



JEWISH WAR VETERANS POST #373

ALBERT ARONOWITZ CHAPTER, Tampa, Florida

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CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 2020 EDITION

OUR NEXT MEETING

Sunday, February 16^h

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.

Presenting the Colors at the Tampa Bay Lightning Hockey Jewish Appreciation Night



Post 373 Members recently served as the Honor Guard for the Presentation of the Colors at the Tampa Bay Lightning Game. From L to R: Sr. Vice Commander Jack Rudowsky, Commander Larry Jasper, Adjutant Steve Falkowitz, Sergeant-at-Arms Jim Marenus, and Jr. Vice Commander Georgi Jasper.

Date	Time	Event
Friday February 14		Valentines Day
Sunday February 16	0930**	Post Meeting
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
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

I would like to discuss my previous issue which was dedicated to those American Jewish heroes who paid the ultimate price for our freedom. I listed 38 people who lost their lives in service to this great nation. I have since learned that there is some disagreement on the actual number. There is one site that insists there are only 37. There is another that lists 58 names but no bio. I have found that it is difficult to verify which service members who have given their lives are actually of the Jewish faith, since the military has ceased to ask and list religious preferences. My research has included researching obituaries to see if they list the religion, resorting to finding photos of the graves and seeing if there is a Star of David on the stone and in other cases, finding where the funeral service was held.

One organization listed more names than I had and did not list some names from my list – 3 were in dispute. I was told that contrary to a DOD listing of one person being KIA, there is a National Archives listing of a suicide after the individual returned home. In another case, even though the service was held in a synagogue and the individual was buried in a Jewish cemetery, I was told the spouse was Jewish but not the service member. In the third case, the individual was an officer in the National Guard, had served in theater, but at the time of death he was operating as a civilian contractor.

I cannot determine in the first case if the person in question died in theater or not. In the second case I cannot determine if in fact the individual was Jewish. In the third case, it does appear that the person was operating as a civilian contractor at the time of his death, but does that disqualify him from being an American Jew who lost his life in service to his country?

So given all of this, I give the benefit of the doubt to the individuals, who all served in theater, and I feel the proper number is, unfortunately, 61. As such, I have the names of the additional 23 but no bios. I will work on finding that information and will publish same when I complete the research.

Moving on, it is that time of the year again – time to nominate post members to positions of leadership. Open for nomination are Commander, Sr. Vice Commander, and Jr. Vice Commander. Please consider stepping up to one of these positions. We will take nominations at the February meeting and hold elections in March. Please do not feel that the incumbents have a “lock” on the position. Turnover is good. All regular post members (unfortunately not Patrons) are eligible to be nominated and

elected. We have all served and have potential leadership qualities. This is your chance to demonstrate your ability to show the post what you can do. Remember, you can nominate anyone – including yourself. If elected, you will not be thrown into the “lions’ den”. Those of us who have held these positions will be there to assist as needed or requested. You are not alone and the desire is for everyone to succeed.

As Department Commander, I had the pleasure to recently officiate at the Installation of Officers for Post 352 in The Villages. I had the opportunity to meet a great group of people, who are all dedicated to the JWV and their faith. The retiring Post Commander, Jerry Prezioso, started the post 8 years ago and has done a tremendous job of building the post. Thank you Jerry and I wish you well in your “retirement”. To the new (and continuing) officers, I wish you great success in the coming year. On behalf of the National and State Leadership, I thank you for your dedication and hard work.

Just prior to our next post meeting I will be in Washington D. C. for 5 days. During that time we will be on Capitol Hill for 2 days discussing a number of important legislative issues with our representatives. After our time at Capitol Hill, and on the 3rd full day, we will be having meetings of the Marketing, Budget, Convention, Personnel, Finance, Policy, Membership, Gulf War, Vietnam, and Women in the Military Committees. We will be discussing and voting on significant issues at the NEC (National Executive Committee) meeting. There will also be a meeting on the National Museum of American Jewish Military History. I will report on these at our post meeting.

I want to send out a request to all who receive this newsletter: we need to increase our membership across the country. Nationally we have a large number of members who are behind in their membership dues and are in danger of being dropped from the roles. Please reach out to these fellow members and help them become current. Additionally, we should all take on the charge to bring in 4 new members in the coming year. If we are successful at this, we will go a long way toward ensuring a JWV with a healthy future.

To all who receive this newsletter and are State of Florida members, please update your rosters especially with email addresses. Going forward, the Department quarterly newsletter will be sent electronically. If we do not have emails for all your post members, your post will be responsible to get the newsletter to them.

I look forward to seeing all Post 373 members at the upcoming meeting. Please bring a friend or other potential member. To all who receive this newsletter who are not members of Post 373, you are always welcome to join us for a nosh and our meeting!

L'Shalom,

Larry Jasper



SOLDIER GIVES FAMILY SURPRISE HOMECOMING DURING STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

4 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Amy Bushatz

An Army spouse got the surprise of her life tonight while attending the State of the Union address as a guest of President Donald Trump when the President went off-script.

“War places a heavy burden on our Nation’s extraordinary military families, especially spouses like Amy Williams from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and her two children -- 6-year-old Elliana and 3-year-old Rowan,” the President said.

“Amy works full time, and volunteers countless hours helping other military families. For the past seven months, she has done it all while her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Townsend Williams, is in Afghanistan on his fourth deployment to the Middle East. Amy’s kids have not seen their father’s face in many months.”

And that’s where the prepared remarks ended for a few moments.

Instead of continuing to read the speech distributed to officials and the press, Trump instead announced that he had a surprise for Williams.

“But Amy there’s one more thing. Tonight we have a very special surprise,” he said. “I am thrilled to inform you that your husband is back from deployment, he is here with us tonight and we couldn’t keep him waiting any longer.”



Sgt. 1st Class Townsend Williams surprises his family by returning early from deployment in Afghanistan during the State of the Union address (Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

And with that, Sgt. 1st Class Williams walked up to hug his wife and two small children as lawmakers stood and cheered.

The reunion was the first time a military family has been surprised by a homecoming as part of the State of Union address. It is also believed to be the first surprise reunion in the House chamber.



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AIR FORCE SAW RECORD-BREAKING NUMBER OF SUICIDES IN 2019

4 Feb 2020 | Military.com | By Oriana Pawlyk

The U.S. Air Force says 137 airmen across the active duty, Guard and Reserve died by suicide in 2019, a 33% increase over the previous year.

Officials confirmed the number last week after the latest statistics appeared on social media. "Suicide is a difficult national problem without easily identifiable solutions that has the full attention of leadership," said Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services for the Air Force.

"The Department of the Air Force has been and continues to pursue immediate, mid-term, and long-range suicide prevention initiatives for the total force that focus on connections between individuals, units, and Air Force family; protections in environments, services, and policies; detection of risk in individuals and units; and equipping the total force and family members to mitigate risk and increase resilience," he said in a statement provided to Military.com on Monday.

Leaked slides posted on the popular but unofficial Air Force Facebook page Amn/Nco/Snco last week showed that the majority of the 2019 deaths were in the active-duty ranks -- 84 total. The slides noted that, as of Dec. 31, 68 of the 84 deaths were suspected suicides but had not been confirmed.

While the Air Force did not break down the 137 number, a spokesperson confirmed that the slides "were accurate at the time they were created." The new total marks the highest annual number since the Air Force began keeping an official record in 2008, said service spokeswoman Lynn Kirby.

While data was not immediately available regarding suicides across the Guard and Reserve component, the previous highest year for suicides among active-duty airmen was in 2017, with 63 confirmed deaths. According to the Department of Defense quarterly suicide report, 60 active-duty airmen died by suicide in 2018. The service lost 103 airmen across the total force that year. The Air Force had already surpassed the number of suicides in all of 2018 by nearly 30 people on Aug. 1, 2019, officials said at the time. That month, officials ordered a "tactical pause" in operations to address the issue.

"Our teammates are taking their own lives," Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright announced in a video, which was posted on social media and directed commanders to address the rise in suicides across the force. "We lose more airmen to suicide than any other single enemy." Wright said 78 airmen had taken their lives between Jan. 1 and July 31, 2019.

Speaking to Military.com in October, the chief said that, over



September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. (U.S. Air Force photo/Christine Groening)

the course of his career, he has heard feedback from airmen who felt the most hopeless during deployments, unable to connect with someone from their unit or loved ones back home. But it was a person -- not a program or initiative -- who stepped in that made them reverse course before it was too late, he said. "That's all it was -- meaningful connections," Wright said.

On those occasions, help came from a friend or teammate -- sometimes even a stranger -- asking the simplest questions such as, "How are you? Is there anything I can do?" he explained. "It makes a big difference if you walk into a work center where you feel like, 'Hey, I'm a valued member of his team, and my supervisor, my teammates, they care about the things that I'm going through' versus, 'Hey, nobody cares,'" Wright said. "This is about making airmen feel valued."

If you or someone you know needs help, the Veterans Crisis Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 800-273-8255, press 1. Services also are available online at www.veteranscrisisline.net or by text, 838255.

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?>

TOXIC 'BLACK GOO' BASE USED BY US HAD ENRICHED URANIUM. MORE VETERANS REPORT CANCER

4 Feb 2020 | McClatchy Washington Bureau | By Tara Copp

WASHINGTON -- For the last six weeks, a private Facebook group set up to help veterans who served at a toxic base in Uzbekistan has been flooded with new members, many with hauntingly familiar stories: I served at K2. I have cancer.

"It was overwhelming," said retired Army Chief Warrant Officer Scott Welsch, a special operations military intelligence officer who deployed to K2, or Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan, in October 2001.

McClatchy exclusively reported in December that the Pentagon had known from the beginning that K2, a former Soviet and Uzbek base, was contaminated with radioactive processed uranium, chemical weapons remnants and underground pools of fuel and solvents that broke through the soil in a "black goo."

Despite the contamination, about 7,000 U.S. forces were deployed there after the 9/11 attacks, from October 2001 to 2005, until Uzbekistan withdrew permission for the United States to use the base.

After the K2 story became public, the veterans' K2 Facebook site was flooded with new requests to join. Each new member was vetted for their military service. Once accepted, more names of ill veterans began to surface.

As the new stories came in, Welsch volunteered to track the reported illnesses. But he had to step away. "I was in bad shape from reporting all these medical issues," said Welsch, who was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2014.

By the end of January the group had recorded 310 cancers.

The last government count, done by the Army in 2015, was that 61 service members who had been at K2 were diagnosed with cancer. That study was prompted by a number of U.S. Army Special Operations Command forces at K2 who had developed various types of cancer.

Despite the Army Special Operations Command requesting the review, special operations forces personnel could not be identified because of the classified nature of their missions, so those illnesses likely were not included in the 2015 count, the Army said at the time.

The self-reported 310 cancers from the K2 veterans' group, if accurate, means the number of cancer-stricken K2 veterans is now five times greater than the Army reported.

Some of those K2 veterans will be in Washington this week, looking for help from Congress.

"I've been wondering all of these years, 'How many more, how many more. How many more?'" said Kim Brooks, widow of Army Lt. Col. Timothy Brooks. Timothy Brooks was one of



C-130 Hercules aircrew members board their aircraft for an Operation Enduring Freedom mission at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, Uzbekistan, on April 19, 2005. (U.S. Air Force photo/Scott Sturkol)

the first to deploy to K2, and one of the first K2 veterans to die of cancer. The first signs came in 2002. That spring Timothy Brooks and his wife were standing in their Fort Drum, N.Y., kitchen and he was agitated, she recalled in a phone interview with McClatchy.

Timothy Brooks had just left a meeting on base where he and other soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division had been handed a form to sign. The unit had just returned home from K2. "They told us we were exposed to some really bad stuff," Brooks recalled her husband saying.

Over the next few months, her husband's health deteriorated. He began to suffer terrible headaches and his temper changed, Kim Brooks said. The 6'5" athlete was constantly exhausted. But the family still prepared for him to deploy to Iraq with other elements of the 10th Mountain Division in spring 2003.

In new documents obtained by McClatchy, two classified maps and a PowerPoint highlight that base leadership had identified enriched uranium contamination in the northwest corner of the base, adjacent to where K2 forces worked and lived.

Still the official guidance on the contamination, reported in an October 2001 to November 2001 classified environmental survey also obtained by McClatchy, was that risk of radiation was low -- if the soldiers remained inside the confines of a large protective dirt berm.

"Conduct radiological air monitoring for uranium (soluble and insoluble) in or near the fighting positions nearest to the former missile storage site," that classified environmental guidance advised.

This week, K2 veterans and surviving spouses are in Washington to talk to members of Congress and press for a hearing about the toxic contamination on the base. They also plan to advocate for K2 veterans still struggling to get the Department of Veterans Affairs to recognize their illnesses as connected to their time in Uzbekistan.

“We need to get in front of this, it’s been killing us for 20 years now,” said former Air Force Staff Sgt. Derek Blumke, who deployed to K2 in 2001 and 2003 with the 16th Special Operations Wing.

The VA has previously maintained that K2 veterans do not have a higher incidence rate of cancer. However, once the agency was informed by McClatchy of the new numbers the veterans’ group is reporting, they provided an additional response.

“According to the latest reviews, there is no indication of increased cancer rates among veterans who served at Karshi-Khanabad,” said VA spokeswoman Susan Carter. “The limitations of self-reported surveys are well documented in the medical research community, but VA will work with the Department of Defense to study this issue further as new empirical data becomes available.”

In January, the House Committee on Oversight and Reform’s national security subcommittee sent letters to Defense Secretary Mark Esper and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, requesting the agencies turn over by Jan. 24 any documents that describe the conditions at K2 and what has been done to treat the veterans who served there.

Neither department has responded, a committee aide said on the condition they not be identified.

In May 2003, Timothy and Kim Brooks were in Fort Drum’s gym listening to a colonel address soldiers and their families in a pre-deployment ceremony. Their unit would depart in a week.

Timothy Brooks put his head in his hands. “I don’t feel well,” Brooks said. “We’ve got to walk out.” Outside the gym door, Timothy Brooks collapsed to the ground and turned gray. Kim Brooks ran back into the gym. “I threw open the doors because the medics were all in a line there with their kits, and I screamed ‘I need a medic now! Come help my husband!’” Brooks said, her voice breaking. Timothy Brooks was diagnosed with stage three brain cancer. He died a year later on May 29, 2004. He was 36.

Because Timothy Brooks was on active duty when he was diagnosed and when he died, Kim Brooks and her four children have received financial and education benefits from the military and VA.

But not all K2 families have had the same experience. Veterans who were not on active duty when the cancer was diagnosed face a much harder path to receive a determination that the illness was connected to their time in service so they can get benefits. Kim Brooks said she will be in Washington for them.

“If they were there and they’re sick, our country needs to take care of them. Bottom line,” Brooks said.

Welsch feels the same way. “In the beginning, before I found this group, my ideal outcome was strictly personal,” Welsch said. “I wanted benefits for me. Now it’s a much bigger picture.”

2 MORE CHINESE NATIONALS ARRESTED AT NAVAL AIR STATION IN KEY WEST

8 Jan 2020 | By The Associated Press

KEY WEST, Fla. — Two more Chinese nationals have been arrested for illegally taking photographs at a Florida Navy base, court records show.

The arrests of Yuhao Wang and Jielun Zhang bring to four the number of Chinese people charged recently with snapping pictures at the Naval Air Station in Key West, FL.

An FBI affidavit says Wang and Zhang drove up to an air station annex entrance and were told by a security officer they could not enter the property without military identification. The FBI says the pair drove onto the base anyway and were apprehended by authorities about 30 minutes later after taking photos of structures on the base.

The two had an initial court appearance on Monday and have bail hearings Friday in Key West federal court. Their attorneys did not immediately respond Tuesday to emails seeking comment.

Two F/A-18E Super Hornet jets attached to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 83 "Rampagers" prepare to take off at Naval Air Station Key West's Boca Chica Field, Oct. 9, 2019. *(U.S. Navy photo/Danette Baso Silvers)*



The arrests follow two similar cases involving Chinese nationals taking photos at the Key West base. On Dec. 26, Lyuyou Liao was charged with illegally taking pictures at another annex of the Naval Air Station.

Liao, 27, is being held without bail. His lawyer argued at a recent hearing that Liao was on vacation taking pictures and that evidence of any crime is thin.

A fourth Chinese man, Zhao Qianli, pleaded guilty last year to illegally taking photographs at the same Florida Keys installation. Qianli, 20, was sentenced to a year in federal prison.

CHINA'S ANTICS ARE A 'GAME-CHANGER' FOR THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS, 4-STAR SAYS

16 Jan 2020 | Military.com | By Gina Harkins

The Navy and Marine Corps must join forces to combat threats China poses at sea, a top U.S. general said Wednesday.

The U.S. needs an integrated naval force that is prepared to take on China, Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger said at the annual Surface Navy Association conference. That's going to require the sea services to work a lot more closely than they have over the last 20 years.

"The significant thing that's driven as to where we are right now is a paradigm shift by China in moving to the sea," he said. "We have watched them build and expand a conventional defensive force and kind of yawned for a long time until they went to sea. China has been building forward-operating bases on man-made islands in the South China Sea. The islands have barracks, runways and hangars.

Here's a look at how the Navy and Marine Corps could adapt to take on China.

Marines on More Decks. Leathernecks aren't going to limit their cruises to amphibious assault ships. Marines must learn how to complement other platforms, the commandant added.

Fixed bases and large ships would leave sailors and Marines vulnerable, he said, citing "Fleet Tactics and Naval Operations" by Wayne Hughes and Robert Girrier.

"I'm not talking cheap because we don't need cheap," he said. "It's great power competition -- they are good. But we need a distributed maritime force. ... That drives you toward more. Smaller, but capable."

Fit to Fight. The Navy and Marine Corps can no longer expect to operate from a distance when it comes to China. Crews, he said, must be prepared to switch from deterrence to offense quickly.

"There is an argument to be made by some who feel that two great powers can stand off with long-range precision weapons and hold each other at bay," Berger said. "I am not in that camp. And reality over the last few years should tell you that doesn't work against this adversary because the farther you back away from China, they will move toward you."



U.S. Marines conduct a simulated amphibious assault exercise during Talisman Sabre 19 in Bowen, Australia, July 22, 2019. (U.S. Marine Corps photo/Tanner D. Lambert)

KEEPING THEM GUESSING

The Navy and Marine Corps can't send warships out that look the same every time, Berger said. To "mess up an enemy threat's mind," he said, the Navy and Marine Corps must be unpredictable. That could mean loading an amphib up with F-35B Joint Strike Fighter jets on one deployment then sending the next ship out full of MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, followed by a mix of the two.

"We need to constantly pose this adversary with different looks," the commandant said.

Force-Wide Reviews. The Navy and Marine Corps are both undergoing assessments that could reshape the look of each sea service. The Navy's force-structure assessment will determine the optimal size of the fleet. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday said Tuesday that the assessment could be done within weeks and is likely to top the 355-ship fleet the last assessment suggested.

The Navy will also make room to add a fleet of unmanned vessels to that count, Gilday said. The service is working closely with the Marine Corps to determine the best fleet size.

The Marine Corps is looking at its fleet, too, in terms of personnel. Berger called a force-structure review his top priority in his planning guidance, and it could close some military occupational specialties while others ramp up.

US MILITARY CLAIMED ‘SUCCESS’ IN HACKING ISIS: DOCUMENTS

21 Jan 2020 | Agence France Presse

The U.S. military claims to have “successfully” disrupted the online propaganda efforts of the Islamic State in a hacking operation dating back at least to 2016, according to declassified national security documents released Tuesday.

The heavily redacted, previously top-secret documents said the U.S. Cyber Command “successfully contested ISIS in the information domain” and limited its online efforts on radicalization and recruitment “by imposing time and resource costs” on the jihadist group.

The documents released by the National Security Archive at George Washington University offer the most detailed look at “Operation Glowing Symphony,” the first offensive hacking operation acknowledged by the Pentagon.

The assessment pointed to a “significant reduction” in the online campaign waged by ISIS but added that the Cyber Command efforts were slowed by a “lengthy and difficult” process for approving its operations.

It said that, given the expectation of “more frequent and widely scoped cyber operations,” better procedures should be in place to “help expedite the request and approval process.”

Officials have previously acknowledged the use of offensive cyber weapons as part of the U.S. arsenal, but the newly released documents offer the most detailed assessment of the moves against ISIS by a joint task force created in 2016 by President Barack Obama.

According to a statement from the university archive, “Glowing Symphony” was initially approved for a 30-day window in late 2016 but a July 2017 administrative message extended the operation, and it was unclear if it is continuing.



A fighter of Christian Syriac militia that battles the Islamic State group burns an ISIS flag on the western side of Raqqa, northeast Syria, July 17, 2017. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

The documents released under a Freedom of Information Act request “reveal the unprecedented complexity of the operation, resulting challenges in coordination and deconfliction, and assessments of effectiveness,” the GWU archive said.

The hacking operation represents the U.S. response to concerns about how extremist groups had been using social media and online services to promote their cause, often seeking to spread propaganda for recruitment and radicalization.

According to the university archive, the latest documents and public comments by Cyber Command chief General Paul Nakasone offer clues to how the joint task force operates and what it may do in response to efforts to disrupt the US election campaign.

Nakasone said in a 2019 interview that another task force called the Russia Small Group had been formed to be able to “rapidly to address a threat” to the campaign.

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>



FROM THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congressman Gus Bilirakis is a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee who is dedicated to work in a non-partisan way to help our veterans in all aspects. Following are some comments from his January 26th progress report:

FIGHTING FOR OUR HEROES



Last weekend, I had the honor and privilege of presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to deserving Filipino WWII Veterans who served our nation honorably and have not been treated appropriately by our government. When they agreed to fight under the direction of our military, they did so with President Roosevelt's guarantee that they would be treated as members of the U.S. military and would earn the same

benefits as any other servicemember. However, after the war a subsequent U.S. President rescinded that promise. It wasn't until 2009 when Congress authorized a lump sum payment to these Veterans; however, many are still fighting for the care and benefits they deserve. While it was truly an honor to recognize their service and sacrifice, this situation remains a terrible injustice. I will continue to fight on their behalf.

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS



As I have said many times, fighting homelessness is a mission that is near and dear to my heart. Last week, I had the opportunity to visit the Homeless Empowerment

Program (HEP) in Clearwater. In addition to offering short and long-term housing options, HEP provides the wrap-around services needed to help clients attain stability. This includes healthcare, mental health and substance use treatment, the chance to participate in community gardening, after school and summer camp initiatives for homeless children and financial literacy programs. They also have specially designed programs to assist homeless Veterans. I look forward to working more closely with HEP and other providers as they continue their efforts to end homelessness in our community.

COMBATting HUMAN TRAFFICKING

This report highlights some staggering statistics:

- More than 1/5th of human trafficking victims are children (between the ages of 12-14)
- The life expectancy for a victim after being taken is seven years
- 83% of human trafficking victims in our country are U.S. citizens
- Florida's rate of human trafficking continues to climb

These are just a of few of the many reasons that I continue to work on this tragic issue. I've helped fund grants like the one just received in Tampa Bay to help form regional coalitions of stakeholders who work together to end human trafficking. We are also working at the federal level to strengthen protections for victims, raise awareness and end the facilitation of this horrific crime. Together we can make a difference.



The story of Fritz Niland, whose three brothers were killed within days of each other, is the basis for "Saving Private Ryan."

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.

‘MILLIONS’ STOLEN IN DECADE-LONG BUYING FRAUD AT FLORIDA VA HOSPITALS, OFFICIALS SAY

11 Dec 2019 Military.com | By Dorothy Mills-Gregg

At least 15 Department of Veterans Affairs employees and vendors in Florida were engaged in an “elaborate” fraud scheme that cost the government “millions” since 2009, two government agencies announced in a joint press conference Wednesday.

Declining to give the exact amount allegedly stolen or say what tipped them off, the U.S. Attorney General for the Southern District of Florida and the Department of Veterans Affairs Inspector General said people affiliated with the Miami and West Palm Beach VA clinics were charged and arrested on charges including conspiracy to commit health care fraud, committing health care fraud and bribery.

Nine of the suspects were “low-level” procurement staff, officials said. They allegedly defrauded the VA by letting vendors charge inflated prices for products or saying vendors supplied an order that was completely or partially unfilled. The employees would then receive a kickback on what the VA paid those vendors, officials said.

“This fraud scheme was clearly carried out, not only by the VA employees but deceptively with those vendors. And both of them are equally culpable in this scheme,” district Attorney General Ariana Fajardo Orshan said.

Officials also announced a separate but similar alleged fraud scheme that they suspect involved disabled veteran Lisa Anderson, 48, of Delray Beach. The attorney general has charged Anderson with false statements on her Service Disabled



The West Palm Beach VA Medical Center in Riviera Beach, Florida. (VA image)

Veteran Owned Small Business application, accusing her of selling her preferred VA contract status to businesses she was not connected to.

OIG and AG officials praised their work in apprehending the suspects, but they called the investigation “ongoing” and did not comment on whether there will be any more arrests.

Orshan emphasized those arrested in the alleged kickback schemes were not representative of the VA at large.

“However, that does not reflect on the many, many well-intended, hard-working individuals that work for the VA medical services, she said, “and I want to clearly state that so it’s just a couple of bad apples.”

The maximum prison sentence for the charges are as follows: 10 years for conspiracy to commit health care fraud, 15 years for bribery and 20 years for falsifying records.

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/>

VETERANS GROUP SUES MILITARY LEADERS, CLAIMING YEARS LONG DELAYS ON BENEFITS DECISION

14 Jan 2020 | Military.com | By Richard Sisk

The military has failed to meet deadlines set by Congress for rulings on veterans' requests to correct records blocking them from receiving benefits, according to a federal class-action lawsuit filed last month.

The suit brought by the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) charges that delays in processing the requests by the Boards for Correction of Military Records of the service branches amount to a denial of the due process rights of thousands of veterans.

In an interview and in statements, Bart Stichman, executive director of NVLSP, said that rulings on "lifetime benefits" for disability and retirement are at stake in the lawsuit, which names Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett and acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly as defendants. "Veterans who seek a correction of an erroneous less-than-honorable discharge or a wrongful denial of disability retirement benefits are paying a high price for the ongoing delays at the Correction Boards," he said.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 16, seeks to compel the "timely final decisions" of the Corrections Boards and gives the defendants until mid-February to respond, Stichman said.

Congress in 1998 set deadlines of 10 months for decisions from the Corrections Boards on 90% of existing requests for review, and 18 months for the remaining 10%, but the boards have routinely blown past the deadlines, the suit charges.

At a 2018 hearing of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel, service representatives acknowledged the backlogs but said they couldn't clear them up without additional resources.

John A. Fedrigo, director of the Air Force Review Boards Agency, testified that Air Force Corrections Boards were reviewing only about 2% of the 15,000 applications received annually within the 10-month deadline.

Robert Woods, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Navy, testified at the 2018 hearing that his service received about 12,000 requests for review annually but was adjudicating only



A group of veterans watches the Veterans Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 2016. (U.S. Army/Sgt. Cody W. Torkelson)

68% of them within the 18-month deadline.

The suit was filed on behalf of Walter Calhoun of Georgia, an honorably discharged Army veteran, and unidentified veteran "John Doe" of Kansas, also an honorably discharged Army veteran who served in the military police in Iraq and earned the Bronze Star. After leaving the service, Calhoun applied for Combat-Related Special Compensation due to his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and headache disorder associated with PTSD, as well as right knee degenerative arthritis and left knee osteoarthritis. His requests were denied. In 2016, Calhoun made a final request to the Army and has been waiting nearly 36 months, or twice the 18-month deadline, for an answer, according to the suit.

Doe experienced PTSD symptoms that led to his medical separation from the Army, which denied him disability retirement benefits, according to the suit. In July 2017, Doe requested a correction of his records to enable him to collect disability but has yet to receive a ruling from the Army Corrections Board, the suit states.

Stichman said the class-action suit represents a mix of veterans either requesting upgrades of discharges to entitle them to benefits or requests from honorably discharged veterans for corrections to their records.

WWII ALLIES, GERMANY MARK 75 YEARS SINCE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

16 Dec 2019 | The Associated Press | By Raf Casert and Mark Carlson

BASTOGNE, Belgium — Side by side, the Allies and former enemy Germany together marked the 75th anniversary of one of the most important battles in World War II — the Battle of the Bulge, which stopped Adolf Hitler’s last-ditch offensive to turn the tide of the war.

At dawn on Dec. 16, 1944, over 200,000 German soldiers started the most unexpected breakthrough through the dense woods of Belgium and Luxembourg’s hilly Ardennes. Making the most of the surprise move, the cold, freezing weather and wearied U.S. troops, the Germans pierced the front line so deeply it came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Initially outnumbered, U.S. troops delayed the attack enough in fierce fighting to allow reinforcements to stream in and turn the tide of the battle by Christmas. After a month of fighting, the move into Germany was unstoppable.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper paid tribute to over 19,000 U.S. troops who died in one of the bloodiest battles in the nation’s history.

“Their efforts not only defended America but also ensured that the peoples of Europe would be free again,” Esper said, calling the Battle of the Bulge “one of the greatest in American history.”

U.S. Army veteran Malcolm “Buck” Marsh took the tributes in stride Monday as he addressed royalty, military leaders and top government officials. “It is great to be here but I’m glad I’m not digging a foxhole,” Marsh said.

Even though German deaths also exceeded well over 10,000 in the battle that stretched deep into January, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier took special time to thank the U.S. troops.

“On this day, we Germans would like to thank the United States of America. The American armed forces, together with their allies, liberated Europe and they also liberated Germany. We thank you,” Steinmeier said.

“Those who died were victims of hatred, delusion, and a destructive fury that originated from my country,” he said.

Germany is now an ally of the United States and its wartime partners in NATO. During the poignant ceremonies at the star shaped Mardasson memorial in Bastogne, the current discord between the United States and several European allies over trade and security were never mentioned.

Even if it was a relatively warm 6 degrees Celsius (43 F) as opposed to the shivering conditions 75 years ago, the

U.S. Battle of the Bulge veterans, front row, listen to the U.S. national anthem during a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge at the Mardasson Memorial in Bastogne, Belgium on Monday, Dec. 16, 2019. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco)



commemoration took place under leaden skies and rain with fog hanging low.

Hitler had hoped the advance would change the course of World War II by forcing U.S. and British troops to sue for peace, thus freeing Germany to focus on the rapidly advancing Soviet armies in the east.

Out of the blue at dawn, over 200,000 German troops counter-attacked across the front line in Belgium and Luxembourg, smashing into battle-wary U.S. soldiers positioned in terrain as foreign to them as it was familiar to the Germans.

Yet somehow, the Americans blunted the advance and started turning back the enemy for good, setting Allied troops on a roll that would end the war in Europe less than five months later.

This battle gained fame not so much for the commanders’ tactics but for the resilience of small units hampered by poor communications that stood shoulder to shoulder to deny Hitler the quick breakthrough he so desperately needed. Even though the Americans were often pushed back, they were able to delay the German advance in its crucial initial stages.

“It was ultimately the intrepid, indomitable spirit of the American soldier that brought victory,” Esper said.

When the fortunes of war turned, it was most visible in the southern Ardennes town of Bastogne, where surrounded U.S. troops were cut off for days with little ammunition or food.

When Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne received a Dec. 22 ultimatum to surrender or face total destruction, he offered one of the most famous — and brief — replies in military history: “‘Nuts.’” Four days later, U.S. troops broke the Nazi encirclement.

“News of their fierce defense quickly spread, boosting the morale of allied forces all along the Western Front,” Esper said.

After the fighting in the Battle of the Bulge ended on Jan. 28, 1945, Allied forces invaded Germany, eventually leading to the Nazi surrender and the end of the war in Europe.

‘NUTS!’ US TROOPS THWARTED HITLER’S LAST GAMBLE 75 YEARS AGO

13 Dec 2019 | The Associated Press | By Raf Casert

BASTOGNE, Belgium — Pvt. Arthur Jacobson was seeking cover in the snow behind a tank moving slowly through the wooded hills of Belgium’s Ardennes, German bullets whizzing by.

That was when he lost his best friend and Bazooka team partner to sniper fire. “They couldn’t hit him, he shouted,” Jacobson said wistfully. “Those were his last words.”

The recollection of his worst day in the Battle of the Bulge still haunts him, three quarters of a century later during the first return of the 95-year-old to the battlefield.

The pristine-white rows of thousands of grave markers over the remains of U.S. soldiers in cemeteries on the former front line hark back to the days when Americans made the ultimate sacrifice for a cause across the ocean.

The fighting in the bitterly cold winter of 1944 was unforgiving to the extreme.

What Jacobson didn’t know then was that he was part of the battle to contain Nazi Germany’s desperate last offensive that Adolf Hitler hoped would become his version of the Allies’ D-Day: A momentous thrust that would change the course of World War II by forcing U.S. and British troops to sue for peace, thus freeing Germany to focus on rapidly advancing Soviet armies in the east.

“WE WERE THERE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT”

The Battle of the Bulge “is arguably the greatest battle in American military history,” according to the U.S. army historical center. Such perspective came only later to Jacobson, who was barely 20 at the time.

“They really didn’t tell us anything,” he said. “The Germans had attacked through Belgium, and we were there to do something about it.”

Out of the blue at dawn on Dec. 16, 1944, over 200,000 German troops counter-attacked across the front line in Belgium and Luxembourg, smashing into battle-weary US soldiers positioned in terrain as foreign to them as it was familiar to the Germans.

Yet somehow, the Americans blunted the advance and started turning back the enemy for good, setting allied troops on a roll that would end the war in Europe less than five months later.

This battle gained fame not so much for the commanders’ tactics as for the resilience of small units hampered by poor communications that stood shoulder to shoulder to deny Hitler the quick breakthrough he desperately needed. Even though the Americans were often pushed back, they were able to delay the German advance in its crucial initial stages. The tipping point was



In this Jan. 6, 1945 file photo, American tanks wait on the snowy slopes in Bastogne, Belgium. (AP Photo, File)

to come later.

All weekend, a handful of returning veterans like Jacobson will be feted by an ever grateful local population for their bravery. Royalty, dignitaries and some government leaders will gather in Bastogne, Belgium and Hamm, Luxembourg, on Monday to remember the battle itself. “It will be a great day,” said Belgian Vice Premier Koen Geens. Remembering both the German forces, driven on by Hitler’s hated SS troops, and the allied soldiers, he said: “We are capable of the worst and of the best.”

“I DON’T NEED A NECKTIE”

Overall, deaths in the month-long battle are estimated in the five digits. The Americans suffered at least 80,000 casualties including more than 10,000 dead, while up to 12,000 were listed killed among some 100,000 German casualties.

Among the fallen was Albert W. Duffer, Jacobson’s Bazooka team partner, shot in the neck by a German sniper on Jan. 6, 1945. Last Tuesday Jacobson went to greet Duffer for the first time in 75 years — at the Henri Chapelle U.S. cemetery in the northern part of the battle zone, where 7,987 U.S. soldiers lie buried. At dusk, Jacobson watched the U.S. flag being lowered and was presented with it in recognition of his valor.

The Battle of the Bulge was one of the war’s least predictable campaigns. After D-Day and the draining Normandy drive, allied troops sweeping across the continent believed the worst was behind them.

Paris had been liberated, Gen. George Patton was moving eastwards toward Germany, and Hitler had to keep an increasingly bleary eye on Stalin’s Soviet armies advancing on the Eastern Front.



Jewish War Veterans of the USA

33rd Mission to Israel

March 22-March 31, 2020



Join us on our 33rd Mission to Israel! Witness the wonderful achievements of this small Jewish country. America's friend and ally. We visit places other groups do not visit. Get updated briefings. Meet Israelis and their leaders. Enjoy fun and comradeship with fellow veterans. Feel at home! You do not have to be Jewish or a veteran to travel with us, so bring your family and friends!



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or you can simply use a QR code reader to scan the code on the right.



If you have any other questions, please contact Christy Turner at:
cturner@jwv.org or 202-265-6283.

BASTOGNE (Continued from page 13)

"The thought was that Germany was on its knees and could no longer raise a big army" said Mathieu Billa, director of the Bastogne War Museum.

Still, Hitler believed Germany could turn the tide, and centered on regaining the northern Belgian port of Antwerp with a push through the sparsely populated Ardennes.

The 120-mile (170 kilometer) dash seemed so fanciful that few of Hitler's own generals believed in it, let alone the allied command. Allied intelligence heard something might be afoot, but even on the eve of the attack the U.S. VIII Corps daily note said that "There is nothing to report."

For days to follow, the only reports would be bad for U.S. troops retreating amid word that SS troops were executing their prisoners — like at Malmedy, where 80 surrendered soldiers were murdered in a frozen field.

When Jacobson moved into the Ardennes, night temperatures outdoors dropped as low as -20 Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit). "You had to dance around not to freeze to death," he said. Daytime saw the constant fear of sniper fire.

Back home in the States, some were oblivious to the soldiers' plight. "My family sent me a necktie," Jacobson chuckled. "I sent a letter back: 'I don't need a necktie.'"

"NUTS!"

Soon though, the German effort pushed its limits as Antwerp

remained well out of reach and troops ran out of ammunition, morale and, crucially, fuel. Even the weather turned against the Germans, as the skies finally cleared, allowing the all-powerful allied air force to pound the enemy.

Nowhere was that tipping point more visible than in the southern Ardennes town of Bastogne, where surrounded U.S. troops were cut off for days with little ammunition or food.

When Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne received a Dec. 22 ultimatum to surrender or face total destruction, he offered one of the most famous — and brief — replies in military history: "'Nuts.'"

Four days later, Patton's troops broke the encirclement. And so it went with the Battle of the Bulge too, with the U.S. troops gaining momentum after Christmas.

After the fighting ended on 28 January 1945, Allied forces invaded Germany, eventually leading to the Nazi surrender and the end of the war in Europe.

Jacobson, who lives in Port St. Lucie, Florida, also entered Germany. But his war was ended by a March 2 mortar blast, which seriously injured his leg and killed three other soldiers.

After eight months of front-line horror, hospital offered him a kind of deliverance despite the pain.

"I used to wake up at night in the hospital. I'd dream about having to move out at night," he said. "Orders would come down, 'let's move out to another position.' And I'd wake up," he said, "and

USS ARIZONA AND USS OKLAHOMA TO SAIL AGAIN, NAVY'S ACTING SECRETARY SAYS



Acting Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Thomas B. Modly meets with business leaders before addressing the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce on Dec. 10, 2019. (Louis Thompson Staats IV)/(U.S. Navy)

24 Dec 2019 The Honolulu Star-Advertiser | By William Cole

Navy ships named USS Arizona and USS Oklahoma will return to active duty with the announcement by Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly that two new Virginia-class attack submarines will be named after American heroes of the greatest generation who perished on the famed Pearl Harbor battleships.

The move brings back into service the hallowed ship names 78 years after both were badly damaged in the surprise Japanese attack on Dec. 7, 1941. Most of the Navy casualties that day came from losses on those two ships.

"I am honored and humbled to name the next two Virginia-class nuclear fast-attack submarines to be built as the USS Oklahoma (SSN-802) and the USS Arizona (SSN-803)," Modly said in a release. "It is my fondest wish that the citizens of the great states of Arizona and Oklahoma will understand and celebrate our

Navy's desire to memorialize the 1,177 heroes who perished in USS Arizona (BB-39) and the 429 more in USS Oklahoma (BB-37) in Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941."

Modly added that "there is no greater honor I can think of for the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the nation than to build and commission into active service two state-of-the-art American warships carrying the spirit of those heroes of the greatest generation, as well as that of their families and the Grand Canyon and Sooner states as they sail through a new American maritime century."

Approximately 1.8 million people annually visit the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, which includes the USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma and USS Utah memorials, six officer bungalows, three mooring quays, and the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center.

"Today is a proud day for Arizona," Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey said in a release. "It's been nearly 80 years since the attacks on Pearl Harbor, which resulted in the sinking of the USS Arizona and deaths of 1,177 of her crewmembers. This ship and the name, 'USS Arizona,' hold special meaning for our country, its history and the people of Arizona--and today, that legacy begins a new chapter."

THE NAVY ONCE CALLED HIM AN ‘UNKNOWN NEGRO SAILOR.’ NOW IT’S NAMING A CARRIER AFTER HIM

19 Jan 2020 | Military.com | By Gina Harkins

Nearly 80 years after the Navy declined to even name the hero black sailor who displayed extraordinary bravery during the attack on Pearl Harbor, the service’s acting secretary is breaking with tradition to name a powerful aircraft carrier in his honor.

The family of Navy Cross recipient Doris “Dorie” Miller said Sunday that acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly’s decision to name a carrier for their uncle is an honor. Having the announcement made on Martin Luther King Jr. Day only makes the situation even more meaningful, Miller’s niece Brenda Haven told CBS Sunday Morning. “That’s beautiful,” Haven said, adding, “It has been a long, hard road.”

Over the last several decades, most of the Navy’s aircraft carriers have been named for U.S. presidents. This will mark the first time a carrier will be named for an African American or a sailor who performed heroic acts while serving in the enlisted ranks.

“In selecting this name, we honor the contributions of all our enlisted ranks, past and present, men and women, of every race, religion and background,” Modly said Sunday. “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, ‘Everybody can be great - because anybody can serve’. No one understands the importance and true meaning of service than those who have volunteered to put the needs of others above themselves.”

Modly will formally announce his decision to name the next Ford-class carrier for Miller Monday -- Martin Luther King Jr. Day -- at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. That’s where Miller is credited with displaying “extraordinary courage and disregard for his own personal safety” to move his captain to safety after the Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese attack.

Then-Mess Attendant 3rd Class Miller not only got his mortally wounded officer to safety during a serious fire, but also manned a machine gun to fire at Japanese aircraft until it ran out of ammunition and he was ordered to leave the bridge. Black sailors were limited in the roles they could serve in at that time, which meant Miller wasn’t trained to operate the machine gun. When the Navy later recognized the men who’d receive awards

Former sailors on the USS Miller, salute a 9-foot-tall bronze statue depicting World War II hero Doris Miller, during an unveiling ceremony along



the banks of the Brazos River, Thursday, Dec. 7, 2017, in Waco, Texas. Miller was a mess attendant on the USS West Virginia stationed at Pearl Harbor, he dragged his injured captain to safety, then directed machine-gun fire at enemy aircraft as the ship sank. (Rod Aydelotte / Waco Tribune-Herald via AP)

for heroism for their actions that day, the service referred to Miller only as “an unknown Negro sailor.”

Facing public pushback over that move, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt later stepped in to award Miller the Navy Cross -- but as Modly told CBS Sunday Morning, the move wasn’t without controversy. “There were some people who did not want him to receive the Navy Cross because of his race,” the acting SecNav said. Miller was the first black service member to receive the Navy Cross, which was presented to him by Fleet Adm. Chester Nimitz.

The Navy in 1973 commissioned a Knox-class frigate named in honor of Miller. Modly wanted to name the next Ford-class carrier for a Navy hero, USNI News reported. He decided on Miller “after extensive conversations with current and former Navy leaders,” according to the outlet.

After receiving the Navy Cross, Miller would go onto become a high-profile spokesman for the sea service before being assigned to the carrier Liscome Bay. That ship was sunk by a Japanese torpedo. Miller and 645 others died in the attack.

The ship named for Miller will be the fourth in the new Ford-class carriers, which will replace the aging Nimitz-class flattops. Two of the other carriers in the class -- the Gerald R. Ford and John F. Kennedy -- are named for presidents.

ARMY OFFICIALS APOLOGIZE AFTER POST FEATURING NAZI WAR CRIMINAL TRIGGERS BACKLASH

17 Dec 2019 | Military.com | By Matthew Cox

U.S. Army officials are struggling to explain why a social media post designed to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II featured a large photo of a notorious Nazi war criminal responsible for the massacre of American soldiers during the Ardennes Offensive.

The Dec. 16 post, which ran on the Facebook pages of the XVIII Airborne Corps, 10th Mountain Division and the Defense Department, depicts a color image of SS Lt. Col. Joachim Peiper, a former adjutant to Heinrich Himmler. The post quickly prompted outrage on Facebook and Twitter.

Peiper commanded Kampfgruppe Peiper, the leading formation of the 1st SS Panzer Division, which helped spearhead the German offensive and carried out the Malmedy massacre, which resulted in the deaths of 84 American prisoners of war.

“I am dumbfounded by the decision to prominently display a Nazi on military social media on the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge,” Army public affairs officer Lt. Col. Brian Fickel tweeted. Fickel is currently a student at the Army War College. “Poor judgment for sure,” Fickel tweeted. “I’m certain it was poor judgment and an inadequate approval process. This was not on purpose.”

The post, however, was not a mistake, according to Maj. Allie Payne, a spokeswoman for the XVIII Airborne Corps.

“The concept of yesterday’s post was to introduce the bad guy or the thoughts of a bad guy on the 16th of December,” Payne told Military.com.

The post was part of a planned campaign of posts on the Battle of the Bulge that’s scheduled to run from Dec. 16 to Jan. 22, Payne said.

Army Col. Tage Rainsford, spokesman for the XVIII Airborne, released the following statement.

“We regret the use of the photograph of Joachim Peiper. The Facebook post containing his image (and others) was the first in a series telling the full story of the Battle of the Bulge,” Rainsford wrote.

“In an attempt to tell the full story of the fight, we also presented the perspective of the German commanders involved in the counterattack. This was in no way intended to glorify the German forces, but to fully portray the odds stacked up against the Americans by December 19th. The story of the Battle of the Bulge will run multiple times each day over the course of the next 6 weeks.”

The post was designed to describe Peiper’s thoughts, according to Payne.

The Dec. 16 post, which ran on the Facebook pages of the XVIII Airborne Corps, 10th Mountain Division and the Defense Department, depicts a color image of SS Lt. Col. Joachim Peiper, a former adjutant to Heinrich Himmler. (DoD via Twitter)



“Today we gamble everything. He paused at his desk. He hated to be alone in his thoughts with the feeling of uncertainty he’d been trying to avoid for weeks. ... this was the way he always thought the end of the world would feel,” according to the post.

The original post states that Peiper was a war criminal, but that disclaimer portion has not been included in many reposts, Payne said.

The choice of the photo may have added to the outrage. The watermark at the bottom right of the photo states it was “colored by Tobias Kurtz,” who is an alleged neo-Nazi sympathizer, the Washington Post reported.

The Post reported that Kurtz had shared another image that depicted Hitler looking on as German soldiers readied to execute a man on his knees. “This photo have my [thumbs-up],” Kurtz wrote in the comments of the drawing, according to the Washington Post.

“I would have been dumbfounded by the decision to prominently display a Nazi on military social media on the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge -- had I not seen cadets making white power sign on national TV on Saturday,” Twitter user Nancy Levine wrote.

Officials from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy have said they are investigating whether hand signs flashed by cadets Army-Navy football game on Saturday are “white power” symbols.

Michael Spears, a retired Army colonel, tweeted, “It seems they are trying to tell the story of the battle.” “Before everyone jumps on this, perhaps the 10th and 82nd could explain what they are doing. You can’t discuss history of WWII without talking about the Nazis,” Spears added.

VA EXPANDS AGENT ORANGE TREATMENT ELIGIBILITY AND ADDS FREE HEALTH EXAM

10 Jan 2020 | Military.com | By Jim Absher

You may be aware that the Department of Veterans Affairs has expanded the locations military members may have been exposed to the weed killer known as Agent Orange when considering medical and disability claims.

The VA has added service aboard ships within 12 nautical miles of the coast of Vietnam and Cambodia to the list of what can qualify veterans and their children for possible health care and disability benefits due to exposure to the defoliant. Previously, only those who served on the ground or on inland rivers could claim that exposure to the chemical made them ill. Veterans groups have long argued that military members came into contact with the chemical onboard ships while loading aircraft and conducting other operations.

Agent Orange was a weed killer sprayed on the jungles of Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War to eliminate forest cover and crops for North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops. The name “Agent Orange” came from the orange identifying stripe used on the 55-gallon drums in which it was stored.

The new law adds an estimated 420,000 to 560,000 veterans to those already eligible for care and benefits for possible exposure.

According to the VA, the following veterans may be eligible for benefits, including those who:

- Came into contact with Agent Orange during their military service
- Served in or near the DMZ between Sept. 1, 1967, and Aug. 31, 1971
- Served in the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. This may include serving on a vessel on the inland waterways or operating within 12 nautical miles of Vietnam or Cambodia.

There were plenty of other ways veterans came into contact with Agent Orange, including on planes that sprayed the chemical or locations that loaded and tested the chemical. In fact, the military used Agent Orange as far back as 1944.

The VA considers a number of illnesses to be presumptive to Agent Orange exposure. This means that all you have to do is have one of the covered conditions and have served in a covered location to be eligible for benefits; you don't need to prove anything else to receive medical care and benefits.

The diseases that the VA considers presumptive, meaning it is known that Agent Orange can cause them, includes:

- AL amyloidosis
- Chloracne (or other types of acneiform disease like it)

The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier Intrepid (CVS-11) steams in the South China Sea on Sept. 13, 1966, with aircraft of Attack Carrier Air Wing 10 (CVW-10) parked on the flight deck. CVW-10 was assigned to the Intrepid for a deployment to Vietnam from April 4 to Nov. 21, 1966. (*V.O. McColley/Navy*)



- Diabetes mellitus type 2
- Ischemic heart disease.
- Parkinson's disease
- Peripheral neuropathy, early onset
- Porphyria cutanea tarda

Several types of cancers are also on the list:

- Chronic B-cell leukemia
- Hodgkin's disease
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Prostate cancer
- Respiratory cancers (including lung cancer)
- Soft tissue sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma)

Agent Orange also caused the birth defect spina bifida in children of exposed veterans.

This list of diseases isn't all-inclusive. There are several other serious health conditions that may be related to Agent Orange, but you may have to fight to get benefits. The VA tried to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension and Parkinson's-like symptoms to the list of presumptive conditions, but that was delayed.

If you or someone you know has one of the conditions listed above or a condition you think may be related to contact with the chemical, you should contact the VA immediately to get assistance.

AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY HEALTH EXAM FOR VETERANS

VA's Agent Orange Registry health exam alerts Veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to Agent Orange exposure during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health

problems more effectively.

Contact your local VA Environmental Health Coordinator about getting an Agent Orange Registry health exam.

About the Agent Orange Registry health exam:

This comprehensive health exam includes an exposure history, medical history, physical exam, and any tests if needed. A VA health professional will discuss the results face-to-face with the Veteran and in a follow-up letter.

Important points about registry health exams:

- Free to eligible Veterans and no co-payment
- Not a disability compensation exam or required for other VA benefits
- Enrollment in VA's health care system not necessary
- Based on Veterans' recollection of service, not on their military records
- Will not confirm exposure to Agent Orange
- Veterans can receive additional registry exams, if new problems develop
- Veterans' family members are not eligible for an Agent Orange Registry health exam.

These Veterans are eligible for the Agent Orange Registry health exam:

Vietnam

- Veterans who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, regardless of length of time.
- Veterans who served aboard smaller river patrol and swift boats that operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam (also known as "Brown Water Veterans")
- "Blue Water Navy" Veterans who served on a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia as defined in Public Law 116-23.

Korea

- Veterans who served in a unit in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) anytime between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971.

Thailand

- U.S. Air Force Veterans who served on Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) bases near U-Tapao, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat, and Don Muang, near the air base perimeter anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.
- U.S. Army Veterans who provided perimeter security on RTAF bases in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961

and May 7, 1975.

- U.S. Army Veterans who were stationed on some small Army installations in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975. However, the Army Veteran must have been a member of a military police (MP) unit or was assigned a military occupational specialty whose duty placed him or her at or near the base perimeter.

Other potential Agent Orange exposures:

Veterans who may have been exposed to herbicides during a military operation or as a result of testing, transporting, or spraying herbicides for military purposes. Learn about herbicide tests and storage outside Vietnam.

INTERESTED IN DISABILITY COMPENSATION?

The registry evaluation is separate from VA's disability compensation process and does not confirm exposure during service.

Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation for health problems related to Agent Orange exposure must file a claim for that benefit.

During the claims process, VA will check military records to confirm exposure to Agent Orange or qualifying military service. If necessary, VA will set up a separate exam for compensation.

"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>



A 1980 COAST GUARD DISASTER KILLED 23. HERE'S ONE HERO'S STORY.

By Kirby Wilson from Tampa Bay Times, St. Petersburg, Fla.

St. Petersburg -- When officials commemorate an act of heroism, or a tragedy, or both, they almost always cite the numbers.

On Monday, it was the number 40. That's how many years it's been since the Coast Guard suffered the worst peacetime tragedy in its history.

And 23: the number of lives lost aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Blackthorn after it collided with a passing 605-foot oil tanker in the waters of Tampa Bay.

And, perhaps most poignantly, the number 18. That's how old Seaman Apprentice William Flores was when he heroically went down with his ship. As the Blackthorn capsized, Flores stayed aboard, throwing life jackets to his fellow seamen. He allowed even more jackets to float to escaping crew members by propping open a locker door with his own belt.

Then, the 180-foot cutter sucked Flores into the depths of Tampa Bay.

"He drowned about 15 feet away from me," remembered Jeff Huse, a survivor of the Blackthorn. "I probably floated with one of the life jackets that he tossed out." Huse was just one of dozens of Coast Guardsmen and women who gathered Monday to celebrate Flores' heroism and to honor the lives lost. (On Tuesday's anniversary, the Coast Guard will remember the tragedy with its own event.) As local politicians and members of Flores' family looked on, Brighter Future Florida, a local nonprofit founded by former Congressman David Jolly, unveiled a concrete statue of Flores for its Circle of Heroes underwater monument off the coast of Clearwater.

One day, his group hopes to include 24 statues in total, Jolly said. For now, the number is 13. Flores' statue is the first in the monument to resemble a particular person.

A freak set of circumstances led to catastrophe on the evening of Jan. 28, 1980. At least one of the passing Capricorn and Blackthorn ships was too close to the center of the channel near the Sunshine Skyway bridge. As the Blackthorn headed out to Galveston, Texas, and the Capricorn in toward Weedon Island,

The challenge coin created to honor the lives of each of the 23 Coast Guard members who perished in the Coast Guard Cutter Blackthorn tragedy is



displayed during a ceremony in the cutter's homeport of Galveston, Texas on Jan. 28, 2019. (U.S. Coast Guard photo/Johanna Strickland)

lights from a nearby cruise ship may have made it difficult for the two ships' crews to see each other until it was too late. And even once the crews did spot one another, an inexperienced Blackthorn officer failed to properly communicate with the Capricorn. All of that is according to two government reports.

Even given all of those factors, the initial collision between the two ships wasn't catastrophic. The vessels hit almost head-on, with the Blackthorn running down the port side of the much larger tanker. (No one on the Capricorn was harmed.)

It was the Capricorn's 13,500-pound anchor that sealed the Blackthorn's fate. It tore into the cutter's hull, then pulled the ship down. Water began gushing into the Blackthorn. On board, chaos. After less than ten minutes, the vessel was sunk, 23 of its crew of 50 lost.

Although some accounts of the disaster say Flores wore a life jacket himself, his body was found without one, his brother Sam Flores said. Perhaps he gave his own life preserver to a colleague in need.

Eighteen is how old Flores' nephew Bobby Flores is now. He doesn't remember hearing very much about Uncle Billy growing up, even though his family hung a picture of him on the wall.

US TROOPS IN IRAQ GOT WARNING HOURS BEFORE IRANIAN ATTACK

14 Jan 2020 The Associated Press | By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ALI ABDUL-HASSAN

AIN AL-ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq — American troops were informed of an impending missile barrage hours before their air base in Iraq was struck by Iran, U.S. military officials said Monday, days after the attack that marked a major escalation between the longtime foes.

At 11 p.m. on Jan. 7, U.S. Lt. Col. Antoinette Chase gave the order for American troops at Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq, to go on lockdown. Military movements froze as her team, responsible for emergency response at the base, sent out alerts about the threat. At 11:30 p.m., she gave the order to take cover in bunkers.

The first strike landed sometime after 1:35 a.m. on Jan. 8 and the barrage continued for nearly two hours. Half way through the attack, Chase learned the missiles were being launched from Iran.

No American soldiers were killed or wounded, the U.S. has said, although several troops were treated for concussions from the blast and are being assessed, said Col. Myles Caggins, a spokesman at the base for the U.S. coalition fighting the Islamic State group.

“The reason why we pushed it at 2330 is because at that point in time all indications pointed to something coming,” she told reporters touring the base. “Worst case scenario — we were told was it’s probably going to be a missile attack. So we were informed of that.”

The sprawling complex in western Anbar province is about 180 kilometers (110 miles) west of Baghdad and is shared with the Iraqi military. It houses about 1,500 members of the U.S. military and the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State militant group.

The Iranian attack — the most direct assault on America since the 1979 seizing of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran — raised fears of a wider conflict although both sides have since indicated that they won’t seek further retaliation, at least in the short term.

“There were more than 10 large missiles fired and the impact hit several areas along the airfield,” Caggins said. At least 15-30 minutes passed between successive strikes, Chase said.



U.S. soldiers and journalists inspect the rubble at a site of Iranian bombing, in Ain al Asad air base, Anbar, Iraq, Monday, Jan. 13, 2020. (AP Photo/Qassim Abdul-Zabra)

The attack destroyed facilities that house dozens of soldiers and one missile hit near an airstrip where six drones were parked but caused no damage, he said.

The base received a notification that the missiles were on their way, thanks to early warning systems, Caggins said, and troops were moved out of harm’s way. He described soldiers who lived through the attack as “warriors.”

The Ain al-Asad air base was first used by American forces after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein. Facilities at the base were split with Iraqi forces when U.S. troops returned in 2014 leading a multi-national coalition to defeat ISIS militants.

Chase said troops had conducted a drill the week before the attack and that they had received some warnings earlier in the day that had prompted them to move troops around the base.

“I had zero casualties and everybody is alive to tell the tale. So as far as I’m concerned, I couldn’t be happier and I couldn’t be prouder of the actions that the soldiers and the coalition forces took that night,” she added.

UPDATE: Approximately 50 service members have since been diagnosed with possible TBI from the concussive effects. These injuries usually take from 3 days to several months to become apparent. Most have returned to duty.

IRAN MAY HAVE A FLEET OF COMMUNIST KILLER DOLPHINS



Military.com | By Blake Stilwell

Iran has some surprising weapons at its disposal. In a 2002 U.S. military exercise that pitted Iran against an invasion from an American task force, the general in command of the opposition was retired Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper. He used motorcycles, small fast-attack boats, land-based missile batteries and even suicide attacks against the Americans.

But he apparently forgot to use Iran's killer dolphin units.

In 2000, the Islamic Republic acquired a number of dolphins from Russia, ones specially trained to attack enemy ships, according to the BBC. The dolphins had originally been trained by the Soviet Union. When funding for the project ran out, the dolphins were acquired by their former trainer, who moved them to a dolphinarium.

But public interest waned, and their caretaker was forced to sell them when he ran out of food.

"If I were a sadist, then I could have remained in Sevastopol," Boris Zhurid, their trainer, told the Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. "But I cannot bear to see my animals starve. ... We're out of medicine, which costs thousands of dollars, and have no more fish or food supplements."

THE FACE OF A KILLER.

In 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the dolphin unit was sent to the Crimean Peninsula from a base in the Russian Pacific

area. There, the dolphins were trained to kill enemy frogmen using harpoons mounted on their backs. They would also swim at enemy ships in suicide attacks while carrying explosive sea mines, as they were able to distinguish between Russian and American submarines by the sounds their propulsion systems make underwater.

The highly trained killer dolphins were moved from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf after Iran purchased them -- for reasons unknown. According to the Russian newspaper, Zhurid's work, which supposedly continued in Iran after the 2000 sale, was solely of a military nature.

Depending on the types of dolphins used by Zhurid, the original animals could still be alive, as dolphins have a lifespan of 50 years or more. He could also have trained more killer dolphins for use against Western shipping.



While the United States protested the sales of arms (or, in this case, killer dolphins) to Iran, Zhurid cared only about his dolphins.

"I am prepared to go to Allah, or even to the devil, as long as my animals will be OK there," he said.

WHY RUSSIA'S HYPERSONIC MISSILES CAN'T BE SEEN ON RADAR

Military.com | By Blake Stilwell

The age of Russian superweapons is upon us -- at least that's what President Vladimir Putin wants us to believe.

And they are cause for concern because the United States' traditional early warning systems might not be able to see those weapons coming.

Hypersonic weapons such as Russia's 3M22 Zircon fly so fast and low -- at speeds of up to Mach 6 and at a low atmospheric-ballistic trajectory -- that they can penetrate traditional anti-missile defense systems.

The missile flies with an advanced fuel that the Russians say gives it a range of up to 1,000 kilometers. And it's so fast that the air pressure in front of the weapon forms a plasma cloud as it moves, absorbing radio waves and making it practically invisible to active radar systems.

U.S. Aegis missile interceptor systems require 8-10 seconds of reaction time to intercept incoming attacks. In those 8-10 seconds, the Russian Zircon missiles will already have traveled 20 kilometers, and the interceptor missiles do not fly fast enough to catch up.

According to Popular Mechanics, even if a U.S. ship were to detect a Zircon missile from 100 miles away, it would have only one minute to do something about it.

In order to intercept a Russian Zircon missile, the U.S. would either need to intercept it at launch or fly an object into its path.

Russia's shift to hypersonic weapons is likely a means of contending with American superiority in size, technology and sheer number of aircraft carriers. The U.S. Navy intends to maintain a force of 12 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers.

By contrast, Russia has one -- and it deploys with a tugboat in case its engine breaks down.

While at sea, any of Russia's 15 Buyan-class corvettes will be able to carry up to 25 Zircon hypersonic missiles. It would take fewer than a half-dozen of those missiles to sink even the most advanced American aircraft carrier, such as the USS Gerald R. Ford.

Some say that innovations like the Zircon are moving the development of military technology away from aircraft carrier-based systems, calling for the U.S. Navy to reconsider the role of the carrier entirely.



(TASS)



Crew members and program officials prepare the X-51A WaveRider for a "captive carry" flight under an Air Force Flight Test Center B-52H Stratofortress Dec. 9, 2009 at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. The captive carry mission is part of preparations being made prior to the X-51's first powered hypersonic flight in early 2010. *(U.S. Air Force/Mike Cassidy)*

GROUND BROKEN FOR NATIONAL POW/MIA MUSEUM IN JACKSONVILLE

20 Jan 2020 | The Florida Times-Union | By Teresa Stepzinski

Military veterans from throughout Northeast Florida came together to honor comrades in arms who were prisoners of war or missing in action and remember their sacrifice.

A standing-room-only crowd that including former prisoners of war, as well as the families of those missing in action, and Gold Star families wept, hugged and prayed together during a solemn ceremony marking the groundbreaking for the total, estimated \$82 million National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum. The memorial and museum is being built on 26 acres.

The first of its kind, the memorial and museum is being built at 6112 POW-MIA Memorial Parkway, at Cecil Commerce Center, which is the former Naval Air Station Cecil Field jet base on the Westside of Jacksonville.

Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial, Inc., a nonprofit organization, is leading the multi-phase memorial and museum project. “Our mission is to honor all former prisoners of war; remember and never forget those missing in action heroes and the families who seek their return,” said Mike Cassata, organization executive director.

Michael Pearson, who recently retired from the U.S. Army National Guard after 20 years, and Tony Langhals, who served as a U.S. Navy patrol aircraft electronics technician before retiring, also after 20 years of service. Both veterans thoughtfully studied the master site plan for the project. They liked what they saw, noting it is a fitting way to honor prisoners of war and the missing in action.

Pearson said he and his fellow members of the American Legion Riders motorcycle club -- military veterans who do charitable work in the community -- support the project 100 percent. “I am so anxious to see it when it’s done,” said Pearson, whose National Guard unit trained at the site that will become the museum and memorial. “Seeing that this is what it’s going to be one day, is exciting,” Pearson said.

Langhals said he came out to the groundbreaking of respect for prisoners of war and those missing in action. “I really respect what they went through and what they have given to our country. I’m just happy to see something like this built in Jacksonville to honor them,” Langhals said.

About 82,000 American military personnel are listed as missing in action and unaccounted for since World War II, according to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). The agency works to account as fully as possible for the missing soldiers, sailors and air crew members.

Kelly McKeague, agency director, was among the speakers at the groundbreaking.



The U.S. flag flies above the POW/MIA flag. (Getty Images)

“Establishing this national memorial rightfully pays tribute to the overwhelming sacrifices borne by our former POWs and the thousands still missing in action,” McKeague said.

Retired U.S. Air Force Capt. William “Bill” Arcuri was flying his 44th mission when his aircraft was shot down Dec. 20, 1972 over Yin Ven, North Vietnam then captured and thrown into a prison camp. He was a prisoner of war until Feb. 12, 1973. Because of his injuries, Arcuri was among the first group of POWs to be released.

The keynote speaker, Arcuri said project like the National POW/MIA Memorial & Museum keep the issue alive in the minds of government officials and citizens. “We who came home must never forget those who did not,” Arcuri said.

The existing NAS Cecil Field Memorial Park was dedicated to those naval aviators stationed at NAS Cecil Field during the Vietnam and Desert Storm War eras. It is being transformed into the new museum and memorial, which supporter say will be “world class.”

The groundbreaking was for Phase 1 -- estimated at about \$5 million -- of the five-year project. Phase 1 calls for restoring and using the historic military chapel -- named the Chapel of the High-Speed Pass.

Just to the north of the chapel, there will be a display of four aircraft that flew out of Cecil Field. The existing grounds of the memorial park will be enhanced, and a replica of the USS Saratoga (CV-60) will be built, according to the plans,

The chapel renovation is nearly complete, and it served as home base for the groundbreaking ceremony. The jet display and memorial brick areas have been designed and permitted.

The project is 59 percent funded, according to the organization.

“This is the beginning of something that we feel will be paramount for the city of Jacksonville, as well as the nation’s veterans,” said Buddy Harris, a retired U.S. Navy commander, who serves as National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum spokesman.

When completed, the memorial and museum will be unique in that no other will be as comprehensive on the mission helping ensure that prisoners of war and those missing in action are not forgotten, Harris said.

DoD RESTRICTS FIREARMS, BASE ACCESS, AND TRAVEL FOR FOREIGN MILITARY STUDENTS TRAINING IN THE US

17 Jan 2020 | Task & Purpose | By Haley Britzky

The Defense Department announced on Friday that training would resume for international military students — once some additional policies and security measures were put in place.

“Going forward we will put several new policies and security procedures in place to protect our people, programs, and installations. These include new restrictions on international military students for possession and use of firearms, and control measures for limiting their access to military installations and U.S. government facilities,” Garry Reid, director for defense intelligence, told reporters on Friday.

“We will also impose new standards for training and education on detecting and reporting insider threats, and establish new vetting procedures that include capabilities for continuous monitoring of international military students while enrolled in U.S.-based training programs.”

The new policies are a result of a review of vetting procedures for foreign students, which was started after the shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola in December — when a Saudi student studying in the U.S. killed four people, including himself — and the following expulsion of 21 other Saudi students over jihadi content and child pornography.

Restrictions will not be tailored to the students’ home countries.

A senior defense official further explained the new policies, saying the department would be “fully implementing” a system called the Defense Biometric Identification System (DBIDS), which aims to “prevent unauthorized access to facilities and installations.”

As for firearm restrictions, the official said there is “not a current policy specific to the international military students,” and that the restriction will bar students from purchasing firearms in the U.S.

On an installation level, commanders will be implementing travel restrictions based on the location of the installation, population size, and training parameters.

“Any military member knows that you may be at one base and the restriction on weekend travel without taking leave is 300 miles, but if there’s a major city that people go to on a regular



In this Dec. 9, 2019 photo made available by the FBI, Saudi Arabia Defense Attaché Major General Fawaz Al Fawaz (second from right) meets with Saudi students at the NAS Pensacola base in Pensacola, Fla. *(FBI via AP)*

basis that’s 310 miles, that local commander has the ability to expand that a little bit to give an equal additional mobility without really getting away from the intent of the guidance to have people available,” the defense official said.

Foreign students will now also undergo “continuous vetting and screening” while they are in the U.S. for training.

While some of the new policies are in response to the Pensacola shooting, an official emphasized that they are not all directly related to that incident, especially because some of the new policies may not have stopped the shooting. For example, the credentialing policy that will restrict access on-base to foreign students would not have impacted the Pensacola shooter, because he was on a base, and in a facility, which he was authorized to have access to.

The official said that the department has received “strong support” from partner nations regarding the new policies, and that they are “not asking anything we wouldn’t ask of ourselves.”

“All current and future students will be required to acknowledge their willingness to abide by these standards,” Reid said. “Committing to full compliance with all U.S. laws on- and off-duty as a condition of their enrollment.”

NEW LAW WILL KEEP GUANTANAMO BAY DETENTION FACILITY OPEN AT LEAST ANOTHER YEAR

26 Dec 2019 | Military.com | By Richard Sisk

The detention facility for war on terror suspects at the Navy's base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, will remain in place for at least another year and prisoner transfers to the U.S. will remain prohibited under the fiscal 2020 defense policy bill, signed into law last Friday by President Donald Trump.

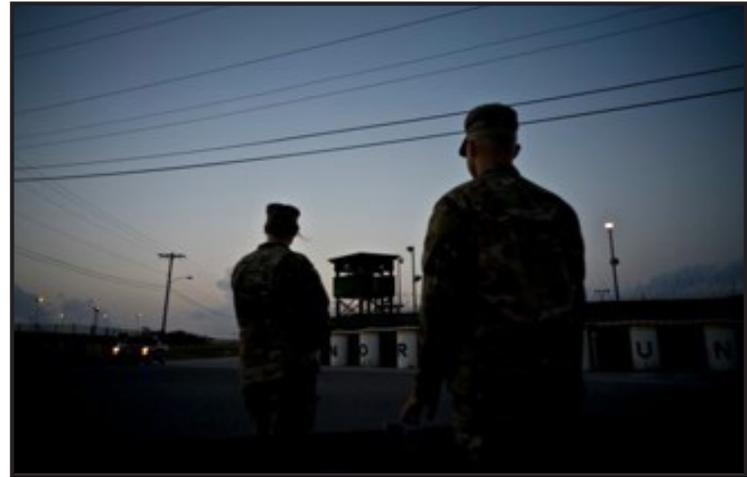
Provisions in the new National Defense Authorization Act bar the use of funds for any attempt to shut down "Gitmo" and return the base to Cuba. They include prohibitions through Dec. 31, 2020, on transfers of the facility's remaining prisoners to the U.S. for prosecution or medical treatment.

The law also precludes the use of funds "to construct or modify facilities" in the U.S. that might be considered as an alternative to housing the prisoners at Guantanamo. The requirements fall in line with Trump's Jan. 2018 executive order to keep Guantanamo open indefinitely.

There are 40 prisoners remaining at Guantanamo of the approximately 780 prisoners who have been held there since the first group arrived from Afghanistan and Pakistan in January 2002.

Former President Barack Obama had pledged to close down Guantanamo and transfer the prisoners to the U.S. for prosecution, but his attempts were repeatedly blocked by Congress.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a challenge brought on behalf of a Yemeni citizen held at Guantanamo regarding his indefinite detention without trial.



In this Tuesday, June 5, 2018 photo, reviewed by U.S. military officials, troops stand guard outside Camp Delta at the Guantanamo Bay detention center, in Cuba. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

THE HILARIOUS AND TOTALLY REAL REASON THE F-22 CAN'T BE HACKED

28 Jan 2020 | We Are The Mighty | By Blake Stilwell

“Star Trek” would be a lot less interesting if we found out the Enterprise didn’t run on an advanced isolinear computing system but instead ran on something like MS-DOS. We might laugh at how incredulous that work of science fiction would be. But in today’s U.S. Air Force, the F-22 – one of the most advanced fighters ever made – runs on a similar disparity.

But of course, the Air Force will remind you that it isn’t science fiction, it’s what they do every day.

The F-22 program was killed at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in an effort to reshape the U.S. military. The F-22 was designed as an air superiority fighter to take on advance fighters from China and Russia in air combat, not support troops on the ground. At the time, American troops were focused on insurgencies and ground combat. Until the terrorists started flying F-14s, there was little perceived need for such a fighter. Now that the U.S. military is refocused on great power wars, the need for such a program is becoming more apparent.

The F-22 is one of the fastest combat aircraft in the U.S. Air Force, even after the development of the F-35. It can detect and attack enemy aircraft from miles away, even if the enemy isn’t yet able to detect the incoming Raptor. In one instance, a Raptor was able to pop up from underneath two Iranian F-4 Phantoms and tell them to go home, which they promptly did, presumably to change their shorts.

Just the presence of a Raptor in a battlespace is enough to clear the skies of enemy aircraft. In a great power war with a country like China, the Raptor would be an indispensable part of the Air Force order of battle. Raptors will quickly disperse in order to keep China from targeting them with ballistic missiles. Their stealth and air combat abilities would then be used to escort C-17s and frustrate Chinese fighters, as well as any Chinese efforts to jam their communications. That’s due in large part to the pilots’ advanced training and the advanced stealth technology



aboard the airframe. But the reason Chinese hackers couldn’t hack their computers is something different altogether.

The technology is more than 35 years old.

When the \$65 billion fighter was cut from the Pentagon budget, there was a lot of joking surrounding the fighter, that the United States had developed a weapon it would never use in combat – after all, until that point the F-22 hadn’t flown a combat mission over either of the two wars the U.S. was actually fighting. Former Navy Secretary John Lehman, found a silver lining, telling the Wall Street Journal that at the very least, the plane’s computer technology was safe from Chinese hackers.

“No one in China knows how to program the ‘83 vintage IBM software that runs them,” he said.

Ten years later, the F-22 has definitely flown combat sorties over Syria and the rise of China and Russia, and their fifth-generation fighters, some of the technology stolen from the United States, might have the Pentagon wishing they had more Raptors.

VFI Supports the JWV Mission and Salutes those that have served in the U.S. military.



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For personal references and additional details on volunteering, contact Nelson L Mellitz, Colonel, USAF, Ret., JWV National Quartermaster, Mobile: 856-278-3041 or nmellitz@comcast.net

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