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In This Issue:

- 1. VA Ordered to Lift Hold on Blue Water Navy Appeals**
- 2. VFW Testifies on Budget Request**
- 3. Air Force and Marine Corps Still Recovering from Hurricanes**
- 4. First Female Fighter Pilot Nominated for Second Star**
- 5. MIA Update**

1. VA Ordered to Lift Hold on Blue Water Navy Appeals: VA was recently ordered to lift its hold on Blue Water Navy appeals as a result of the recent Procopio v. Wilkie court decision. The VFW-supported Procopio decision clarified that Blue Water Navy Vietnam War veterans are eligible to receive presumptive disability compensation benefits for health conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange. After the decision was issued on January 29, 2019, VA requested a stay, which places a hold on Blue Water Navy claims and appeals while the agency deliberated whether to appeal the decision. VA's request to stay Blue Water Navy claims was denied and VA is now forced to start taking action on appeals. This means veterans affected by the Procopio decision may see activity on their appeals in the near future. The VFW urges Blue Water Navy veterans who receive notice of action on their claims to contact a VFW-accredited Service Officer at: www.vfw.org/NVS. The Department of Justice still has until April 29, 2019, to formally appeal. Moreover, the Procopio decision still leaves certain questions unanswered for Blue Water Navy veterans and others exposed to Agent Orange. This is why the VFW continues to urge for the swift passage of H.R. 299, the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019*. Urge your members of Congress to [cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 299](#).

2. VFW Testifies on Budget Request: This week, VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Patrick Murray testified before the House Committee on Appropriations and House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, VA, and Related Agencies. Alongside Mr. Murray was DAV and PVA who co-author the Independent Budget. Together, they advocated for increased funding for veteran health care and benefits. Specifically, the IB questioned whether VA has requested the funds it needs to properly implement the VFW-championed VA MISSION Act and sufficient funding to update VA's ageing infrastructure. The VFW also urged Congress to fix the unacceptable housing conditions at privatized military housing facilities throughout the country and repair military installations that were damaged by recent natural disasters. [Read the Independent Budget](#). Watch the [House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing](#). Watch the [House Appropriations Subcommittee hearing](#).

3. Air Force and Marine Corps Still Recovering from Hurricanes:

In multiple congressional hearings this week, the Air Force and Marine Corps expressed the critical need for additional supplemental funding from Congress to rebuild base infrastructures and family housing after the devastation of Hurricanes Florence and Michael. Hundreds of

service members and their families remain displaced after Hurricane Florence caused \$3.6 billion in damages at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Similar devastation occurred at Tyndall Air Force Base in October 2019 after Hurricane Michael caused \$3 billion in damages. Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson stated that the Air Force “had to stop 61 facility projects in 18 states because we don’t have a supplemental [appropriations] to recover from this devastating storm.” If additional funds are not made available in the coming months, the Air Force will have to cut 18,000 training and flying hours to fund reconstruction efforts. The VFW has called on Congress to prioritize disaster relief efforts for the affected military installations.

4. First Female Fighter Pilot Nominated for Second Star: On Tuesday, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein announced that Brig. Gen. Jeannie Leavitt was among the 23 general officers nominated for promotion to Major General. Despite finishing among the best in her flight training class in 1992, Brig. Gen. Leavitt was prohibited from flying fighters and bombers. However, in 1993, she became the first female F-15 pilot after the DOD opened combat pilot positions to women. Since then, she has logged more than 3,000 flight hours, including more than 300 combat hours between Iraq and Afghanistan. Brig. Gen. Leavitt was also the first female to command the 57th Wing at the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, Nellis Air Force Base and currently serves as the Air Force Recruiting Service Commander at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. [Learn more about Brig. Gen. Leavitt.](#)

5. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identification of one U.S. service member from WWII. Returning home with full military honors is:
-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Vincent J. Rogers, Jr.** was a radio operator for the 38th Bombardment Squadron, (Heavy), 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Helen Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands. On Jan. 21, 1944, he was onboard a B-24J bomber that crashed shortly after takeoff. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rogers.](#)

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.