



March 29, 2018

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1. President Nominates New VA Secretary: The president yesterday nominated Navy Rear Adm. (Dr.) Ronny Jackson to replace Dr. David Shulkin as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Shulkin was brought onboard as VA Undersecretary of Health in the aftermath of a nationwide crisis in care and access that rocked veterans' confidence in their VA. He was retained by President Trump and confirmed as VA Secretary by the Senate 100-0. Under his tenure, the VA achieved a host of successes ranging from increased accountability and transparency to a beefed-up education package and increases in overall funding and patient satisfaction. Dr. Jackson joined the Navy in 1995, and according to [his official bio](#), served in Iraq as an emergency physician in charge of resuscitative medicine for a forward deployed surgical shock trauma platoon, and since 2006, has been the White House physician for three presidents. The VFW will closely monitor the Senate confirmation process, because what Dr. Jackson's bio does not reflect is any experience working with the VA or with veterans, or managing any organization of size, much less one as multifaceted as the Department of Veterans Affairs. Robert Wilkie will serve as acting secretary in the interim. He is currently the Defense Department's Undersecretary for Personnel & Readiness.

2. Vietnam Veterans Day: The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are joining with VFW Posts across the nation to mark today, March 29, as the first anniversary of National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Almost 9 million men and women served in uniform during the Vietnam Era, with 3.4 million of them serving downrange. On the Vietnam Wall are the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died there, 47,000 battle-related, to include 1,600 names of those who remain missing in action. The VFW national organization and many of its Departments and Posts are proud to be among the 11,000 commemorative partners of the Vietnam War Commemoration to continue recognizing the 50th anniversary of all who served

from Nov. 1, 1955, to May 15, 1975. By presidential proclamation, the commemoration extends from its inaugural event on Memorial Day 2012 through Veterans Day 2025. [Learn more about the commemorative partner program here.](#)

3. VFW Participates in Air Force Leadership Roundtable: On Thursday, VFW's newly-appointed Director for National Security and Foreign Affairs, Mr. John Towles, joined the Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David Goldfein at a roundtable. They were joined by Director of Air Force Public Affairs Brigadier General Ed Thomas; Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations Lieutenant General Chris Nowland, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Space Operations Mr. Shawn Barnes, and Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services Lieutenant General Gina Grosso. The four-hour meeting allowed for an intimate in-depth conversation with senior Air Force leaders on military readiness and personnel program improvements within the Air Force, future plans for community engagement, the status of Air Force readiness, Air Force current operations, and Space Command updates.

4. DHA Executive Council Meeting: On Tuesday, the VFW participated in the quarterly Defense Health Agency (DHA) MSO/VSO Executive Council meeting led by DHA Director Vice Adm. Raquel Bono. She was joined by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Tom McCaffery, Office of Personnel Management Deputy Director for Healthcare & Insurance Laurie Bodenheimer and the Presidents of Humana Military and Health Net Federal Services, who currently hold the TRICARE contracts for the East and West Regions respectively. The briefing included an overview of the role that DHA plays as a Combat Support Agency and an update regarding TRICARE implementation in the East and West service regions. Emphasis was placed on the need for beneficiaries who pay their premiums and fees by credit card to update their billing information with the new contractors. Beneficiaries who fail to do so will no longer be covered by TRICARE. The meeting also included an update on the TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan, which is scheduled to end on December 31, 2018. Eligible beneficiaries will instead be eligible to enroll in the Federal Employee Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). To learn more about how this change may impact you, [please click here.](#)

5. GI Bill Changes Are Coming: For some students utilizing their GI Bill benefits there could be some changes coming. This past summer the GI Bill was revamped and improved by adding almost two dozen new provisions, and a lot of those changes are being implemented August 1st of this year. Some of the changes students see are different amounts for the Monthly Housing Allowance, Priority Enrollment, and expansion of Work Study programs. We encourage all students utilizing VA education benefits to contact their School Certifying Official, or Veteran Offices to inquire to see if any of the changes could affect you. Some minor changes have already happened, but most will come later this year. Don't be caught off guard by some of the new additions to the GI Bill, in order to prepare and take advantage of these programs as best as possible [follow this link](#) that explains the new provisions.

6. Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Information: The VR&E program commonly known as Voc Rehab is an excellent benefit offered by VA that is not utilized by as many eligible veterans who may need it. VR&E services can assist eligible veterans with resume

development skills, job search training, employment accommodations, and education in order to keep employed through different avenues. The VR&E program offers individual counselors to accommodate the different needs of the clients they serve. We encourage all veterans to learn more about VR&E services to see if you may be eligible for this great benefit. To read more about VR&E and to see if you're eligible [click here](#).

7. The VFW Needs YOU: As a grassroots organization, the power of the VFW is in its membership. That means all 1.7 million of our members. We are stronger together and effective because of what our collective efforts accomplish. Part of being great advocates means renewing your membership and we encourage you to do so. We also encourage you to consider becoming a Life Member of the VFW as a permanent show of your support. If you are not yet a member, we encourage you to join. [Renew your membership or become a Life Member](#). Please [click here](#) to join.

8. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced identification and burial updates for eleven American service members who had been missing in action from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Pete W. Simon**, 34, of Grindstone, Pa., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried March 31 in Northfield, Ohio. Simon was a member of Company G, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. In September 1950, his unit participated in a defense of the Pusan Perimeter, a large defensive line west and north of Pusan, South Korea. Simon was reported to have been killed in action on Sept. 5, 1950, but his remains could not be located following the battle. [Read about Simon](#).

-- **Army Cpl. William C. McDowell**, 20, of Stuttgart, Arkansas, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 4 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. McDowell was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit was assembled with South Korean soldiers in the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the east side of the Chosin River, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces. McDowell was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing on Dec. 2, 1950. [Read about McDowell](#).

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. William H. Harth, Jr.**, 22, of Columbia, S.C., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 6 in his hometown. Harth was a bombardier assigned to the 329th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), which was known as "The Traveling Circus." On Aug. 1, 1943, Harth's B-24D aircraft, nicknamed "Hell's Angels," participated in a historic mission, code-named Operation TIDAL WAVE-- the first large-scale, low-altitude attack by U.S. heavy bomber aircraft on Ploesti, Romania. As Harth's aircraft approached the target, it was hit by German anti-aircraft fire. Harth was killed when the aircraft crashed. [Read about Harth](#).

-- **Marine Corps Pvt. John M. Tillman**, 21, of Reno, Nev., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 6, in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. Tillman was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. Tillman's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Tillman was killed on the first day of the battle. [Read about Tillman](#).

-- **Army Cpl. Roy J. Hopper**, 21, of Miami, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 6 in Dayton, Ohio. Hopper was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment. He was reported killed in action on July 31, 1950, after his battalion engaged in a fighting withdrawal against North Korean forces in Chinju, South Korea. Following the battle, the enemy had control of the battlefield, preventing a search for his remains. [Read about Hopper.](#)

-- **Air Force Col. Edgar F. Davis**, 32, of Goldsboro, N.C., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 6 in his hometown. Davis was an RF-4C Phantom navigator, assigned to the 11th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. On Sept. 17, 1968, Davis was on a night photo-reconnaissance mission over Laos when he and his pilot were shot down by anti-aircraft artillery fire. While the pilot ejected and was rescued, no contact was received from Davis. After search and rescue efforts were suspended after failing to locate Davis or the wreckage, Davis was declared missing in action. [Read about Davis.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Lyle E. Charpiloz**, 19, of Silverton, Ore., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried on April 7 in Salem, Ore. Charpiloz was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. On Nov. 20, 1943, Charpiloz's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Charpiloz was killed on the first day of the battle, one of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors killed in the intense fighting. His remains were initially buried in a battlefield cemetery on the island. [Read about Charpiloz.](#)

-- **Navy Reserve Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Ora H. Sharninghouse, Jr.**, 22, of McComb, Ohio, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 7 in Findlay, Ohio. Sharninghouse was a member of the Navy Torpedo Squadron Eighteen (VT-18), USS Intrepid. On Sept. 8, 1944, during a bombing mission against Japanese positions on Babelthuap Island, Palau, their 2,000-pound bomb hit an ammunition dump. The resulting explosion tore the tail from the aircraft, causing it to crash off-shore. Sharninghouse was reported missing in action. [Read about Sharninghouse.](#)

-- **Navy Radioman 3rd Class Jack R. Goldwater** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Goldwater was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read about Goldwater.](#)

-- **Navy Water Tender 2nd Class Porter L. Rich** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Rich was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rich.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Capt. George Van Vleet** was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, (Heavy), 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Helen Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands. On Jan. 21, 1944, Van Vleet was a passenger on a B-24J bomber when the aircraft crashed shortly after take-off. Interment services are pending. [Read about Van Vleet.](#)