



September 7, 2021



The VFW Reflects: On Saturday, the 20th anniversary of Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance, the more than 1.5 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary encourage all Americans to pause and reflect on Sept. 11, 2001, and to remember the victims, their families, and those who have selflessly sacrificed to ensure our way of life.



2022 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Application Process Now Open: Applications are now being accepted for the 2022 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship. The program, which is in its eighth year, is for VFW members who attend an accredited institute of higher learning. Select student veterans will be chosen for the semester-long program that focuses on real policy issues faced by veterans, service members, and their families. The highlight of the program is participation in the VFW Legislative Conference, which in the past has included meetings at the White House and with senior officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs and members of Congress. Those selected also spend time with their VFW Department leaders on Capitol Hill pushing the VFW's legislative priorities. Alumni of the program have become more active at all levels of the VFW and have been instrumental in changing laws to improve care and benefits for veterans. [Learn more and apply for the fellowship.](#)



September is Suicide Prevention Month: On average, twenty veterans die by suicide each day. To spotlight suicide prevention in September, VA is [providing guidance](#) for veterans who need support or for anyone to provide support to a veteran. VA's [Reach Out](#) campaign outlines five things we all can do now: reach out, hear veteran stories, be prepared, find resources, and spread the word. For any veteran in crisis, you are not alone. The Veteran Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone (1.800.273.8255, press 1), text (838255), or online chat by visiting VeteransCrisisLine.net.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced seven burial updates and six new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Navy Steward's Mate 2nd Class Jesus F. Garcia, 21**, of Agana, Guam, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Garcia. He will be buried on Oct. 6, 2021, in San Diego. [Read about Garcia.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Walter S. Belt, Jr., 25**, of Cleveland, Kansas, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Belt. He will be buried on Oct. 9, 2021, in Ellsworth, Kansas. [Read about Belt.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Ernest N. Vienneau, 25**, of Millinocket, Maine, was a pilot assigned to the 340th Bombardment Squadron, 97th Bombardment Group, 15th Air Force, based out of Amendola, Italy. On Nov. 6, 1944, the B-17 Flying Fortress bomber on which he was serving as co-pilot came under heavy anti-aircraft fire while on a mission over Maribor, Yugoslavia, in present-day Slovenia. During the barrage, a piece of flak penetrated the cockpit and struck Vienneau in the head, mortally wounding him.

He will be buried on Oct. 9, 2021, in his hometown.

[Read about Vienneau.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Arthur R. Thinnes, 17**, of Milwaukee, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Thinnes. He will be buried on Oct. 15, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Thinnes.](#)

-- **Navy Radioman 3rd Class Charles A. Montgomery, 21**, of Folcroft, Pennsylvania, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Montgomery. He will be buried in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Montgomery.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Charles E. Hiltibran, 19**, of Cable, Ohio, was a member of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Hiltibran will be buried in Urbana, Ohio. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Hiltibran.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Stephen C. Mason, 21**, of Jersey City, New Jersey was assigned to Headquarters Co., 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. He was reported missing in action during Operation Market Garden after his patrol failed to return from a mission to the enemy lines near Beek, Netherlands on Nov. 3, 1944. His body was unable to be recovered. He will be buried in North Arlington, New Jersey. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Mason.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Bernard J. Sweeney, Jr., 22**, of Waterbury, Connecticut, was assigned to Company I, 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division. His unit had been engaged in battle with German forces near Strass, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was reported missing in action on Dec. 16, 1944. His body was not recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Sweeney.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Joseph C. Rouse, 23**, Rouse was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Rouse. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rouse.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Sgt. Francis W. Wiemerslage, 20**, was assigned to the 549th Bombardment Squadron, 385th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force, serving in Germany. He was the ball turret gunner on a B-17G Flying Fortress bomber during a mission over Dresden, on March 2, 1945. Enemy fighters attacked the bomber between Berlin and Leipzig, and the plane was shot down. Two of the nine crew members survived the incident, while the rest, including Wiemerslage, were killed. Interment services are pending. [Read about Wiemerslage.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class John G. Bock, Jr., 18**, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Bock. Interment services are pending. [Read about Bock.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Cpl. Andrew Pellerito, 22**, was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 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. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Pellerito was killed on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Pellerito.](#)

-- **Navy Hospital Apprentice 1st Class Keefe R. Connolly, 19**, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Connolly. Interment services are pending. [Read about Connolly.](#)

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