's decision to commute the sentence of Chelsea Manning, the former Army intelligence analyst who leaked troves of classified intelligence to the website Wiki leaks. Former service members and veterans service organizations alike reacted quickly to the news after it broke. Military.com's story alone generated more than 800 comments on the website and more than 1,600 on its Facebook page, most of them critical. "As a classified documents custodian among other classified jobs while active duty, I find this pardoning mess to be as treasonous as the release of the documents themselves," one reader wrote. "This is a slap in the face to anybody punished for minor procedural infractions involving classified information. I witnessed careers destroyed for locking confidential memos in desks instead of safes. It is a sad day for anybody who ever wore a American military uniform." In an email, another reader, Thomas Prager, wrote, "I can't believe the Army paid for [her] transgender surgery, and I while on active duty separated my shoulder [but] was denied surgery because it was not [deemed] necessary." Manning, 29, of Oklahoma City, is imprisoned at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas as part of a 35-year sentence she received in August 2013 after pleading guilty to multiple charges under the Espionage Act. She is now set to be freed May 17, according to a release from the White House. She was to be eligible for parole in 2021.

National Guard Unit to Wear the 2nd Infantry Division Patch: 81st Brigade Combat Team to Wear the Indianhead Division Patch. As part of the Army's Associated Unit Program, the 81st Armored Brigade Combat Team of the Washington Army National Guard began wearing the 2nd Infantry Division patch on December 3, 2016 during a ceremony at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

News from our Active Component 2/1 Infantry comrades: The 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry (Legion) has been extremely successful in the past year, conducting multiple international training exercises throughout the Pacific Region. Every company participated in at least one operation with partner nation forces. B Company spent over two months training in Malaysia and Thailand as part of [Keris Strike 16](#) and [Hanuman Guardian 16](#). A Company trained for a month in Alberta, Canada; their Stryker infantry platoons demonstrated their versatility and lethality while attached to 3PPCLI during [Exercise Maple Resolve](#). Most recently, the Legion conducted a joint [training exercise with the Japanese Self Defense Force](#) at the Yakima Training Center in eastern Washington. We are now preparing to spend several months training at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and in Yakima to prepare for a decisive action training rotation this fall at the National Training Center in Ft. Irwin, CA.

The 75th Ranger Regiment Is No Longer an All-Male Unit: The 75th Ranger Regiment has been a boys-only club since its inception. That just changed. For the first in history, a female Ranger will join them. At the tail end of 2016, three female soldiers started a RASP 2 class -- the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, for NCOs in the rank of staff sergeant and above as well as all officers who wish to be leaders in the 75th Ranger Regiment -- and two made it to the final board. According to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's public affairs office, one of these women was officially selected and earned the right to wear the coveted Ranger scroll and distinctive tan beret at the course's conclusion in December 2016. That would make the 75th Ranger Regiment the first special operations unit to have a female soldier graduate their selection course. To understand the impact of a female Ranger, you must first understand the unit she worked so hard to join. Most don't know anything about the 75th, and for those who live the hard life under a tan beret, that's just fine. Even their official mission statement is vague: "to plan and conduct special missions in support of U.S. policy and objectives." Further muddying the waters, there is a leadership school on the same post that has no official affiliation with the 75th. You may have heard of it before, it's called *Ranger School*. So who, or what, is the 75th Ranger Regiment? The short answer is that it's our country's premier special operations raid force. They are the barrel-chested freedom fighters who are responsible for killing or capturing more high-value targets than any other unit in the military during the war on terror. They have worked at the highest levels of the shadowy special operations world, where they humbly over-deliver no matter what the mission may be. They pride themselves on the execution of three simple principles: speed, surprise, and violence of action. They're particularly good at that last one. And, until recently, they were an all-male unit. The Department of Defense announced the reversal of its longstanding policy of excluding women from serving in combat military occupational specialties and their corresponding units in 2013.

Vet Thinks He's Getting Honored With A Jersey And Meets His New Best Friend: Luciano Yulfo is a retired Army Sgt. 1st class who was the guest of honor at a recent New York Knicks game. Luciano was injured while fighting for our country and has been on the waiting list for quite some time to receive a service dog. After Luciano was honored with a special jersey and thanked by basketball legend Larry Johnson was when the real surprise came. What Luciano didn't know was that he was about to meet his perfect match service dog Murphy. What a perfect surprise for this incredible hero! And oh my goodness did he look like a kid on Christmas!

The Senate Committee Approves Mattis as Next Defense Secretary: Retired Marine Gen. James Mattis cleared another hurdle Wednesday in becoming the nation's 26th secretary of defense but it was unclear exactly when he will get almost certain confirmation by the full Senate. The Senate Armed Services Committee voted 26-1 to approve Mattis to succeed outgoing Defense Secretary Ashton Carter. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a New York Democrat, was the lone "No" vote. By law, Mattis cannot be officially nominated as Defense Secretary until President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in at noon Friday, and it was not clear that the Senate could be convened during the parade and partying that follows the inauguration on the west front of the Capitol. President Barack Obama also has yet to sign the special legislation granting Mattis a waiver to succeed outgoing Defense Secretary Ashton Carter but he was expected to do so before leaving the White House Friday. The 66-year-old Mattis needed the waiver to get around the World War II-era law barring those in the military from taking cabinet posts until at least seven years after retirement. Mattis retired in 2013 as head of U.S. Central Command.

Trump Taps Former Congresswoman, Academy Grad as SecAF: President Donald Trump announced he will nominate Heather Wilson, a former congresswoman and Air Force Academy graduate, as the new Air Force secretary. "Heather Wilson is going to make an outstanding secretary of the Air Force," Trump said in an announcement. "Her distinguished military service, high level of knowledge, and success in so many different fields gives me great confidence that she will lead our nation's Air Force with the greatest competence and integrity. Our debt to America's men and women in uniform is eternal. Their service is an inspiration to us all, and we honor their service and sacrifice," Trump said. Wilson would be the third woman to serve in the role after Deborah Lee James, who served under President Barack Obama, and Sheila E. Widnall, who served under President Bill Clinton's administration. "America and our vital national interests continue to be threatened," Wilson said in the statement. "I will do my best, working with our men and women in the military, to strengthen American air and space power to keep the country safe." Republican Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said, "Heather Wilson is an excellent choice for secretary of the Air Force. Having served with her on the House Armed Services and Intelligence Committees and worked with her on many issues, I know her to be a serious and thoughtful leader who is well-equipped to meet the challenges we face in national security. I look forward to working with her in this new role." Wilson graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1982, part of the third class to include women, according to the White House statement. She earned both master's and doctoral degrees as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in England, while in the Air Force. She served as an officer in Europe and, after leaving the service in 1989, served on the National Security Council staff at the White House under President George H.W. Bush during the fall of the Berlin Wall, according to her biography.

VA to Host Summit for Women Veterans: The Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Women Veterans is slated to host the Summit for Women Veterans in Dallas from March 17-18. The summit will be the first national-level event for women veterans since 2011. Topics include training, information and guidance particular to female veterans, regardless of VA enrollment. There will be lectures, panel discussions, exhibits and open forums promoting forward-thinking dialogue, collaboration with industry best practices and research. The target audience includes women veterans, public sector partners, academics and community partners.

New Congress Starts by Passing Vets Bills: Shortly after the opening of the 115th Congress, the House of Representatives passed its first two pieces of legislation, H.R. 27 and H.R. 28 — both veterans bills. H.R. 27, the *Ensuring VA Employee Accountability Act* will require that a copy of reprimands or admonishments are retained in a VA employee's permanent record. H.R. 28, the *Biological Implant Tracking and Veteran Safety Act of 2017*, directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to adopt and implement a standard identification protocol for use in the tracking and procurement of biological implants. Both bills will need to pass the Senate before becoming law. The House also passed H.J. Res. 3, which approves the selection of a location for a memorial to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield. The Senate must also pass this resolution before final approval by the president.

Dignitaries attend, speak at Veterans Inaugural Ball: Guests at the sold-out Veterans Inaugural Ball – A Salute to Heroes include Medal of Honor recipients, senior military leaders, veterans, corporate executives, entertainers and others. The ball, which began at 5:30 p.m. Jan 20, 2017 with a reception before the dinner, features three dozen Medal of Honor recipients including Thomas Kelley, president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society



House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Sen. Jodi Ernst, R-Iowa, who served as a lieutenant colonel in the Iowa National Guard, are among the speakers planned at the event. Other dignitaries include David Shulkin, nominee for Secretary of Veterans Affairs; retired Gen. James Mattis, nominee for Secretary of Defense; retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, nominee for National Security Advisor; and Ted Roosevelt, IV, a Legionnaire, Navy veteran and grandson of one of the founders of The American Legion. Corporate representatives of the ball's sponsors such as American Airlines, Boeing, Walmart, UPS, Applied Information Systems, T-Mobile, Farmers Insurance, Moore DM Group, Four Roses, Samsung and others will also be in attendance. Drew Carey, veteran of the Marine Corps Reserve, was the emcee. Rascal Flatts lead vocalist Gary LeVox performed with two of Nashville's top songwriters, Wendell Mobley and Neil Thrasher. Silver Star recipient James McEachin, a Korean War veteran, performed a dramatic reading. The "Star-Spangled Banner" will be performed by Janine Stange, who has sung the national anthem in all 50 states.

Former Defense Chief Hagel Opens Pentagon's Vietnam Exhibit: Former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel returned to the Pentagon to pay tribute to his fellow Vietnam veterans who he said fought in an unpopular war they didn't understand and returned to an ungrateful nation. The two-time Purple Heart recipient formally opened the Defense Department's Vietnam war exhibit, which stretches along a segment of the third-floor corridor and marks the 50th anniversary of the conflict. Hagel said it was "a difficult time to serve this country."

"Unfortunately, our Vietnam veterans came back to a country that was not only ungrateful, but their service was vilified," said Hagel, who served as Pentagon chief from 2013-2015. "These men and women didn't have anything to do with the policy that put us in Vietnam, but they served this country and they served it as honorably as any generation in the history of this country has served." Hagel and his brother Tom served in Vietnam in 1968. The exhibit, he said, provides accurate, historical reflection on the war and the times. It documents the history of the war and has interactive displays that focus on the war from the veterans' perspective.

Obama Receives Farewell Tribute From Military:

With ruffles and flourishes and a few tears in the audience, the U.S. military paid a "Farewell Tribute" to President Barack Obama, who called his time as the civilian chief of the armed forces the "greatest privilege" of his life. "Mr. President, thank you for being a Commander-in-Chief that we have been proud to follow," Joint Chiefs Chairman Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford said on behalf of all the services. "You were there," Dunford said of Obama, when troops were deployed to combat zones, when they returned home to heal, and "finally, Mr. President, you were there at Dover Air Force Base to receive the remains of the fallen." Dunford, who will remain as Joint Chiefs Chairman in the Trump administration, noted that Obama was the first president to serve two full terms with the nation at war. "We recognize and appreciate your service, your sacrifice and your commitment to the force," Dunford said. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter followed Dunford at the pass-in-review ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall near the Pentagon and said that Obama will "feel the warm wind of a nation's gratitude at your back" as he departs the presidency. There was no mention in the tributes of the difficulties and setbacks that occurred on Obama's watch -- the return of troops to the Middle East to fight Islamic State militants, the terror raid in Benghazi, Russian aggression in Europe, China's push into the South China Sea, the ongoing civil war in Syria, newly-fraught relations with Israel, and many others. In his own remarks, Obama paid tribute to the troops and also appeared to grow emotional at times as he called on them to stay true to their "core principles" and uphold "American values" under a new Commander-in-Chief in President-elect Donald Trump. U.S. service members must respect the rule of law and do their utmost in their duties to avoid civilian casualties, Obama said. "We cannot sacrifice the very freedoms we are fighting for," he said. Any of the accomplishments attributed to him during the course of his presidency -- "they're because of you," Obama said of all those in uniform. "And so, although I recognize that the formalities require me listening to praise directed in large part to me, I want to turn the tables -- I am still Commander-in-Chief, so I get to do what I want to do -- and I want to thank you," Obama said. "Of all the privileges of this office -- and there are many -- I will miss Air Force One, I will miss Marine One -- -- but I can stand before you today and say that there has been no greater privilege, and no greater honor, than serving as the Commander-in-Chief of the greatest military in the history of the world."



PUSH FOR FULL CONCURRENT RECEIPT IS RE-NEWED IN THE 115TH CONGRESS:

MOAA continues to lead the effort to end the disability offset to retired pay and strongly supports a plan to phase out the disability offset for all disabled retired servicemembers, with initial priority for those who were prevented from serving 20 years solely because they became severely disabled in service. Concurrent receipt means to receive both service-earned military retired pay and VA disability compensation. Up until 2001, any retired servicemember who also received VA disability compensation had an amount equal to the VA compensation deducted from his or her military retired pay. As the 115th Congress has been sworn in on Capitol Hill, companion concurrent receipt bills have been introduced in both houses of Congress. In the House, Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.) reintroduced H.R. 333, the Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act, and Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) reintroduced H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act. Both bills essentially seek to change the law and permit eligible retirees with disability ratings less than 50 percent to receive full concurrent receipt.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY OPTIONS GETTING CLEARER:

An advisory committee suggests eligibility restrictions as a solution to the cemetery's capacity problems. Retiree eligibility, active duty requirements, and spatial and fiscal constraints are all topics of discussion for delaying maxing capacity at Arlington National Cemetery, Va. If nothing changes, there won't be space for anyone – let alone those meeting exceptional eligibility standards – within the next few decades. Potential courses of action going forward are taking more solid form. The Arlington National Cemetery Advisory Committee held a public meeting this week to provide an update on burial eligibility recommendations and cemetery capacity forecasts, among other business. The latest report further solidified the likely recommendations the committee will provide to the secretary of the Army. The advisory committee is tasked with finding solutions to the rapidly shrinking available space at the cemetery and suggesting ways to prolong the maximum capacity point as far into the future as possible. The committee has now developed two potential courses of action, which largely fall in line with suggestions from previous reports. Current rules permit anyone with an honorable discharge and with at least one day of active duty service to be interred or inurned at ANC. That's a looser eligibility standard than used for other veteran cemeteries, which can require at least 24 months' service. Both suggested courses of action include a provision to adopt the 24 months' active duty requirement. Further, both potential courses of actions could include changing of eligibility criteria to include only those service members killed in action and/or recipients of the Medal of Honor. However, if approved, those restrictions would not be implemented for another 10 to 20 years. The cemetery is undergoing two expansion projects to add 27 acres, which will be completed next year. Plans underway (but not finalized) are expected to add another 40 acres, to be completed in 2022.

Versatile F-4 Phantoms Making 'Final Flight' for US Military:

The last of thousands of F-4 Phantom jets that have been a workhorse for the U.S. military over five decades are being put to pasture. The Air Force will held a "final flight" retirement ceremony Dec 212, 2016 at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, where the last F-4s are still flying for the U.S. military. The ceremony will celebrate the airplane's rich military history as the jet was a mainstay during the Vietnam War and used for decades for reconnaissance missions and anti-missile electronic jamming. McDonnell Douglas — now part of Boeing Corp. — built more than 5,000 F-4s for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. It first flew in the late 1950s, and production ended in 1985. The last F-4s still flying for the U.S. military took on a different role, serving as aerial targets and test aircraft during Air Force training over the New Mexico desert. The planes are either flown by pilots or remotely as drones by controllers on the ground. They've been used as targets for missiles and also used to test new radars and other missions. But with the retirement this week, the planes will no longer fly and instead be used as ground targets. That the plane stayed in service so long is a testament to a range of roles that the F-4 could handle thanks to its large size, powerful engines and a two-member crew, said Jeff Duford, a National Museum of the Air Force research curator. While other aircraft could handle some of the same missions, "there were none that were as flexible as the F-4," Duford said.



Navy Destroyer Fires Warning Shots at Iranian Vessels:

In the latest incident of high-seas tension between the U.S. and Iran, a Navy destroyer fired a series of warning shots at four Iranian vessels on Sunday after the Islamic Republic's boats closed in at a high rate of speed in the Strait of Hormuz, Fox News confirmed. The USS Mahan tried to order the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard boats to stop via radio communication, but the vessels didn't respond to the request, prompting the destroyer to fire three warning flares, a U.S. defense official said. In addition, a Navy helicopter dropped a smoke float. The Iranian boats sailed within 900 yards of the Mahan, which had been escorting two U.S. ships. In recent days Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps has conducted an annual exercise in the strait simulating maneuvers necessary to shut down the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Sunday's incident was only the most recent Iranian provocation of U.S. ships or aircraft in the region. Among the notable incidents: In late November, an Iranian small boat in the Strait of Hormuz trained a machine gun on a U.S. Navy helicopter. U.S. warships have been targeted by rebels in Yemen who are being supplied and supported by Iran. In September, Iran threatened to shoot down Navy aircraft it said was encroaching on its airspace. In early September, seven Iranian boats harassed a U.S. Navy ship in the Persian Gulf. The first half of 2016 saw 19 "dangerous interactions" with the Iranians, according to a U.S. Navy report. There are currently no U.S. aircraft carriers deployed in the Middle East after the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower returned to Norfolk and the USS George H. W. Bush had its deployment delayed. There is, however, a U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship with helicopters, jets and more than 1,000 marines in the region.

Trump Planning Biggest Fleet Expansion Since Cold War:

With President-elect Donald Trump demanding more ships, the Navy is proposing the biggest shipbuilding boom since the end of the Cold War to meet threats from a resurgent Russia and saber-rattling China. The Navy's 355-ship proposal released last month is even larger than what the Republican Trump had promoted on the campaign trail, providing a potential boost to shipyards that have struggled because budget caps that have limited money funding for ships. At Maine's Bath Iron Works, workers worried about the future want to build more ships but wonder where the billions of dollars will come from. The Navy's revised Force Structure Assessment calls for adding another 47 ships including an aircraft carrier built in Virginia, 16 large surface warships built in Maine and Mississippi, and 18 attack submarines built in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Virginia. It also calls for more amphibious assault ships, expeditionary transfer docks and support ships. In addition to being good for national security, a larger fleet would be better for both the sailors, who'd enjoy shorter deployments, and for the ships, which would have more down time for maintenance, said Matthew Paxton, president of the Shipbuilders Council of America, which represents most of the major Navy shipbuilders. "Russia and China are going to continue to build up their navies," he said. "The complexities aren't going to get any easier. The Navy, more than any of the services, is our forward presence. We're going to need this Navy." Even when Trump takes office, no one envisions a return to the heady days during the Cold War when workers were wiring, welding, grinding, pounding and plumbing ships at a furious pace to meet President Ronald Reagan's audacious goal of a 600-ship Navy. The Navy currently has 274 deployable battle force ships, far short of its old goal of 308 ships. Lawrence J. Korb, a retired naval officer and former assistant defense secretary under Reagan, said the Navy's request isn't realistic unless the Trump administration is willing to take the budget "to levels we've never seen."