



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter,

Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)

WEBSITE: www.2-1-196th.com

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Volume 10

“A Soldier Once And Always”

July 2020

Commanders Corner: Greetings to all my 2/1 Infantry Brothers and to all members that served with our sister units. June has come and it appears that our country is opening up some but unfortunately the virus continues to cause many problems through many areas of the country. I blame much of the problems on our young people who have never taken the virus seriously. Even during the beginning of the lockdown in March and April I would see many groups of young people who lockout of schools roaming about in groups with no face mask. Today I visited the grocery store to pick up some items and face mask are required but once I got inside I noted many people with no mask and they tended to be young people. I asked the manager why they were not enforcing the mask rule and he replied that they try but it's mostly impossible.



The last several weeks with the protesting and riots have been very disappointing in that rules and laws have been abandoned by our political leaders and in fact they have encouraged the mayhem. Unfortunately the last few weeks have brought back many bad memories of what we all faced as we returned from Vietnam and faced the Vietnam Riots and unrest and I find those days to mirror what we came home to but maybe for different reasons. The political leaders at that time did very little also so I am not too optimistic that things will be different now. It took our great country years to recover then and I can only hope it will be better this time around.

Looking forward we have the 4th of July coming up and I hope you all will be able to celebrate the independence of our country with your family and reflect how you have contributed to that independence with your many sacrifices. Most celebrations where I live have been cancelled but it allows us more time with our loved ones who are the most important. I will be flying many American flags at our home.

Again I hope this month's newsletter finds everyone well. Please don't forget that Rich can always use any input or news that you might want to share. Also if there are any suggestions that you might have on newsletter content Please give Rich feedback. I think he does a great job but I am sure that he would appreciate your feedback and suggestions.

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

Dwight Sypolt.

Commander

One minute your 21, staying up all night drinking beer, eating pizza and doing sketchy stuff just for fun; Then... in the blink of an eye your 60 years old drinking water, eating kale and you can't do sketchy stuff because you wrenched a muscle while putting on your socks.

From H Duckworth O'Brien's "A Grunt's Life":
Grenadier: A soldier who fires a M-79 grenade launcher. It fires a single shot 40 mm High Explosive or flechette round. Their rotation arms the projectile after travelling at least 98 feet. Not much of a direct fire, close-up defensive weapon unless you fired it nearly vertical. Because of it's distinctive "bloop" sound when fired, it was known as The Thumper or Blooper. A good grenadier could drop a round in a bunker at over 400 yards. Real handy at keeping the Cong's head down when crossing an open paddy.

Chapter Activities: Due to COVID-19 there is nothing to report concerning the 2/1 Infantry Chapter ADVA. Everything has been shut down all over the country. It is difficult to accumulate items for our Newsletter when the entire nation has been idled. As your Editor, I would like to hear from you with activities from your perspective. There are some interesting stories that you can relate from your vast experiences from your time in the service or from your dealings with fellow Chapter members. Please send them to me via email at rheroux1@nc.rr.com. Don't forget there is a face book page devoted to our Chapter. This is a wonderful way of keeping in touch with other members of the Chapter. The address for this activity is www.facebook.com/2-1-196th. Please go into the page and "like" it so that it will be easy to recover whenever you wish to look for future items. Chuck Holdaway and I have put items of interest in this media as often as we get something that we feel would be of interest.

What was the cost for the National Guard to deploy in D.C.?:

The deployment of thousands of National Guard troops in response to protests on the streets of Washington, endorsed by President Donald Trump and much criticized by the city's mayor, cost the federal government \$2.6 million per day at its peak. A Reuters analysis of National Guard data showed that over the course of a week starting June 1, the deployments cost about \$14.5 million. At the peak, about 1,200 D.C. National Guard troops and 3,900 from other states were sent to the capital to back law enforcement during demonstrations that erupted over the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man who died in Minneapolis police custody after being pinned beneath an officer's knee for nearly nine minutes. Blazes erupted near the White House on May 31 as protests flared up in the district. Democratic U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen called Trump's use of states' National Guard troops against people peacefully protesting "an affront to our Constitution" and an example of Republicans undermining the District of Columbia's right to self-governance.

My wife and I went grocery shopping recently with masks. Came home and took off masks; brought home the wrong wife. Stay Alert people!

The National Army Museum will be the first and only to tell the 245-year history of the U.S. Army in its entirety. Construction in the Museum has continued with a focus on completing the installation of the exhibits, the Veterans' Hall, Medal of Honor Garden, and Café Terrace. All workers and contractors are following the rules and regulations outlined by the CDC and the Governor of Virginia. As you may know, the government considers construction to be an essential service, as it helps keep our country and our economy on the move. Opening date for the Museum has been placed on hold because of COVID-19. Stay tuned for a new date TBA,

Pres. Trump taps retired general and Fox News regular as Pentagon policy chief: President Donald Trump plans to nominate retired Army brigadier general, author and Fox News regular Anthony Tata to be the Pentagon's policy chief, the White House announced recently. Tata would succeed John Rood, who was ousted as undersecretary for policy in February after being viewed as insufficiently loyal to Trump. The post has been filled on an acting basis by James Anderson. If confirmed by the Senate, Tata would take over the Pentagon's policy shop at a turbulent time for Pentagon. The military has been wracked by both the coronavirus pandemic and is also grappling with racial issues amid nationwide protests. Defense Secretary Mark Esper also clashed with Trump over whether to deploy active-duty troops to intervene in the protests. Tata, meanwhile, is a major Trump defender and is the author of the "Threat" war novel series. Tata served as North Carolina transportation secretary from 2013 to 2015 under Republican Gov. Pat McCrory. Tata also weighed a bid for Congress.

Air Force pilot is the first Woman to fly the F-35 in Combat: Air Force Capt. Emily "Banzai" Thompson had never conducted a combat sortie before deploying to Al Dhafra Air Force base in the United Arab Emirates. Now, she is the first woman to ever fly the F-35A Lightning II in combat. "This is my first deployment ... so for me it was a pretty big deal, the first combat sortie for me. ... Of course being the first female, it's a pretty big honor," Thompson, who is assigned to the 388th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base. "There's a lot of females who have come before me and there's a lot of females already flying combat sorties in other platforms," Thompson said. "So just to be the person who gets that honor, that first, it just meant a lot." It's unclear where or when the combat sortie took place, but airmen and F-35s from the 388th and 419th Fighter Wings at Hill Air Force Base deployed to Al Dhafra on May 20. The 388th Fighter Wing did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Air Force Times. Thompson originally started her Air Force career as an F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot before moving to F-35s. Although there are only a few number of female F-35 pilots, Thompson remains optimistic about what's next for women flying the fighter jets.

Bill would create commemorative coin in support of National WWII Memorial: A Bill was introduced to authorize the U.S. Treasury to mint coins to contribute to maintenance and programming at the National WWII Memorial. The National World War II Commemorative Coin Act, would establish commemorative coins representing the sacrifice and commitment of WWII veterans. All proceeds from the sale of the coins would go to the Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends), a non-profit that helps maintain the memorial and provides educational programming and commemorations throughout the year.

More troops, Bigger Paychecks and Housing Improvements in Senate Military Budget Policy Plan: The military would see a 3 percent pay bump next year, an increase in the overall number of troops serving and new mandates on improving family housing under a \$740.5 billion budget policy plan approved by a key Senate panel this week. The measure, which still faces a long congressional path to becoming law, also includes several provisions related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the continuing nationwide protests related to racial inequality. Senate defense lawmakers on Thursday praised their draft of the annual defense authorization bill as an important bipartisan step forward for continued military investment and reform. If it survives negotiations in coming months, the final bill will mark the 60th consecutive year Congress has passed the legislation, an unusual mark of cooperation in an increasingly politically divided environment. "This bill is, to its core, bipartisan, reflecting equal input from Republicans and Democrats alike," said Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe, R-Okla. "Building on the last two years, this year's NDAA charts a decisive course of action to implement the National Defense Strategy, regain a credible military deterrent, and ultimately achieve a lasting peace."

Air Force Gen. Charles Brown becomes first African American Service Chief: Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. was confirmed Tuesday as the 22nd Air Force chief and the first African American to be the top officer of a military service. In announcing the unanimous Senate vote of 98-0, Vice President Mike Pence called Brown's nomination, and now confirmation, historic. Brown, known as C.Q., is now the commander of U.S. Air Forces Pacific. He is replacing Gen. David Goldfein, who is expected to retire in the summer. The confirmation comes as demonstrators across the United States have held protests against systemic racism and police brutality. Protests in all 50 states and in Washington, D.C., were sparked by the May 25 death of a handcuffed black man, George Floyd, by a Minneapolis police officer, who has since been fired and charged with second-degree murder. In a video posted to Facebook on Friday, Brown poignantly described his thoughts about the recent events following the death of Floyd. He described how he was often the only African American in his squadron, and as a senior officer the only African American in the room. "I'm thinking about how my nomination provides some hope but also comes with a heavy burden. I can't fix centuries of racism in our country, nor can I fix decades of discrimination that may have impacted members of our Air Force," he said in the video.



Second lady Karen Pence, a Marine mom, takes key role in Veterans Suicide Prevention Effort: Second lady Karen Pence believes one way for military families to get through their many challenges and stresses is to start talking about the problems more, not less. "With veterans, we want them to be able to talk about their struggles and sometimes they can't," said Pence, whose son is a pilot in the Marine Corps. "Sometimes they're dealing with trauma that damages the brain. Sometimes they just don't know how to tell people they're struggling. "But help is out there." Pence has served as the ambassador to the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) task force, a 15-month project to find new solutions for veterans' mental health and suicide challenges.

CMSgt JoAnne Bass to become first woman to serve as chief master sergeant of the Air Force:

Chief Master Sgt. JoAnne Bass, the current command chief for Second Air Force, has been selected to be the next chief master sergeant of the Air Force. Bass will become the 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the service said Friday. She will be the first woman to serve as the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer in any of the United States military services, though a woman previously served as the chief enlisted advisor for the National Guard Bureau. She will succeed current Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth Wright, who is scheduled to retire Aug. 14. “I’m honored and humbled to be selected as the 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force and follow in the footsteps of some of the best leaders our Air Force has ever known,” Bass said in the release. “The history of the moment isn’t lost on me; I’m just ready to get after it. And I’m extremely grateful for and proud of my family and friends who helped me along the way.” The Air Force’s next chief of staff, Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown, said he picked her because she has the right skills, temperament and experience, and because her leadership style matches his. Brown will also officially become chief of staff in August. The Air Force said Bass was the “consensus choice” out of more than a dozen finalists from across the service. “I could not be more excited to work side-by-side with Chief Bass,” Brown said in a release. “She has unique skills that will help us both lead the total force and live up to the high expectations of our airmen.”



F-35 pilots are the first to graduate from TOPGUN:

The first F-35C Lightning II pilots have graduated from the Navy Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor course — best known as TOPGUN — and are back in the fleet training others, according to the Navy. Marine Corps Maj. Derek Heinz, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 125, the “Rough Raiders,” and Navy Lt. William Goodwin III, assigned to the VFA-147 “Argonauts,” graduated in May from TOPGUN at the Naval Aviation War fighting Development Center at Naval Air Station Fallon in Nevada. The Navy said that all F-35C tactics instructors have undergone the 13-week TOPGUN course — but Heinz and Goodwin are the first who were already flying the F-35 to graduate, using a syllabus tailored for F-35C integrated operations. “Our focus on the students that go through TOPGUN is not limited to teaching them the tactics, techniques and procedures that are required for them to successfully employ their aircraft, integrated into a larger force,” said Cmdr. Timothy Myers, head of the TOPGUN Department at the war fighting center, in a Navy news release. “We are also in the business of teaching our graduates how to instruct other students, so that when they go back to the Fleet, they are able to instruct at a very high level.”

Day is Over; Night has come. Today is gone, what’s done is done. Embrace your dreams through the night. Tomorrow will come with a brand New Light.

First Time in Decades, Female Soldier Completes Final Phase of Special Forces Training:

A female National Guard soldier has successfully completed the final stage of the Army Special Forces Qualification Course (Q Course), but she's not a Green Beret yet. The soldier finished the grueling three-week evaluation known as Robin Sage this week, but she is still in the final counseling phase, in which she and other students receive evaluations from course staff, Lt. Col. Loren Bymer, spokesman for U.S. Army Special Operations Command, told Military.com recently. She is not a graduate yet," Bymer said. "She is still a student in the course, and until she graduates, she is not a Green Beret." It's unclear when the counseling phase will be complete. The current female candidate is not the only woman, however, to have made it this far in Green Beret training. Then-Capt. Kathleen Wilder previously made it through the Q Course in the 1980s, but was not allowed to graduate with the rest of the students, Bymer said. USASOC would not provide any details about the soldier's identity. "We do not release information about Special Forces candidates or recent graduates due to operational and personal security reasons," Bymer said. The 53-week Q Course is made up of six phases and includes training in small-unit tactics, combat marksmanship, advanced Special Forces tactics, language training and unconventional warfare.

COVID-19 Survey Reveals Concerns over Health, Well-Being and Economy:

Hundreds of veterans throughout the nation called on The American Legion for direct assistance after participating in a COVID-19 survey between mid-April and June 15. Nearly 24,000 took the survey — 95.4% veterans — indicating their concerns over the pandemic, their well-being as a result of it and economic strains it has placed on them. Nearly 30% indicated that the pandemic had caused a major impact in their lives, and over 38% said stay-at-home orders had negatively affected their emotional well-being. The Buddy Check program proved to be on target for veterans, 40.58% of whom reported that communication with friends and family is the most important resource to address their emotional well-being. Physical activity was second among the choices at 25.26%. While most veterans who responded to the survey said they receive health care from primary physicians, 32.84% said they were “fully confident” and 57.79% were “somewhat confident” with VA’s response to the crisis. “VA has tackled this difficult situation as well or better than any other health-care providers,” American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford said. “And we are not surprised. We all share in the challenge to deliver the best care anywhere and know that VA is working hard to set a standard for all health-care operations. As we deal with this historic time as a nation, The American Legion stands strong in support of all who provide care for our nation’s veterans and citizens.” The economy and personal financial effect of the pandemic weighed on the minds of the respondents. The threat the coronavirus presents to the U.S. economy was rated as “large” by 87.05% and over 76% indicated the pandemic presents “some threat” or a “large threat” to their personal financial situation. A nearly equal percentage (35.6%) of respondents indicated they were “very concerned” about contracting the coronavirus as well as their ability to buy groceries because of it.

**LZ Ross
1968-1969**



What does moving American troops out of Germany mean? After more than a year of thinly-veiled threats to start pulling U.S. troops out of Germany unless Berlin increases its defense spending, President Donald Trump appears to be proceeding with a hardball approach, planning to cut the U.S. military contingent by more than 25% — 50,000 including civilian Department of Defense employees — and the plan Trump reportedly signed off on last week envisions reducing active-duty personnel to 25,000 by September, with further cuts possible. But as details of the still-unannounced plan trickle out, there’s growing concerns it will do more to harm the U.S.’s own global military readiness and the NATO alliance than punish Germany. The decision was not discussed with Germany or other NATO members, and Congress was not officially informed — prompting a letter from 22 Republican members of the House Armed Services Committee urging a rethink. “The threats posed by Russia have not lessened, and we believe that signs of a weakened U.S. commitment to NATO will encourage further Russian aggression and opportunism,” Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas wrote in a letter to Trump with his colleagues. Sen. Jack Reed, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, slammed Trump’s move as “another favor” to Russian President Vladimir Putin. But Richard Grenell, who resigned as U.S. ambassador to Germany two weeks ago, told Germany’s Bild newspaper that “nobody should be surprised that Donald Trump is withdrawing troops.” “Donald Trump was very clear we want to bring troops home,” he said, adding: “there’s still going to be 25,000 American troops in Germany.”

Pentagon to Return largest Number of Allied Troops' Remains from Korean War: The U.S. will return the largest number of South Korean soldiers missing from the Korean War so far after years of forensic investigation of the unidentified remains that were handed over to the Pentagon by North Korea. The repatriation ceremony in Hawaii for 147 South Korean soldiers who were lost between 1950 to 1953, including some who can now be identified through DNA, marks the largest such effort to date. “This is a monumental, historic event between the United States government and Republic of Korea,” Rear Adm. Darius Banaji, deputy director for operations at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, said in a recent interview. “It gives you chills to think about it,” he added. The remains came from a series of boxes that North Korea turned over, mostly recently in 2018. They were identified by the DPAA lab and scientists from South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense Agency for KIA Recovery and Identification. “In some cases, [the South Koreans] have very, very compelling DNA matches already,” said lab director John Byrd. So far, 62 Americans have also been identified from the sets of remains from North Korea. 7,582 U.S. troops are still listed as missing from the conflict. The Pentagon agency is tracking more than 82,000 U.S. military personnel from World War II, Korea, the Vietnam War, the Cold War and other modern conflicts. Some of its biggest projects include identifying the 388 sailors who were killed aboard the USS Oklahoma when it was sunk in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941; Marines recovered from the island of Tarawa in the Pacific or exhumed from unknown graves in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii where they were buried after the 1943 battle; and field work at the Cabanatuan prisoner of war camp in the Philippines, where more than 1,000 American military and civilian personnel were executed and buried in mass graves in World War II. But the cases that present some of the biggest challenges — logistically, scientifically and politically — are from the Korean War, where thousands of American and allied troops fighting under the United Nations were lost in large land battles in what is now communist North Korea, which remains closed off to search teams.

Trump Threatens 10 Years in Prison for Protesters toppling Statues, citing Veterans Memorial Protections: President Donald Trump threatened a decade of jail time for protesters defacing and toppling statues on federal lands, citing a little known law designed to punish vandalism at American veteran cemeteries. Trump tweeted that he had authorized federal officials to “arrest anyone who vandalizes or destroys any monument, statue or other such federal property in the U.S. with up to 10 years in prison, per the Veterans’ Memorial Preservation Act, or such other laws that may be pertinent.” But no presidential authorization is necessary. The Veterans’ Memorial Preservation Act allows for fines and a prison term of up to 10 years for “attempts to injure or destroy, any structure, plaque, statue, or other monument on public property commemorating the service of any person or persons in the armed forces of the United States.” The memorial preservation act is already existing regulation, and does not need any special authorization to be enforced. Other federal laws also prohibit trespassing and vandalism on federal lands, although they do not specifically focus on memorials and grave sites. Protesters in recent weeks have also been charged with local crimes related to attacks on the statues, including disobeying police orders and unlawful assembly.

Far-Right Groups continue to Attract Troops and Veterans: As protesters have taken to the streets to call for racial justice and police reform, in the wake of the alleged murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, another movement has made headlines for all the wrong reasons. Its name is Boogaloo. Two weeks after the FBI arrested an Army reservist and two veterans, one of the Navy and the other the Air Force, for planning to incite violence at a Las Vegas protest, an active-duty airman shot and killed a federal security officer in Oakland, California. All four, according to their online activity, identified with the far-right group, which is loosely tied to anti-government and white-supremacist beliefs, but mostly advocates for an armed insurrection— of whatever kind— in general. Though largely brushed off by veterans and service members as a group of has-beens and wannabes, the Boogaloo archetype that emerged in memes in the past decade has taken hold in the violent-extremist corners of the internet. In both the white-power and anti-government “communities, ‘boogaloo’ was frequently associated with racist violence and, in many cases, was an explicit call for race war,” according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. “Today the term is regularly deployed by white nationalists and neo-Nazis who want to see society descend into chaos so that they can come to power and build a new fascist state.” But the movement, as it were, is still disparate and diffuse. And it’s one of several quasi-groups that have sparked investigations in the military. “The challenge is, it’s a huge melting pot of different individuals without a clear-cut ideology,” Seth Jones, a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told Military Times in a Monday phone interview. “People are associating with it that have different short- and long-term objectives. And that’s the problem for those of us that write about it.” Jones and two co-authors released a report June 17, “The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States,” the result of a compilation of data that includes far-right, far-left, religious and other extremist groups. Following multiple hearings on the issue, Congress has made a move: proposing in the latest House version of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act bill that DoD start tracking and reporting white supremacist activity in the military, in addition to other extremist behavior or criminal gang affiliations.

Trust in VA Now at an All-Time High, VA Says: The level of trust veterans have in the medical care they receive at the Department of Veterans Affairs has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic, averaging nearly 90% for the first time since the department began soliciting feedback in late 2017. In outpatient surveys taken following appointments for health services, veterans' trust in care increased 5% during the past three years, from an 84.9% satisfaction rate in the fourth quarter of 2017 to 89% through the end of March. The figures were based on more than four million responses from veterans, according to the VA. Of those millions of veterans who have responded since 2017, 3.5 million said they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they trusted their health care. President Trump rolls out a broad strategy to prevent veteran suicides, an epidemic that has remained stubbornly persistent over three administrations. The 10-point road map includes an interagency effort that brings in advocacy groups and nonprofits for a holistic approach, according to the plan, and also aims to promote community-based suicide prevention programs. Trump mandated the initiative in March 2019 with an executive order, but the planned release for March this year was delayed by the coronavirus crisis. "Ending the tragedy of veteran suicide demands bold action at every level of society," Trump said in an address at the White House, describing the crisis as a "grave tragedy." At least 20 veterans and service members die by suicide each day, according to a recent report by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Second lady Karen Pence and U.S. Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams have been tapped as ambassadors for the effort, which is called the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide, or PREVENTS. While some factors of suicide are understood, like financial issues or exposure to trauma, other reasons and data points remain elusive, officials said, and much of the effort will focus on data collection and analysis. "There is so much we don't know" about veteran suicide, a senior administration official said. Trump echoed those remarks, saying "nobody quite understands" the problem. Another thrust of the effort is collaboration with key veterans and military service organizations, which the Trump administration hopes will amplify resources and other information to veterans and family members. Other administrations have focused on veteran suicide, but the Trump administration's is the largest such push, said Chanin Nuntavong, executive director of the American Legion, the country's largest veterans service group. The effort could help destigmatize conversation around mental health inside and outside the veteran community, he said. "I'm glad this has become a national issue," Nuntavong said. Barbara Van Dahlen, a longtime veterans mental health advocate, was appointed to lead the task force last year. Veteran suicide was also a problem for the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations following sustained combat in Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions that have been the sites of counterterrorism missions. While focus on newer veterans of mental health resources has been a fixture at VA, the agency has found that older veterans die by greater numbers. Veterans aged 55-74 had the highest number of suicides in 2017, more than any other demographic, according to a VA report released last year. Veterans aged 18-34 died by suicide at higher rates, the report found.



VA's protective equipment supplies inadequate for second wave of coronavirus, officials warn:

Veterans Affairs' top health official said the current 30-day supply of personal protective equipment is about half what he wants it to be and about five months less than what will be needed if the coronavirus pandemic has a second wave in the fall. "A surge (this fall) is a complete unknown," said Dr. Richard Stone, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, during a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing Tuesday on the department's supply chain challenges. "All we have to go by is what happened in the fall of 1918 with the influenza pandemic where the second wave had a dramatically greater mortality than the first wave." Despite those problems, however, Stone said he believes the department's response to the pandemic this spring was laudable, and insisted that increased worldwide demand on medical masks, gowns and gloves has not put any employees in danger. "No facility at VA ever ran out of protective equipment, and we are taking steps to ensure that we never risk exhaustion of our supplies and future disasters," he said. "We are working diligently to not only prepare for a potential second wave of COVID-19, but also for any other disaster the nation might face."

Restrictions lifted on Military Honors at National Cemeteries:

The solemn strains of taps may now echo again among the marble headstones at Omaha National Cemetery and dozens of other federal military burial grounds. The Department of Veterans Affairs has lifted restrictions that halted committal services and the rendering of military honors at its 143 cemeteries since March 23. The restrictions were imposed as a measure to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. "We believe we have a robust set of measures in place that will allow us to conduct committal and memorial services while protecting the health and safety of veterans, their families and our team members who serve them," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said in a statement. The solemn strains of taps may now echo again among the marble headstones at Omaha National Cemetery and dozens of other federal military burial grounds. The Department of Veterans Affairs has lifted restrictions that halted committal services and the rendering of military honors at its 143 cemeteries since March 23. The restrictions were imposed as a measure to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. "We believe we have a robust set of measures in place that will allow us to conduct committal and memorial services while protecting the health and safety of veterans, their families and our team members who serve them," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said in a statement.

Active Coronavirus cases among VA patients jump 36 percent in a week:

Despite a 36 percent increase in active coronavirus cases among Veterans Affairs patients in the last week ending June 20, 2020, department officials continue to insist the rise should not raise concerns among veterans or public health expert VA officials reported 2,332 active cases of the fast-spreading illness among patients at 129 department medical centers across the country. That's up more than 500 cases in the last week alone, and 68 percent higher than the department's low of 1,390 active cases at the end of May. VA press secretary Christina Noel said that those figures "are not the best measure of the department's performance fighting COVID-19, because more testing could also lead to higher case counts, including among those who lack symptoms." "The best measure of how COVID-19 is affecting VA patients is the number of hospitalizations, which are steady," she said. In March the hospitalization rate was 38 percent. In April, May and June, that number has been below 24 percent.