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1. VFW National Convention Returns to Orlando: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie will be joining more than 10,000 members of the VFW and its Auxiliary at the 120th VFW National Convention as it convenes this Saturday through July 24 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. “It’s been 11 years since our last national convention was held in Orlando, so it is great to be back!” exclaimed VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence, “and we are honored to have two cabinet secretaries join us next week, as well as recognize some very deserving individuals with the VFW’s highest national awards,” he said. “We hope to hear Secretary Pompeo address issues, challenges and successes as it pertains to America’s overseas alliances, returning missing and unaccounted-for service members home to their families, and ongoing efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons and material,” he said. “From Secretary Wilkie, we look forward to hearing about ongoing initiatives to return VA benefits to Blue Water Navy Veterans, as well as the proper implementation of the MISSION Act, and program enhancements to women’s health, mental health, homelessness, and access to VA care.” Among the numerous award recipients to be recognized will be VFW Accredited Service Representative of the Year Mike Eshenbaugh; \$30,000 VFW Voice of Democracy scholarship winner Christine Troll; VFW Citizenship Award to Ken Fisher; VFW Armed Forces Award to retired Navy Adm. Michelle Howard; three VFW National Teacher Awards; the VFW Fred C. Hall Outstanding Post Special Project Award to VFW Post 10555, Panama City Beach, Fla.; the VFW Americanism Award to Ann Mills-Griffiths; VFW Commander-in-Chief’s Gold Medals of Merit to retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Kelly McKeague and retired Army Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond. The VFW will also elect William “Doc” Schmitz as VFW Commander-in-Chief for the year 2019-2020. The VFW National Convention is not open to the public, but its business sessions will livestream July 22-24 at vfw.org/convention beginning at 8 a.m. EDT. [Read more.](#)

2. House Holds Hearing on Pending Legislation: This week the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing to discuss 18 pieces of pending legislation to improve veteran programs and strengthen protections. Many of the draft bills introduced are supported by the VFW, such as expansion for homeless programs, small business

enhancements, closing financial loopholes for predatory colleges, and an adjustment for enrollment into the Montgomery GI Bill. The VFW thanks Chairman Mark Levin (D-Calif.) and Ranking Member Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) for their continued bipartisan efforts to expand benefits and protections for service members, veterans, and their families. [Read the VFW's Testimony.](#)

3. Take the Veterans Health Care Survey: Major provisions of the VFW-supported VA MISSION Act of 2018 were recently implemented, including the new Veterans Community Care Program and other improvements to the way VA delivers care to veterans. To gauge the effectiveness of changes and inform its advocacy, the VFW would like feedback on your experience receiving VA health care. Help the VFW hold VA and Congress accountable for fulfilling their mission to veterans by taking a short survey regarding your preferences when receiving health care. [Take the survey.](#)

4. Veterans Benefits Forum: On Tuesday, July 23, 2019, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., during the 120th VFW National Convention in Orlando, Fla., the VFW will host its third annual Veterans Benefits Forum. During the forum, leadership of the VA Veterans Benefits Administration, who oversee veterans benefits such as the GI Bill, disability compensation, and survivor benefits; VA National Cemetery Administration, who manage VA's 136 national cemeteries; VA Veterans Health Administration, who operate VA's network of more than 1,200 health care facilities; DOD Health Affairs, who oversee the Military Health System, including the TRICARE programs; and Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training, who govern veterans employment programs across the country, will update service members, veterans, and their families on recent changes and improvements to care and benefits. [Learn more about the 120th VFW National Convention.](#) [Download the new mobile events app.](#)

5. Secretary of Defense Nomination Hearing: On Tuesday, the Senate Armed Services Committee conducted a hearing on the nomination of Dr. Mark T. Esper to be Secretary of Defense. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and served 10 years on active duty and 11 years in the National Guard and Army Reserve. After leaving active duty, he held numerous executive positions within the government and in the private sector. Before becoming the 23rd Secretary of the Army, he was the Vice President for Government Relations at Raytheon. Dr. Esper holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and a doctorate in Public Policy from George Washington University. During the hearing, Dr. Esper stated that if nominated he will continue supporting the strategic goals of the U.S. National Defense Strategy. He expressed concern that without a long-term predictable budget from Congress we would be unable to invest in future capabilities and future technologies and "we must actively seek ways to free up time, money, and manpower to invest back into our top priorities." He also stated that a crucial component to ensuring military readiness is to take care of our families, improve military housing and childcare, and reduce spousal unemployment. [Watch the hearing.](#)

6. North Korea Update: On Tuesday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry indicated that it may suspend its moratorium on nuclear weapons and missile testing due to scheduled bilateral war games between South Korea and the United States, set to be held this summer. That afternoon, a second statement was issued, warning that any bilateral military drills may significantly impact any discussion with the U.S. concerning nuclear diplomacy. This move comes only weeks after

President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met at the military demarcation line dividing North and South Korea where they committed to resuming closed-door talks concerning regional security architecture within the Indo-Pacific.

7. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identifications of five American servicemen who had been missing and unaccounted for from WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. William E. Rambo** was a member of Company H, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. In Nov. 1943, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, and more than 2,000 were wounded during the fighting. Rambo was killed on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rambo.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Connie Cagle** was a member of Company K, 126th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division, when his unit was engaged with enemy forces along the Soputa-Sanananda Track, near Buna, in the Australian Territory of Papua (present-day Papua New Guinea.) Cagle was killed in action on Nov. 22, 1942. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cagle.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Robert W. McCarville** was a member of Company L, 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division. He was killed in action on Dec. 5, 1942, during an assault against enemy positions near Cape Endaiadere, Duropa Plantation, Territory of Papua. Due to intense enemy fire, his unit was unable to recover his remains. Interment services are pending. [Read about McCarville.](#)

-- **Navy Fire Controlman 3rd Class Adolph J. Loebach** 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 USS Oklahoma was hit multiple times which caused it to capsize quickly and caused the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Loebach. Interment services are pending. [Read about Loebach.](#)

-- **Navy Mess Attendant 1st Class Johnnie C. Laurie** 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 USS Oklahoma was hit multiple times which caused it to capsize quickly and caused the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Laurie. Interment services are pending. [Read about Laurie.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <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.

To view this week's and previous editions, visit: <http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>.