



Federal Update for June 24 - 28, 2013



VA Starts Campaign to Raise PTSD Awareness

WASHINGTON (June 24, 2013) – In observance of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) awareness month, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD invites the public to participate in its “Take the Step” campaign.

“Every day of the year, we should focus on assisting those who have served our Nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “In June, during PTSD awareness month, we take special care to help Veterans with PTSD. VA is a leader in providing state-of-the-art, high-quality mental health care that improves and saves Veterans’ lives. PTSD treatment can help and there is hope for recovery for Veterans who need mental health services.”

Throughout the month, online at www.PTSD.va.gov, the campaign has highlighted different topics so visitors can “Take the Step” to: know more about PTSD; challenge their beliefs; explore the treatment options available; and reach out to make a difference.

VA provides effective PTSD treatment for Veterans and conducts extensive research on PTSD, including prevention of stress disorders. Veterans are encouraged to use VA’s PTSD resources so they are able to recognize symptoms and seek help if the need arises. VA also encourages Veterans to share what they learn with someone they know to build awareness and support systems.

Following exposure to trauma, most people experience stress reactions but many do not develop PTSD. Mental health experts are not sure why some people develop PTSD and others do not. However, if stress reactions do not improve over time and they disrupt everyday life, VA encourages Veterans to seek help to determine if PTSD may be a factor.

“Many barriers keep people with PTSD from seeking the help they need,” said Dr. Matthew Friedman, Executive Director of VA’s National Center for PTSD.

“Knowledge and awareness, however, are key to overcoming these barriers. For those living with PTSD, knowing there are treatments that work, for example, can lead them to seek needed care. Greater public awareness of PTSD can help reduce the stigma of this mental health problem and overcome negative stereotypes that may keep many people from pursuing treatment.”

PTSD Awareness Month Highlights:

- The purpose of PTSD Awareness Month is to raise public awareness of PTSD and its effective treatments so that everyone can help people affected by PTSD.
- Throughout June explore weekly features at www.ptsd.va.gov.
- “Ten Steps to Raise PTSD Awareness” provides links to materials that foster greater understanding of trauma, PTSD and treatment. It offers practical suggestions for the public to raise PTSD awareness in their own community.
- For continued involvement, please [sign up for the PTSD Monthly Update](#). Stay up on new information about PTSD and trauma year round.

On June 3, VA announced it had hired a total of 1,607 mental health clinical providers to meet the goal of 1,600 new mental health professionals outlined in the President’s Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order. Additionally, VA had hired 2,005 mental health clinical providers to fill existing vacancies, as well as 318 new peer specialists towards the specific goal of 800 peer specialists by Dec. 31, 2013 as outlined in the Executive Order.

Throughout the summer, VA will hold mental health summits at each of its 152 medical centers across the nation to establish and enhance positive working relationships with their community partners. The summits will help encourage community engagement in order to better address and understand the broad mental health care needs of veterans and their families.

For more information about PTSD, professionals and the public can go to The National Center for PTSD Web site at www.ptsd.va.gov. The site offers resources such as:

- PTSD Coach mobile app, this award-winning app provides symptom-management strategies and it's always with you when you need it.
- Continuing education opportunities for providers, including PTSD 101 courses, on the best practices in PTSD treatment (CEs/CMEs offered).
- AboutFace: An online video gallery of Veterans talking about PTSD and how treatment can turn your life around.

VA Mental Health Care Update

For veterans with mental health conditions, prompt and continuous access to mental health care can be lifesaving. However, research shows that after deployment, veterans often go years without obtaining mental health care, and when they do, their care is often fragmented. A recent study found that, among veterans with mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, the average time between return from deployment and initiation of mental health care was two years. The study, which looked at veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who visited Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers between 2001 and 2011, also found that an average of seven and a half years lapsed between the first mental health visit, and the start of treatment that would be considered "minimally adequate" for these conditions — which would be eight treatment sessions within a year.

By the end of the study, 75 percent of veterans had not received minimally adequate care. The findings were published in the December 2012 issue of the journal *Psychiatric Services*. Prompt care is important because mental illness can impair people's lives and interfere with their relationships and jobs, said study researcher Shira Maguen, a psychologist at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center who treats patients with PTSD. "If we can get them into care sooner, that's less time that they have to live with some of those challenges after they return from deployment," Maguen said. Many factors can interfere with veterans getting mental health care, including the stigma associated with mental illnesses (such as the belief that seeking care is a sign of weakness), concern that seeking care may jeopardize their careers, trouble finding transport to VA centers, and trouble getting appointments. (Last year, a report from the VA inspector general found that about half of veterans seeking a mental health evaluation waited an average of 50 days for an evaluation.)

To broaden access to mental health care, the VA says it has taken steps to increase staffing and to partner with community health care centers. In a report released last week, the VA said it has made agreements with 15 local clinics in seven states to allow veterans to be treated at those clinics. Maguen said it is also important to identify the factors that keep veterans coming back for care. Her study found that most veterans who receive minimally adequate care do so within one year of their first visit. Follow-up appointments are critical for patients at risk for suicide — studies show that one of the highest risk periods for suicide is the month following discharge from a hospital or emergency room for a suicidal episode. But a report from the VA inspector general released last month found that about one-third of veterans at high risk for suicide did not receive the required four mental health follow-up visits within a month after their discharge. What's more, for about a third of these at-risk veterans, there was no documented attempt to contact them to remind them of their appointments. "That kind of a clinical response is not acceptable," said M. David Rudd, provost of the University of Memphis who has studied suicide risk among veterans. "You don't have control over whether or not somebody will keep and appointment. You do have control of whether you attempt to track them." The inspector general report said the VA needs to improve its effort to reach out to patients who do not show up for mental health appointments.

Rudd said the VA may want to consider conducting home visits for psychiatric patients who have trouble getting to VA centers. The inspector general report said the VA should consider expanding the use of telemental health services, such as videoconferencing. The VA also said this week it has increased capacity of its Veterans Crisis Line to connect veterans in crisis with trained mental health providers. [Source: MyHealthNewsDaily | Rachael Rettner | 31 May 2013 ++]

Board of Veterans' Appeals Update

The backlog of cases before the VA's Board of Veterans Appeals will get worse before it gets better because the Washington office is drowning in paperwork, its top official warns. The second layer of appellate review inside the Department of Veterans Affairs, the board needs more attorneys, more money to pay them and two legislative tweaks to stem a record number of appeals, acting Chairman Stephen L. Keller told the Tribune-Review. The board's docket at the start of the year contained 45,959 appeals of decisions on initial claims filed at VA field

offices, including Pittsburgh, Keller said. That's up from 7,731 cases in 2002. The VA expects tens of thousands more appeals as it digs out from beneath a mammoth backlog of initial and supplemental claims. "In order to do the appeals at present, we need more staff. We got a plus-up of \$8 million from Congress, and we'll do what we can with that. But based on the projections we have of the anticipated receipts of appeals to the board for the coming years, we're going to have what we call a 'tsunami' of appeals pouring into the board. And we don't have the resources to deal with them in the time frames veterans are accustomed to," Keller said.

When honorably discharged veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars file claims today with VA, seeking compensation for wounds, injuries or illnesses incurred while in uniform, they are lining up behind nearly 845,000 vets — the most in the agency's history. The delay of nine months or more for a decision led to heavy criticism of the VA by veterans and members of Congress. VA vows to reduce that glut radically by 2015, but a Tribune-Review investigation showed the backlogs from those delays dog all three layers of the claim process: regional offices, which make initial rulings; appellate courts at the Board of Veterans Appeals; and above that, the Court of Veterans Appeals. At VA's regional office in Pittsburgh, for example, former GIs wait nearly two years for decisions on initial claims and another four years if they dispute those decisions in appeals to the board. With more than \$140 billion in annual discretionary and entitlement spending, VA has more employees than any federal agency except the Defense Department. Unlike the Pentagon, however, VA was spared by lawmakers from sequestration spending cuts and employee furloughs. VA recently mandated overtime for those helping to dig out of the backlog.

"If VA has a resource problem, this is certainly the first we're hearing of it," Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, told the Trib. "It's hard to remember a time when Congress didn't provide the department with everything it has asked for — be it funding, personnel or technology — as evidenced by the fact that VA's budget has increased 40 percent in just the last four years. "If VA officials doubt the department's ability to adjudicate future claims appeals, it's incumbent upon them to formulate a realistic plan to address the issue and to tell Congress what they need to implement it. So far, they have not done so," Miller said. "Nevertheless, one thing is certain: Every veteran filing an appeal deserves a thorough, fair and timely evaluation of their case." Keller

said the appeals board is putting the \$8 million boost Congress gave it last year to good use. The board plans to hire 90 attorneys to help the 528 who oversee appeals. He said he'd hire more if he had the money to keep them, because good lawyers affected by the economic slowdown are looking for work. "Right now," Keller said, "the job market for attorneys is very good for us, you know?"

The appeals board recently tied into the agency's Veterans Benefits Management System, a paperless computer program that VA believes can help slash the error rate on initial claims, reducing appeals. That can't come too soon: The board estimates it will run out of storage space next year for boxed paper files. Keller emphasized there's "no magic bullet" to slash wait times on appeals, but he believes two reforms from Congress could help. Conducting a veteran's default hearings by video conference, instead of requiring personal appearances, would save vets time and taxpayers money because judges would not have to jet from Washington to regional offices, he said. Cutting in half the amount of time veterans have to appeal initial decisions to 180 days is a fix favored by many service organizations aiding vets. Despite delays, Keller urged veterans to appeal for benefits they earned through their service. "In your heart, if you're sincere about it, appeal," he said. [Source: Pittsburgh Trib Total Media | Carl Prine | 1 Jun 2013 ++]

DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse Update

Here is a sad lesson in government waste. Since 2008, the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) have spent over \$1 billion to create an integrated electronic health record (iEHR). Four years and \$1 billion later, not a single line of code has been implemented. Defense and VA use separate medical databases that can neither translate nor communicate their data in a functional way. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 directed the departments to develop a single electronic health record system by 2009. They pushed that scheduled date of completion to 2017 after the plan hit a number of management, oversight, and planning snags, detailed in full at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/652413.pdf> by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The final cost estimate also exceeded initial expectations – from \$4 billion to nearly \$12 billion.

Notwithstanding the hundreds of millions of dollars devoted to electronic health records, journalist Aaron Glantz noted recently that 97 percent of benefit claims

are still done on paper. An inspector general audit last summer found that a North Carolina VA office had so much paperwork it "appeared to have the potential to compromise the integrity of the building." How did government planners spend over \$1,000,000,000 without anything to show for it? Reliance on contractors certainly played a role. In a review of DoD service contracting and spending data, the Project on Government Oversight reported that contractor employees cost nearly three times more than an average DoD civilian employee performing the same functions. A 2008 GAO report, with figures that are still accurate, also found that at offices within TRICARE, the DoD's health care program, contractor employees outnumber DoD employees significantly, comprising 88 percent of the workforce. Even with one of the highest percentages of contractors anywhere in the federal government, money was spent with nothing produced.

In February, Defense and VA suggested that their plan might change directions, but leave some existing aspects of the project in place. That's when things got interesting. In a segment that debuted in late March, political satirist/pundit Jon Stewart called out President Barack Obama for routinely promising to eliminate the backlog of veterans' benefits but clearly failing to deliver: The point is, if you're making the case that government has a meaningful role to play in improving people's lives, then when you're not obstructed from doing what you want, you better (expletive) bring it. Coincidentally, the day after Stewart's rant, the DoD/VA Interagency Program Office put everything on hold until further analysis could be conducted. Many war veterans have gone through what may prove to be the most traumatic experience of their lives. They return home only to have their government fail to deliver efficiently on the benefits it promised. That nexus – of troop sacrifice on the one hand, and government ineptitude on the other – brings to life Bob Novak's famous aphorism, "Always love your country – but never trust your government!" [Source: U.S. News & World Report article 4 Apr 2013 ++]

DoD Benefit Cuts Update

The benefits that lured so many troops into military service may not remain intact after sequestration and other budget cuts, the Pentagon chief said 30 MAY. The military is considering cutting retirement benefits and charging more for healthcare and prescription drugs, said Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel while

speaking to troops at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Hagel is on the island as a part of his tour of the Pacific region, and solicited questions from the audience of troops based there. The department's most recent budget proposal to Congress included increasing copays for prescription medication and fees for Tricare, the military's health care system. "We are reviewing every component of our budget, and we have to look at personnel costs because they represent the biggest part," he said on Thursday. "We are looking at everything across the board, [such as] entitlement programs, in every way."

Cutting these benefits will have a crippling effect on maintaining a strong military force, according to one advocacy group. "The DoD only has two carrots to entice somebody to stay 20, 30, 40 years in uniform, and that is the immediate receipt of military retirement pay, and reasonably inexpensive health care for themselves and their spouse for the rest of their lives," says Joe Davis, national spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Troops deserve subsidized benefits due to the taxing tempo of military life, he says. Constant relocation hampers earning equity on a purchased home, and precludes military spouses from developing a steady career. Service members reentering the workforce after decades in the military have less of an edge over younger civilians applying for the same jobs, he says. Raising these costs will take a toll on the military leadership at both the enlisted and officer levels. "The impact is not so much recruitment, but it will impact retention," he says. "What you could have in the end isn't the best qualified, it's the last person standing."

Personnel funds take up over 30 percent of the Pentagon budget - at almost \$142 billion - according to the most recent Pentagon budget. That portion should receive a higher priority, Hagel said, offering a line he has repeated since sequestration and the resulting furloughs first began: "You take care of your people." "We still have the best benefits that I'm aware of anywhere in the world," he said. "We have to do things like that, or we won't be able to sustain the programs." Hagel's comments come at a time when the Pentagon is still trying to meet budget cuts, and announced it would furlough civilian employees for 11 days starting in July as a part of the across-the-board cuts known as sequestration. The U.S. government coffers are strained to accommodate a growing number of veterans coming home from war zones who require medical assistance. [Source: U.S. News & World Report | Paul D. Shinkman | 30 May 2013 ++]

Stolen Valor Update

If you lie about being awarded military honors for profit, you can now be subject to criminal prosecution, according to a new law signed by President Obama 3 JAN. The Stolen Valor Act of 2013, introduced in January by Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV), “makes it a Federal crime for an individual to fraudulently hold oneself out to be a recipient of any of several specified military decorations or medals with the intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit,” the White House said announcing the signing. The law was the latest attempt by the government to help protect real military heroes from phonies. The original iteration of the bill, the Stolen Valor Act of 2005, had been in effect for six years before the Supreme Court ruled it was unconstitutional.

At the time, the law was written to say it was a crime simply to lie about military service and awards — a broad characterization the Supreme Court said violated a person’s First Amendment right to free speech. A new version of the bill, introduced by Heck in late 2012, narrowed the act to say the liar must be attempting to somehow materially profit from the lies, making the would-be crime more akin to fraud. A tweaked version of that bill was reintroduced in 2013. President Obama took a hard stance against military phonies last year when he announced a new government website to track awards for legitimate heroes. “It may no longer be a crime for con artists to pass themselves off as heroes, but one thing is certain – it is contemptible,” he said in reference to the Supreme Court’s ruling in 2012. “...No American hero should ever have their valor stolen.” [Source: ABC News | Lee Farren | 3 Jun 2013 ++]

DoD Sexual Abuse Update

Uniformed leaders in the Pentagon have told lawmakers that legislation addressing sexual assault in the military goes too far. The Washington Post reports that service chiefs wrote letters last month to members of Congress to express their disagreement with bills that would take away a commander's role in deciding whether to prosecute. The legislation would put that decision in the hands of uniformed prosecutors.

- Gen. James F. Amos, the commandant of the Marine Corps, wrote in a letter to leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "A commander is responsible and accountable for everything that happens in his or her

unit. Victims need to know that their commander holds offenders accountable, not some unknown third-party prosecutor."

- Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote in a letter to congressional leadership, "Removing commanders from the military justice process sends the message to everyone in the military that there is a lack of faith in the officer corps."

Service chiefs and Dempsey were scheduled to testify 4 JUN before the Senate Armed Services Committee. The issue of sexual assault has become a burden for the Pentagon, which released a report last month citing a 35 percent increase in "unwanted sexual contact" in the last two years. Sen. Kirstin Gillibrand (D-NY), author of a bill that would take the decision to prosecute out of a commander's hands, doesn't understand why the generals have complaints about the legislation. "They have a very strong understanding that victims don't want to report because they feel they'll be retaliated against or they think their career will be derailed," she told the Post. [Source: NGAUS Washington Report 4 Jun 2013 ++]

VA Sexual Assaults Update

The House passed legislation 4 JUN designed to make it easier for veterans to obtain financial compensation for injuries or illness linked to sexual abuse while in the military. About 4,000 veterans last year sought compensation from the federal government for post-traumatic stress disorder and other illness connected to military sexual trauma, showing that the problem of sexual abuse in the military has longstanding repercussions for the victims and for taxpayers. The Department of Veterans Affairs says about half of military sexual trauma-related claims are approved, but lawmakers say the rate should be higher. The House Ruth Moore Act of 2013 bill H.R.671, sponsored by Democratic Rep. Chellie Pingree of Maine, recommends that the department update its guidelines for dealing with disability claims related to sex abuse. Until it does, the VA must meet extensive reporting requirements, including a monthly report to all veterans who submit a disability claim connected to military sexual abuse or who seek treatment for illnesses or injuries related to sex abuse. The legislation was passed by voice vote and drew bipartisan support from leaders of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The bill does not stipulate exactly how the VA should revamp the claims process when it comes to military sexual trauma claims.

The Senate version S.294 lays out a clearer path that many supporters would like to see the VA follow. They want the VA to let the veteran's testimony serve as sufficient proof that an assault occurred. Currently, the VA considers a range of evidence when determining whether an assault or harassment occurred. Under current policy, the proof can include statements from colleagues, friends or family, documentation of a request for transfer, or evidence of a change in job performance. Pingree said such proof can be hard to come by because so many cases go unreported. The bill is named after Maine resident Ruth Moore, who said she was raped twice while in the Navy and fought for years to get the VA to approve compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder and other injuries. "There are thousands and thousands of Ruth Moores out there, who have been fighting for their benefits for years, or even for decades," Pingree said. "As survivors of sexual assault, they have suffered and sacrificed enough. We can make the process of getting the benefits they are owed a little bit simpler." The VA originally came out against the bill, but has since dropped its opposition. The issue has taken on more urgency in Congress after a recent Pentagon report that estimated the number of cases involving "unwanted sexual contact" jumped to about 26,000 in the latest fiscal year. Supporters of the bill have also called on President Barack Obama to enact the changes they're requesting through an executive order. [Source: Associated Press article 4 Jun 2013 ++]

VA Claims Backlog Update

Senior executives in the Veterans Affairs Department could face a 25 percent pay cut unless they substantially reduce the number of disability claims backlogged for four months or longer by next summer. That provision was included in the 2014 Military Construction-VA funding bill passed by the House 4 JUN. The House adopted an amendment by Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA) which would limit the pay of senior VA officials to 75 percent of their salary from July 1, 2014, to Sept. 30, 2014, "unless as of July 1, 2014, the percentage of disability compensation claims that are more than 125 days old is less than or equal to 40 percent." On 3 JUN VA reported claims backlogged 125 days or longer totaled 569,418 -- 66.2 percent of all 860,203 pending claims.

It's not the only provision targeting department executives' compensation: VA Senior Executive Service Personnel won't get any bonuses in 2014 if the House bill becomes law, as the result of another amendment by Rep. Keith Rothfus (R-PA).

The House bill -- if it becomes law after a Conference with the Senate -- also contains language that derails Defense Department plans, announced by Secretary Chuck Hagel last month, to develop its own electronic health record based on commercial software. An amendment by John Culberson, R-Texas, required Defense to develop an integrated electronic health record as defined in the Defense-VA Joint Executive Council's strategic plan for 2013 through 2015, which doesn't leave the Pentagon any wiggle room to pursue a solo strategy.

[Source: NextGov.com | Bob Brewin | 5 Jun 2013 ++

POW/MIA Update

"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,000+), Korean War (7,900+), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,655), 1991 Gulf War (0), and OEF/OIF (6). Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1420. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

- None

Korea

- The DPMO announced 28 MAY that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, were recently identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army 1st Lt. Douglas H. Haag, 26, of Louisville, Ky., will be buried June 1, in his hometown. In early July 1950, Haag, and elements of the 21st Infantry

Regiment (IR), 24th Infantry Division (ID), were deployed along the Kum River in western South Korea to maintain their positions long enough for Republic of Korea (R.O.K) forces to retreat to a more defensible position in the south. From July 10-12, 1950, North Korean forces struck and overran the U.S. positions, inflicting heavy casualties on the 21st IR. During this attack, Haag was reported missing near the town of Chochiwon. When no further information on Haag was received by U.S. forces, and when he failed to return to U.S. control during the prisoner of war exchanges with the Chinese and North Korean forces, a U.S. military review board re-examined his status and concluded that Haag was presumed dead and his remains non-recoverable. In June 2012, personnel from the R.O.K Ministry of National Defense Agency for KIA Recovery and Identification (MAKRI) were canvassing South Korea towns and villages to find information regarding unaccounted-for R.O.K soldiers from the Korean War, when the team located human remains near the town of Chochiwon. The MAKRI returned the remains and military equipment over to U.S. officials. Haag's remains were among those found and transferred into U.S. custody. To identify the remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence, and forensic identification tools such as dental comparison which matched Grainger's records. They also used mitochondrial DNA - which matched Haag's brother and sister.

- The DPMO announced 5 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Master Sgt. Olen B. Williams, 37, of Verbena, Ala., will be buried June 9, in Clanton, Ala. In late 1950, Williams and elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) were establishing a defensive line south of a bridge across the P'ungnyuri River, near a small village in Sinhung-ni, North Korea, when the 31st RCT was attacked by enemy forces. As a result of the battle, Williams was reported missing in action. In 1954, the United Nations and Communist Forces exchanged the remains of war dead in what came to be called "Operation Glory." Among the remains that were turned over at that time were remains of servicemen who died and were buried on the eastern bank of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. The remains were transferred to

the Central Identification Unit (CIU) in Kokura, Japan, for scientific analysis. In October 1955, a military review board declared the remains within seven boxes unidentifiable. The unidentified remains were transferred to Hawaii, where they were interred as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, also known as the “Punchbowl.” In 2012, analysts from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) reevaluated Williams’ records and determined that, due to the advances in technology, the remains recovered from Operation Glory should be exhumed for identification. To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as dental and radiograph comparison – which matched Williams’ records. Using modern technology, identifications continue to be made from remains that were previously recovered from North and South Korea. More than 7,900 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Korean War.

World War II

- The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 3 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing since World War II, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Air Force Sgt. Charles R. Marshall, 19, of Martin, Ky., will be buried on June 8, in Ivel, Ky. On July 21, 1944, a B-24H Liberator aircraft, which carried nine crew members, including Marshall, was shot down and crashed while on a bombing raid against enemy targets in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany. Of the nine crew members, six parachuted to safety; a seventh crewmen’s remains were recovered near Hadorf. Marshall and another crewman were not recovered. Attempts to recover their remains after the war were unsuccessful. In 2009, a German national turned over human remains to a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) investigating team that was in southern Germany. The German national claimed to have recovered human remains and aircraft wreckage from the crash site southwest of Munich. In 2012, a JPAC recovery team excavated the suspected crash site southwest of Munich, locating additional human remains and aircraft wreckage, including military identification tags bearing Marshall’s name. To identify the remains of Marshall, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools such as dental comparisons and mitochondrial DNA, which matched

Marshall's uncle. Today there are more than 400,000 American service members that were killed during WWII, the remains of more than 73,000 were never recovered or identified.

[Source: http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases Jun 2013 ++

Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule

Following is the current schedule of recent and future Congressional hearings and markups pertaining to the veteran community. Congressional hearings are the principal formal method by which committees collect and analyze information in the early stages of legislative policymaking. Hearings usually include oral testimony from witnesses, and questioning of the witnesses by members of Congress. When a U.S. congressional committee meets to put a legislative bill into final form it is referred to as a mark-up. Veterans are encouraged to contact members of these committees prior to the event listed and provide input on what they want their legislator to do at the event.

- **June 18, 2013.** Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs will hold a hearing on the post-decision process for appealed Veterans. 2:30 P.M.; 334 Cannon
- **June 20, 2013.** HVAC Economic Opportunity Subcommittee will hold a hearing to discuss the value of education for Veterans at public, private, and for-profit colleges and universities. 10:00 A.M.; 334 Cannon
- **June 26, 2013.** HVAC Economic Opportunity Subcommittee will hold a legislative hearing on the following bills. Time: TBD

The tentative bill list is as follows:

- HR 331 – School Consortium Bill, to permit the centralized reporting of Veteran enrollment by certain groups, districts, and consortiums of educational institutions.
- HR 1357 – VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, to improve the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program by providing assistance under such program for certain training programs that are considered less than fulltime.
- HR 1796 –Troop Talent Act, ensure that the education and training provided members of the Armed Forces and Veterans better assists members and Veterans in obtaining civilian certifications and licenses, and for other purposes.

- HR 2210 – Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship Improvements Act of 2013, amend title 38, United States Code, to expand the eligibility of children of certain deceased Veterans to educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Education bill on ‘irrevocable decision’.
- Draft “Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration Act of 2009,” this is a reprise of a Buyer Bill from 2009 that would split off from VBA a new “Economic Opportunity Administration.”

- **June 27, 2013.** HVAC will hold a hearing to discuss VA’s capital investment options to provide Veterans with care. 10:00 A.M.; 334 Cannon

[Source: Veterans Corner w/Michael Isam 14 Jun 2013 ++]