



**THE KOREAN WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION, INC.  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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**MONTHLY REPORTS FOR NOVEMBER 2016**

The following from the Executive Director of the Korean War Veterans Association is given for the month of November 2016.

1. **MEMBERSHIP & RECRUITMENT REPORT:** Submitted by Mr. John “Sonny” Edwards - As of 11-29-16

New members this Month 44  
New members last year 69  
New members TYTD 637  
New members LYTD 697  
Active members LYTD 13830  
Active members TYTD 13142  
Decrease 688  
Deceased comrades TYTD 1198 Avg109/per Month

Departments with 4 plus new members past 30 days  
CA-6 FL-8 PA-5 IL-4 TX-4

2. **HOLIDAY SEASON 2016: MILITARY SHIPPING DEADLINES**

For mail addressed to/from:

**APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 090-092**

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

**APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIP 093**

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: None
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec.2
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

**APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 094-098**

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9

- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

### **APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIP 340**

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

### **APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 962 - 966**

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 16
- First-Class and Priority Mail (letters/cards and packages): Dec. 9
- Parcel/Airlift Mail: Dec. 2
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 25
- Standard Post Mail: Nov. 7

### **Domestic Mail (any U.S. address that is not an APO/FPO)**

- Priority Express Mail Military Service: Dec. 23
- First-Class: Dec. 20
- Priority Mail: Dec. 21
- USPS Retail Ground: Dec. 15

Priority Express Mail Military Service (PEMMS) is available from selected military post offices. If mailing to an APO/FPO/DPO address, check with your local post office to determine if PEMMS service is available and specific delivery service standards.

Space Available Mail (SAM) refers to parcels mailed to APO/FPO addresses at parcel post rates first transported domestically by surface, then to overseas destinations by air on a space available basis. The maximum weight and size limits are 15 pounds and 60 inches in length and girth combined. From overseas locations, items mailed at Standard Post rates are sent to CONUS by air on a space available basis. The maximum weight and size limits are 70 pounds and 130 inches in length and girth combined.

It is recommended customers check with local civilian or military post offices for information regarding size restrictions and customs declaration form requirements. Customers are advised mailing restrictions apply and some items cannot be mailed. Examples of non-mailable items are: alcohol, switchblade knives, pornography, controlled substances, and explosive or incendiary devices. If in doubt, contact your local civilian or military post office.

As a final note, customers should ensure articles are packaged properly for mailing and packages do not display markings related to any type of hazardous material, such as bleach, alcohol, or cleaning fluids. Parcels found by U.S. Postal Service with such markings or labels on the outside of the box will not be processed.

[For more information see the Military Postal Service Agency website](#) or the [U.S. Postal Service website](#).

### 3. MESSAGE FROM JONGWOO HAN - PRESIDENT, KOREAN WAR LEGACY FOUNDATION



Jongwoo Han  
President, Korean War Legacy Foundation  
Korean Peninsula Affairs Center (KPAC)  
The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs  
Syracuse University

The Korean War fundamentally transformed the destiny of the Korean nation. What awaited Koreans, liberated after 35 years of the most atrocious form of colonial rule by Japan in 1945, were roads that had never been taken by them before: the road of capitalistic democracy with the United States for Koreans in the South and the road of communism with the U.S.S.R. for Koreans in the North. Tracing back through the histories of American foreign policymakers, few were at all concerned with the state of Korea before or during WWII. After the Truman administration abandoned the peninsula by demobilizing troops overseas, it was only following the North Koreans' attack across the 38th parallel that the U.S. decided to return.

Political entanglement in future Asian conflicts, however, was not totally unwanted by American foreign policymakers. While avoiding the Korean Peninsula was part of their aims to provide relief to the American people post-WWII, it was a long-term goal to maintain some involvement in Asia as a way to stifle the spread of Soviet ideology.

Immediately following the end of WWII, U.S. foreign policy in relation to the Korean Peninsula was highly inconsistent and mismanaged. Nevertheless, an invaluable, lasting commitment was eventually made by the American people. The troops sent to the peninsula were young, innocent, American men and women who risked their lives to save a people they never met, a culture they did not understand, in a place they could not even locate on the map until their ships docked at the ports of Pusan and Inchon. The contemporary bilateral relationship between South Korea and the U.S. sprang out of the anomaly of international politics following WWII, but the lasting bond forged between them exists because of these veterans. Without them, South Korea's success as the most vibrant economy and democracy in Asia would have been impossible.

From this perspective, to simply reference the Korean War as a "turning point" in American history would be an understatement. The events that took place on the Korean Peninsula immediately after 1945 defined an era of global interaction, and led to the bifurcation of the world into two spheres. If one really considers the scale and impact of the Korean War, calling it simply the "Korean Conflict" is not only a misnomer, but an insult to those who lost their lives on the Korean Peninsula during that time.

We diminish the struggles of the veterans and civilians who perished in the war's wake by refusing to recall history accurately. The Korean War was one of the most vicious, dreadful wars fought in the 20th century. For example, compared to American conduct in the Pacific theater during WWII, more napalm was dropped on the Korean Peninsula during the Korean War than on Japan—a country that attacked U.S. soil—during World War II. There are other examples that could be given as well, but from this fact alone it is clear that American military action on the Korea Peninsula was not limited.

The Korean War Veterans Digital Memorial (KWVDM) strives to remember the Korean War the most authentic way possible: by interviewing, archiving, and recording the first-hand experiences, original artifacts, and personal memories of Korean War Veterans (KWVs). The KWVDM is both a memorial and a limitless museum for Korean War Veterans to share their personal stories and experiences uncensored with the world. The database is completely searchable, meaning it is easy for new users to access specific artifacts or interviews by searching keywords. Beginning with the Korean War Veterans Association Central New York Chapter #105, Inc., the KWVDM has already collected 37 interviews (32 KWVs, 4 spouses, 1 civilian) and 1,262 metadated artifacts from the same 32 KWVs and their families. The KWVDM is already growing nationally, and aspires to spread internationally (seeking out veterans from UN member states that committed troops) if possible.

The ultimate goal of the KWVDM, however, is not just to digitalize the past, but to engage the younger generation and prevent the Korean War from becoming a truly forgotten war. Taking advantage of the fact that there are still more than 2 million KWVs left in the U.S., the KWVDM will host a Youth Program and Internship program for middle school through college level students that will connect them with a veteran in their area. Through this program, veterans will mentor students about the war and lessons they took away from their experience—which students will put to use for projects during their program—and students will utilize the KWVDM to upload more of their veteran’s information or artifacts online.

We must preserve this part of history because it is by no means merely a blip on the radar screen of the Cold War, but an important part of our contemporary history. From 1950-1953, the Korean Peninsula saw more than 2.5 million civilians perished, 54,000 American soldiers sacrificed, up to 500,000 opposition forces lost, and more than 3 million Koreans turned into refugees. By the war’s end, territory gained by the U.S. and South Korea was minimal and the ceasefire treaty holding the 38th parallel remains today. Koreans, veterans, and Americans are left asking, how much longer must the North and South tread down their two predestined roads before they can meet again? For Koreans and Americans on the peninsula, the war continues.

I want to thank all members of the Korean War Veterans Association Central New York Chapter #105, Inc., for their enthusiastic support and participation in this pilot project, and thanks to my project team members for their dedication to collect, arrange, manage, and present historical data of KWVs, as well as construct the website—with a special thanks to my colleague, Professor Yoo Seong-joon of Sejong University for his leadership.

Finally, I want to especially recognize the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs of Republic of Korea for its decision to support this pilot project financially. Also, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude toward CEO Park Byeong Yeop of Pantech Co., Ltd for his gracious donation to the Korean Peninsula Affairs Center of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, which has been an important contribution to the completion of this digital memorial. In next 5 years, the KWVDM will be enriched with more interviews and artifacts from KWVs in other states and countries, and I am confident that this will be the best way to honor our past, to preserve historical data, and to educate our future generations with the lessons learned from the Korean War.

4. **AMBASSADOR FOR PEACE MEDAL PRESENTATION:**

The Embassy has been backlogged with the number of requests for the Ambassador for Peace Medal. This has caused a longer delay in processing the medal for Korean War Veterans. We will stay on top of this issue and hope to have all requests for the medal processed in a timely manner.

5. **FREE FLU SHOTS:** From now through March 31, 2017, all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system can receive free flu shots at any Walgreens or Duane Reade pharmacy. The joint outreach health initiative is designed to help serve veterans closer to where they reside. Veterans must bring their VA identification cards with them, as well as another photo ID, and complete a short four-question application, which will be used to automatically update their VA Electronic Health Records. No appointments are necessary.

6. **THESE MEDICINES OFTEN SEND AMERICANS TO THE ER** An estimated 1 in 250 Americans lands in the hospital emergency department each year because of a medication-related reaction or problem, a new federal study finds. Among adults 65 and older, the rate is about one in 100, the study authors said. Remarkably, the medicines causing the most trouble haven’t changed in a decade, the researchers noted. Blood thinners, diabetes medicines and antibiotics top the list. These drugs accounted for 47 percent of emergency department visits for adverse drug events in 2013 and 2014, according to the analysis. Among older adults, blood thinners, diabetes medicines and opioid painkillers are implicated in nearly 60 percent of emergency department visits for adverse drug events. “The same drugs are causing the most problems,” said study co-author Dr. Daniel Budnitz. The study doesn’t tease out what went wrong. The reasons likely vary from one drug to the next, said Budnitz, director of the medication safety program at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People on the blood thinner warfarin (Coumadin), for example, must have their blood levels checked regularly due to the major risk of internal bleeding. Problems arise when there is insufficient monitoring or dose adjustment of these so-called anticoagulants, or when drug interactions occur, Budnitz explained. Diabetic patients taking insulin run into trouble when their blood-sugar levels fall too

low, he added. If they forget to eat or accidentally administer the wrong dose, they can pass out, fall and break a hip, he said. “It’s hard, often, to do the right thing every single time,” Budnitz said.

While medication safety has improved in hospitals, reducing harm from the medicines people take outside of the hospital remains a challenge, the study authors noted. Ninety percent of U.S. prescription spending occurs in outpatient settings, they said. Older patients often have multiple health conditions requiring complex medication regimens prescribed by different clinicians. This makes them particularly vulnerable, the study suggests.

Illness such as diabetes and heart disease become more common with age and are treated with drugs commonly linked to emergency department visits, Budnitz explained. Also, “having chronic illnesses can make adverse events more serious when they do occur,” he said. Michael Cohen, president of the nonprofit Institute for Safe Medication Practices, said it’s important to document trends in adverse drug events. “They’ve been focusing on opioids, anticoagulants and antidiabetic drugs like insulin or the oral drugs that people take because these are the ones that are most likely to harm people,” Cohen said. Budnitz, along with study lead author Nadine Shehab of the CDC and colleagues, examined data involving more than 42,000 emergency department visits in 2013 and 2014.

These cases involved prescription or over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements, homeopathic products or vaccines identified as the reason for the visit. Adverse drug events included allergic reactions to medicines, taking too much medication, or a child’s accidental ingestion of a medicine.

Twenty-seven percent of trips to the ER for drug-related reactions and other health problems were serious enough to require hospitalization, the researchers found. Roughly one-third of visits to the emergency department for adverse drug events occurred among adults 65 and older in 2013-2014, versus one-quarter in 2005-2006. Older adults also had the highest hospitalization rates. Among kids, antibiotics accounted for 56 percent of emergency visits for adverse drug events among children 5 years and under. For kids ages 6 to 19, antibiotics were the most common drugs followed by antipsychotic drugs (4.5 percent), often prescribed for children with disruptive behaviors, the researchers reported. Overall, an estimated 1.3 million emergency department visits for adverse drug events occurred each year of the two-year study period, Budnitz said. That’s up from about 700,000 visits per year in 2005 and 2006, he said. But “it’s hard to say that the rate changed or didn’t change” because the research team wasn’t able to study how much more these medicines are being used, he explained. Budnitz said new Medicare payment incentives may help reduce future adverse events by encouraging doctors to perform specific requirements, such as having patients on blood thinners participate in anticoagulation management programs. Results of the government-funded study were published Nov. 22 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Dr. Chad Kessler, of the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center in North Carolina, said collaboration is key to reducing these adverse events.

“When administrators, physicians and other health care personnel as well as the public recognize how large a problem this is, only then can we take the needed steps to remedy this,” said Kessler, co-author of an editorial accompanying the study.

## 7. **VA AND SOCIAL SECURITY PARTNER TO SPEED-UP DISABILITY DECISIONS FOR VETERANS**

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) launched a new Health IT initiative that enables VA to share medical records electronically with social security disability processors. This secure process will save time and money resulting in better service for Veterans and dependents who apply for social security disability benefits. The SSA requests nearly 15 million medical records from health care organizations yearly to make medical decisions on about three million disability claims. For decades, SSA obtained medical records through a manual process. This new national initiative puts in place an automated process to obtain Veterans’ medical records entirely electronically. “VA’s partnership with Social Security will ultimately improve the quality of life for Veterans and their dependents by enabling Veterans to share their health information within a safe and secure health-related consumer application,” said Dr. David Shulkin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. The joint venture is expected to significantly speed up social security disability decisions, utilizing VA’s [VLER Health Exchange](#) under the [Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record](#) (VLER) Program. The VLER Health Exchange gives VA and participating community providers the ability to retrieve Veterans’ health information from each other for the purpose of treatment. Currently, VLER Health Exchange shares health data with over 79 community health care partners, representing 775 Hospitals,

427 Federally Qualified Health Centers, 142 Nursing Homes, 8441 Pharmacies and over 11,969 Clinics. The SSA now has access for the purpose of processing benefits for Veterans and their dependents. “This SSA-VA partnership is another example of VA’s leadership in interoperability efforts among federal partners,” said VA Secretary, Robert McDonald. “Increasing federal partnerships to improve operation and resource coordination across agencies is among VA’s 12 Breakthrough Priorities for 2016.” VA has partnership agreements with Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Treasury (DOT) among many others.

8. **TAXES FROM A TO Z: V IS FOR VETERANS' BENEFITS:** Under the Tax Code, income is reportable and taxable unless otherwise excluded. Fortunately, when it comes to veterans’ benefits, those paid under any law, regulation, or administrative practice administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are completely excludable. Excludable benefits for veterans includes educational benefits, including education, training, and subsistence allowances. Likewise, benefits under a dependent-care assistance program are not taxable. Excludable benefits for veterans also include compensation and accommodation for disabilities. Specifically, disability compensation and pension payments for disabilities paid either to veterans or their families as well as grants for homes designed for wheelchair living and for motor vehicles for veterans who lost their sight or the use of their limbs are not taxable. Payments made under the compensated work therapy program are similarly excludable. Death benefits for veterans and their families are also excludable. Veterans’ insurance proceeds and dividends paid either to veterans or their beneficiaries, including the proceeds of a veteran’s endowment policy paid before death are not taxable, as are death gratuities paid to a survivor of a member of the Armed Forces who died after September 10, 2001. Any interest on those insurance dividends you leave on deposit with the VA are also excludable. Finally, any bonus payment by a state or political subdivision because of a veteran’s service in a combat zone is tax free. And remember, it’s not just benefits paid to veterans that are excludable. As noted above, those veterans’ benefits paid to family members are treated the same as those paid to veterans and are tax free. For more information about taxes and the military, check out [IRS Pub 3, Armed Forces’ Tax Guide](#) (downloads as a pdf).
9. **BURIAL BENEFITS REQUIRE VETS TO PLAN:** No one likes to think about death, but if a veteran wants to be buried with military rights, or in a national cemetery, pre-planning is a must. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a website which includes information about national cemeteries, preparing in advance, donating burial flags and burial benefits for veterans buried in a private cemetery. To insure eligibility of burial in a VA cemetery, discharge papers are required. Family members should be made aware of where these papers are kept. The discharge papers are also required for burial benefits in a private cemetery. The VA has 131 national cemeteries and those eligible for the benefits are entitled to a gravesite at one of the national cemeteries, providing space is available. Opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate are provided at no cost to the family. Burial benefits are also available for spouses and dependents of the veteran in a national cemetery even if they predecease the veteran, according to the website <http://www.cem.va.gov> (click on Veteran Services, then on burial benefits in the drop-down menu). Family members need to contact a funeral home to assist with making burial arrangements at a national cemetery. To schedule a burial, fax documentation to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-866-900-6417 and follow up with a phone call to 1-800-535-1117. Many VA national cemeteries display an Avenue of Flags on patriotic holidays and during special events. The Avenue of Flags consists of burial flags donated by the families of deceased Veterans and provide a unique visible tribute. Veterans are entitled to burial benefits when buried in a private cemetery including a government headstone or marker, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate at no cost to the family. Some veterans may also be eligible for burial allowances.  
For more information on eligibility call 1-800-827-1000. Arrangements for military burials in private cemeteries can also be arranged by calling the local VFW or American Legion Post.
10. **FREE WHEELCHAIRS TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO NEEDY MILITARY VETERANS.** A Roman Catholic fraternal group will be distributing free wheelchairs on Saturday to local military veterans who have a disability that impedes their mobility.

The Knights of Columbus Southern California Chapters has 200 new lightweight wheelchairs to give away beginning at 1 p.m. at Santiago de Compostela Catholic Church in Lake Forest.

The wheelchairs, in four different sizes, were purchased with \$45,000 in donations from business owners and parishioners to benefit the Knights of Columbus Wheelchair Drive.

The distribution is part of an effort that targets veterans waiting for a VA-issued wheelchair, a process that could take months or years, or for whatever reasons have not sought help from their local VA medical center.

Knights of Columbus obtains the wheelchairs for \$150 apiece; 100 were donated to VA locations in Riverside and San Diego counties. Any veteran in need will be given one on Saturday, for as long as there are wheelchairs available, said John Blaney of Knights of Columbus Council No. 9487.

Santiago de Compostela Catholic Church is at 21682 Lake Forest Drive, Lake Forest. For more information, contact Blaney at 714-863-4125 or jcb laney@att.net

#### 11. **'UNKNOWN'S' DOCUMENTARY DEBUTS ONLINE, ON DVD**

A veteran-produced documentary offering a behind-the-scenes look at the soldiers who guard the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery will be available on DVD and Blu-Ray in time for Veterans Day. "The Unknowns" aims to give viewers a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Tomb Guard, one of the members of the 3rd Infantry Regiment, or "The Old Guard," who serve at Arlington. It was released in theaters on Memorial Day [through Gathr](#), which screens movies depending on how many people buy tickets. Ethan Morse, the documentary's producer who guarded the tomb from 2005-06, said there were 45 screenings over the summer that brought in \$56,000. The DVD or Blu-Ray versions can be ordered online at [the film's website](#) and will be available online through Walmart, Best Buy and Barnes & Noble. Digital download will also be available starting on Veterans Day. The film will be available through iTunes, Amazon Prime and Google Play by the end of the year. Morse said Arlington National Cemetery has agreed to stock copies in its gift shop. "We're really honored about that," he said. "As a soldier, [the gift shop] is where I used to go to hang out before I went to the tomb." Through a partnership with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, anyone who orders a copy of the movie from the website can use the promotional code "TAPS" to receive 5 percent off their purchase. Five percent of the sale will then be donated to TAPS. Passengers on most Delta Airlines flights also will have the chance to watch the documentary, where it will be part of the in-flight entertainment package through July, Morse said. The DVD and Blu-Ray feature commentary from Morse and director Neal Schrodetzki (another Army veteran who served at the Tomb of the Unknowns), bonus interviews, behind-the-scenes footage and deleted scenes. "Delta is based in Atlanta, and they always have a lot of military flying through there to Fort Benning," he said.

12. **THE VA YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ABOUT:** Our father, Daniel Peter Schwartz, passed Nov. 17. He was a family man filled with kindness, compassion and love. As a Korean war veteran, he lived the majority of his 84 years in Iowa. An honest Midwesterner grounded in the thought that a man's handshake was his word. Diagnosed four months prior with stage 4 andiocarcinoma, Dad's focus was to fight the battle. He was never a smoker and he defeated a cancer battle 35 years prior, and victory again was his vision — to wage his own war, for his own life, for his own family, against an adversary who in the end took his life, yet never his spirit. After his family, the Des Moines Veterans Hospital was his No. 1 ally in his final battle. Palliative CLC/Comfort Living Care is the modern term for hospice. Under her guidance, Dr. Benjamin's staff in the Palliative Care Unit helped Dad and our family through this war. I had no experience with the VA system, so negative media exposure chiseled my opinion — opinion laden with images of a VA hospital riddled by neglect, below-standard conditions and erroneous diagnoses. Stricken with my preconceptions, my sister and I escorted Dad in his wheelchair to the floor where he would spend the balance of his life. Within one hour we knew Dad was in the right hands. Earning the right of entry through his service, it removed medical financial burdens that can strangle a family. The very best care was presented and indeed delivered. From top to bottom, this group operated as a single unified unit with a common objective of creating the most compassionate environment for the heroes of this country. On behalf of our families and our father's memory we extend our sincerest thanks to the Des Moines CLC Palliative Care Unit. Unrelenting tenderheartedness guides their expertise and knowledge, which led Dad through his final siege. The team kept Dad's health premier yet most importantly his spirit and dignity

paramount. The staff, aides, nurses and doctors touched Dad and for some, Dad touched them. He was that sort of person and they are that sort of unit.

13. **VA CAN HELP TAKE A BITE OUT OF DENTAL BILLS:** There are quite a few veterans who do not meet the eligibility criteria when it comes to getting dental care through the VA. Under the program, veterans will be able to apply for the VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP). The VA provides comprehensive dental care to veterans who meet certain eligibility standards; however, as mentioned earlier, the benefit of dental care is not available to many. If you would like to know if you're eligible for VA dental, please call and we can give you the current eligibility requirements. The VADIP is designed to offer enrolled veterans and those beneficiaries of the VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) an opportunity to purchase dental insurance at a reduced rate. Veterans enrolled in the VA health care program and CHAMPVA program beneficiaries are eligible to participate in VADIP. Participating in VADIP does not affect veterans' eligibility for other VA dental services and treatment. The program will be administered through either Delta Dental or MetLife. The VADIP was originally a three-year national pilot program mandated by Public Law 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, and was designed to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing a premium-based dental insurance plan to eligible individuals. Dependents of veterans, except those eligible under CHAMPVA, are not eligible for VADIP; however, there may be separate coverage options available through the insurance carrier (Delta Dental/MetLife). Enrollment in the plan began on Nov. 15, 2013, and coverage started Jan. 1, 2014. Those interested in applying for the program can complete the application online, over the phone or by mail. The VA has provided a direct link to both the Delta Dental and the MetLife VADIP webpage at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP). Coverage under VADIP is provided throughout the United States and its territories. The initial signup period will be at least 12 calendar months, after which VADIP beneficiaries may renew their participation for another 12-month period or opt for a month-to-month period, as long as the participant remains eligible for coverage and the VA continues VADIP. Each participant enrolled in the VADIP will pay a fixed monthly premium for the coverage, and co-pay may be required. Participants can choose from the multiple plan options available to provide the best benefit and premium to meet their specific needs. Plans may include diagnostic, preventive, surgical, emergency, and endodontic/restorative treatment. For more information on VADIP, call the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP) and click on the link for either Delta Dental or MetLife. These links provide information regarding registration, current enrollment rates, and services.

14. **VA PROPOSED RULE IS ATTACK ON VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

In a surprise move, the Veteran's Administration is proposing new rules on just who can get monthly pension or widow's benefits. It's an attempt to prevent people from gaming the system by giving away assets and then applying for aid. But veterans and their families are crying foul. They say it will cause real harm by making an already cumbersome process more so and will mean more delays in granting benefits. That would put needy veterans at risk of losing one of the most critical benefits out there—one that can help veteran's stay at home and not go to a nursing home.

"The proposed VA rules are an attack on our nation's veterans and their families; it's a huge change from the status quo," says Bernard Krooks, an elder lawyer in New York and a Forbes contributor. One big legal wrinkle: The regulatory action comes after attempts to pass a look-back rule in Congress failed. There's some question whether these changes can be made administratively, so if the regulations pass, they could be challenged in court.

The VA pension—or widow's pension—benefit provides money to needy veterans and surviving spouses who require daily assistance for necessary activities such as eating, bathing and dressing. Basically, there is no hard and fast net worth number to be eligible, at least for now. If you get down to \$80,000 in assets—not including your house or car—and you have high deductible medical expenses that net out your income, you may qualify. A single veteran's maximum monthly benefit is \$1,788, and a surviving spouse's is \$1,149 (it's tax-free).

Krooks [explains the math](#) of how the current rules work.

There are some real gotchas in the proposed VA pension rule changes. (Credit: Getty Images)

The [proposed rules](#) on "Net Worth, Asset Transfers, and Income Exclusions For Needs-Based Benefits" would establish a new combined net worth and income limit of \$ 119,220, impose a 36-month look-back period on asset transfers (like Medicaid's Congressionally-mandated five-year look-back period), and a penalty period of

up to 10 years related to gifts. There's a new tougher definition of medical expenses deductible from income, and a proposed IRS matching program.

The new gifting rules and penalties for making gifts (all gifts in the look-back period are presumed to have been made to qualify for benefits) are strict. There's no allowance to give away money to your church, or say for a wedding gift to a grandchild. For a veteran who gave away \$50,000, he would get a 28-month penalty. That is, he wouldn't qualify for benefits for 28 months. A widow would be penalized for 44 months.

15. **MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY VETERANS BENEFITS AND DIVORCE MAKE FOR TAX**

**CONFUSION:** The way tax rules interact with divorces rules is complicated enough. Throw in military retirement rules and it can get very confusing. In the [case of Elmer Nuss](#), it looks like the Administrative Law Division of the Alabama DOR came up with a reasonable response, but it also seems like it shouldn't be this hard. Mr. Nuss was divorced in 1998. The Court ordered that one half of his military retirement pay go to his ex. The case does not state this explicitly, but my inference is that the federal government was paying her directly. According [to this](#), a state court can order any split it wants of military retirement pay, consistent with state law. There are limits, though, on what portion the federal government will pay directly to an ex-spouse. Apparently, that is what created the problem. Disability pay is not subject to division as property. It is subject to garnishment for alimony or child support, however. Mr. Nuss began receiving VA benefits, which reduced his retirement pay. The ex-wife subsequently garnished the Taxpayer's bank account to receive the difference between what she had received in military retirement pay before the Taxpayer began receiving the VA benefits, and the reduced amount she had received after he began receiving the VA benefits. The Taxpayer filed a motion in Madison County Circuit Court to quash the garnishment. The Court ruled that the ex-wife had a vested interest in one-half of the Taxpayer's military retirement pay, and that as a property settlement it could not be reduced. The Court accordingly ordered the Taxpayer to pay his ex-wife the difference between the reduced military retirement she received after the Taxpayer began receiving VA benefits and the amount she would have received but for the VA benefits. The Taxpayer paid those amounts to the ex-wife during the years in issue. He also deducted the amounts as alimony on his Alabama returns in those years. Alabama Department of Revenue came after him about the alimony deduction. I always find reading cases more interesting if I root for one side or the other. I usually root for the taxpayer, unless they are being ridiculous (which is not all that uncommon). I have to tell you though, I am absolutely always going to root for a disabled veteran. So I am really pleased that Mr. Nuss won, even though I am not sure the decision is correct. The problem that DOR had with the alimony deduction was that the assignment of retirement pay to the ex-spouse had been considered a "property settlement". Alabama follows federal principles in this regard and most of the point of the rules about alimony seems to be to prevent property settlements being considered alimony. The ruling saw it differently: ..... the divorce decree specifies that the payment of one-half of the Taxpayer's military retirement to his ex-wife constituted a property settlement. The Alabama Court of Civil Appeals has held on several occasions, however, that the substantive nature of an award given in a divorce decree takes precedence over the label applied in the decree. There was no explicit provision in the agreement indicated that it was not to be included in gross income of the recipient and that was good enough. They cited Proctor, a 2007 [United States Tax Court decision](#). At the end of the day, this case is about how the benefit of converting from military retirement pay to veterans benefits should be divided. If the case had gone the other way, half the benefit would have gone to the ex-spouse. The simple guiding principles should be that when in doubt you go with the disabled veteran, but, of course, those judges can't just come out and say that. As a practical matter, divorce agreements allocating military retirement payment should probably explicitly address what happens if the pay is reduced due to veterans benefits.

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16. **NEW STUDY RANKS BEST, WORST CITIES FOR VETS:**

Four of the top 10 U.S. cities for veterans are in Texas, according to a new study released Monday by a personal finance website. The study, conducted by WalletHub, found that the Texas cities of Laredo, Plano, Austin and El Paso are all among the nation's best for military veterans based on 21 factors like the availability of military-skills related jobs, veteran unemployment, economic health, overall veteran population and access to Department of Veteran Affairs administered healthcare.

Among the other top 10 cities overall are Scottsdale, Arizona, which came in first, Irvine and San Diego, California, Colorado Springs, Colorado and Tampa and Orlando Florida.

At the bottom of the list ranking at 100 through 97, respectively, are Detroit, Michigan, which ranked as worst for veterans, Newark, New Jersey, Cleveland, Ohio and Memphis, Tennessee.

The top cities ranked strongly for factors like economy, job availability for veterans and overall quality of life. “I think one of the key takeaways here is that jobs and economy really play into anyone’s retirement a career – but veterans even more so because they are often younger,” said Jill Gonzalez, a WalletHub analyst. “They really do need to make sure the job opportunities in whatever cities they are settling down in are good for veterans.” The study analyzed data from a variety of sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the VA to draw its conclusions. It examined and ranked the top 100 most populated cities nationwide.

Gonzalez said the most important factor to examine for most veterans looking to relocate is economics and jobs. “Employment is so important – especially before you’re settling down in a city, that’s something that you really need to think about before,” she said.

#### 17. **THE NUMBER VETERANS IN CONGRESS WILL LIKELY DROP AGAIN NEXT YEAR**

The overall number of veterans serving in Congress will likely drop again next session, even as the number of lawmakers who fought in the recent wars continues to rise.

An analysis from the nonpartisan Veterans Campaign shows that for the first time in 70 years, Congress could boast fewer than 100 veterans in the House and Senate in 2017. That is due in large part to retirements of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans, and the aging of America’s veterans population as a whole.

“So it’s natural to see the numbers drop,” said Seth Lynn, executive director of the campaign. “I feel like this is getting to the lower level we’re going to see for quite a while.”

Currently 21 veterans serve in the Senate, a number that’s expected to hold steady once the elections finish.

But the House looks certain to reduce its number of lawmakers with direct military experience. Today, 79 representatives are veterans, and Lynn said that number is likely to drop by about 10 percent in the November contests “We live in a dangerous world. I still think it matters to have lawmakers who served. But the population trends show a long-term reduction in the size of the veterans population for years to come.”

Carter and Lynn each said they’re encouraged by the continued rise in the number of candidates who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. This year at least 54 candidates from those wars are vying for spots on Capitol Hill, almost a third of 172 veterans running in all the open congressional races. The number of recent war veterans in Congress has risen every two years since 2006, when current Army Deputy Secretary Patrick Murphy became the first veteran who fought in Iraq to win election to the House. Two years ago, Iowa Republican Joni Ernst became the first female Iraq War veteran and first female combat veteran to win a Senate seat, part of a class of 24 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to win congressional elections in 2014. Lynn noted that 10 female veterans are among the candidates this year, about the same as in 2014. He also noted that veterans are hardly the only group over-represented in Congress. More lawmakers previously worked as lawyers and Peace Corps members than in the general population, and usually candidates’ unusual backgrounds help them stand out as trustworthy or uniquely qualified

#### 18. **LEGISLATION:**

- **Congress Advances Veterans’ Bills:** In its first week back from the election recess, Congress has advanced a number of veterans’ bills to expand the Veterans’ Oral History Project to gold star families, require VA to improve the Veterans Crisis Line to ensure no crisis call goes unanswered and improve VA’s Automobile Adaptive Equipment Program. H.R. 4511, the *Gold Star Families Voices Act* and H.R. 5392, the *No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act* now await the president’s signature.
- Former legislation H.R. 5903 “To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to treat recipients of the Korea Defense Service Medal as war veterans for purposes of determining whether contributions to posts and organizations of war veterans are charitable contributions.” Mr. David Eiselsberg and Mr. Jett Thompson whom both work in Representative Sam Johnson’s are in charge of making this H.R. happen quickly. They stated to

us that after H.R. 1475 is through mark-up, they will be putting a “full court press” on to make the old 5903 legislation up to date.

Congressman Johnson strongly stated that he will be personally pushing this legislation through. He firmly believes that it will be passed.

He also stated that he will need **ALL OF OUR HELP** in reaching out to his colleagues on the Hill encouraging them to support this Bill.

It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that when the new House Resolution is ready to be introduced **ALL KOREAN WAR VETERANS, DEFENSE VETERANS AND FAMILIES** will need to flood their Congressman’s office with requests to support this new House Resolution (HR). We will keep you informed once the new HR is published.

We will be publishing a one page fact sheet on this legislation with talking points to share amongst all our members and chapters to say when contacting their Congressmen and women.

19. **SCAM ALERT: TOP FIVE VETERAN SWINDLES:** Aside from elderly fraud, scams targeting veterans really burns my bacon. Men and women who have proudly served our country are constant targets for scam artists.

Swindlers target vets because they know they are drawing guaranteed benefits. While veteran payments are paid over a lifetime, they often aren’t enough to pay all of the bills. Financial predators know this.

According to the [AARP Fraud Watch Network](#), there are a host of scams aimed at vets. Many of these operations masquerade as charities that claim to benefit vets. Here are the major scams:

**Bogus sales** – “A scammer claiming to be a deploying service member posts a large ticket item on a classified ad website that he needs to sell right away and at a steep discount. The scammer asks for upfront payment with a wire transfer or gift cards.

**Real estate rip-off** – A scammer posts a fake rental property on a classified ad website offering military discounts. You just need to wire transfer a security deposit to the landlord.

**VA phishing** – A caller claiming to be from the Department of Veterans Affairs calls to “update” your information.

**Fake charities** – Fake charities use names that are close to the names of legitimate charities, often referencing Armed Forces, veterans, or military families.

**Benefits “buyout”** – Scammers will target veterans in need of money by offering cash in exchange for their future disability or pension payments. These buyouts are typically a fraction of the value of the benefit.

**Dubious investment advice** – An “adviser” will tell the veteran she is missing out on benefits, and wants to review her investment portfolio. He’ll then want to put the veteran’s investments in a trust, to appear to have fewer assets and to therefore be eligible for an additional pension.”

Note: The “benefits buyout” scam also goes by the name of “pension advances.” A company will offer to “buy” monthly pension payments in exchange for a lump-sum payment. It’s actually an unregulated, high-interest loan. I’ve written about pension advances several times. Don’t even go near them.

The best way to protect yourself against vet scams? Avoid all mail, email and phone solicitations. If the solicitor claims to be from a charity, check them out on [give.org](#).

The Fraud Watch network also gives the following advice:

“Be suspicious anytime you are asked to pay by wire transfer or gift cards. Know that the VA will never call, text or e-mail you to update your information. Make donations directly to the veterans’ organizations you know. And only work with VA-accredited representatives when dealing with VA benefits; you can search for them online at the [VA Office of General Counsel website](#).”

20. **REVISIT TO KOREA PROGRAM:**

The Revisit Korea program is over for 2016. Over 350 veterans and family members returned to Korea on the ROK government subsidized program that was commenced in 1975. The big change this year was that the Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA) approved Korea Defense Veterans, and their families, going for the first time. We have been told that the program will continue in 2017.

We don't receive the actual quotas and specific dates until after the first of the year. However, the months are usually June, July, September, October and November. These quotas go very fast so it's highly recommended that you submit your registrations ASAP. For more information see: [www.KWVA.org](http://www.KWVA.org) or [www.miltours.com](http://www.miltours.com)

21. **THE SAE EDEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA**—The Sae Eden Presbyterian Church is planning an event in Houston, Texas in June 2017. I am sure KWVA will be a part of this ceremony.
22. **KOREAN WAR MONUMENT DEDICATION:** Duplin County, North Carolina, and the Duplin County Historical Society, is honoring the men from our county who died in the Korean War. We will unveil and dedicate a granite monument on the Court House grounds on Friday, November 4, 2016, at 2:00 P.M. They are located just off Interstate 40, about half way between Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina. The organizers of this special dedication would like to have a large attendance of Korean War veterans and their families to honor these men who died in the “forgotten war.” For further information, please contact Mr. Charles M. Ingram at Email: [charles@ingramandingram.com](mailto:charles@ingramandingram.com) or call 910-296-3676.
23. **READING OF THE FALLEN:** The Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation has been conducting a reading the names of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Korean War. In 2015, all of the American Servicemen who died during the war had their names announced in a very dignified and solemn ceremony. This year all of the Korean Augmentation to the United States Army soldiers names who were killed had their names read at the Memorial. On June 25, 2017, The Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation will read all of the fallen from the Allied Countries who came to the aid of South Korea will have their names read at the Memorial.
24. **POW/MIA REPORT:** Submitted by Mr. Rocky Harder, KWVA POW/MIA Coordinator. Monthly Teleconference, DPAA-Family Organizations/VSO/MSO Thursday, November 20, 2016, 2:00 PM

DoD Participants: Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Acting Director, DPAA BG Mark Spindler, Deputy Director, DPAA Mr. Todd Livick, Director, DPAA Outreach & Communications Mr. Johnie Webb, Deputy Director, DPAA Outreach and Communications Mr. Mike Fowler, DPAA Outreach & Communications Colonel Chris Forbes, Director, European-Mediterranean Operations Colonel Mike Gann, Director Asia-Pacific Operations Mr. John Hamilton, Director, Plans & Policy Mrs. Jennifer Nasarenko, Deputy Director, Plans & Policy

Family Groups-VSO-MSO Participants:

1. American Legion Freddy Gessner National Security
2. Disabled American Veterans - Vincent Darcangelo POW-MIA Committee
3. Korean War Veterans Association - Rocky Harder POW-MIA Committee
4. Coalition of Families Rick Downes President
5. Honor Release Return, Inc. - Moe Moyer National Co-Chairman
6. Korea-Cold War Families of the Missing - Sherra Basham
7. National League of POW/MIA Families - Ann Mills-Griffiths Chairman of the Board
8. MIA Recovery Network (formerly Search and Recovery for the Greatest Generation) -Kenneth Breaux
9. Korean War POW/MIA Network - John Zimmerlee

- Agenda 1. General Update (Acting Director)  
2. Operational Update (Deputy Director)  
3. Q&A  
4. Closing Comments

Acting Director's Comments:

- Welcome – I would like to welcome you all to our quarterly teleconference. As you will recall at our meeting in late July, we proposed the idea of quarterly teleconference calls plus two in-person meetings per

year. The feedback we received was supportive of this concept particularly since those of you who have questions during the intervening month are able to reach out to the OC staff to get answers.

-Director's Hiring Action Status – The decision remains with the selecting official, Secretary McKeon.

-New PP Director – I would also like to introduce Mr. John Hamilton, new Director of Policy and Plans who was the former Director of USAREUR/G5. I would also like to introduce the Deputy Director of Policy and Plans, Ms. Jennifer Nasarenko.

-Special Operations Association Reunion – Just returned yesterday from giving remarks at the Special Operations Association 40th Reunion in Las Vegas. I spoke to approximately 200 of their members at the POW/MIA symposium. Thank you to Rick Estes and Mike Taylor, it was a great visit.

-Green Bay Family Update – Was held in early September. 164 Family members representing 90 missing (44-WWII, 36-Korean War, 10-Vietnam War). DPAA is also coordinating with hotels where Family Updates are being held to request they fly the POW/MIA flag during these events.

-POW/MIA Recognition Day – Ceremonies at the Pentagon and in Hawaii In addition to Secretary Carter, keynote speakers at the Pentagon were Vietnam War POW Capt. Jerry Coffee, US Navy and Senator John Cornyn (Texas) whose father was a WWII POW. Jay Blount, World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument chief of interpretation and education was the keynote speaker at the DPAA hosted ceremony in Hawaii. Next year's Pentagon ceremony will be on September 15 and I hope to see more of you there as I think it sends a strong message.

- Hawaii Office Visit – Spent a great two weeks working more closely with our staff there. Especially worked tightly with our Chief Financial Officer to ensure we properly closed out our FY16 budget.

-Updates of Identification and Accounted-for Numbers:

In FY 2016 in coordination with the Service Casualty Offices, we accounted-for 124 formerly missing Americans, and we are on an operational pace to exceed that number in 2017. We accounted-for 77 in FY 2015.

-DPAA "identified" a total of 164 remains in FY 2016—11-Vietnam war, 69-Korean War, and 84-WWII. 63 of these were from disinterments of unknowns, 34 from unilateral turnovers, and 67 from worldwide operations. The additional 40 identified service members will become accounted-for once their families have been notified, and their numbers will be included in our FY17 totals.

-I'll ask Rick Downes, Executive Director of the Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War POW/MIAs, to share what he can regarding his recent trip to North Korea.

-Mr. Downes briefly described his trip to North Korea with the Richardson Center for Global engagement. They met with the Vice Foreign Minister and discussed accounting for Korean War missing with emphasis on remains recovery and crash site locations in North Korea. He closed by stating that more details will follow at a later date.

-Rick briefly highlighted the Bring our Heroes Home Act, recently introduced by Senator Ayotte. The legislation was not further discussed by the group on the call.

-Upcoming Events:

--75th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor

China: One Investigation Team is scheduled to deploy to in November for two weeks to conduct investigations of losses there

Korean War: - South Korea: One Investigation Team will deploy to South Korea next week.

- **MIA Families Sought:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is seeking families of missing American service members to attend informational update meetings and to collect DNA samples if one is not already on file. Learn more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/Families/Family-Events/>.
- **Army Pfc. William V. Giovanniello,** 22, of Brooklyn, N.Y., will be buried Nov. 10 in Port Jervis, N.Y. Giovanniello was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, when his unit was forced into a fighting withdrawal from Chorwon, South Korea. He was declared missing in action on April 25, 1951. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/995006/soldier-killed-in-korean-war-accounted-for-giovanniello/>.
- **Army Cpl. Wayne Minard,** 19, of Furley, Kan., will be buried Nov. 12 in nearby Wichita. Minard was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting a delaying action south to Kunu-ri, North Korea. He would be reported missing in action on Nov. 26, 1950. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/996115/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-minard/>.
- **Army Pfc. Daniel Hunt,** missing from the Korean War, has now been accounted for. On Sept. 28, 1951, Hunt was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, in the vicinity of Hill 1030, conducting operations in an area referred to as Heartbreak Ridge. The Chinese launched an attack, which the company repelled. They were then ordered to move east and attack the enemy on Hill 867 nearby. Prior to their attack, the enemy launched a barrage of mortar against the Americans, and survivors withdrew to friendly lines. Following the withdrawal, Hunt was reported missing in action. During an investigation by the U.S. Army Casualty office, three members of Hunt's unit reported that he had been killed during the fight, Sept. 28, 1951. Based on this information, the U.S. Army declared him deceased. On Feb. 12, 2016, the Republic of Korea unilaterally turned over remains believed to be unaccounted-for Americans from the Korean War. The recovered remains were reported to have been found near Heartbreak Ridge. DNA analysis, as well as circumstantial and anthropological evidence, was used in the identification of his remains. Interment services are scheduled for Dec. 2 in Phoenix, Arizona.
- **Army Pfc. William W. Cowan,** 19, of White House, Tenn., will be buried Nov. 19 in Fredonia, Ohio. On Feb. 12, 1951, Cowan was a member of Company M, 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, when he was reported missing in action after his unit attacked a road block set up by enemy forces near Hoengsong, South Korea. It would be later learned he had been captured but died in captivity in a POW camp in North Korea. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1001386/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-cowan/>.
- **Marine Corps Pfc. Wilbur C. Mattern,** 23, of Oelwein, Iowa, will be buried Nov. 21, in Arlington National Cemetery. In November 1943, Mattern was assigned to Company M, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. After several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Mattern died on the second day of the battle, Nov. 21, 1943. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1004088/marine-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-mattern/>.

- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Robert R. Cummings**, of Schoolcraft, Mich., was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry Regimental Combat Team, when his unit was attacked by an estimated 200,000 Chinese soldiers near the Yalu River in North Korea. He would be declared missing in action on Nov. 29, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1007708/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-identified-cummings/>.
- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Frederick W. Langhorst**, 24, of Yonkers, New York, will be buried Nov. 26 in Battle Creek, Michigan. On July 17, 1945, Langhorst was assigned to the 1330 Army Air Force Base Unit, Air Transport Command, and was the co-pilot of a C-109 aircraft with three other crew members on a routine cargo transport mission from Jorhat, India, to Hsinching, China, when it crashed in a remote area. An extensive search of the area failed to identify the crash site and the crew was declared deceased on July 18, 1946, and their remains designated non-recoverable. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1008332/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-langhorst/>.
- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Robert E. Moessner**, missing from World War II, has now been accounted for. On April 18, 1944, Moessner was the bombardier of a B-24 aircraft out of Kwelin, China, and was shot down near Hong Kong, along with eleven other crewmembers onboard. The aircraft had been conducting a sea sweep and encountered a Japanese merchant ship and escorting destroyer. After making two passes, they withdrew under heavy fire, but were subsequently shot down by Japanese fighters. The pilot crashed the aircraft into shallow water of Hong Kong harbor, and it broke apart. Two crewmembers survived and were captured by the Japanese. Upon their release at the conclusion of the war, they reported that Moessner went down with the aircraft. In the days following the crash, the Japanese salvaged the wreckage and recovered two bodies. Local residents also found bodies near the shore. At the end of hostilities, Army Graves Registration Service (AGRS) recovered the remains and took them into custody. Three sets were eventually identified and the fourth was buried as an "Unknown" in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. In August 2005, based on advances in DNA technology the grave was exhumed and sent to the lab for analysis. DNA analysis and circumstantial evidence were used in the identification of his remains. Interment services are pending. For more information on DPAA please visit our website at [www.dpaa.mil](http://www.dpaa.mil), or find us on social media at [www.facebook.com/dodpaa](http://www.facebook.com/dodpaa)
- **Army Master Sgt. Joseph Durakovich**, missing from the Korean War, has now been accounted for. In late November 1950, Durakovich was a member of Company G, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, establishing a defensive position in Pongmyong-ni east of Kuni-ri, North Korea, when they were attacked by the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces (CPVF). The Americans were continually attacked as they withdrew along the main supply route to Samsu-ri, and they encountered a roadblock they could not break through. Following the battle, Durakovich could not be accounted for and was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950. Durakovich's name did not appear on any POW list provided by the CPVF or the North Korean People's Army, and no returning American POWs provided any information concerning Durakovich as a possible prisoner of war. Based on this information, a military review board amended his status to deceased in 1953. In August and September 2002, a Joint U.S. and Korean People's Army recovery team conducted a Joint Recovery Operation at a site in Ung Bong, Village, North Korea, based on information provided by two Korean witnesses. The site was approximately 30 kilometers from where Durakovich was last seen. During the excavation, the team recovered material evidence and possible human remains. DNA analysis and circumstantial evidence were used in the identification of his remains. Interment services are pending.
- **Army Cpl. Vernon D. Presswood**, 19, will be buried Dec. 3 in his hometown of Pinckneyville, Ill. In late November 1950, Hendrickson was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment,

7th Infantry Division, which was assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team and deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was engaged by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Presswood was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/Article/1011150/soldier-killed-in-korean-war-accounted-for-presswood/>.

- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Harold P. Haugland**, of Gallatin, Mont. In late November 1950, Haugland was a member of Company D, 15th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, which was assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team and deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when it was engaged by overwhelming numbers of Chinese forces. Haugland was reported missing in action as of Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. Read more at <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1008321/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-identified-haugland/>.
  - **Army Cpl. Louis A. Damewood**, missing from the Korean War, has now been accounted for. On February 13, 1951, Cowan was a member of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, when he was reported missing in action. The unit was attacking a road block set up by opposing forces near Hoengsong, South Korea, when he was declared missing. In 1954, United Nations and communist forces exchanged the remains of war dead in what came to be called "Operation Glory." All remains recovered in Operation Glory were turned over to the Army's Central Identification Unit for analysis. The remains they were unable to identify were interred as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii, known as the "Punchbowl." One set of remains was designated "Unknown X-14160." On Nov. 6, 2016, the remains designated as X-14160 were exhumed and sent to the DPAA laboratory for analysis. DNA analysis and circumstantial evidence were used in the identification of his remains. Interment services are pending.
25. **POW/MIA FOREVER STAMP:** A MESSAGE FROM TOM THIEL ~ KWVA CID169 Sec, Ed, Web, DoF Web, AL#41. 19147 Park Place Blvd, Eustis, FL 32736 [352-408-6612](tel:352-408-6612), [kwvathiel@gmail.com](mailto:kwvathiel@gmail.com)

There are more than 83,000 MIAs in all wars starting with WWII to the present. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, More than 7,800 Americans remain unaccounted-for from the Korean War. They were our brothers and sisters in arms, and U.S. Citizens. The Korean War and Korea Defense Service Veterans of Lake County, Chapter 169 Inc., has pledged to do all that it can to return all MIAs so that their families may gain some peace. We must do still more to keep the public aware of these 83,000 Missing in Action Americans. A First Class POW/MIA Forever Stamp would surely help us do this, and we want to convince the U.S. Postal Service to issue such a stamp. But the Post Office objects. Fortunately, one of our Korean War brothers, a POW for some 33 months, the late William "Bill" Allen, author of *"My Old Box of Memories,"* had already done a lot of spadework on this effort. But, sadly, Bill was not able to convince the Postal Service. So he went to his Congressman, Gus Bilirakis of Florida's 12th District who in 2013 introduced HR2794, the Perpetual POW/MIA Stamp Act. In November 2015, Mr. Bilirakis reintroduced it as H.R. 3558 with the same name.

I obtained this new information from Congressman Ron DeSantis, of FL 11th District. According to Mr. DeSantis, "This legislation would provide for the issuance of a forever stamp depicting the National League of Families POW/MIA flag to honor members of the Armed Forces who are still prisoners, missing, or unaccounted for." Mr. DeSantis went on to say "H.R. 3558 has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform." Mr. DeSantis continued "As a member of this committee, I will diligently review this legislation with my colleagues and keep your thoughts in mind should this, or any similar measure, come to the House floor for a vote." Sadly, our legislation is still buried in the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. We sincerely appreciate all that have contacted their U.S.

Representatives on behalf of the original bill. But now you need to do it again—contact your Congress person, our FL representatives on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and leaders of this committee. Please also send this to your Veteran’s Group’s National Level so that this action might be implemented throughout the U.S., not just in Central Florida. Selected addresses follow:

**Congressman Gus Bilirakis** 2187 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-5755; Fax:(202) 225-4085 7132 Little Road New Port Richey, FL 34654 (727) 232-2921; FAX:(727) 232-2923

**Congressman John Mica** 2187 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-4035; Fax:(202) 226-0821 100 East Sybelia Avenue, Suite 340 Maitland, FL 32751-4495 407-657-8080; Fax: 407-657-5353

**Congressman Ron DeSantis** 308 Cannon House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 202-225-2706; Fax: 202-226-6299 1000 City Center Circle Port Orange, FL 32129 386-756-9798; Fax: 386-756-9903  
United States House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform

**Congressman Jason Chaffetz**, Chairman, UT-3 2236 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-7751 51 S University Ave., Suite 318 Provo, UT 84601 Phone: (801) 851-2500

**Congressman Elijah Cummings**, Ranking Mbr, MD-7 2230 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-4741; Fax: (202) 225-3178, 1010 Park Avenue Suite 105 Baltimore, MD 21201, (410) 685-9199; Fax: (410) 685-9399

26. **TELL AMERICA PROGRAM:**

The Map Poster of the Korean War continues to be requested. The map is available to those participating in the Tell America Program. If you would like maps for your presentations, please contact: Director Roy Aldridge, Chairman, Tell America Program

6544 Grand Ridge, Dr

El Paso, TX 79912

Phone: 915-581-4725 ~ Email: [Royaldridge@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Royaldridge@sbcglobal.net)

27. **EMBASSY NEWS:** The Defense Attaché for the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, MG Kyoung Shin will be leaving his position toward the end of 2016. He has been a true friend to the Korean War Veterans across the United States. He will be truly missed.

28. **NOMINATE A HERO:** Do you know a fellow citizen who has performed a singular act of extraordinary heroism or a continued commitment to putting others first? Nominate them for the 2017 Congressional Medal of Honor Society Citizen Honors. Four U.S. citizens and one organization are selected each year to receive Citizen Honors awards. To be considered, nominees age 18 and older must have made a difference in the lives of others through a singular act of extraordinary heroism, or through exceptional selfless service to others. Young Americans age 8-17 can be nominated for their leadership, courage and service. Community organizations can be nominated for their exceptional impact in support of our nation’s service members and families. Award recipients will be recognized in Washington on National Medal of Honor Day, March 25, 2017. Applications are available through Nov. 30 at: [www.themedalofhonor.com](http://www.themedalofhonor.com)

29. **TOUTING 2 YEARS OF PROGRESS, MCDONALD HOPES TRUMP WILL CONTINUE VA TRANSFORMATION**

In his final days in office, Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald said more veterans trust the department now than they did two years ago. About 60 percent of veterans say they trust VA to fulfill its commitments to veterans, up from 47 percent six months ago, according to a departmental survey. More veterans — 74 percent compared to 65 percent a year ago — say they get the services they need. The results come from a [new report](#) from the department, which details VA’s progress on delivering health care and other services to veterans under McDonald’s myVA Transformation strategies. “Things are moving in the right direction,” McDonald said during a Washington Post event one day before Veterans Day. “My suggestion to the next president would be ‘please keep it going, if not accelerate the progress.’” McDonald didn’t expound much further on the incoming Trump administration, instead taking the time to describe other areas where the department has improved. By March, VA completed 5.3 million appointments within the department — 730,000 more than it two years ago, the report said. It’s issued twice as many authorizations, 268,000 of them, for veterans to receive care

outside VA since 2014. The department's network is 45 percent larger than it was last year with 350,000 community providers. About 22 percent of veterans' appointments were completed on the same day, while 85 percent were completed within seven days and 96 percent done within 30 days, the report said.

VA's disability backlog is also down this year, McDonald said. The department processed 1.3 million claims in 2016, which took an average of 123 days to complete. That processing time has actually dropped 65 percent in recent years, the report said. "Because we've done such a good job driving down the disability claim backlog, the number of appeals have gone up," McDonald said. "The number of appeals is relatively constant at 10 to 11 percent of all decisions made, but as you go from 950,000 claims dealt with to 1.6 million, which is what we have today, that 10-11 percent is a higher absolute number." Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander Brian Duffy also said he hopes VA will find a way to bring the appeals backlog down.

"We're happy that the initial benefits package has been worked down, but we want them to work now with the same due diligence on bringing down the appeals," he said during a Nov. 10 press conference in Washington. "We think a lot of resources were obviously diverted on the initial claims."

McDonald took perhaps one last opportunity to push lawmakers to pass a few pieces of key legislation before the 114th Congress leaves and 115th takes its place, but it's unclear what the lame-duck will get done.

"The fact now that we have one party that's controlling the executive [branch] and the House and the Senate, I would hope in regards to the veterans legislation ... that would bode well," Duffy said. "But time will tell."

### 30. **SOCIAL SECURITY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS PARTNERSHIP MEANS FASTER DISABILITY DECISIONS FOR VETERANS**

The Social Security Administration has announced the launch of a new Health IT initiative with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that enables all Social Security disability case-processing sites to receive medical records electronically from all VA facilities. Veterans will receive a faster decision on their Social Security disability claim, speeding them and their dependents through this new process. Both agencies will save time and money with an automatic request through the eHealth Exchange. "President Obama has said, 'we must maintain the sacred covenant we share with our veterans by ensuring they have the care and benefits they deserve,' and I could not agree more," said Carolyn W. Colvin, acting commissioner of Social Security. "We are committed to providing our veterans with the world class service they so richly deserve and improving the speed and efficiency of our disability program."

The new Health IT program was tested successfully at Social Security locations around the country. On Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, the eHealth Exchange will go live, nationally, to all Social Security disability case processing sites.

Social Security requests nearly 15 million medical records annually from healthcare providers and organizations to make medical decisions on about three million disability claims. Medical documentation is essential to make a disability determination. Historically, the agency obtained medical records through a manual process (mail, fax, secure mail). This new national initiative puts in place an automated process to obtain medical records electronically without human intervention.

"VA is currently improving quality of life by enabling Veterans to share their health information with federal partners and integrating their data into a safe and secure health-related consumer application," said Dr. David Shulkin, undersecretary for health of the Department of Veterans Affairs. "Currently, when eligible veterans apply for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits the average wait time for Social Security to receive paper records from VA can take months; this partnership allows Social Security and VA to share the Veteran's health information electronically in minutes. The Social Security and VA partnership allows VA to continue to be a leader in interoperability efforts among federal partners while improving overall quality of life for our Veteran patients."

This partnership adds the VA to Social Security's more than 50 other Health IT partners, including the Department of Defense, in approximately 7,000 facilities across the United States providing electronic health records. Social Security's goal is to continue expanding the number of healthcare organizations and federal agencies providing electronic health records within a safe and secure environment.

To learn more about Health IT, please visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityssi/hit>.

Social Security offers two other programs to expedite disability claims filed by veterans. Wounded Warriors and veterans with a VA disability compensation rating of 100 percent Permanent & Total have their Social Security disability claims treated as high priority and receive expedited decisions. For more information about these programs, please visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/people/veterans>.

31. **TRICARE PUBLICATIONS UPDATE:** DOD has redesigned TRICARE handbooks, brochures, fact sheets and guides to make them more user friendly and visually appealing. To view the updated publications, visit: [www.tricare.mil/publications](http://www.tricare.mil/publications).

32. **NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE VA**

The month of November has been quite a busy planning month for the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. They have announced several new strategic partnerships. Talk around the coffee table is making several observations about just what the VA considers strategic partnerships. It is prudent however to recognize that any progress is positive, and will hopefully lead to furthering many developments to making better and increasing the quality of service to our veterans. That being said, the VA now is embracing a commitment to engage 'External Organizations' to support Veterans and their Families.

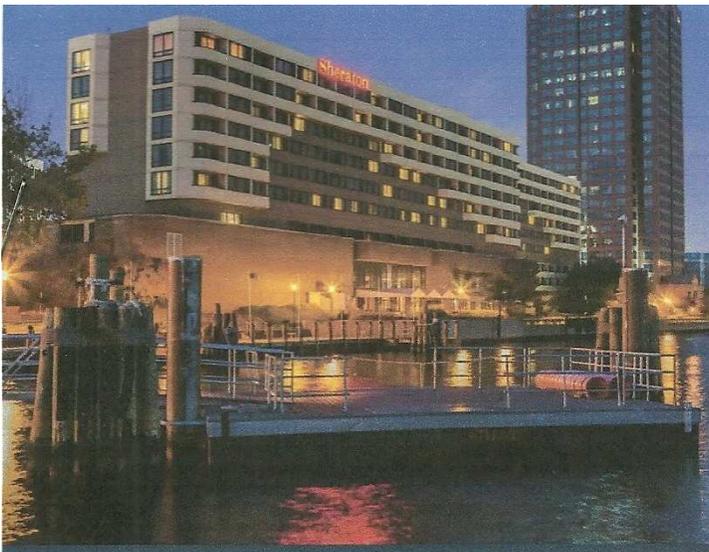
One of the 'new partnerships' is with Cardinal Health. Through its Operation: Support our Heroes project, Cardinal Health has pledged to donate 2,000 care packages (consisting of toiletries and other personal hygiene items), as well as other consumer health products to VA facilities for distribution to homeless veterans. This program is being piloted at nine VA facilities across the country, including several in the Midwest, parts of the Southwest and California. Interesting to note that not only the Veterans Advocates of Ore-Ida, but several organizations across the Western Treasure Valley, have been doing this service for years, by providing toiletry kits and personal care items to our needy and homeless through our offices, stand downs and shelters. So glad to see more are now responding. Another new strategic partnership is with NCR Corporation. This features NCR's self-service kiosks especially designed for veterans. It provides a point-of-service for all veterans (rural, homeless, economically disadvantaged and medically disabled) and their spouses and dependents, to access their history with the VA. So far there is one each in New York City and Los Angeles.

The VA also announced that they now are partnering with Social Security in order to speed up disability decisions. This Health IT program will utilize the VA's Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) Program. This new national initiative provides an automated delivery system for veterans records to be obtained by the Social Security Administration, and should speed up the application process for Social Security Disability benefits.

The VA also awarded \$6.8 Billion for medical disability examinations for veterans, also known as (Comp and Pen Examinations) which is Compensation and Pension. These awards, to five firms, are intended to reduce veterans wait times for service connected benefits. This new consortium of providers is expected to surpass the processing period of the 'MyVA' initiative of 2014. Contracts and oversight will be managed by the VA's 'Strategic Acquisition Center', which is located in Frederick, Maryland.

And to try to catch up with the times, the VA has announced that they are now partnering with another government organization, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as a federal shared service provider. The service that the USDA is providing the VA, is a modern financial management solution that will replace the existing system and improve financial transparency and processing across the department. Lets all hope this will work, and just maybe save some money to better help veterans! On another note, the battle lines are really being drawn regarding the VA and the 2016 election results. The main dividing issue is whether to expand the privatization of the VA. Fierce battling on both sides over the second-largest agency in the federal government with 350,000+ employees. Keep an eye on this one folks. "The prudent man always studies seriously and earnestly, to understand whatever he professes to understand, and not merely to persuade other people that he understands it." — Adam Smith

33. **2017 KOREAN WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**



**Sheraton**<sup>®</sup>  
NORFOLK WATERSIDE HOTEL

## The Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel looks forward to welcoming the Korean War Veterans Association!

### **DATES**

October 4th – 8th, 2017 Rates available (3) days pre and post subject to hotel availability

### **BOOKING LINK**

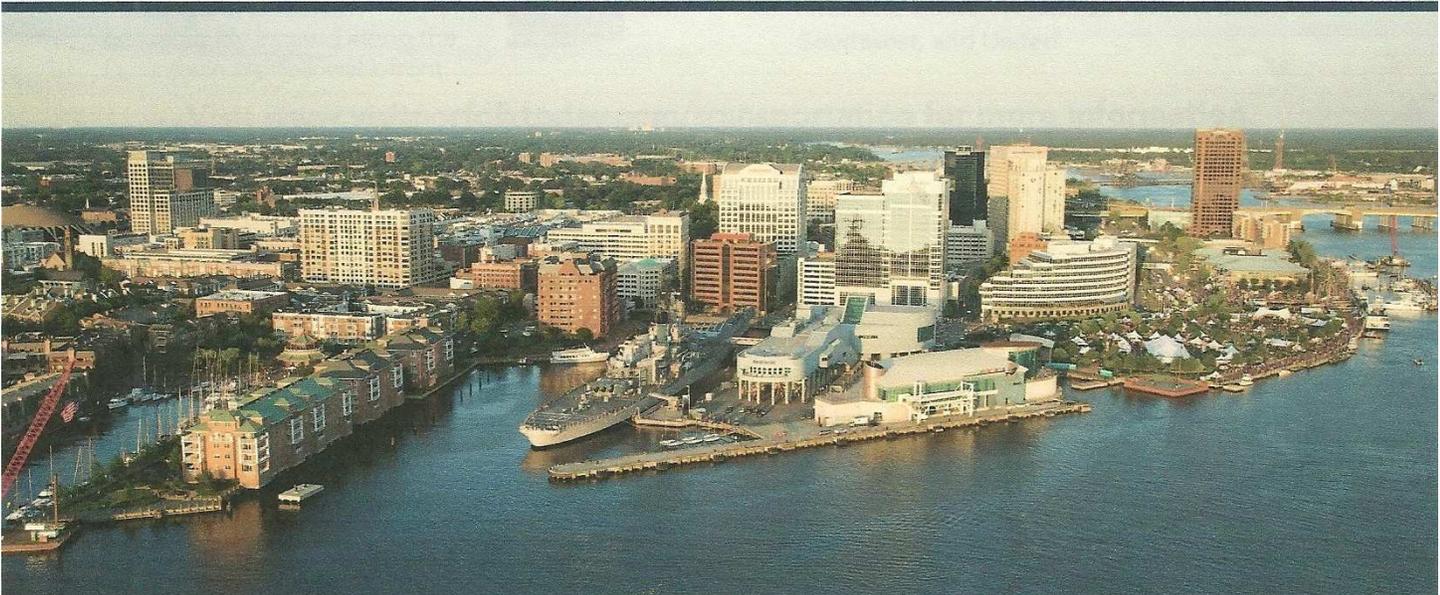
<https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/KWA2017> or call 1-800-325-3535 and ask for the Korean War Veterans Association

### **RATES**

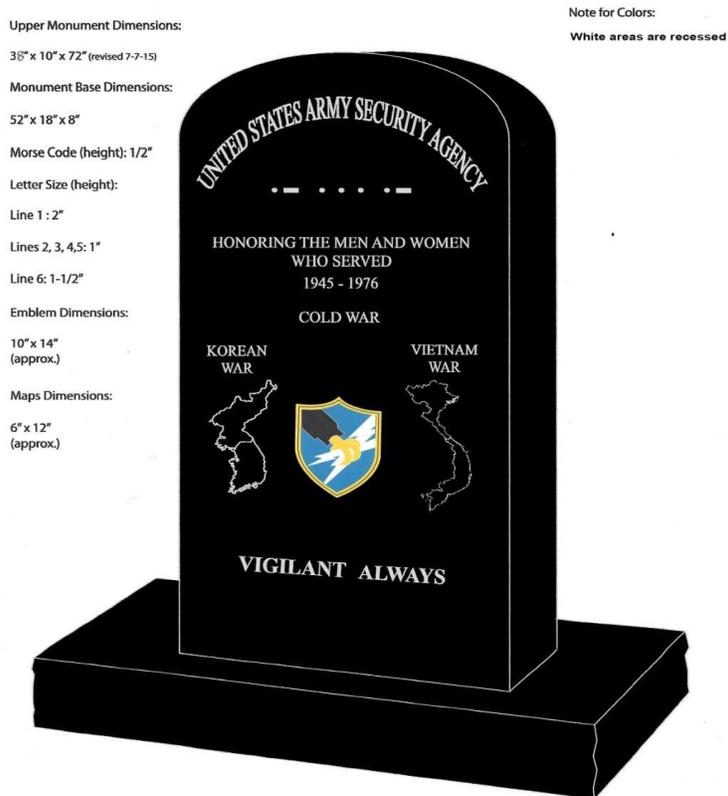
Standard room at \$104.00 plus tax, Balcony room at \$114.00 plus tax, Club Level king at \$134.00 plus tax. Choice of two queen size beds or one king size bed, harbor view or city view. Club level rooms include access to complimentary continental breakfast and evening hors d'oeuvres.

### **LOCATION**

Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel 777 Waterside Drive, Norfolk, VA 23510 [www.sheraton.com/norfolk](http://www.sheraton.com/norfolk) (757) 622-6664.



34. **HONOR FLIGHTS:** Honor Flights for the remainder of the year have not been scheduled to the unpredictable weather in Washington, D.C. Honor Flights will resume starting in April 2017.
35. **DIRECT SCHEDULING FOR VA AUDIOLOGY AND OPTOMETRY APPOINTMENTS:** The VA announced it would eliminate a primary care referral requirement for veterans seeking appointments with audiologists or optometrists. The Audiology and Optometry Direct Scheduling Initiative is being piloted throughout the country and is expected to be fully operational within all VA Medical Centers by the end of 2016.
36. **RESCHEDULED: KWVMF FUND RAISING GALAS:** A Gala Benefit is scheduled for, November 31, 2016, at the Sheila Hotel, Seoul, Korea to raise money for the maintenance program at the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the Wall of Remembrance in Washington, D.C.
37. **CHOSIN FEW MEMORIAL DEDICATION** at Quantico Marine Corps Base (Museum) has been postponed indefinitely due to contractual problems.
38. **NEW MEMORIAL PROPOSED FOR ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY:**



19.

**MASSACUSETTS APPROVES KOREAN DEFENSE**

**VETERANS MONUMENT:** Korea Defense Veterans are about to get their first dedicated monument! It will be on the site of the Korea War Memorial in Charlestown, MA. The memorial was conceived, designed, and constructed by the Korea Veterans of America which is Chapter#299 of the KWVA. Other monuments similar to this one are being planned in the New York/New Jersey area and on the West Coast. Jeff Brodeur, Second Vice President of the KWVA, was the force behind this effort and through his tireless efforts it will come into being on November 10, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. at the Charlestown site. All are welcome to attend the dedication, and if they choose, they may still make a donation in any amount to its' overall cost. Special thanks go out to Jongwoo Han, PhD., President of the Korean War Legacy Foundation, Inc. and World History Digital Education Foundation, Inc. for their financial support, as well the members of the KWVA who helped make this dream a reality. Membership in the KWVA is open to all who served in Korea at any time from 1950 – present. ([www.kwva.org](http://www.kwva.org))



20. **PBS'S NEW DOCUMENTARY, "THE BATTLE OF CHOSIN RESERVOIR," IS A BRUTALLY HONEST ACCOUNT OF THE INFAMOUS BATTLE THAT NEARLY WIPED OUT THE 1ST MARINE DIVISION DURING THE KOREAN WAR.**

When I ask Korean War veteran Juan Balleza about what he thinks of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there's a heavy sigh on the other end of the line. He tells me that he's followed the wars closely, on the news and in

the movies. He marvels at the amount of equipment soldiers have to carry these days, and the power and accuracy of their weapons. Then, after a long pause, Balleza says, “I don’t think I could survive that type of fighting. It’s got be very stressful.” That’s not the response I’m expecting. Balleza was a Marine. He fought in the Chosin Reservoir, in one of the bloodiest battles in U.S. military history, and he did it on an empty stomach, and with no body armor, and in subzero temperatures. Give him an M4 and some night-vision goggles and the guy could survive anything, because for 17 days in the winter of 1950 he survived *everything*. But Balleza doesn’t see it that way. He was lucky, that’s all. “I came back with all my fingers, all my toes,” he says. “No frost bite. Just the experience of having survived battles, and people trying to kill me, and me killing them.”



Photo via Wikimedia Commons

*A column of the U.S. 1st Marine Division move through Chinese lines during their breakout from the Chosin Reservoir*

Balleza is one of a handful of Korean War veterans who appear in PBS’s new documentary, “The Battle of Chosin,” a comprehensive blow-by-blow of the infamous 17-day battle, which pitted two of the world’s most powerful militaries against each other under some of the world’s most extreme conditions. It’s a story of extraordinary hardship, and, at its most visceral, a meditation on the impact of combat on the mind and soul. “You’re not the same person,” says one Chosin veteran, who describes beating a group of wounded Chinese prisoners with his rifle. “You’re a different person. You’re just something that you never thought you’d be.” The film is also a history lesson. Korea is often called the “forgotten war,” but it was only buried, like a traumatic memory — the moment it became painfully obvious that we weren’t the invincible superpower we thought we were after World War II. And we’re still reeling from it. If there’s one clear takeaway from this film, it’s that the Battle of Chosin permanently altered America’s footing in the world.

To drive that point home, “The Battle of Chosin” features a number of illuminating interviews with experts and historians. But, really, it’s Balleza’s story and the stories of the other veterans who fought in the reservoir that do the most to capture the magnitude of the battle, and then to help us, the audience, make better sense of its legacy. Balleza grew up in San Antonio and joined the Marine Corps Reserve in 1948 at the age of 17. In May 1950, he graduated high school. The war started in June. His outfit was called to active duty in July. Two months later, he was carrying a Browning Automatic Rifle in the embattled streets of Seoul, South Korea. “I was pretty salty by that point,” Balleza told Task & Purpose. “But I didn’t realize the danger that was up the road at the Chosin Reservoir.”



Screen grab from PBS's

*American Marines in North Korea during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir.*

The orders came in early November: Balleza's unit, the 7th Marine Regiment, would head north into the mountains en route to the Chinese border with the rest of Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Smith's 1st Marine Division to crush the remnants of the North Korean military on its home turf. Gen. Douglas MacArthur was then the commander of all United Nations' forces in Korea. By his estimation, the war was almost won.

That was, of course, a gross miscalculation. The worst had yet to come. As MacArthur's forces advanced toward what was expected to be a swift and relatively painless victory, Mao Zedong was quietly preparing the Chinese military to enter the fight from the other side of the border.

It began on the night of Nov. 27 with a surprise attack. Approximately 120,000 Chinese troops charged into the American encampments on both sides of the Chosin Reservoir, outnumbering Smith's forces about four to one. "It was just one solid field of fire as they came down," a Marine veteran recalls in the documentary.

The opposing armies clashed in the dark. Rifles became clubs. Bayonets were fixed. Men were shot at pointblank range. The fight raged until dawn.

Then, just as suddenly as they had arrived, the Chinese troops vanished. It was a ploy: Mao's strategy was to lure MacArthur's forces deeper into North Korea, where mountain passes provided minimal cover and temperatures remained around 30 below zero, so they could be surrounded and slaughtered. MacArthur, thinking the Chinese were on the run, took the bait. The Battle Of Chosin Reservoir is the 17-day bloodbath that followed. As American casualties surged, a "fighting withdrawal" southward was initiated, but Mao had the 1st Marine Division in his crosshairs. He wanted to annihilate it. In the documentary, veterans describe a desperate scramble for survival — an every-man-for-himself scenario that saw droves of wounded Americans left for dead and, ultimately, the entire U.N. contingent driven below the 38th parallel never to return.

For the United States, the defeat has served as an enduring wake-up call.

"You had fundamental changes in American history," explains historian Bruce Cumings. "That built the national security state, built military bases abroad, a large standing Army for the first time in US history. And all of that transpired in December 1950 courtesy of the Chinese intervention."

Balleza left Korea in February 1951. He's not bitter — not toward MacArthur for mismanaging the war, not toward the North Koreans for starting it, and not toward the Chinese troops he faced in combat. "I've said and I'll say it again," he said. "If I were to meet a Chinese soldier who was up there when I was, I'd hug him like a brother, because I know that he suffered the same things that I did."



Screen grab from PBS's

*American troops in North Korea during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir*



Photo via Wikimedia Commons

*Wounded Marines evacuated by a HO3S-1 helicopter from VMO-6.*

Time is funny like that. It helps us see the positives in situations that were once insufferable. But Balleza isn't just being nostalgic. When, like many of the other veterans interviewed in the documentary, Balleza looks back at the battle of the Chosin Reservoir, the tragedy of that experience is largely eclipsed by all the good that followed. The way he sees it, Korea was a victory. The evidence is everywhere.

“South Korea is one of the strongest economic nations in the world,” he said. “Just look at all of the Korean products around. It's incredible. It makes me feel good that the friends of mine who did not make it back, they did not die in vain. The Koreans have really paid for the sacrifice of so many American military men.”

21. **VETERANS DAY 2017**: Director Paul Cunningham has been appointed Chair of the Veterans Day 2017 Committee. Other members include Director Whitmore and Executive Director Jim Fisher. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please inform Director Cunningham.

Our urgent interest in this planning lies in the necessity for the Korean War Veterans to prepare for Veterans Day, 2017 when we will be Host VSO.

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and agenda items included:

- Review of quotes from caterers for Reception. Polish food items were included in the menu and reflected in the quotes of just under **\$32,000 (this includes all taxes and usage fees)**. This represents the largest single expense.
- Logistics of setting up the reception area to provide informative information regarding the PLAV, membership applications, National Service Director on Benefits available to veterans. Volunteers to “man” the tables, greeters and personnel to check the names of guests against the issued invitations. (Must meet restrictions and/or rules set by VA) Signage and its display.
- Invitation Cards for the reception.
- Ordering Lapel Pins for reception attendees and possibly members who will be unable to attend.
- Reception location. Women in Military Service Memorial Building. **RENTAL FEE: \$1, 500,00** (SUBJECT TO CHANGE).
- Determination of Need for a Specific Checking Account for the 2017 Veterans Day Event with the requirement that 2 signatures be required for all checks.
- Hotels and Transportation needs for Departments. Consideration of “Specials” such as tours and monument visitations. Several area lodging sites had been visited and were discussed.
- Seating for the Ceremonies at Arlington Amphitheater and Bus information. Early arrival for PLAV is encouraged because of expected crowds. Amphitheater seating is limited and opens to the public on a “first come-first seated” basis after 8:00AM

22. **PRAYER LIST**:

- Mrs. Virginia Edwards (Sonny's wife) – remission
- COL Bill Weber – Fitting of new prosthesis
- Director George Bruzgis – Operation on his legs – Circulation problems

It is an honor to work with each of you and I hope we continue to look forward to continuing our progress in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

*James R. Fisher*

James R. Fisher  
National Executive Director  
Korean War Veterans Association, USA