



November 21, 2018

This week's issue is being delivered early in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.

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1. Korean War Remains Uncovered Inside DMZ: This past week, South Korea's defense ministry announced that five sets of remains from the Korean War had been unearthed during demining operations around the Cheorwon area, in the vicinity of Arrowhead Hill. This recent discovery brings the total number of remains unearthed in this area since Oct. 1 to nine. This effort is the result of a joint agreement signed between North Korea and South Korea to remove weapons and munitions along the 155-mile long Demilitarized Zone that separates the two Koreas, and to identify and return any remains that are recovered in the process. Currently, there are 7,675 Americans who remain unaccounted for from the Korean War and more than 133,000 South Koreans.

2. Military Recruiting Drops 7 Percent: Recruiting statistics released by the Department of Defense last week reflect a 7 percent overall decrease in accessions for fiscal year 2018. In the Active Component, the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force met or exceeded their goals of 39,000; 31,556; and 29,450, respectively, while the Army was more than 6,500 soldiers short of their goal of 76,500. It was the first time since 2005 that the Army did not meet its goal. In the Reserve Component, only the Marine Corps Reserve and Air Force Reserve met or exceeded their goals of 8,990 and 5,282, respectively. The Navy Reserve came in 421 sailors short of their goal of 7,097. The Air National Guard was 870 airmen short of their 9,659 goal. The Army Reserve was 4,273 soldiers short of their goal of 15,600, and the Army National Guard was more than 9,700 short of their goal of 34,629 soldiers. Quoted in a [Stars and Stripes article](#), Maj. Gen. Joe Calloway, the Army's military personnel management director, blamed the Army's shortfall largely on a strengthening U.S. economy in which fewer potential recruits are looking for jobs. Only about 30 percent of 17 to 24-year-olds can meet the mandatory requirements for consideration for military service — a combination of physical, mental, and background attributes. According to the Pentagon, only about 13 percent of that target population is even interested in military service. [Read more.](#)

3. November is National Family Caregiver Month: November celebrates the nearly 5.5 million individuals who choose to care for our nation's veterans. Current estimates show nearly

2.4 million VA patients are receiving assistance with daily living activities. Those providing the assistance are mostly made up of family members such as spouses, adult children, and parents, as well as by friends and neighbors. To assure these unsung heroes are receiving the necessary support required while helping their veterans, the VFW has partnered with The Elizabeth Dole Foundation. This partnership is part of the VFW's Mental Wellness Campaign, to increase awareness of mental health options and to empower people with the knowledge to identify signs of mental distress. The VFW also worked with Congress and VA to assure the expansion of VA's current caregiver program to all eras of veterans. The expansion is expected to begin for Vietnam War era veterans in 2019. [Learn more about caregiver support.](#)

4. TRICARE Prime and Select Open Season: TRICARE has kicked off its first open season where Prime and Select beneficiaries can enroll in or change their health care coverage plan for 2019. The open season period will last from now until Dec. 10 and any changes made during this period will become effective on Jan. 1, 2019. If you are satisfied with your current plan, then your coverage will continue automatically for 2019, as long as you remain eligible for coverage. [Find out more](#) about the open season and how to modify your existing health plan.

5. TRDP and FEDVIP Update: The current TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will end Dec. 31, 2018, and will be replaced by the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) dental coverage options. Vision plans will also be available to eligible TRICARE beneficiaries through FEDVIP. The first opportunity to enroll in FEDVIP is during the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season, which began on Nov. 12, 2018, and runs through Dec. 10, 2018. Coverage begins on Jan. 1, 2019. In general, retired uniformed service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP in 2018 are eligible for FEDVIP dental coverage, and if enrolled in a TRICARE health plan, FEDVIP vision coverage, beginning in 2019. Family members of active-duty uniformed service members who are enrolled in a TRICARE health plan are eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage. [Learn more.](#)

6. MIA Update: This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced six new identifications. Returning home with full military honors are:

-- **Army Pfc. Leo J. Duquette** a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces near Choch'iwon, South Korea. Duquette could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 11, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Duquette.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. John W. Martin** was a member of Medical Company, 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. Martin was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing on Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Martin.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Lewis E. Price** was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. In November 1944, his unit moved into the Hürtgen Forest in Germany, to relieve U.S. forces who had been fighting for weeks. The fighting in and around the forest was frequently chaotic, and while details surrounding his loss are sparse, he was reported missing in action as of Nov. 6, 1944. Interment services are pending. [Read about Price.](#)

-- **Navy Reserve Ensign Charles M. Stern** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Stern. Interment services are pending. [Read about Stern.](#)

-- **Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Ulis C. Steely** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Steely. Interment services are pending. [Read about Steely.](#)

-- **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Charles H. Harris** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Harris. Interment services are pending. [Read about Harris.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, click here: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm>.

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to vfwac@vfw.org.