



JEWISH WAR VETERANS POST #373

ALBERT ARONOWITZ CHAPTER, Tampa, Florida

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CONNECTIONS

MARCH 2020 EDITION

OUR NEXT MEETING

Sunday, March 15th

9:30 am Breakfast / 10:00 am Meeting
SCI Unit — James A. Haley VA Center
13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa



UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES*

To find our meeting room, go in the main entrance of the SCI Unit. There is a stained glass window ahead of you. Take a left at the stained glass window. Our meeting room is the second sliding door on your left.



**Uncommon Valor:
Honoring Jewish
Heroes**
Sunday, March 8th
See Flyer on Page 32

Date

Time Event

Sunday March 8	0300	Daylight Savings Begins
Monday March 9		Purim begins (Sundown)
Sunday March 15	0930**	Post Meeting
Sunday March 29		Vietnam Veterans Day
Wednesday April 8		Passover begins (Sundown)
Sunday April 19	0930**	Post Meeting
Monday April 20		Yom Hashoah begins (Sundown)
Tuesday April 28		Israel Independence Day (Sundown)
Sunday May 10		Mother's Day
Saturday May 16		Armed Forces Day
Sunday May 17	0930**	Post Meeting
Sunday May 24		Collections — locations TBA
Monday May 25		Memorial Day
		Collections — locations TBA
Thursday June 4	0900	Department of Florida Convention
Saturday June 6		D Day
Sunday June 14		Flag Day and Army's Birthday
Sunday June 21	0930**	Post Meeting and Father's Day

* Dates and Times are subject to change

** Breakfast at 0930; Meeting begins at 1000

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For the latest updates:

Check out all of our websites:

Post 373 — www.jwvtampa.org
State of FL — www.jwv-fl.org
JWV National — www.jwv.org



COMMANDER'S CORNER

At our March meeting we will hold elections preceded by one more opportunity for nominations. You can nominate yourself. Consider stepping up. Installation will take place at the April meeting.

Upcoming events:

- We will be honored by the Tampa City Council on Thursday March 19th. Please plan to attend.
- We have been invited to participate at a Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home event hosted by Suncoast Hospice. They have offered us a table to display JWV info and we will have an opportunity to do some recruiting.
- I have been asked to speak at the POW/MIA Day event at the Veterans Memorial Park in Tampa on Saturday April 4th (National approved the appearance on behalf of the JWV). I would like as many members as possible to show the "hats".
- We will have our Color Guard at the JCC (Downtown location) on Sunday May 3rd – I need to know who will be participating.
- We will plant flags at several local cemeteries on Wednesday morning May 20th.
- We will have our annual Memorial Day Poppy Sale/Collection – we will discuss dates and locations at the meeting.

There is a growing concern about the Corona Virus that is making its way around the world. I would like to expound on this. Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses, they are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. They cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) which was transmitted from dromedary camels to humans and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) which was transmitted from civet cats to humans.

The strain of current concern is a new strain, coronavirus COVID-19 that has not been previously identified in humans and the source has yet to be identified.

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives

on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing, cleaning surfaces such as shopping cart handles before touching them, and thoroughly cooking meat and eggs,

If you suspect you may have contracted COVID-19, contact your doctor right away. **DO NOT GO TO THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE OR A HOSPITAL** until you speak to the doctor or hospital. This way you can be sure not to infect others. Tell him or her about your symptoms and recent travels and possible exposure before you go to your appointment.

What are the symptoms and how can you tell if it may be the virus vs a cold or allergy?

The most common symptoms of the virus:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Common symptoms of allergies:

- Clear, watery nasal discharge
- Itchiness of the eyes, ears, nose, or mouth
- Sporadic fits of sneezing
- Can last for weeks to months

Common symptoms of a cold:

- Thick, discolored nasal discharge
- Sore throat and cough
- Fever or slightly raised temperature
- Usually lasts several days before starting to go away

The virus can cause pneumonia and in severe cases there can be organ failure. As this is viral pneumonia, antibiotics are of no use. The antiviral drugs we have against flu will not work. Recovery depends on the strength of the immune system. Many of those who have died were already in poor health.

An important fact to remember is that the flu annually kills far more people than this new Corona virus has. So far, in the US alone, according to preliminary estimates from the CDC, 18,000 people have died, 280,000 people have been hospitalized and approximately 35 million in the U.S. have come down with the flu during the 2019-2020 season.

Bottom line is, there is no reason to panic. In the U. S., your chances of contracting this new virus are very slim. If you suspect you are in the presence of someone who may be ill, follow the precautions above and stay healthy, as a good immune system is your best defense against this virus.

L'Shalom,

Larry

US SIGNS DEAL WITH TALIBAN TO END AFGHANISTAN WAR, BRING HOME TROOPS

29 Feb 2020 | The Los Angeles Times | By David S. Cloud, Tracy Wilkinson

DOHA, Qatar—The United States and the Taliban agreed on a peace deal Saturday that calls for swift reductions in U.S. forces in Afghanistan in return for commitments by the militant group to reject foreign terrorists, a major step toward ending America's longest war.

To shouts of “God is great,” the accord was signed by U.S. and Taliban negotiators side by side in a luxury hotel ballroom in a scene once all but unthinkable. The sides agreed that the U.S. will cut its troop levels from around 12,000 today to 8,600 by early summer—and eventually to withdraw completely from Afghanistan if al-Qaeda and other terror groups do not reemerge there.

Dozens of turbaned, bearded Taliban - some with smart phones, others fingering worry beads - took seats in the red-carpeted hall for the signing, many of them sitting in proximity to current and former U.S. officials, their longtime foes, for the first time.

“Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan,” read a sign in English, Arabic and Pashto on the dais where the officials inked the deal.

The agreement offers perhaps the best opportunity yet for the U.S. to extricate itself from a grinding 19-year war that has cost the lives of more than 2,400 U.S. soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Afghans since it invaded after the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 and ousted the Taliban from power.

The agreement does not involve a full end to the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan: The initial withdrawals would only return troop numbers to about the same level achieved by former President Barack Obama, who oversaw a steep pullout from Afghanistan that Trump reversed a few months after he took office.

But even a partial pullout would give Trump a signature election-year achievement, enabling him to claim he has followed through on his pledge to scale back overseas wars, a goal that has largely eluded him in Iraq and Syria.

In the four-page pact, the U.S. pledged to remove all forces from Afghanistan within 14 months and to begin “immediate” work on freeing some 5,000 Taliban prisoners. It stated that the Taliban “will send a clear message” that Al Qaeda and “those who pose a threat to the security of the United States and its allies have no place in Afghanistan.”

“The agreement we sign today will be the true test,” Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo said as he opened the ceremony. The deal was finalized after a week-long pause in fighting that saw



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during the agreement signing between Taliban and U.S. officials in Doha, Qatar, Feb. 29, 2020. The United States is poised to sign a peace agreement with Taliban militants on Saturday aimed at bringing an end to

18 years of bloodshed in Afghanistan and allowing U.S. troops to return home from America's longest war. (AP Photo/Hussein Sayed)

attacks across Afghanistan drop sharply. It commits the Taliban to an eventual ceasefire and to launch talks for the first time with U.S.-backed government in Kabul on a political settlement of the conflict—demands the militant group has steadfastly rejected in the past.

But Taliban negotiators set aside those objections in return for a pledge by the U.S. to withdraw its troops, the group's longtime goal and one that meshed with Trump's own desire to bring troops home in the middle of an election year.

Afghan officials in Kabul reacted cautiously to the agreement. “The reduction of violence was a good start. I hope it will come to a ceasefire,” Defense Minister Asadullah Khalid said. “But the Afghan National Army has a duty, a job. Even with a peace agreement, they will continue to control and keep their positions, however in a defensive way.”

The Kabul government only grudgingly agreed to begin power-sharing talks with the Taliban after U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad opened direct talks with the Taliban for the first time last year. That raised fears of President Ashraf Ghani and other officials in Kabul that the U.S. was willing to reach a separate peace with their longtime foes.

Though Pompeo attended the ceremony, the agreement was signed by Khalilzad, who was born in that country and later emigrated to the United States, and by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's top political leader and a longtime advocate of negotiations.

Taliban leaders staged what amounted to a brief victory parade on Doha streets before the signing ceremony, likening the deal to previous victories over other foreign armies who sought to occupy Afghanistan, including the British and the Soviets,

“This historic day in our history is a day of pride. Today is the day that our fathers celebrated 30 years and a hundred years ago by defeating Britains and Russians,” said Mohammed Abas

Stanekzai, a senior Taliban negotiator, as other Taliban waved the group's flag and cheered. A video of the march was posted on YouTube.

"After 20 years of jihad are celebrating a day that Islamic Emirate would sign the agreement with the invader Americans which is about withdrawal of their troops and the victory of Afghanistan Mujahedeen," he added, while also warning Taliban "not to become too arrogant." He said the "American invaders" will be gone in 14 months.

"Our brother and our elder Mullah Baradar will sign this agreement with the American invaders," Stanekzai said. "Based on this agreement foreign troops would leave Afghanistan within 14 months and Afghanistan would be independent once again."

In reaching a deal with the Taliban, a coalition of largely ethnic Pashtun militia groups who imposed a harsh form of Islam on the country and allowed Osama bin Laden and other terror leaders to operate from their territory, Trump has at least on paper achieved the makings of a potential ending of the conflict.

But the deal is fraught with risks and unknowns that could easily cause it to collapse, former U.S. officials and analysts say. The looming departure of the U.S. could reignite a four-decade-old civil war, a conflict that predated the U.S. invasion and that could quickly intensify again, as warlords and rival ethnic groups rearm and resume the bloody fighting that over four decades left the country one of the poorest in the world.

If violence does spike, Trump or his successor will have to decide whether to proceed with the planned pullout or halt it in hopes of preventing Afghanistan from once again descending into chaos. "There is a risk that it will very quickly breakdown," said Laurel Miller, a former State Department special representative for Afghanistan. "If the U.S. loses interest, it's hard to see where the glue for this process comes from."

The timing of the the next round of talks, which are scheduled to begin March 10 in Oslo, could hardly be worse for Ghani, the Afghan president, who this month was declared the winner of presidential elections—nearly five months after the vote. His chief rival, Abdullah Abdullah, has refused to recognize that outcome and declared himself the victor.

The standoff has delayed appointment of a negotiating team for the talks with Taliban.

The two sides appears far apart, with Ghani and his advisors seemingly intent on deal that allows the Taliban to join the government, while Taliban negotiators appear to have in mind more far-reaching overhaul that give them a major voice in running the country.

Having succeeded in forcing the U.S. to agree to a withdrawal after two decades of fighting, Taliban leaders consider

themselves to be operating from a position of strength, Paul Miller, a former U.S. National Security Council official who oversaw Afghanistan policy said in remarks last week at the Center for National Security, a centrist Washington think tank.

Many Taliban were forced to flee to Pakistan early in the war. Its leaders took refuge in the remote city of Quetta while others used its largely ungoverned tribal areas to mount attacks inside Afghanistan, fighting on year after year, despite often severe casualties in battles with the U.S. and Afghan troops.

Though its support in Kabul and other Afghan cities is low, the Taliban has steadily gained ground in rural areas in recent years, taking back control of districts in the south and east of the country that had been under under Kabul's control a decade ago when the U.S. had nearly 100,000 troops in the country.

Attacks by the Taliban and other militant groups "increased considerably in late 2019," according to data provided by the U.S. military to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction in a report released in January. In response, the U.S. stepped up airstrikes, dropping more bombs in 2019 than in any year in over a decade.

Without continuing U.S. pressure on the Taliban, its leaders could quickly back away from the agreement or the Afghan government could become mired its own internal divisions, analysts said.

There are also growing fears especially among Afghanistan's urban population that the Taliban militants could reclaim power in some areas of the country and take away women's rights and other hard-won freedoms as they seek to reimpose their harsh form of Islamic law.

U.S. officials said they will have a seat at the talks in Oslo and will press for protecting women's and minority rights, as well as for the survival of the Afghan government, which remains wracked by corruption and unable to fully control large parts of the country.

"A high priority for us is absolutely the protection of women's rights," a senior State Department official told reporters in Washington. "We will use our voice."

But keeping the talks on track will require the U.S. to use the leverage it still has over the Taliban to force them to a deal. That leverage includes threatening to withhold international aid, on which Afghanistan is heavily dependent, analysts said.

U.S. officials also insist that the timetable for reducing troop levels below 8,600 will dependent on conditions in the country—specifically the Taliban's adherence to its promise not to allow al Qaeda and other terror groups to reestablish a presence on Afghan territory.



TALIBAN SAY THEY WILL RESUME OPERATIONS AGAINST AFGHAN FORCES

2 Mar 2020 | Agence France Presse

The Taliban said Monday they were resuming offensive operations against Afghan security forces, ending the partial truce that preceded the signing of a deal between the insurgents and Washington.

The declaration comes only a day after President Ashraf Ghani said he would continue the partial truce at least until talks between Afghan officials and the Taliban kick-off, supposedly on March 10.

It ran for one week ahead of the signing of the historic accord in Doha on Saturday, and continued over the weekend.

“The reduction in violence... has ended now and our operations will continue as normal,” Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP.

“As per the (U.S.-Taliban) agreement, our mujahideen will not attack foreign forces but our operations will continue against the Kabul administration forces.”

Fawad Aman, deputy spokesman for the defense ministry said the government was “checking to see if (the truce) had ended”.

“We have not had any reports of any big attacks in the country yet”, he added.

Since the deal signing on Saturday, the Taliban have been publicly celebrating their “victory” over the U.S.

Under the terms of the deal, foreign forces will quit Afghanistan



The Taliban’s decision to resume operations against Afghan forces comes just days after they agreed a deal with the United States. (Giuseppe CACACE/ AFP)

within 14 months, subject to Taliban security guarantees and a pledge by the insurgents to hold talks with the Kabul government.

The dramatic fall in attacks due to last week’s partial truce between the Taliban, U.S. and Afghan forces offered Afghans a rare opportunity to go about their daily lives without fear of violence.

Ghani warned the insurgents Monday that he was not committed to a key clause in the Doha deal involving the release of thousands of Taliban prisoners.



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US STRIKES TALIBAN FORCES, IN FIRST HIT SINCE PEACE DEAL



In this Dec. 31, 2001, file photo, U.S. Marines with full battle gear prepare to leave the U.S. military compound at Kandahar airport for a mission to an undisclosed location. (AP Photo/John Moore)

4 Mar 2020 | The Associated Press | By Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. conducted Wednesday its first airstrike against Taliban forces in Afghanistan, a military spokesman said, days after signing an ambitious peace deal with the militant group in the Mideastern state of Qatar.

U.S. military spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said in a tweet that the “defensive” strike was the first U.S. attack against the militants in 11 days. He said the attack was to counter a Taliban assault on Afghan government forces in Nahr-e Saraj in the southern Helmand province. Leggett added that Taliban forces had conducted 43 attacks on Afghan troops on Tuesday in Helmand.

Leggett called on the Taliban to stop the attacks and uphold their commitments based on the agreement signed on Feb. 29 between their leaders and U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Doha, Qatar, which lays out a conditions-based path to the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan.

President Donald Trump confirmed Tuesday that he spoke on the phone to a Taliban leader, making him the first U.S. president believed to have ever spoken directly with the militant group responsible for the deaths of thousands of U.S. troops in nearly 19 years of fighting in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Defense Ministry said in another statement on Wednesday that a Taliban attack on a checkpoint in northern Kunduz province had killed seven of its soldiers. The statement said that ten Taliban fighters were killed in the shoot-out.

The Taliban have not claimed responsibility for any of these attacks so far or commented on the U.S. airstrike Wednesday. However, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told The Associated Press Wednesday that a week of reduction in violence that started midnight on Feb. 21 had ended.

Leggett said that U.S. forces are responsible for defending their Afghan allies according to agreements between U.S. and Afghan governments.

NEW HAMPSHIRE SENATORS CALL ON ESPER TO HONOR 'LOST 74' ON VIETNAM WALL



Frank E. Evans (DD-754) underway in January 1969. (U.S. Navy/Collections of the Naval History and Heritage Command)

24 Feb 2020 | The New Hampshire Union Leader, Manchester | By Shawne Wickham

New Hampshire's two U.S. senators have signed on to a bipartisan letter urging Defense Secretary Mark Esper to add the names of the 74 American sailors who died aboard the USS Frank E. Evans in 1969 to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

Sens. Jeanne Shaheen, D-NH, and Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., both members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, are leading a dozen lawmakers who requested a meeting with Esper to discuss the matter. Noting that last year marked the 50th anniversary of the loss of the sailors during a training exercise off the coast of Vietnam, the senators said honoring their sacrifice "is long overdue."

During international maneuvers on June 3, 1969, the Evans collided with a much larger Australian aircraft carrier and the smaller ship was cut in half. Seventy-four sailors died, including two young men from New Hampshire: Ronald Arthur Thibodeau of Manchester and Gary Joseph Vigue of Farmington. Both were married and had young sons.

The military did not include the "Lost 74" sailors' names on the Vietnam wall in Washington, D.C., because the accident happened outside the designated combat zone.

In their letter to Esper, Shaheen and her fellow senators, including Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-NH, and Susan Collins, R-Maine, noted that the Evans had been providing naval gunfire off the coast of Vietnam before the training exercise, including during the Tet Offensive. And the ship's crew had been set to return to combat after the exercise concluded, they told Esper.

"We look forward to a meeting with you and working together to ensure their names are added and their sacrifice is rightfully commemorated," the letter concluded.

AIR FORCE ISSUES NEW GUIDELINES FOR BEARDS, TURBANS AND HIJABS



Airman 1st Class Jaspreet Singh, the first Airman at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey to wear a U.S. Air Force approved turban as a uniform item stands in front of a fire truck at Fire Station 1, Joint Base MDL, Dec. 5, 2019. (U.S. Air Force/Airman 1st Class Briana Cespedes)

11 Feb 2020 | Stars and Stripes | By Chad Garland

Airmen will be allowed to wear up to 2-inch beards under a new Air Force guidance that outlines grooming standards for religious accommodations.

The updated grooming policy, published Friday, also allows members of the Sikh faith to wear turbans and Muslim women to wear hijabs.

Airmen must have religious or medical exemptions to grow beards, the policy says.

The guidance for beards grown under a shaving waiver remains unchanged: Such whiskers must not be trimmed to give a sculpted appearance and cannot exceed a quarter-inch in length, the updated policy states.

The Air Force is following the lead of the Army, which in 2017 became the first service to allow Muslim and Sikh soldiers to wear head coverings and beards in line with their religious beliefs. A similar accommodation was extended later to Norse pagan service members.

A Muslim airman first was allowed to wear a beard in 2018. The following year, a Sikh and at least two Norse heathen airmen were granted beard accommodations, according to a review of media reports.

The new guidance does not limit how long a religiously accommodated beard can be but states that it must be rolled or tied so that it does not extend more than 2 inches below the chin. A connected mustache must not extend past the line of the upper lip, the guidance says.

Turbans, under-turbans and hijabs must be made of a “subdued material in a color that closely resembles the assigned uniform,” it states. Designs other than a camouflage pattern matching the uniform are prohibited. The head coverings must be worn in a neat and conservative manner and, when directed by a commander, need to be made of fire-resistant material. Turbans may be worn in place of traditional military headgear.

Wing commanders or the equivalent, colonel and above, may grant waivers for the sacred scruff or holy headgear after a chaplain has interviewed the applicant to ensure a request is based on sincerely held religious convictions. In the past, chaplains had to certify it was part of a doctrinal or traditional observance.

Requests for beard, turban or hijab waivers should be approved unless they involve a “compelling government interest,” such as safety, or would negatively affect military readiness, unit cohesion, standards or discipline, the regulation states.

Accommodations may be suspended or withdrawn if an airman is assigned to hazardous duty or environments, such as where chemical weapons threats exist.

Commands may also demand an immediate shave or removal of headgear to ensure a proper gas mask fit in the event of an attack, say sample approval memos included with the new regulation.

WITHDRAWAL *(Continued from page 4)*

Both sides are likely to continue to limit attacks in hopes of a cease fire will take hold in coming weeks. The U.S. and its allies are planning training and better equipping Afghan army and police while the talks are under way. And the U.S. military says it will continue to carry out counter-terrorism operations against Islamic State, which has fighters in eastern parts of the country.

The U.S. could also delay additional withdrawals if the Oslo talks collapse or the Taliban refuses to negotiate in good faith, though it’s unclear whether Trump would decide to halt the pullout in that case.

“If the talks fail there is nothing in the agreement that obliges the United States to withdraw its troops,” said the official, who briefed reporters on the condition of not being named. “That’s not to say that president doesn’t have prerogatives as commander-in-chief to make any decision he feels is appropriate.”

NATO AGREES TO EXPAND IRAQ TRAINING MISSION

12 Feb 2020 | Agence France Presse | By Damon Wake

NATO defense ministers agreed Wednesday to expand the alliance's training mission in Iraq, responding to U.S. President Donald Trump's demand for more action from allies in the Middle East.

The plan is for NATO, which runs a 500-strong mission to train Iraqi forces, to take on some personnel and training activities now run by the US-led multinational coalition against the Islamic State group.

But the details -- how many troops will switch and what they will do -- have yet to be worked out because the alliance is still waiting for the Iraqi government's formal agreement.

"Today we have made the decision in principle. We will continue to work on the details and the numbers and exactly what kind of activities," Stoltenberg said.

Spain said it was ready to transfer troops currently working under the aegis of the coalition to the NATO mission, as Western powers seek to enable Iraq to prevent any resurgence of the feared jihadist group.

"We support moving a major part of the Spanish contingent to the NATO mission, while still continuing to work with the coalition," Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles said, insisting that any changes must have the backing of the Iraqi government.

Stoltenberg said the alliance wanted to "provide more support to Iraq, because it is extremely important that ISIS never returns. "We have seen the brutality, have seen the horrendous violence they have been responsible for," he added.

Trump called on NATO to do more in the Middle East in January, days after a U.S. drone strike against a top Iranian commander in Baghdad sparked a regional crisis.

The January 3 strike that killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani sparked outrage in Baghdad and a vote by the Iraqi parliament to oust all foreign troops -- including 5,200 U.S. soldiers.

The anti-IS coalition halted its campaign for three weeks in response, and NATO stopped training activities while insisting it remained committed to helping Iraq.

British Defence Minister Ben Wallace said London was open to moving some of its troops to the NATO mission, which is seen as more palatable to Iraqi authorities because of its non-combat role and because it is not US-led.

While the NATO mission would do similar training activities to the anti-IS coalition, officials feel the alliance could make it more effective by bringing greater structure and coordination,



Iraqi Army commanders and soldiers outside an Islamic State drone and IED factory discovered today on June 23, 2017, in the frontline neighborhood of Al-Shifa, on the edge of the Islamic State occupied Old City of west Mosul. *(Martyn AIM/Getty Images)*

owing to its experience of training forces in Afghanistan.

Beyond increasing the size of the mission by rebadging coalition personnel, ministers also looked at how NATO could expand its training activities. This could involve extending geographically outside NATO's current three training zones or adding more training activities.

As a longer-term objective, NATO is looking to see what it could do elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa to improve stability and fight terrorism by training local forces. "This is both about military activities, but also political support and cooperation with countries in the region," Stoltenberg said.

SAFE TRAVELS —WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT MEDICARE WHEN TRAVELING ABROAD:



In general, Medicare will not pay for health care services or supplies if you travel outside the United States. Please go to the following website to see Medicare Traveling Rules:

<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/travel?>

NATIONAL COMMANDER WEINER TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

The Jewish War Veterans National Commander Harvey Weiner testified before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on February 26. Here is the entirety of Weiner's oral testimony:

Chairman Moran and Chairman Takano, Ranking Members Tester and Roe, I am Harvey Weiner, a Vietnam War combat veteran and the National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., America's oldest active continuous veterans' association. We will be celebrating our 125th anniversary next year. American Jews have fought in all of America's wars in a proportion greater than their proportion in the general population.

I want to speak to you this afternoon about courage. Members of the armed services will risk his or her life on the battlefield to serve this great nation and to do the job assigned. Hundreds of thousands of American soldiers have given their lives and millions of American soldiers and their families have made other sacrifices in this regard. They had the right stuff and displayed great courage. They took enormous risks because their country called and because it was the right thing to do. On behalf of all veterans, past and present, and all service personnel, past and present, I am asking each and every one of you to show courage by doing your job and by doing right, regardless of the political consequences, including the possibility, or even the probability, that you will lose your job by being voted out of office.

When you, who, implicitly or explicitly, sent us off to war and asked us to do the right thing at the risk of our lives, it is a shanda if you are unwilling to take that risk to do right yourselves, rather than what is politically expedient. Shanda is Yiddish for "shameful." The risk of losing your job pales in comparison to the risk we take of losing our lives. I was reviewing the John F. Kennedy Profiles in Courage winners of the award that is the nation's preeminent award for elected officials and public servants. For them and for you, it is the Nobel Prize, the Oscar, the Lasker, the Pulitzer. I give you these examples.

Carl Elliott was a Congressman from Alabama for eight consecutive terms from 1949 to 1965. He was a Democrat, but he authored and voted for National Education Defense Act, which he knew would lead to his removal as a Congressman in 1964. He was right, but he did what was right.

Charles Weltner, also a Democrat, was a Congressman from Georgia who dropped out of his race for a third term rather than seek reelection and be bound by a party loyalty oath to support the candidacy of segregationist Lester Maddox.

Bob Inglis, whom many of you know, is a Republican and was a Congressman from South Carolina. He reversed himself on the issue of climate change because he felt it was the right thing to do. He knew that it would probably mean the demise of his political career and it did.

We, who died, who were wounded, who survived, or who risked our lives in the military to do the right thing because America asked us to, are asking you to do the right thing, merely at risk of losing your jobs.

Do not take funds away from the military, including from their daycare and schools, to build a border wall, because it is politically expedient for you to do so.

In addition, the Constitution, which you swore under oath to uphold, vests the power to declare war solely in the hands of Congress and not in the President, who is solely the Commander in Chief. However, since World War II, Congress, as a practical matter, has ceded its Constitutional responsibility to the President in the semantic guise of so-called "emergencies" and "police actions." War is too important to be in the hands of one person, and since World War II, the usurping of the war power by both Democratic and Republican presidents has led this nation into disaster after disaster and caused the unnecessary deaths of over a hundred thousand of my comrades-in-arms, my brothers and my sisters. An after-the-fact toothless Congressional resolution is not enough. Take back the war power that the framers of the Constitution and your own 1973 War Powers Resolution gave you.

When Abraham Lincoln was in the Congress, he wrote the following:

"The provision of the Constitution giving the war-making power to Congress, was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons. Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This our convention understood to be the most oppressive of all Kingly oppressions; and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us."

As a cantankerous football coach in my neck of the woods is fond of saying, "Do your job!" Risk your jobs to do the right thing! In the long run, it is not just your constituents that you must face. You must face your children, your grandchildren, your descendants, and history. Also, you must face yourself and your conscience. Become a candidate for the Profiles in Courage award.

We, the veterans of America, do not just ask you to do the right thing despite the political consequences. We demand it, and we are entitled to do so. Thank you.



US SAYS CHINESE SHIP FIRED LASER AT AMERICAN AIRCRAFT

28 Feb 2020 | The Associated Press | By Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON — A Chinese Navy ship fired a laser at a U.S. surveillance aircraft flying over the Philippine Sea west of Guam, the Navy said Thursday, acknowledging the incident more than a week after it happened.

The Navy said the People's Republic of China naval destroyer lased the American P-8A Poseidon aircraft in an act the U.S. deemed unsafe and a violation of international codes and agreements. The statement from U.S. Pacific Fleet said the laser was detected by sensors on the aircraft but was not visible to the naked eye.

“Weapons-grade lasers could potentially cause serious harm to aircrew and mariners, as well as ship and aircraft systems,” the Navy said. The incident took place about 380 miles west of Guam.

The Poseidon crew is deployed to Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan. The squadron conducts routine operations, maritime patrol, and reconnaissance in the Pacific Fleet area.



In this image provided by the U.S. Navy, a sailor assigned to the Grey Knights of Patrol Squadron (VP) 46 signals the pilot in the flight station of a P-8A Poseidon during a pre-flight check on Oct. 23, 2019, in Oak Harbor, Wash. (Austin Ingram/U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class via AP)

The Veterans Administration (VA) offers Veterans Choice Program

It stipulates that Veterans who have to wait more than 30 days to see a doctor, or who live more than 40 miles from their closest VA site can receive health care from community providers. The provider must be part of the VA's network of community providers. Please go to the following website for further information:

<https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/choice-act-summary.pdf>

What Is This???



This QR Code leads you directly to the online JWV National Membership Application. Open your camera app on your smartphone as if to take a picture of it. Your smartphone will automatically open the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) in the web browser. On the top of the screen you will see a block that reads, “**Lead.me,**” so go ahead and simply tap the worded block. Your smartphone will automatically scan the QR Code and take you to the Online JWV Membership Application. You can fill out the Online Membership Application and forward it within minutes to JWV USA. Also consider placing this QR code on the back side of your business card to use to sign up new members to your Post. As an alternative, you can store the URL on your phone, which will also take you to the online application. That URL is: www.jwv.org/online_membership/users/membership. Thanks to the JWV USA Professional Career Staff for helping make this process easier.

AFTER DELAY, VA SETS NEW TIMELINE FOR ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD PILOT PROGRAM

28 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Dorothy Mills-Gregg

The Department of Veterans Affairs has delayed deploying its new electronic health record (EHR) pilot until this July, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie told Congress on Thursday. “That is my goal. I’m confident that we can fulfill our mandate,” Wilkie said during a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on the VA’s proposed 2021 budget. “I would hope that it would be earlier.”

Among other benefits, the EHR is meant to relieve new veterans from having to physically carry around a copy of their treatment record by transferring their files electronically from the Pentagon to the VA. It would also combine the VA’s health record programs so staff can spend more time with patients.

Two weeks ago, the VA postponed staff training on the EHR, which was set to go live in Spokane, Washington, by March 2020. “Two weeks ago was always the date that I’d chosen to make sure we would be ready,” Wilkie said. “But I was not satisfied. And I promised you and [House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Phil Roe] that, if I was not satisfied, we would not launch.”

Richard Stone, Veterans Health Administration executive in charge, said the EHR delay is a development issue. “There are about a thousand work processes that need to be written,” he said. “Those are substantially completed, but once you finish those work processes, you’ve got to set that electronic medical record into a number of interfaces that plug into the rest of the system. There are 73 interfaces; 19 are completed as of today, and that is why we’re delayed.”

He added that deploying the new EHR pilot system as planned would have eliminated Spokane veterans’ abilities to refill prescriptions online. Currently, those veterans fill prescriptions about 11,000 times a month online, but since this part of the pilot is not operational yet, the VA would have had to set up a call center and input it all manually, Stone said.

While lawmakers and veteran service organizations expressed disappointment with the delay, they largely supported the VA’s decision. However, Rep. Jim Banks, R-Indiana, asked VA officials to elaborate on the department’s nearly doubled EHR budget request of \$2.6 billion for fiscal 2021. “I absolutely support the \$90 million increase to accelerate the implementation of the scheduling system,” he said, “but I have a hard time seeing how VA could even spend an \$850 million increase for infrastructure and upgrades.”

Stone said aging VA facilities need new cables, in addition to updating the heating and cooling system for the equipment,



Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie addresses the House VA Committee about the VA’s \$243.3 billion budget proposal for fiscal year 2021. *(Military.com photo/Dorothy Mills-Gregg)*

before the EHR can be rolled out to those locations in 2021. “The greatest challenge -- and Dr. Stone touched on it -- is ancient buildings,” Wilkie said. “I’m spending millions and millions of dollars building closets right now to house equipment because the facilities, some of which are a 100 years old or older, can’t accept the kind of infrastructure that we need to get these programs online.”

The new EHR system will include a new appointment scheduling system, which is expected to be rolled out first. The VA has been under intense scrutiny over the last five years as reports revealed some veterans had died while they waited for an appointment and one clinic had created a secret list to hide how long patients were waiting for care.

Jon Rychalski, VA assistant secretary for management and chief financial officer, listed one successful technological upgrade in Spokane. “They were able to change login times from something like 30 minutes to something like 15 seconds. I mean, it’s really that significant.”

Committee Chairman Mark Takano, D-California, reminded Wilkie that, while Congress wants the VA to get the new EHR right, lawmakers must be kept in the loop.

Wilkie acknowledged that responsibility and said he’s been grateful for all the support lawmakers on the House VA committee have given him. “You have graciously recognized the complexity of this program,” Wilkie said. “It is the most complex program the federal government has undertaken, and you have given me gracious opportunities and great leeway to fulfill your mandate.”

HERE'S THE LIST OF MILITARY CLINICS THAT WILL NO LONGER SERVE RETIREES, FAMILIES

19 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Amy Bushatz

Pentagon officials on Wednesday released a list of military treatment facilities and clinics that will no longer provide care to military retirees and active-duty families as part of a shift in focus to supporting active-duty readiness.

“The military health system is in the midst of implementing several significant reforms aimed at building a more integrated and effective system of readiness and health,” said Tom McCaffery, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. “We reviewed all facilities through the lens of their contributions to military readiness -- that includes MTFs [being] operated to ensure service members are medically ready to train and deploy. It also means MTFs are effectively utilized as platforms that enable our military medical personnel to acquire and maintain the clinical skills and experience that prepares them for deployment in support of combat operations around the world.”

The list is included in a 61-page report to Congress delivered Wednesday. The report lays out the process through which officials selected the locations slated for changes. Those changes, first announced in a Feb. 3 memo obtained by Military.com, are slated to impact 200,000 retirees and active-duty family members. Of those, officials said Wednesday, about 80,000 are active-duty family members, while the remaining 120,000 are retirees and their families.

Of the 38 facilities that will no longer see retirees or family members, 24 are slated to shift to active-duty only over the next several years, officials said. Eleven clinics have already started the process of moving to active-duty only, and three are slated to close to all users.

An additional four facilities are slated for downgrades. For example, the hospital at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina, will downgrade to an ambulatory care center under the plan. Two facilities will shift to mostly active-duty care, but will take families as needed. And two hospitals could be given upgrades, including the hospital at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

While officials said military readiness, not cost savings, is the primary driver for the changes, pushing retirees and active-duty families into the community for care should save the system money. For 2021, that savings is expected to reach about \$36 million, officials said.

“We have generally found that, through our contracts, that our care often is cheaper in the network from a government purchase point of view than the cost of actually doing it within our direct-care system in some locations,” Dr. Dave Smith, deputy assistant secretary of defense for force health, told reporters. “And clearly, as part of our methodology, that was



Lt. Cmdr. Andy Hogan, a physician at Naval Hospital Jacksonville's Family Medicine Clinic, checks a sailor's heartbeat. (U.S. Navy/Jacob Sippel)

one of the questions we asked, but our principal question was, ‘Are we getting readiness value out of this location that is worth the cost, if you will, compared to putting that somewhere else in the system.’”

But the changes will bring higher costs to many users forced to see doctors within the civilian community. For retirees on Tricare Prime, receiving care off base costs \$20 per visit for primary care and \$31 for specialty care. That's for in-network doctors outside the MTF, and comes on top of a \$600 per family annual registration fee.

For active-duty families on Tricare Prime, the change will carry no out-of-pocket costs.

The Feb. 3 memo noted that “in many cases” all users will still be able to receive pharmacy services at the impacted facilities. All the clinics listed as shifting to active duty-only were noted as keeping pharmacy service for all users. However, pharmacy services provided by the facilities slated for complete closure will cease. That means users who previously received drugs from those facilities will need to shift to a different military pharmacy or pay out of pocket for drugs from a local retail pharmacy or mail order.

Officials told reporters Wednesday that no clinics identified for transition will do so until care is secured within the civilian community for each patient, a process that they said could take as long as five years. The Defense Health Agency, which manages the Tricare program and its private contractor, will oversee that process, McCaffery said.

“It will be the Defense Health Agency working with the local MTF leader, the installation commander and our Tricare network partners in making those determinations in terms of

— Continued on Page 13

MILITARY CLINICS *(Continued from page 12)*

assessing the ability of that civilian health care market to take on additional patients,” he said. “We recognize that this is an MTF by MTF, market by market implementation.”

Officials said they examined more than 300 military health facilities as part of their review. Of those, they looked at 77 for a “detailed assessment” and determined that 50 warrant changes. Thirty-eight were then identified as having the necessary nearby civilian medical support to absorb an influx of new patients, they said.

That civilian capacity was assessed by surveying the local provider network and working with base commanders and MTF officials, the report says.

For example, researchers looked at primary, specialty and in-patient care within specific drive-time standards. For primary care, officials looked at providers within 15 miles of the current MTF for urban areas, and 30 miles for rural areas. For specialty care, the standard was 40 miles for urban areas and 55 miles for rural areas. And for in-patient hospital care, the standard was a 60-minute drive time.

For in-patient care, special attention was paid to labor and delivery services, the report states. In many cases, it notes, decisions were made specifically based on that issue. For example, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, closing Blanchfield Army Medical Center to non-active duty patients is not an option because the local hospitals, in nearby Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and Clarksville, Tennessee, would not be able to handle a resulting 267% increase in annual deliveries, the report states.

Below is a list of facilities slated for changes or closures.

Facilities closing to non-active duty patients include:

- Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, outpatient clinic
- Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, outpatient clinic
- Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, outpatient clinic
- Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, outpatient clinic
- Hanscom Air Force Base, Massachusetts, outpatient clinic
- MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, outpatient clinic
- Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, outpatient clinic
- Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, outpatient clinic
- Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, outpatient clinic
- Navy Weapons Station Earle, New Jersey, Colts Neck Earle clinic
- San Onofre Marine Corps Base, California, San Onofre Health Clinic
- Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Joel clinic and Robinson clinic
- Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Georgia, Naval Branch Health Clinic Albany
- Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Virginia, Naval Branch Health Clinic Dahlgren
- Naval Submarine Base New London, Connecticut, Naval Branch Health Clinic Groton
- Naval Support Facility Indian Head, Maryland, outpatient clinic
- Naval Air Station Belle Chasse, Louisiana, outpatient clinic
- Naval Support Activity Mid-South, Tennessee, outpatient clinic
- Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, New Hampshire, outpatient clinic

- Fort Detrick, Maryland, Barquist outpatient clinic
- Defense Distribution Center in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, outpatient clinic
- Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, outpatient clinic
- Fort Lee, Virginia, Kenner-Lee outpatient clinic
- Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Kirk Army Health outpatient clinic

Facilities that have either already transitioned to active duty-only, or are in process:

- Fort Riley, Kansas, Farrelly Health Clinic
- Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Hood Medical Home and Charles Moore clinic
- Naval Support Activity Lakehurst, New Jersey, Naval Behavioral Health Clinic Lakehurst
- Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, Rancho Bernardo clinic
- Presidio of Monterey, California, outpatient clinic
- Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois, outpatient clinic
- Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, outpatient clinic
- Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island, Naval Health Clinic New England
- Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, outpatient clinic
- Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, Okubo Medical Home
- Fort Carson, Colorado, Robinson-Carson outpatient clinic

Facilities that will close completely to all users:

- MacDill Air Force Base’s Sabal Park community clinic in Brandon, Florida
 - Fort Benning, Georgia, North Columbus-Benning clinic
 - Fort Irwin, California, Department of Behavioral Health
- Facilities that could see upgrades:
- Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, upgrade to Level II Trauma Center
 - Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii, could be closed to non-active duty patients if officials determine that the local community can handle providing the necessary medical care.

Facilities slated for downgrade:

- Fort Meade, Maryland, Kimbrough, Ambulatory Care Center to downgrade to a clinic
- Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina, Naval Hospital Beaufort downgrade to ambulatory surgery center
- Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, downgrade to an ambulatory surgery center and outpatient clinic; McDonald clinic downgrade from ambulatory surgery to an outpatient clinic
- Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, downgrade from ambulatory surgery to an outpatient clinic

Facilities that may continue to see active-duty families

- Naval Technical Training Center Meridian, Mississippi, outpatient clinic
- Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Miami, Florida, Gordon outpatient clinic

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE RIGHT WAY TO TREAT PTSD IN VETERANS

18 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Kacie Kelly

Kacie Kelly is Deputy Director of the Military Service Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute, where she oversees and manages policy, operational, and programmatic efforts on veteran health and well-being, including the Warrior Wellness Alliance.

Recent media reports surrounding a study on military PTSD treatment highlight some important ongoing challenges -- but they don't tell the whole story. And because of that, people could be getting the wrong message about effective care.

In a Jan. 30 study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, the authors assessed findings from many years of research on PTSD treatment outcomes. While the study rightly notes that trauma-focused therapies are good at treating PTSD, the authors made some conclusions that suggest trauma-focused therapies should not be prioritized as a first-line treatment. The headlines, jumping on this, unfortunately fail to paint a complete picture of the current state of care for veterans and servicemembers with trauma-related injuries, and may inadvertently reinforce negative perceptions about seeking mental healthcare.

Mental health, like physical health, often has a range of valid treatment options. Leading scientists in the field regularly review existing research to determine what should be the best choice for any given condition and provide guidance for practicing clinicians. Treatment options for PTSD might include various types of talk therapy, medication, or some combination, but research has consistently demonstrated that trauma-focused treatments are the best first choice for treatment.

Specifically, Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE) are good options and do work for many veterans. Some 30-50% of veterans who participate in one of these treatments experience significant symptom reduction and no longer meet criteria for PTSD diagnosis following treatment. While a recent publication called into question the effectiveness of CPT and PE with all veterans, another recent review of the literature on treatments of veterans and servicemembers with PTSD (supported by the International Society of Traumatic

Stress Studies) concluded that these treatments should be used as first-line treatments while acknowledging the limitations (such as dropout rates and treatment complexities with often co-occurring conditions).

It seems the solution should be advocacy for research into new treatments for individuals who do not benefit from the first-line treatments. The study's coverage unfortunately took a different and concerning approach, inaccurately suggesting that the treatments do not work.

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VA RAMPS UP MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING AFTER RASH OF PARKING LOT SUICIDES

Week of February 17, 2020 | Military.com

The Department of Veterans Affairs is proposing spending \$682 million more next fiscal year on mental health issues and ramping up funding for suicide prevention efforts by one-third, as it faces Congressional scrutiny over a series of tragic incidents on VA premises over the past year. The VA's budget request for fiscal 2021, released Feb. 10, totals \$243.3 billion -- a dramatic 10% increase from 2020. In addition to resourcing mental health and suicide prevention, it would nearly double the amount of funding for a joint VA-Defense Department effort to create a merged electronic health records system and provide a 9% increase to the budget for women's health care.

THE VETERANS HEALTH ID CARD FOR MILITARY BASE ACCESS

The Defense Department announced expanded Commissary, Military Service Exchange and MWR access as of January 1, 2020. Veterans who are eligible and want to take advantage of in-person benefits must have a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). Veterans must be enrolled in the VA health care system to receive a VHIC. To enroll, you can complete an application for enrollment in VA health care by telephone without the need for a signed paper application. Just call 1-877-222-8387 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Eastern. You can also apply for VA healthcare benefits online at www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, or in person at your local VA medical facility. Once your enrollment is verified, you can have your picture taken at your local VA medical center, and VA will mail you a VHIC.

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/68479/veterans-need-vhicfor-in-person-commissary-military-exchange-and-mwr-access/-for-in-person-commissary-military-exchange-andmwr-access/>

PTSD *(Continued from page 14)*

For comparison, consider cancer treatment. There are multiple courses of treatment for an individual experiencing colorectal cancer. The first-line treatment for this disease is a partial or complete surgical removal, and according to the American Cancer Association, the 10-year survival rate is 59 percent. Would we suggest that someone with colorectal cancer not have surgery for this cancer, knowing that the treatment only works for some? Of course not. While we encourage innovation in healthcare, we must also value context and nuance in data, so people are not discouraged from reaching out for help that works.

There should be more precision in diagnosing, understanding, and treating veterans and service members with PTSD, but there must also be more accuracy in describing the existing evidence on diagnostic and treatment advances that have been made. We should also take into consideration the fact that, like most health care, that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to treating each individual.

Andrew Coughlin, a retired U.S. Army Specialist and an avid mountain biker who's a member of the George W. Bush Institute's Team 43, struggled for many years during his transition from active-duty service. He connected to high-quality care at the Marcus Institute for Brain Health to address his PTSD and challenges associated with traumatic brain injury (TBI). At MIBH, Andrew participated in a 4-week comprehensive and integrated program that included Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR) and other trauma-focused treatments.

Andrew today tells others "help is available, and people want to help." Based on his life-changing experiences in the program, he encourages other veterans "not to give up and to take some responsibility for treatment."

He's right. Veterans need to be engaged in treatment decisions, recognizing that mental wellbeing isn't transactional, and PTSD is usually not binary or isolated. And they should also become educated on what effective treatments are available to them, including innovative solutions. The Wounded Warrior Project's Warrior Care Network, for instance, provides 70 hours of therapy during a 2-3 week program, demonstrates exciting results with more symptom reduction, overall improvement in outcomes, and a completion rate of over 90%. Treatments such as CPT, PE, and EMDR are effective treatments for many with traumatic military experiences, and veterans should know about and ask for them.

Innovation, education, and partnerships are key in this effort. That's why the Bush Institute's Warrior Wellness Alliance has united 15 organizations around a single mission to connect more veterans to high quality care when they need it. By linking veteran peer networks to high quality clinical programs for the invisible wounds of war, our hope is that together we will help more veterans reach out for help and navigate to high-quality care for PTSD that exists across the country.

Continued research and innovation to improve treatment options are certainly important, so veterans can access the right care at the right time, and at the right place. While we have much work to do, the invisible wounds of war are real injuries that can be treated successfully. It's our duty to get it right for those who have sacrificed much for our country. By helping more men and women in uniform seek and access quality care for the invisible wounds, we'll enable each of them to continue to lead and serve our country even after they have taken off the uniform.

NAVY EOD TECH AWARDED SILVER STAR FOR SAVING COMRADES DURING ISIS FIGHT

Chief Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician Matt O'Connor stands at attention alongside Vice Adm. Scott D. Conn, commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, after being awarded the Silver Star Medal during an awards ceremony held at the C3F headquarters. *(U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Casey S. Trietsch)*



14 Feb 2020 Military.com | By Gina Harkins

A Navy chief was awarded the military's third-highest valor award on Thursday for repeatedly braving enemy fire in an area filled with improvised explosive devices to save his teammates.

Chief Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician Matthew O'Connor, a member of EOD Mobile Unit 11, received the Silver Star during a ceremony at Naval Base Point Loma in San Diego. Vice Adm. Scott Conn, commander of Third Fleet, presented O'Connor with the award.

"Adversity under fire doesn't test one's character, it reveals it," Conn said during the ceremony.

O'Connor, who joined the Navy in 2008, was serving as the EOD lead for a special operations task force fighting the Islamic State group in April at an undisclosed location. The team was tasked with checking into a facility where terrorists were known to be producing IEDs.

The chief and his team maneuvered into an enemy-held village but were ambushed by eight fighters when they got to the facility. After returning fire, O'Connor noticed a teammate on the ground, according to his award citation.

"With utter disregard for his own safety, Chief O'Connor advanced forward, carried his wounded teammate to cover, and then rendered lifesaving medical treatment while coordinating suppressive fire," the citation states.

He again braved enemy fire to reach the team's linguist, who was hurt. O'Connor then carried the first injured teammate to a casualty collection point, "under continuous enemy fire through difficult terrain," his award citation states.

O'Connor then returned to the facility where the ambush started to conduct post-assault procedures, the citation adds. He then guided the rest of the task force across the area laden with IEDs to reach a vehicle pick-up point.

"By his bold initiative, undaunted courage and total dedication to duty, Chief O'Connor reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service," the Silver Star citation says.

'PAINT' THAT PURPORTS TO REGROW WOUNDED TROOPS' BONES MOVING TOWARD FDA TESTING



Medics talk about how to help a simulated victim's leg injury during a mass casualty exercise Feb. 5 at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. (U.S. Air Force/Samuel King Jr.)

or other device to be inserted into the break, potentially letting surgeons salvage limbs by reconstructing the broken, or even shattered, bone, Alvarez claims.

He said veterans could find the new product beneficial as it may be used in spinal fusions to treat back pain or restore stability to the spine by welding two or more vertebrae together. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the goal of this surgery is to have the vertebrae grow into a single bone, which is just what AMP2 is intended to facilitate.

Alvarez created his product after finding out halfway through his career that wounded soldiers he served with ultimately had limbs amputated because they couldn't regrow the tissue needed to make the limbs functional.

"To me, it felt like a tragedy that that would be the reason why you would lose a limb," he said. "So when I got back from Iraq, I went back to grad school and the motivation there, in part, was to see if I could develop something or work on the problem of how do you induce the body to regenerate tissue in specific places and with a lot of control?"

Alvarez, who graduated from MIT with a Ph.D. in Biological Engineering and a Master of Science in Chemical Engineering, said AMP2 has shown a lot of promise: A recent test showed bone regrowth that filled a two-inch gap. And its potential is not limited to combat injuries, he added.

"The DoD and the VA are actually getting a lot of leverage from their investment because you can treat not only trauma, but also aging-associated diseases like lower back pain," Alvarez said. "It's going to redefine how physicians practice regenerative medicine."

20 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Dorothy Mills-Gregg

The latest proposed bone regenerative therapy is a paint-like substance that coats implants or other devices to promote bone regrowth. It's designed for use in treating combat injuries and lower back pain, among other issues.

After about \$9 million in grants from the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, the substance, called AMP2, made by the company Theradaptive, is moving onto the next trial phase, a step ahead of testing on humans. Creator Luis Alvarez, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who served a year in Iraq, said coating an implant is much better than the current, more dangerous therapy for bone regrowth.

"Without this product, the alternative is to use the type of protein that is liquid," Alvarez said. "And you can imagine if you try to squirt a liquid into a gap or a defect in the bone, you have no way of controlling where it goes."

This has caused bone regrowth in muscles and around the windpipe, which can compress a patient's airway and nerves leading to the brain, he said.

AMP2 is made out of that same protein that promotes bone or cartilage growth in the body, but it's sticky. It binds to a bolt

'LT. DAN' WAS JUST HONORED WITH MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY PATRIOT AWARD

12 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By James Barber

Legendary actor and activist for veteran causes Gary Sinise was honored by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society with its Patriot Award on February 5th at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society is a group made up of Medal of Honor recipients. Each year they present the Patriot Award to "those persons, who through their life's work, have distinguished themselves as Americans who are dedicated to freedom and the ideals represented," according to a Department of Defense release.

The Patriot Award committee also looks to honor individuals who demonstrate of the six values embodied by the Medal of Honor: courage, sacrifice, commitment, integrity, citizenship and patriotism. Most recently that was Sinise.

"I've made such good friends amongst this incredible group of people, and to have them acknowledge me is just a great, great honor," Sinise said during the ceremony.

Actor Gary Sinise receives the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's Patriot Award at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, Calif., Feb. 5, 2020. Sinise has dedicated nearly 40 years to working for service members, veterans, first responders and their families.

(Photo By: Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Leon Wong)



Why Gary Sinise is such a great candidate for this honor:

Sinise, well respected in the theater and film acting communities, made a connection with active duty and veteran military members when he played the role of Lt. Dan in the 1995 Oscar Best Picture "Forrest Gump."

51 YEARS AGO, THIS AIRMAN THREW HIMSELF ON A BURNING FLARE TO SAVE HIS CREW

25 Feb 2020 | Task & Purpose | By David Roza

This article by David Roza originally appeared on Task & Purpose, a digital news and culture publication dedicated to military and veterans issues.

The annals of the infantry and special forces community are filled with tales of heroes throwing themselves on grenades to save their buddies. Just in the past 20 years, four Medals of Honor were earned by service members who dove onto explosives, knowing full well what the consequences would be.

But 51 years ago Monday, an airman proved that such heroism isn't limited to troops on the ground. Sgt. John Lee Levitow (then an Airman First Class) saved his entire aircrew in the skies above Vietnam by throwing himself on a flare that was mere seconds from igniting into a 4,000-degree fireball that would have melted right through their aircraft.

How did such a strange situation come to be? According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, on February 24, 1969, Levitow was a loadmaster aboard an AC-47 gunship flying a night mission in support of Long Binh Army post, in the country's south.

Troops at Long Binh were besieged by enemy mortar fire, wrote Air Force Magazine in a 1984 article. The AC-47, using the call sign Spooky 71, was loaded up with 7.62-mm Miniguns and thousands of rounds of ammunition to help them out.

To guide their aim and provide illumination for troops on the ground, Air Force Magazine explained, the AC-47s used Mark 24 magnesium flares, which were three-foot long metal tubes that weighed 27 pounds a piece.

On a normal day, an airman would trigger the arming mechanism of the flare and chuck it out the plane's cargo door. Ten seconds later, an explosive charge would open the flare's parachute, and 10 seconds after that, the magnesium would ignite, generating a light of 2,000,000 candlepower and a heat of 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit, according to Air Force Magazine.

But February 24, 1969 was not a normal day.

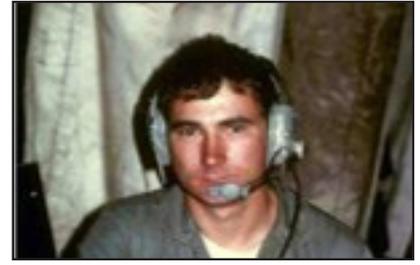
While flying over Long Binh, one of Levitow's crewmates, Airman Ellis Owen, had his finger in the safety pin ring of a flare, getting ready to toss it through the cargo door when an enemy mortar round smashed into Spooky 71, ripping a two-foot hole through the right wing and perforating the fuselage in over 3,500 places, according to Levitow's Medal of Honor citation.

The explosion wounded all five of the crew and slammed them to the floor as Spooky 71 fell into a steep, descending turn to the right, momentarily out of control, Air Force Magazine wrote.

The 23-year-old Levitow, though stunned by the blast concussion and peppered with over 40 fragment wounds in the back and legs, "staggered to his feet and turned to assist the man nearest to him who had been knocked down and was bleeding heavily," the citation read.

Levitow dragged his crewmate away from the opened cargo door, but he noticed that the flare Owen had been holding was now

Airman 1st Class John Levitow in an AC-47. (U.S. Air Force)



rolling around the aircraft floor amidst thousands of Minigun rounds.

The flare was armed and smoking, and Levitow had no way of knowing how much time was left before it blew. The igniting mechanism could have been damaged too, which might ignite the flare even faster, wrote Air Force Magazine.

"Realizing the danger involved and completely disregarding his own wounds, Sgt. Levitow started toward the burning flare," the award citation read. "The aircraft was partially out of control and the flare was rolling wildly from side to side."

Maybe it was because of the roller coaster airplane, or the loss of blood, or the partial loss of feeling in his right leg, but Levitow just couldn't grab the rolling flare with his hands. Instead, he dove on the burning flare and hugged it to his body as he dragged himself to the cargo door.

With a last burst of strength, the airman hurled the flare, which ignited immediately after leaving the aircraft. As Levitow lapsed into unconsciousness, the pilot regained control of the plane, wrote Air Force Magazine. They landed at Bien Hoa, Spooky 71's home base, and the wounded Levitow was flown to a hospital in Japan.

But that mission wasn't enough for the airman. When he recovered from his wounds, Levitow, who had already flown 181 combat sorties, flew another 20 before returning stateside and completing his enlistment as a C-141 loadmaster at Norton Air Force Base, Calif., according to Air Force Magazine.

On May 14, 1970, just over a year after nearly dying over Long Binh, Levitow was awarded the Medal of Honor at the White House by President Richard Nixon.

"Sgt. Levitow, by his selfless and heroic actions, saved the aircraft and its entire crew from certain death and destruction," read the citation. "Sgt. Levitow's gallantry, his profound concern for his fellowmen, at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country."

Levitow passed away from cancer in 2000, according to We Are The Mighty. But his legacy burns bright today due to all the awards, buildings and bridges named after him.

So next time you see the airman's name or face anywhere, remember that heroism aims high.

THOUSANDS IN MILITARY COMMUNITY POISONED BY CARBON MONOXIDE OVER A DECADE, STUDY FINDS

25 Feb 2020 | Stars and Stripes | By Nancy Montgomery

Around 6,400 troops and their family members were poisoned by carbon monoxide in the past decade, a military health study has found. Some 24 service members died from breathing the colorless, tasteless, odorless and deadly gas. Most of the cases were deemed accidental, but around 11% of active duty service members intentionally harmed themselves and one case was ruled an assault, said the study published last month in the Defense Health Agency's medical journal. No details were provided for the assault case or the deaths.

Troops working in repair and engineering jobs accounted for more poisonings than those in other career fields. "This finding warrants further analysis to examine the overall incidence rates of CO intoxication across occupations and highlights the importance of appropriate preventive measures for military personnel who repair or maintain vehicles," journal editor Cmdr. Shawn S. Clausen said in an email.

While motor vehicle exhaust was the second most common source of carbon monoxide poisoning in confirmed cases among active duty troops, those working in motor transport accounted for just 3.2% of cases, the lowest proportion, the study said.

Military personnel "face unique and deadly sources of significant CO exposure not found in the private sector," according to the Army textbook "Occupational Health and the Service Member." Tanks, howitzer and armed helicopter crews, as well as troops firing missiles or small arms inside indoor firing ranges can be exposed to the gas. Carbon monoxide becomes dangerous when it's allowed to build up in a closed space.

"Military personnel can also potentially be exposed to CO ... by working with machinery, motor vehicles, and gasoline-powered tools," Clausen said. Carbon monoxide poisoning was confirmed in nearly 1,270 active-duty troops, 361 reservists and just over 4,700 family members between 2009 and 2019, the study found.

Cases were diagnosed at more than 190 military installations and locations worldwide. Fort Carson in Colorado had the highest number of confirmed cases -- 60 -- during the 10-year period, followed by Naval Medical Center in San Diego, Calif., with 52 cases. Less than 5% of confirmed cases affected service members assigned outside the U.S., the study said.

Carbon monoxide exposure often affected groups, the study said. For example, 21 soldiers were sickened when a corroded vent hose caused CO to build up in a kitchen tent used by



Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, conducts tank crew gunnery at the Orchard Combat Training Center, Nov. 11, 2019. Tank, howitzer and armed helicopter crews as well as troops firing missiles or small arms inside indoor firing ranges can be exposed to carbon monoxide, a military health report detailing thousands of exposures said. *(U.S. Army photo/Mason Cutrer)*

soldiers during an exercise near Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, in September 2014. Four of the soldiers were hospitalized.

In 2017, four soldiers were treated for carbon monoxide exposure when the M1A2 Abrams tank they were in malfunctioned during an exercise in Latvia.

Last August, two service members and three family members were treated at Fort Bragg, N.C., for carbon monoxide exposure. It was later determined that the residents of more than 80 homes at the base were at risk because of blocked vents in the laundry rooms.

All the services require CO detectors in base housing but off-base housing requirements vary by state. The symptoms of mild-to-moderate CO poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. High exposure can produce seizures and coma, and ultimately lead to death.

Carbon monoxide decreases not only the amount of available oxygen in the air but also in red blood cells, killing by asphyxiation. Two out of three people who suffer severe cases of CO poisoning may have long-term complications, including severe intellectual impairment, blindness and deafness.

The vast majority of service members included in the study returned to duty with no limitations, it said.

THIS IS THE WORST SMELL IN THE WORLD, AND VETERANS SAW IT COMING



(Wikipedia Commons)

20 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Rebecca Alwine

It's official. Scientists have sniffed out the worst smell in the world, and veterans everywhere can say, "I told you so."

It's not the fine scent of combat boots after 15 months in Iraq. And it's not the whiff of sea bag after a workout. It's not even the putrid odor of the trash the movers accidentally packed when you moved from South Korea back to the States.

When compared with other terrible smells upon which cleaning products were tested, the worst smell ever was officially named "U.S. Government Standard Bathroom Malodor."

Mal-what?

You already know exactly what it is. You can probably even taste it. And your spouse is knowingly exchanging a glance with your buddy's wife because she knows it too, without ever going to its source.

"Malodor" is a substance that replicates the stench of, yup, military field latrines.

It's science, and notable enough that The New York Times reported about it.

More than 20 years ago, scientist Pamela Dalton was working on developing the stink bomb -- yes, also a real thing -- for the Pentagon. And the base of the stink bomb was the above mentioned military field latrine-fueled standard stench.

What better to use in a stink bomb than the incredibly disgusting thing you already have on hand?

Your heart might be swelling with pride right now even as your stomach churns. Because, yes, in addition to fearlessly protecting freedom, you are also personally responsible for a smell so bad that science has been forced to acknowledge it.

VETERANS GROUP: PENTAGON BROKE AGREEMENT TO REOPEN DATABASE



In this June 3, 2011, file photo, the Pentagon is seen from air from Air Force One. *(AP Photo/Charles Dharapak, File)*

19 Feb 2020 | The Associated Press | By Ben Finley

NORFOLK, Va. — The Pentagon has reneged on its agreement to reopen a vast records database that helps service members who are appealing a less-than-honorable discharge, a veterans group said Tuesday.

The National Veterans Legal Services Program said the Defense Department has failed to make public the "vast majority" of decisions made by military review boards over the last several years.

Military review boards grant or deny a veteran's request to upgrade a less-than-honorable discharge. Veterans' lawyers study those past decisions in hopes of building successful arguments for their clients.

Appeals are being made at a time of growing recognition that a less-than-honorable discharge can stem from behaviors brought on by post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries.

Liberal consideration is supposed to be given to veterans with combat-related mental health conditions and to those who were sexually assaulted while in the military.

Bart Stichman, executive director for the veterans group, said the Pentagon continues to break federal law and is harming "veteran advocates who rely on access to these decisions to help them represent and secure critical benefits for veterans and their families."

Stichman's organization had sued the Pentagon over the matter in early January, alleging that hundreds of thousands of decisions have been publicly unavailable since April.

A few weeks later, Stichman said, the Pentagon had agreed to a timeline for releasing most of the records. But on Tuesday, the veterans group said access "continues to be severely limited."

The U.S. military said that some of the records had been made available, according to a recent court filing. But officials discovered that "some of the decisions still contained personal identifying information," which could not be made public under federal law and needed to be redacted.

Military officials said they regret that the personal information precluded them from meeting the deadlines they had agreed upon, their attorneys wrote in the court filing.

A court hearing to review the matter is scheduled for March 6 in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia.

The lawsuit over the records has already drawn the attention of 11 Democratic U.S. senators. They wrote a letter to military leaders in January asking when the records would become available again.

COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION, LIKE BOOT CAMP IN REVERSE, PROPOSED FOR SOLDIERS LEAVING SERVICE

17 Feb 2020 | The Day, New London, Conn. | By Julia Bergman

The family of a Marine Corps veteran who died by suicide last fall want soldiers to go through a reintegration program when they leave the service, the way they go to boot camp when they join military.

Tyler Michael Reeb, a decorated Marine who did three combat tours overseas, died on Oct. 14, 2019 at his home in Richard, Virginia. He was 34.

Reeb grew up in New Canaan, and was active in sports including baseball, wrestling, lacrosse, and football. He loved being outdoors. His obituary describes him as having a contagious sense of humor, a sincere sensitivity toward others, and a strong work ethic. During and after college, he worked with under-privileged youth in Pennsylvania, before enlisting in the Marines in November 2007.

His uncle, Chris Reeb, and other members of Tyler’s family, including his parents, Jaymie and Michael C. Reeb, have been talking with state and federal lawmakers about developing a standardized reentry program for all soldiers returning from combat before they get out of the military. It would be the analogous counterpart to basic training and would last just as long. Marine Boot Camp spans 13 weeks. The military does provide guidance to service members getting out, but it’s not enough, Reeb said.

“We transform civilians into soldiers,” he said. “We have to transform these soldiers back to civilians.”

Reeb said the family doesn’t have all the answers, but they know they must do something. They are soliciting input on how the reintegration program would be structured and what would be included. They know they want service members to be provided with resources and strategies to cope with and address post-traumatic stress. The family does not use the “D,” for disorder, because, they say, post-traumatic stress is a normal response to a traumatic event or series of events.

In 2009, Tyler deployed to Iraq as a radio telephone operator and point man. While there, Tyler and his platoon conducted numerous security, counter improvise explosive device or IED, and reconnaissance and surveillance missions in and around Al Assad Air Base.

He later undertook the arduous process of becoming a Scout Sniper, who are highly skilled in marksmanship, and move about undetected in support of combat operations, serving as a commander’s eyes and ears on the battlefield.

Tyler deployed to Afghanistan twice, first from September of 2010 to March 2011 during which time he conducted over 100 Scout Sniper missions in the Helmand province, directly

Marines with Headquarters Battery, 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, participate in a 15 kilometer hike on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Jan 31, 2020. (Timothy Hernandez/U.S. Marine Corps)



engaging with Taliban daily. He deployed again from January 2012 to July 2012 leading fellow Marines in over 100 combat missions including four battalion-level and two regimental-level operations.

Tyler was promoted to the rank of staff sergeant just before he was honorably discharged from the Marines in December of 2015.

After he got out of the Marines, Tyler had a job lined up with the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security, helping develop, coordinate, implement and revise tactical training for protective forces.

While he waited for the job to start, his uncle suggested he come and live and work with him in Connecticut. Reeb said

— Continued on Page 21

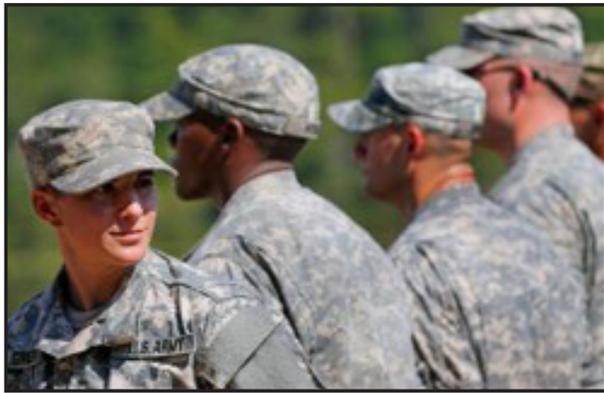
“THE JEWISH VETERAN”



Here is a link for the current issue – it is formatted as a PDF. Please feel free to email the link to a member of our faith who might be a potential JWV member. Also, ask you Shul/Temple/Synagogue/JCC to post a copy of “The Jewish Veteran” on their bulletin board. It serves as an ideal way to market the JWV USA and what we represent.

<https://www.jwv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Jewish-Veteran-2019-Issue-4.pdf>

COURT CONSIDERS WHETHER MEN-ONLY DRAFT IS CONSTITUTIONAL



In this Aug. 21, 2015 file photo, U.S. Army Capt. Kristen Griest, left, of Orange, Conn., stands in formation during an Army Ranger School graduation ceremony at Fort Benning, Ga. (AP Photo/John Bazemore)

3 Mar 2020 | The Associated Press | By Kevin Mcgill

NEW ORLEANS — Weeks before a government commission weighs in on the subject, federal appeals court judges will consider whether the military's all-male draft system is constitutional.

A Texas-based federal judge ruled last year that it is not, in response to a lawsuit brought by the National Coalition for Men. The government appealed, leading to Tuesday's hearing before a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The case is one of three being argued before the panel at Tulane University's law school in New Orleans. The court holds hearings at Tulane once a year.

The United States government stopped drafting young men into the military in 1973. But every male must still register for the draft when he turns 18.

The Supreme Court upheld the male-only draft in 1981, at a time when women were not eligible for combat roles. Women became eligible in 2015 and U.S. District Judge Gray Miller cited the change in his ruling last year.

It's not clear when the appeals court panel will rule. The hearing takes place about three weeks before a federal commission is scheduled to release a final report and recommendations on the draft — including whether the nation still needs a draft registration system, whether women should be required to register and whether other changes are needed.

The commission's chairman, former Republican U.S. Rep. Joe Heck of Nevada, has publicly supported requiring women to register for the draft.

"The Commission has been following this case as it progresses, making our work all the more relevant and important," Heck said in an emailed statement Monday. The commission is scheduled to release its report on March 25.

REINTEGRATION *(Continued from page 20)*

during the six or so months that Tyler lived with him, they talked about whether Tyler had suicidal thoughts.

"He called me "UC," short for Uncle Chris. He said 'UC, that's not my thing.' He said, 'I have talked my friends off the ledge from that but that is just not my thing,'" Reeb said. "And yet I could tell you that he slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow every night. They never turn off. They're always on, always prepared."

In hindsight, Reeb said there were other signs that Tyler maybe was not doing as well as he said he was. He drank heavily. But at the same time, he never missed a day of work and was never late and kept up with his responsibilities.

"He was an adult and I gave him space when he lived with me," Reeb said. "We all missed this and the reality of it is, there's got to be a ton of other people out there like this."

After Tyler's death, Reeb began doing research and learned that an average of 20 veterans die by suicide each day. The Department of Veterans recently revised the veteran suicide rate to 17 per day. In Connecticut, recent VA data shows that about 40 veterans commit suicide annually.

Reeb said the numbers alone show that more must be done.

"I think we have people's ears," he said, of the family's effort to create the reentry program. "We have to stay in their ears."

Before Monday's ceremony, Bobby Flores read about the Blackthorn on Wikipedia. He talked with his family about the account of Larry Clutter, who served with his uncle on the Blackthorn. For years after the accident, Clutter pushed for the Coast Guard to honor Flores.

In 2000, the service heeded Clutter's calls, awarding William Flores posthumously with the Coast Guard Medal, the force's highest peacetime service award. And in 2012, the Coast Guard dubbed a vessel the Coast Guard Cutter William Flores. It's still in service today.

Bobby Flores knows how deep service runs in his family. His grandfather, Robert, and uncle, Sam, served in the Navy. His father, Richard, served in the Air Force. Uncle Billy served in the Coast Guard. Bobby Flores plans to continue the family tradition as a future member of the Marines.

Richard Flores, one year older than Billy, has seen his son Bobby, a high school senior in Texas, grow older than his heroic brother. It's a surreal fact made stranger by Bobby and Billy's striking resemblance.

So how does Richard Flores feel about seeing his son follow in William Flores' footsteps?

"There's some anxiety when I think, 'He's going off to boot camp. He's going to come back a man,'" Richard Flores said. "But I put it in God's hands. He's going to take care of him."

MARINE PILOT WHO 'BORROWED' HELICOPTER TO END SNIPER SITUATION HAS DIED



19 Feb 2020 | We Are The Mighty |
By Joslin Joseph

Lt. General Charles "Chuck" Pitman passed away this past Thursday at age 84. His career spanned over 40 years, including three combat tours in Vietnam. He also was involved in Operation Eagle Claw, the attempted rescue of the American hostages in Tehran in 1980. He commanded an Air Wing and was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Marine Corps Aviation. He earned the Silver Star,

Retired Lt. Gen. Charles "Chuck" Pitman Sr. (DoD Photo via Wikipedia)

four Distinguished Flying Crosses, a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. But for all his achievements in uniform, Pitman is better known for ignoring military protocol and breaking a bunch of regulations so he could save lives.

That was the thought process of then, Lieutenant Colonel Pitman. On Jan. 7, 1973, Pitman was the commander of the Marine Air Reserve Training in Louisiana. Pitman had turned on the television to see a horrible scene unfolding. A gunman had taken position on top of a hotel and was shooting and killing police officers. The sniper had a full view of all on comers, and any attempt to enter the hotel was met with murderous gunfire.

Pitman didn't even think twice about asking permission to help. He grabbed another pilot and two crew members and jumped in a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter and headed toward New Orleans.

The incident Pitman was flying into actually started several days earlier on New Year's Eve. Mark Essex was a Navy vet who had been kicked out due to behavior issues. He had ended up in New Orleans, where he fell in with radical groups. One of those groups was the Black Panthers. Essex had grown angrier over time with what he perceived to be injustices he faced in the Navy and now as a civilian. After learning of a civil rights protest in which two students from Southern University were killed by police, Essex lost it.

He went to New Orleans police headquarters, where he shot and killed an African American cadet; shooting him from behind. He then fled and tried to break into a warehouse. When police arrived, unaware that he was linked to the shooting at HQ, Essex ambushed them, mortally wounding one. By the time backup arrived, he had vanished into the night.

On Jan. 7, Essex reappeared, and entered a Howard Johnson hotel in downtown New Orleans. As he made his way to the roof, he murdered a newlywed couple and the hotel's manager and assistant manager. He then set fires in several rooms and made his way to the roof.

Essex had set an ambush. The shooting and fires would draw first responders to the scene. Then he would carry out his horrible plan to kill more cops. As the police and firefighters arrived, they attempted to enter the hotel. Essex killed three police officers and wounded several more. He was able to pin down anyone that attempted to move toward the hotel and was completely concealed from return fire by concrete barriers on the roof.

By this time, the TV cameras had shown up. Broadcasting over the airwaves, they told viewers of the horrible situation unfolding in downtown New Orleans. One of the viewers was Lt. Colonel Pitman.

Pitman flew the CH-46 toward the hotel without any idea what he was actually going to do. He just knew he had to do something. When he arrived on site, Pitman located an empty parking lot next to the hotel. He landed, headed to the command center, and quickly became apprised of the situation. The cops on the scene sought his advice, and his years of service in Vietnam kicked in. Essex had the high ground, so Pittman would go higher.

He put several New Orleans police officers on the helicopter and took off. He started flying passes over the roof of the hotel, slowing down and turning so that the police could get a good shot. They could not. Essex would take shots at the aircraft from afar but would take cover the minute they closed in. Pitman noticed this and kept making passes to lure Essex into thinking this was his routine. Finally, after one pass, he turned immediately around and caught Essex in the open. The police in the helicopter unloaded on the sniper. When all was said and done, Essex was found with over 200 rounds in his body.

Pitman was lauded as a hero by the police and citizens of New Orleans and just about everybody...except the United States Marine Corps.

It turns out that Pitman (kind of... sort of) violated a few rules and regulations when he took the helicopter. He wasn't allowed to use military personnel or aircraft for anything other than a rescue mission (like evacuating flood victims).

You would think that the Marine Corps would look at the badassery that Pitman just pulled off and call it a public relations coup. But, they didn't (of course) and started the process of a court-martial.

It was only due to the intervention of Democratic Congressman and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Edward Herbert that the issue was dropped.

Pitman would continue his amazing career, retiring in 1990 as a Lt. General.

Lt. General Pitman, rest easy, and Semper Fidelis.

ARMY POURS CASH INTO LONG-RANGE MISSILE DEVELOPMENT, NEW INFANTRY RIFLES

10 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Matthew Cox

The U.S. Army on Monday unveiled its \$178 billion spending request for fiscal 2021, a proposed budget that adds some 1,000 active-duty soldiers and sets aside money for new long-range missiles, high-tech soldier systems and a new family of rifles for infantry and other close-combat forces.

The \$178 billion topline request is \$4 billion less than last fiscal year's \$182 billion request, according to Army budget documents. The Army received \$180 billion in the fiscal 2020 enacted budget.

The Army is requesting funding for significant investments in soldier lethality, another modernization priority.

The Next Generation Squad Weapon -- a new 6.8mm system slated to replace the M4A1 carbine and M249 squad automatic weapon in infantry squads -- is slated to receive \$111.2 million -- that's \$75.4 million for RDT&E and \$35.8 million to start buying the first rifle and automatic rifle variants, according to Pentagon budget documents. Fielding is scheduled to begin in fiscal 2023.

The Army also plans on spending \$906 million for 40,219 sets of Integrated Visual Augmentation System (IVAS) -- a Microsoft-based system that features sophisticated goggles that allow soldiers to see their weapon sight reticle in their field of view along with other key tactical information. Fielding is set to begin in fiscal 2021.

The Army continues to place a high priority on its modernization effort, a plan to replace most of its major weapons platforms over the next decade.

The Army began ruthlessly cutting non-modernization programs in the last budget cycle to free up more than \$31 billion in a tedious process known as "Night Court." "We must transform all linear industrial age processes to be more effective, protect our resources and make better decisions," Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, said in the documents. "We must be the Army of tomorrow, today."



The Next Generation Squad Weapon Science and Technology prototype consolidates both ammunition and weapons, as well as a power and data rail for integration of next-generation fire-control systems. *(Daniel Cler/CCDC Armaments Center)*

The Army increased its missile budget to \$3.5 billion, up from the \$3 billion it received from last year, according to budget documents.

For long-range precision fires, the Army's top modernization priority, the service is requesting \$800 million in research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) for the Long-Range Hypersonic Missile effort, according to budget documents.

The Army is requesting a total of \$172.6 million for its new, long-range Precision Strike Missile (PrSM). Some \$122.7 million of that is for research, development and testing and \$49.9 million would purchase 30 of the new missiles, according to Pentagon budget documents. The PrSM is intended to engage targets beyond 500 kilometers, replacing the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) which has a range of about 300 kilometers.

The Army is spending \$537 million for the Mobile Short-Range Air Defense System, or M-SHORAD, compared to last year's \$233 million, according to budget documents.

PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNS LAW TO HELP VETERANS FIND JOBS IN SCIENCE AND TECH

Week of February 17, 2020 | Military.com

A new law, signed by President Donald Trump this month, will make veterans eligible to participate in certain programs from the National Science Foundation, a move designed to introduce

more vets to jobs in science and technology. The law, known as the Supporting Veterans In STEM Careers Act, extends to veterans specific NSF scholarship and fellowship programs and different kinds of grants. It took effect February 11.

THE US NAVY JUST GOT ITS HANDS ON A NEW KIND OF IRANIAN MISSILE



Weapons seized from Iran by crew of the USS Normandy, including 358 surface-to-air missile components and “Dehlavieh” anti-tank guided missiles, February 9, 2020. (U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Michael H. Lehman)

19 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Gina Harkins

A pair of Navy ships have for the first time nabbed a new kind of Iranian surface-to-air missiles during recent arms seizures in the Middle East.

U.S. weapons experts have gotten their first look at a new “uniquely Iranian-designed missile,” Navy Capt. William Urban, a U.S. Central Command spokesman, told reporters on Wednesday. Sailors aboard the destroyer Forrest Sherman and cruiser Normandy confiscated eight of the new 358-missiles during separate weapons seizures in the Middle East.

The Forrest Sherman got five of the surface-to-air missiles in November and the Normandy seized three more earlier this month. Both operations took place in the Arabian Sea.

Urban declined to talk about the new missile's capabilities or what the U.S. has learned about it. The eight missiles -- along with anti-tank missiles, pieces for land-attack and anti-ship cruise missiles, high-explosive warheads, drone parts, blasting caps and other items -- were on their way to war-torn Yemen.

“The United States is confident that these weapons fit the pattern of weapons smuggling to the Houthis in Yemen, which Iran has been engaged in for five years,” Urban said. “The latest two seizures add substantial support to the body of evidence that Iran continues to smuggle advanced weaponry into Yemen.”

The new Iranian missile has been used in the Yemeni battle space, Urban added. The Houthis have also used some of the

Iranian-developed weapons outside of Yemen, firing missiles at U.S. warships and attempting to attack civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, he said.

Though Urban repeatedly declined to confirm that the caches were being provided to the Houthis directly by the Iranian government, he said the vessels stopped by the pair of Navy ships were contracted specifically for the purpose of delivering the weapons.

“If the weapons were manufactured in Iran, then they came from Iran,” Urban said. “Certainly 150 anti-tank guided missiles do not just walk away. They are illicitly smuggled for a purpose and that purpose is to spread lethal assistance to the Houthis, to Iranian proxies.”

Iran has for years backed the Houthis, who in 2015 seized control of much of Yemen, forcing the president to flee to Saudi Arabia. The yearslong war to restore him to power has led to a devastating humanitarian crisis in the country.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said after the Navy's intercept of the second weapons cache bound for Yemen that the world must reject Iran's attempts to spread violence.

“The U.S. Navy interdicted 358 Iranian-made missiles + other weapons components on their way to the Houthis in Yemen,” Pompeo tweeted. “This is another example of the world's largest state sponsor of terror the Islamic Republic of Iran continuing to defy the UN Security Council.”

BYE-BYE TO BRRRRT: AIR FORCE WANTS TO RETIRE 44 A-10 WARTHOGS

10 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Oriana Pawlyk

Despite multiple efforts to push the iconic A-10 Warthog's retirement date further into the future, the U.S. Air Force is now slated to shelve dozens of the Cold War-era ground-attack planes in the upcoming fiscal year, according to the service's budget request.

The Air Force will remove 44 Thunderbolt IIs from its total aircraft inventory, the fiscal 2021 Air Force budget documents say. The service had already marked these A-10s for divestment last year, according to Air Force Maj. Gen. John Pletcher, the deputy assistant secretary for budget at the Air Force's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Financial Management and the Comptroller at the Pentagon.

Pletcher on Monday said the retirement will affect "the oldest and least-ready aircraft" in order to modernize a combat-capable fleet of 218 total A-10s across seven squadrons.

Their removal comes as the Air Force recently awarded a contract worth nearly \$1 billion to Boeing Co. to produce new wings for the aircraft in need of the upgrade.

The service -- facing financial pressure driven by congressionally mandated spending caps known as sequestration -- made multiple attempts in recent years to fully retire the aircraft, which officials say would save an estimated \$4 billion over five years and free up maintainers for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Known for its iconic Gatling gun designed to shred tanks, and its tough titanium armor designed to take hits and keep flying, the A-10 has proponents including prominent lawmakers who have fiercely opposed the move to get rid of the aircraft.

In 2016, then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced the A-10 retirement would be delayed until 2022 after lawmakers such as then-Rep. Martha McSally, a Republican from Arizona, and the late Sen. John McCain, also of Arizona, complained that doing so would rid the military of a "valuable and effective" close-air-support aircraft.

Two A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft fly a flight training mission March 16, 2010, over Moody Air Force Base, Ga. The A-10C is the first Air Force aircraft specially designed for close-air support of ground forces. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Benjamin Wiseman)



However, fiscal 2017 budget request documents show the Air Force had still planned to remove A-10 squadrons in increments between 2018 and 2022 to make room for F-35A Lightning II squadrons coming online. As a result, McSally included a provision in that bill that would prohibit retirement of the Warthog until the Air Force could prove that the F-35 is able to perform similar missions as effectively on the battlefield.

To date, the Air Force has 281 A-10s in its inventory (two A-10s were destroyed in a collision in 2017), but has repeatedly stressed it can maintain roughly six of its nine A-10 combat squadrons through 2032, which is why officials have not committed to buying new wings for the entire fleet.

The Air Force finished re-winged 173 A-10s in 2019 through the Enhanced Wing Assembly program, which began in 2011. One of the destroyed aircraft had received the upgrade. Through the next iteration of the effort, the "A-10-Thunderbolt II Advanced-Wing Continuation Kit," or "ATTACK" program, the service will begin re-winged the rest "of the A-10s that remain in the inventory" after 44 planes are cut, a spokeswoman said Monday. The reduction means only 65 aircraft would need the wing fix, down from 109.

The planes, which entered service in 1976 and have deployed to the Middle East, Europe and the Pacific, have played an outsized role in the air campaign that began in 2014 against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, helping provide close-air support for Iraqi and U.S. partner forces on the ground. The A-10 has also been instrumental in air operations in Afghanistan.

EISENHOWER CARRIER STRIKE GROUP DEPLOYS WITHOUT STOPPING AT HOME FIRST



The aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) transits the Atlantic Ocean, Feb. 8, 2020. (U.S. Navy photo/James Norcket)

21 Feb 2020 | The Virginian-Pilot | By Brock Vergakis

As part of the Navy's plan to make aircraft carrier deployments less predictable, thousands of crew members on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and its strike group stayed at sea after they passed their final certification exercise rather than coming home before being deployed as is normally the case.

The Navy said Thursday the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group started its deployment in the Atlantic Ocean immediately after completing an exercise that began in January. The certification exercise usually lasts about a month and amounts to a final exam proving everyone is ready for various real-world combat scenarios.

The Navy did not specify exactly when the strike group's deployment officially began.

The unusual step is part of a Defense Department strategy known as "dynamic force deployment," which is meant to keep adversaries on their toes.

For decades, Norfolk-based aircraft carriers would predictably sail into the Mediterranean Sea on their way to the Persian Gulf and back. But as Russia's Navy has become more active in the Atlantic and elsewhere, military leaders decided to change that

up.

The Norfolk-based aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman was the first to do so in 2018 when it deployed for a few months to the Mediterranean, came home, and then deployed again to the Arctic Circle.

The Navy has not said where the Eisenhower is headed. The Truman is already underway in the Middle East and it's unclear when it is coming home after it faced months of delays due to an electric issue.

"The Sailors of IKE Strike Group are trained and ready to execute the full spectrum of maritime operations in any theater," Rear Adm. Paul Schlise, commander of the Eisenhower carrier strike group, said in a statement.

Other ships in the strike group include the Norfolk-based guided-missile cruisers USS San Jacinto and USS Vella Gulf, and the guided-missile destroyers USS Stout, USS James E. Williams and USS Truxton.

The strike group has about 6,000 people assigned to it, including its air wing.

SIKORSKY-BOEING'S SB-1 DEFIANT HELICOPTER PROTOTYPE IMPRESSES LEADERS IN FLIGHT DEMO

20 Feb 2020 Military.com | By Matthew Cox

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida -- In a demonstration Thursday for the U.S. Army's top civilian official, a Sikorsky-Boeing team flew experimental helicopter prototypes that could one day become the service's next scout and assault rotorcraft under the Future Vertical Lift (FVL) program.

The SB-1 Defiant helicopter prototype performed a series of aerial maneuvers to show off its unique X2 technology, which features a coaxial rotor blade system and a large propeller in the tail section of the aircraft designed to aid in forward thrust.

This was the first flight demonstration of the Defiant for Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Illinois -- a former Army UH-60 Black Hawk pilot who was shot down in Iraq -- also attended the demonstration.

Sikorsky, part of Lockheed Martin Corp., and Boeing Co. built the Defiant after the Army awarded the team a contract in 2014 as part of the Joint Multi Role Technology Demonstrator (JMRT-D) program.

The Army also awarded a contract to a Textron Inc.-Bell team, which built the V-280 Valor, a tiltrotor-design helicopter that completed its first test flight in December 2017.

The technology-demonstration effort was formulated to explore new concepts and will heavily inform the design of the Army's effort to develop a Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) to replace the Black Hawk.

The Sikorsky-Boeing S-97 Raider also flew in Thursday's demonstration. The Raider is smaller and a little more streamlined than the Defiant, but it was the first helicopter of this type built with the X2 coaxial rotor and rear-thrust propeller technology.

The Raider has been flying since 2018 and has been clocked at speeds more than 200 knots. It is currently being scaled into the Raider X, which will be 20% larger and designed to compete in the Army's Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) effort, part of the FVL, Sikorsky-Boeing officials said.

"This is a very crucial moment for the Army for bringing in these new platforms into the formation so that we can maintain that technological edge for years to come," McCarthy told defense reporters at the demo.



Sikorsky-Boeing's SB-1 Defiant -- a helicopter prototype that features a coaxial rotor design and a rear propeller for thrust -- at the Sikorsky Development Flight Test Center in West Palm Beach, Florida, February 20, 2020. *(Matthew Cox/Military.com)*

The demonstration also featured a test flight of the Sikorsky Autonomy Research Aircraft, which is being used to research how autonomy can reduce the workload on pilots flying in extreme combat conditions.

Both the Defiant and Raider are designed to fly at speeds of more than 200 knots, but they flew at slower speeds during the demo. The Defiant hit 140 knots, while the Raider reached 180 knots. Both hovered, flew backward and performed pirouettes for the audience.

"When we are flying at 130 knots in this machine, we are using less than 20% of the prop power and less than 30% of the engine power," said Bill Fell, senior experimental test pilot for the S-97 Raider and the Defiant. By comparison, Black Hawks, equipped for combat, fly at an average speed of 140 knots.

Sikorsky President Dan Schultz described the Defiant as the product of "almost \$500 million in investment and over 12 years of development."

VETERANS, MARINES HONOR 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF IWO JIMA BATTLE AT CAMP PENDLETON

16 Feb 2020 | The San Diego Union-Tribune | By Phil Diehl

Marines and sailors gathered at Camp Pendleton on Saturday to remember the historic Battle of Iwo Jima that took place on a rocky island in the Pacific Ocean almost 75 years ago.

“When we got off the ship they told us we’ve got to have it, whatever the cost. There was no way to back out,” said Carlo Romero, 95, a Fallbrook resident who later fought in Korea and Vietnam before he retired as a Marine lieutenant colonel.

The island invasion lasted 36 days, from Feb. 19 to March 26, 1945. More than 100,000 U.S. troops, including 74,000 Marines, fought 21,000 Japanese soldiers deeply entrenched in bunkers and tunnels dug into the volcanic rock.

“I don’t really think about it a lot,” Romero said. “I try to forget it, but it is hard to forget.” He remembers being glad when the battle was over, and he could finally get off the island. “I could get my ears cleaned out,” he said. “They were all full of mud and dust. I went to sickbay and they took a syringe and washed it all out.”

Several family members accompanied Romero to Saturday’s events, including his son-in-law Howard Warner, a former Navy submariner and the retired commander of Naval Base Point Loma. The two have shared a few military jokes over the years.

“I always tell him there’s only one kind of Marine, a submarine,” Warner said.

Romero earned a Bronze Star for valor on Iwo Jima, Warner said, and, “We’re all really proud of him. He’s the greatest guy.”

Numerous books have been written and movies made about the battle. Some 6,800 Americans were killed. Of the 82 Marines who earned the Medal of Honor during World War II, 22 were for actions on Iwo Jima.

When the Marines raised an American flag on the island’s Mount Suribachi, the event was recorded in a famous black-and-white news photograph seen around the world. Later the photo was memorialized on a U.S. postage stamp and in a larger-than-life sculpture near the gate to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

“Four of the men who put up that flag came off my ship,” said Mort Block, 93, a Carlsbad resident who was a Navy seaman on the USS Talladega.



Marine 1st Lt. Christian Woo shakes hands with Al Nelson Jr., a veteran of the Battle of Iwo Jima, during the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima Commemoration tour on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 13, 2020. *(Drake Nickels/U.S. Marine Corps)*

Block grew up in New York and enlisted straight out of high school because he wanted to be in the Navy. He went from basic training straight to England, where his ship carried Marines to Normandy for the D-Day invasion. After Normandy, Block went to the Pacific, first to Iwo Jima and then Okinawa. Each time his ship delivered the Marines to the beach, then waited offshore a few days to pick up the dead and wounded. “I was still 18, but I knew it was important, a part of history,” he said.

The commemoration, an annual event for 30 years, is one of the largest Iwo Jima reunions in the United States. The number of Iwo Jima veterans has dwindled in recent years and most of the remaining survivors are in their mid-90s or older, but 28 attended Saturday’s events.

Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Osterman, commanding general of the I Marine Expeditionary Force, spoke briefly to the group. “These Marines and sailors who fought on Iwo Jima are made of grit, determination and a fighting spirit to succeed,” Osterman said. “This same eternal spirit is embodied by our Marines and sailors serving today.”

The evening’s activities began with an outdoor sunset ceremony, bell tolling, wreath-laying and a 21-gun artillery salute. Afterward, everyone went indoors for a re-enactment of the famous flag-raising, taps and the Marine’s Hymn.

DON STRATTON, ONE OF THREE REMAINING CREW FROM USS ARIZONA, DIES AT 97

17 Feb 2020 | The Honolulu Star-Advertiser | By William Cole

Don Stratton, who escaped a burning USS Arizona by making a harrowing hand-over-hand climb across a rope to an adjacent ship on Dec. 7, 1941, died Saturday, leaving just two living survivors of the famed battleship.

"We are profoundly sad to say that last night, Feb. 15, USS Arizona Survivor Donald Stratton passed away peacefully in his sleep surrounded by his wife of nearly 70 years, Velma, and his son Randy," Pearl Harbor National Memorial Daniel Martinez, chief historian for the memorial, said, "God bless him and his beloved family. My hero is gone but will always be in my heart. He is now part of our national memory."

The Colorado Springs man was 97. An Arizona crew that once numbered 1,512 is now down to two. Survivors Lou Conter and Ken Potts are both 98.

It was 8:06 a.m. on Dec. 7, 1941, when death raced through the USS Arizona, chasing them all. A 1,760-pound Japanese high-altitude armor-piercing bomb had penetrated the Arizona's decks 40 feet from the bow, igniting a million pounds of gunpowder for the ship's massive 14-inch guns.

Stratton, then a seaman 1st class, described it in his book, "All the Gallant Men," as a "great sucking sound, like a whoosh" that rocked the ship with concussive force.

The explosion blew apart the forward decks, collapsing turret No. 1 some 28 feet and sending a fireball 500 feet into the air. Stratton, 19, and several other men were in a metal box 70 feet off the water – the port side anti-aircraft "director" – where they were in danger of being cooked to death.

"The flames swallowed the foremast where we were," the Nebraska native said in the book. "As they shot through the two openings of the enclosure, we shielded ourselves by taking shelter under some of the equipment, our hands covering our mouths and eyes. But the flames found us, catching us all on fire, burning off our clothes, our hair, our skin."

Six men, Stratton included, were saved by climbing hand-over-hand on a rope thrown at the last second by a sailor on the adjacent repair ship USS Vestal in one of the most dramatic rescues of the day.

Stratton received burns over 65% of his body. A total of 1,177 men were killed on the Arizona.

Conter, who was on the stern of the battleship when the big bomb hit, returned to Pearl Harbor for the most recent Dec. 7 observance, in part to be present for the interment of fellow crew member Lauren Bruner.

Bruner, who also made the climb across the rope with Stratton, died Sept. 10 at age 98.

"We have to bury Lauren Bruner ... so I had to come back," Conter, sitting in a wheelchair, said shortly after he arrived. "I'll come out every year I can until I'm gone."

For Stratton, Bruner and the four other men, salvation appeared in



In this file photo from Dec. 7, 2016, Donald Stratton, center, a USS Arizona survivor shakes the hand of an admirer at Kilo Pier next to the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Honolulu. (AP Photo/Eugene Tanner)

the form of Joe George, a sailor and boxer on the Vestal.

The order had been given for the Vestal to cut loose from the Arizona and head for open water, Stratton said in his book. Before George extended a lifeline to the men on the Arizona, he had been using an axe to cut the mooring lines.

George and the ship's captain "were engaged in some kind of a debate, a heated one" that conveyed to Stratton that "we didn't have a chance."

But George stood his ground, and the six men, although badly burned, were able to climb hand over hand above oily, burning water to safety.

"One thing is for certain: Had Joe George not stood up for us, had he not been a rebel and refused to cut the line connecting the Vestal to the Arizona, we would have been cooked to death," Stratton wrote. "If anyone deserved a Medal of Honor that day, in my opinion, it was him."

The Navy said George, who died in 1996, was commended in 1942 but he never received any medal for his actions. For more than a decade, Stratton and Bruner lobbied for George to get a Navy Cross or other medal.

In 2017, Stratton, Bruner and Potts met at the Pentagon with the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, secretary of defense and chief of naval operations to honor George.

In conjunction with the Dec. 7 ceremony that year, the deputy commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet presented a Bronze Star with "V" Device for Valor to George's daughter, Joe Ann Taylor, aboard the USS Arizona Memorial.

Stratton, Bruner and Conter were front and center.

"One of Donald's final wishes was that people remember Pearl Harbor and the men aboard the USS Arizona. Share their story and never forget those who gave all for our great country," Stratton's family said on Facebook.

NEO-NAZI GROUP MEMBERSHIP MAY NOT GET YOU BOOTED FROM MILITARY, OFFICIALS SAY



Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., center, is joined by other members of Congress as she speaks after the group toured the U.S. Border Patrol Central Processing Center Saturday, June 23, 2018, in McAllen, Texas. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

12 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Richard Sisk

Membership in a white supremacist or neo-Nazi group won't necessarily get a U.S. service member tossed out of the military, defense officials told a House subcommittee Tuesday.

The officials, including representatives of Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the Army's Criminal Investigation Division, appeared to make a distinction between membership in an extremist organization and "active participation" in deciding on recruitment and retention.

The officials also told a hearing of the House Armed Services subcommittee on personnel that they had no reliable data on how many service members had been administratively discharged for espousing white supremacist ideology or how many potential recruits had been barred from enlisting.

The testimony appeared to stun several members of the committee.

"I am flummoxed by what I've heard today," Rep. Jackie Speier, D-California, chair of the Subcommittee, said after questioning Robert Grabosky, deputy director of Law Enforcement at the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

Grabosky said that membership in a white nationalist group "is not prohibited," but "active participation" in the group could lead to an administrative discharge, at a commander's discretion.

"I find that astonishing," Speier said. "If you're a member, that's an activity. I think we need to take a look at that."

Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Mississippi, an Iraq veteran, brigadier general in the Army National Guard and ranking member of

the subcommittee, said the bottom line for white nationalists in the military was, "what can we do better to keep 'em out and what can we do to get 'em out?"

In his opening statement, Kelly said "we don't have a lot of reliable data" on the spread of extremist ideology in the military.

"The definitive data we do have comes from the Department of Defense, where there have been 21 criminal cases involving white supremacy over the last five years" in the service branches, Kelly said.

Several of the subcommittee members pointed to the case of Air Force Master Sgt. Cory Reeves, allegedly a leader in the Colorado branch of the supremacist group Identity Evropa, who posted racist memes and spread far-right propaganda.

In November 2019, the Air Force demoted Reeves to technical sergeant, but he was initially allowed to remain in the service. In December, the Air Force announced that proceedings had begun to dismiss him from the service.

In a separate panel at the hearing, advocacy groups warned of the spread of white supremacist and hate group ideology in the military.

"I want to start by saying that, right now, the white supremacist movement in the United States is surging and presents a distinct and present danger to this country and its institutions, including the U.S. Armed Forces," said Lecia Brooks of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"Recent investigations have revealed dozens of veterans and active-duty servicemembers who are affiliated with white supremacist activity," Brooks said.

ESPER DEFENDS MOVE TO DEFUND STARS AND STRIPES, SAYS NEWS ORG. NOT A PRIORITY



First Lt. Tracy Tyson reads the Stars and Stripes in Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, while waiting for a flight to Forward Observation Base Wolverine, Oct. 5, 2009. (U.S. Navy photo/Ernesto Hernandez Fonte)

14 Feb 2020 | Stars and Stripes | By Corey Dickstein

WASHINGTON -- Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Thursday defended the Pentagon's effort to strip Stars and Stripes of all of its federal funding as part of its fiscal year 2021 budget request, telling reporters in Brussels that the independent news organization is not a priority.

"So, we trimmed the support for Stars and Stripes because we need to invest that money, as we did with many, many other programs, into higher-priority issues," Esper said during a news conference at NATO headquarters. He listed space, nuclear programs, hypersonic missiles and "a variety of systems" as places the money -- slightly more than \$15.5 million -- could be reinvested in the \$705.4 billion Defense Department spending proposal.

Pentagon officials acknowledged Wednesday for the first time that the budget proposal completely cuts the subsidy that the department provides Stars and Stripes to print and distribute newspapers to troops deployed around the world, including remote and often-dangerous locations in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Stars and Stripes receives about \$8.7 million annually in operations and maintenance funds and about \$6.9 million in contingency operations funds, said Marine Lt. Col. Chris Logan, a spokesman for Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist. The cut to Stars and Stripes' annual Pentagon subsidy equals about half of the news organization's annual funds to pay expenses. Stars and Stripes' remaining money comes from sales, subscriptions and advertising.

Pentagon officials confirmed Monday that the budget request would cut at least some funding to Stars and Stripes, but they declined to provide monetary figures attached to the proposal. Stars and Stripes' leadership was informed of the proposed cuts by Pentagon leadership also Monday, after The Wall Street Journal reported the news organization was eyed for a funding reduction.

Stars and Stripes first appeared during the Civil War, and it has been published continuously since World War II. It produces daily newspapers for U.S. military troops around the world and operates a website that is updated with news 24 hours per day. Though it is part of the Pentagon's Defense Media Agency, Stripes retains its editorial independence and is congressionally mandated to be governed by First Amendment principles.

In Logan's statement Wednesday, he acknowledged Stars and Stripes'

value during its seven decades of continuous service to the U.S. military community.

"Their hard work and dedication in reporting on issues that matter the most to the military community continues to be of value," he said. "However, as we look forward to the current budget proposal and beyond, the DOD must prioritize spending to support our warfighters in the most critical areas of need. Therefore, the department has made the difficult decision that, beginning in fiscal year 2021, it will no longer provide appropriated funds to Stars and Stripes."

The news organization's value to American troops has been proven, said Ernie Gates, Stars and Stripes' ombudsman. He said the newspaper not only provides service members "a little piece of home" or a "welcome diversion" from tough missions, but it also provides independent, free-flowing information that they need to exercise their rights as Americans.

The proposal has received pushback from varying directions, including a former commander, lawmakers and a key journalism advocacy-and-education organization, the Society of Professional Journalists.

SPJ called on Esper to rethink the funding cut to Stars and Stripes, which it said would be "a huge disservice to the men and women who serve our country" who rely on the physical newspaper in areas where they cannot access the internet.

"Since it was first published during the Civil War, Stars and Stripes has been a balanced and objective source of information for members of the military," SPJ National President Patricia Gallagher Newberry said Wednesday in the statement. "Its ability to inform troops about issues important to them must not be hindered."

Military veteran lawmakers Rep. Gil Cisneros, D-Calif., and Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., tweeted their support for Stars and Stripes this week.

"Stars & Stripes was a link to home when I was in Iraq and Okinawa," wrote Gallego, a Marine veteran. "It's an A+ indie take on everyday DoD news, f*** ups, and Administration & General Officer BS. No wonder this President wants to cut it. He's got a fight on his hands."

Cisneros, a Navy veteran, wrote Stars and Stripes "provides a crucial voice on the DOD, VA, and other military matters."

"We need their reporting," he tweeted.

Other members of Congress reached this week for comment said they needed to take a close look at budget documents before speaking. One member expected to be briefed on the Stars and Stripes funding proposal this week.

In an email, a former top commander of American and NATO troops in Europe defended Stars and Stripes.

"Every day in my office as commander [of] U.S. European Command, I would read Stars and Stripes," said retired Navy Adm. James Stavridis, who served as EUCOM chief and NATO Supreme Allied Command from 2009 to 2013. "It was an invaluable, unbiased, and highly professional source of information which was critical to me in my role overseeing U.S. military throughout Europe."

The San Jose State University Jewish Studies Program, the Burdick Military History Project,
College of Social Sciences, History Department and Veteran Students Organization;
The California State Guard Military Museum Command;
Hillel of Silicon Valley and the Jewish War Veterans present

***"Uncommon Valor:
Jewish-American Medal of Honor Heroes"
A Day to Honor and Study Military Service***

Free and Open to the Public

Sunday, March 8th

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Tower Hall



**San Jose State University
One Washington Square, San Jose**



11:00 AM: Introductory Remarks

*Dr. Robert Katz, Exhibit Organizer
Major General Jay M. Coggan, Commanding General
California State Guard*

2020 Jewish Studies Levinson Memorial Lecture

*Judge Quentin L. Kopp
"American Jews and Military Service"
Morris Dailey Auditorium, Tower Hall*

1:00 PM: Video: "True Honor: Jewish War Heroes"

Courtesy of the Jewish War Veterans

**1:30-5:00 PM: 2020 Burdick Military History
Symposium: Jewish Military History**

Morris Dailey Auditorium, Tower Hall

*Moderated by Dr. Jonathan Roth,
Professor of History, San Jose State University*

"Zionists in the Red Army during the Russian Civil War"
*Ignat Ayzenberg, Coordinator of Jewish Studies,
San Jose State University*

"The Boys of Camp Ritchie: From refugees to instruments of justice"
*Lieutenant-Colonel Erik Brun, California State Guard
Military Museum Command*

"Jewish Military Chaplains: An American Tale"
*Dr. Ronit Stahl, Assistant Professor,
Department of History, U.C. Berkeley*

For more information contact Dr. Jonathan Roth at jonathan.roth@sjsu.edu