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1. Potentially Dangerous Amounts of Opioids Issued at Some Military Hospitals: Some U.S. military hospitals overprescribed opioids to patients with chronic pain from 2015 to 2017, a dangerous practice that put them at risk for addiction and overdose, according to the Department of Defense Inspector General's Office. "In light of this DOD IG report and the opioid epidemic this country is suffering from, the VFW is extremely upset to find that our very own military treatment facilities were complicit in the opioid crisis," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. "This is intolerable and accountability must be at the forefront. We demand answers on this matter." [Read more.](#)

2. HillVets 100 Honors Three VFW Members: On Thursday, HillVets released the HillVets 100 Class of 2019, honoring the work of three VFW members — VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence, VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci, and VFW Department of Texas Service Officer Terry Eshenbaugh. "This is a great honor, not only for me but for the VFW and the exceptional work our employees and members do on a daily basis on Capitol Hill and in our local communities on behalf of our veterans, service members and military families," said Lawrence. [Read more.](#)

3. House Passes Bill to Expand Veteran Homeless Programs: This week, the House overwhelmingly passed the VFW-supported *Veteran HOUSE Act of 2020*. This bill would expand eligibility for the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program to veterans discharged under other-than-honorable (OTH) conditions. Veterans with OTH discharges make up only 3% of the veteran population, but they compose 15% of the homeless veteran population. The bill was introduced by Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) who is working to get more veterans off the streets, "Expanding housing assistance and services to these men and women would allow homeless veterans who have slipped through the cracks access the support they have earned through their service to our country," said Peters. The HUD-VASH program is an incredibly valuable tool for veterans who are in need of stable housing. [Learn more.](#)

4. Military Housing Crisis: On Tuesday, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Criminal Investigation Division raided the Tinker Air Force Base offices of Balfour Beatty Communities in connection with suspected EPA violations. The raid was the result of a subpoena on behalf of the EPA in connection with the removal of asbestos flooring in September of 2019. Last fall, Balfour Beatty received a stern warning in a letter from the Air Force indicating if "prompt and substantial improvement" is not noted, formal action against the company will begin. [Read more](#). In a related matter, Navy Admiral Charles A. Williams (Ret.), who has 40 years of real estate experience and who has been nominated to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment told lawmakers during his confirmation hearing that he is "livid" about the housing conditions of some sailors and their families. Williams said, if confirmed, his first priority will be to tackle problems with Navy privatized housing. He stated during his [confirmation hearing](#) that, although he "needs to study the issue more ... I'll lay out a plan in fairly short order."

5. House Approves VA Dental Pilot Program: On Monday, the House approved [H. J. Res. 80](#), which would provide congressional approval of the VA Innovation Center's programs to expand access to dental care through pro bono services at community dental clinics. This legislation is now being considered in the Senate. [Learn more](#).

6. Join the TRICARE Webinar: Do you have questions about your TRICARE benefits? Here's your chance to get some answers. Please join TRICARE on Thursday, Jan. 30, from 1-2 p.m. EST for the "Ask TRICARE" webinar. The Q&A webinar will include a panel of subject matter experts to answer your stateside and overseas questions about TRICARE health care, pharmacy and dental programs. You must be registered and in the webinar platform to submit a question electronically. If you call in by phone, you'll only be able to listen to the webinar. Don't miss this unique opportunity to ask questions directly to TRICARE experts. [Register](#) for the webinar.

7. VA Launches Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! Campaign: The Department of Veterans Affairs *Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! campaign* is designed to focus on VA's commitment to a safe and welcoming health care environment for veterans, employees, volunteers and visitors. Harassment of any kind is unacceptable on VA campuses. This behavior does not honor or value the traditions of military service and will not be tolerated at VA. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is among the Veterans Service Organizations who have partnered with VA to stop harassment. [Learn more](#) about stopping harassment.

8. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced five burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

--**Army Cpl. William J. McCollum**, 19, of Anderson, South Carolina, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action Dec. 2, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces. Following the war, his remains could not be recovered until June 2018, when North Korea turned over 55 boxes, purported to contain the remains of American service members killed during the Korean War,

which included McCollum's remains. McCollum will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about McCollum.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Junior C. Evans**, 20, of Hall County, Texas, was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 12, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. However, accurate accountability of troops was often difficult due to the chaotic environment and Evans likely went missing during a battle between Nov. 27 and Dec. 6, 1950. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Evans will be buried in Gilmer, Texas. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Evans.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Lowell S. Twedt**, 27, of Le Grand, Iowa, was a pilot assigned to the 71st Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group. On Oct. 20, 1944, he piloted a P-38J "Lightning" aircraft as part of an escort for a B-17 "Flying Fortress" bombing mission targeting oil storage tanks in Regensburg, Germany. The mission encountered enemy anti-aircraft fire around Bolzano, Italy. Three P-38Js, including Twedt's, went down as a result. An eyewitness account saw Twedt's aircraft falling to the ground in flames, and did not see him eject. Twedt's remains were never recovered. Twedt will be buried in Fernly, Nevada. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Twedt.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Louis Wiesehan Jr.**, of Richmond, Indiana, was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Wiesehan on the second day of battle, Nov. 21, 1943. Wiesehan will be buried April 18, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Wiesehan.](#)

-- **Air Force Maj. Neal C. Ward**, 23, of College Station, Texas, was a member of the 602nd Special Operations Squadron, as the pilot of an A-1H aircraft, leading a flight of two on an armed reconnaissance mission in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Following four bombing runs, Ward's aircraft was seen being stuck by automatic weapons fire, followed by a large fire and explosion. Ward's wingman was unable to establish contact and did not observe a parachute following the incident. Ward will be buried in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Ward.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: votervoices.net/VFW/register.

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.

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