



October 26, 2018

**In This Issue:**

- 1. VFW National Commander Writes Op-ed on Lack of GI Bill Payments**
- 2. VFW Meets with CEO of Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation**
- 3. Washington Named Test Location for \$10B VA Medical Records Project**
- 4. TRICARE Prime and Select Open Season**
- 5. Korea Update**
- 6. DOD Sending Active Duty Forces to U.S. Border**
- 7. VFW National Home for Children**
- 8. VA, Partners Offer Flu Shot**
- 9. MIA Update**

**1. VFW National Commander Writes Op-ed on Lack of GI Bill Payments:** This week, the VFW's National Commander B.J. Lawrence wrote an op-ed in Military Times regarding student veterans not receiving their tuition and housing payments. Lawrence highlighted the importance of these payments so students can pay their tuition, rent, and childcare on time without fear of financial penalties. This is not the first time VA has faced severe backlogs in claims, and Lawrence called for attention to this issue so it doesn't happen again in the spring semester. In the op-ed he wrote about the steps student veterans need to take to help rectify their financial hardships from the lack of GI Bill payments. [Read the op-ed](#). If you are a student veteran facing financial hardships due to this issue, please contact [1studentveteran@vfw.org](mailto:1studentveteran@vfw.org).

**2. VFW Meets with CEO of Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation:** Michael "Rod" Rodriguez, an Army veteran and VFW member who was recently named President and CEO of the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation, visited the VFW's Washington, D.C. office this week to provide an update on the foundation's progress. "Building a memorial is a 24-step process," Rodriguez said. "We are on steps 9 through 12, which is site selection. Site selection involves the foundation itself coming together with a program and going before the various commissions that exist within this area." Rodriguez says the GWOT Memorial Foundation is trying to raise \$50 million for the project, which received the support of President Trump in August 2017 when he signed the VFW-supported *Global War on Terrorism Memorial Act* into law. [Learn more](#).

**3. Washington Named Test Location for \$10B VA Medical Records Project:** VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced that Washington State will be a test location for a \$10 billion project to convert all VA medical records into electronic form. "Washington state has the perfect mix of

active duty, technical infrastructure, rural components, and a large number of veterans,” Wilkie said during a recent visit to Fairchild Air Base in Spokane, according to The Spokesman-Review. “So what we are doing here in Washington, we are testing out the medical health records, which is the largest program the VA has ever undertaken. We are going to test it here in Spokane. That will be the template for the entire country.” [Read the article.](#)

**4. TRICARE Prime and Select Open Season:** Beginning on Nov. 12, TRICARE will kick 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 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. Korea Update:** On Thursday, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and the United Nations Command announced that as a part of a compromise reached in September, troops and weapons have been removed from the Joint Security Area near the village of Panmunjom. This disarmament was one of the many conditions agreed to last month during a summit between the defense ministers of the two Koreas and the U.N. Command. Additional provisions include creating buffer zones, land and sea boundaries, establishing a no-fly zone above the border, removing some of their front-line guard posts and opening the Joint Security Area up to tourists. Earlier this month North and South Korea began a separate demining operation near Hill 281, also known as Arrowhead Hill. Once demining operations have been completed, joint operations will begin in order to recover the remains of more than 300 sets of U.S., Korean and U.N. allies believed to be buried there. General Vincent Brooks, commander for U.S. Forces Korea and U.N. Command, applauded the action stating that, “The area around this hill contains the fallen from several countries, and returning them to their countries and families is a top priority for me.”

**6. DOD Sending Active Duty Forces to U.S. Border:** On Thursday, the Associated Press reported that President Trump directed the Secretary of Defense to deploy 800 active duty soldiers to the U.S./Mexico border. Currently, there are approximately 2,000 National Guard soldiers supporting the U.S. Border Patrol with logistics, communications, and administrative support. However, it is unclear what role the active duty forces will play in the overall border security operation since federal law prohibits them from conducting law enforcement activities inside the U.S. unless specifically authorized by Congress.

**7. VFW National Home for Children:** Past residents are sharing their stories of how the VFW National Home for Children impacted their lives. One story about a man named Brian details his experience growing up at the National Home and how he was inspired by the honor and faithfulness of those who make the Home possible to serve his country in Iraq. [Watch Brian’s video and hear more stories.](#) If you know a military or veteran family that needs help, have them call the VFW National Home Military and Veteran Family Helpline at (800) 313-4200.

**8. VA, Partners Offer Flu Shot:** Veterans enrolled in VA and in need of their flu shot can receive it at their nearest VA health care facility or at their local Walgreens. The Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, VA and doctors suggest all individuals get their flu shot during the fall. This is particularly true for individuals over the age of 65, pregnant women, caregivers of infants or family members with health problems, health care employees, and people with heart problems and other chronic illnesses or conditions. [Learn more](#) about the flu shot or locate the nearest location to receive one.

**9. MIA Update:** This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 5 new identifications, and the burial date and location for 3 previously identified servicemen. Returning home with full military honors are:

-- **Army Master Sgt. Charles H. McDaniel**, 32, of Vernon, Ind., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Oct. 27 in Greenwood, Ind. McDaniel was a medic with the 8th Cavalry Regiment Medical Company supporting the regiment's 3rd Battalion. In November 1950, his unit was engaged with enemy forces of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces (CPVF) southwest of the village of Unsan, and east of Hwaong-ri, North Korea. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 2, 1950, when he could not be accounted for by his unit. [Read about McDaniel.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. James K. Park**, 20, of Beaumont, Texas, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Oct. 27 in Barry, Texas. Park was a member of Company I, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. On Nov. 23, 1944, Park was declared missing in action after being wounded while his unit was engaged in fierce fighting within the Hürtgen Forest in Germany. Soldiers from Park's company attempted to search for him, but were prevented from doing so due to sustained fighting in the area. On Nov. 24, 1945, his status was amended to deceased. [Read about Park.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Paul D. Gilman**, 19, of Belen, N.M., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Oct. 26 in his hometown. Gilman was a member of Company M, 3rd 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. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Salerno died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. [Read about Gilman.](#)

-- **Mr. George L. Ritter** an employee of Air America Incorporated, was piloting an Air America C-123K from Udorn Airfield, Kingdom of Thailand, headed for Xienhom District, Xaingnabouli Province, Laos. The aircraft was on a routine resupply mission for U.S. Agency for International Development and was last heard from when they were northeast of Sayaboury, Laos. Search and rescue efforts were continued through Dec. 31, 1971, but no sign of the aircraft or the four crewmembers were found. Ritter was subsequently reported missing. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ritter.](#)

-- **Merchant Marine Wiper Elvis N. Spotts** was a crew member of the SS Cape Isabel, part of a convoy of three ships including the USS Grayson and the SS Cape Fear. On Feb. 22, 1944, the ships were approximately 12 miles off the coast of Tarawa Atoll. The two Merchant Marine vessels were bringing supplies to Betio Island. Spotts was electrocuted during bilge maintenance. He was unable to be revived. Interment services are pending. [Read about Spotts.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Dwight W. Randall** was a member of Company C, 2nd Amphibian Tractor 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, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually

annihilated. Randall died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Randall.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Angelo M. Gabriele** was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing, and it came to rest on the shallow harbor floor. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Gabriele. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gabriele.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Grant C. Cook, Jr.** 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 Cook. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cook.](#)

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 [yfwac@vfw.org](mailto:yfwac@vfw.org).