



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)

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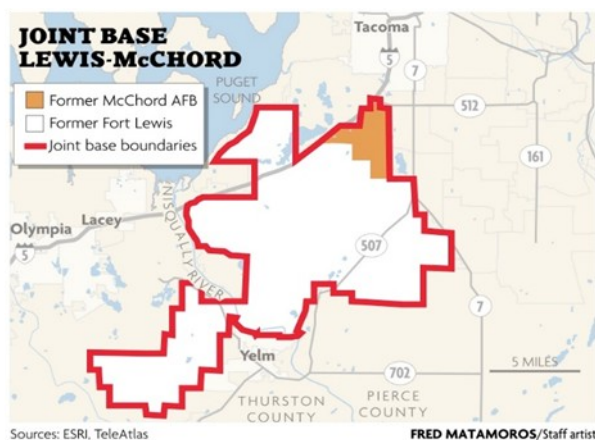


Volume 7

“A Soldier Once And Always”

December 2017

Commanders Corner: The Christmas, New Years and other religious Holidays are upon us. I hope that all of you are doing fine and enjoying life. We recently commemorated another Veterans Day as our soldiers are still at war or risking their lives in Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions again. Remember those who served and who are still serving. As Veterans, it is our duty to make sure that the Nation and its citizens don't forget, or become complacent to those who pick up the gauntlet of military service. Our Regiment, the 1st, is an old regiment, and many of us may not really understand its place in history, and how that may have affected the soldiers that have served in the regiment over the past 200 plus years. In the months to come I will try to get some facts on the history of the 1st Infantry Regiment. We should continue any traditions for 2nd BN 1st INF from its days in Vietnam; I don't know if there are any. If something comes to mind, send me a note. As you may or may not know, 2-1 INF is part of the [2nd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division which is assigned to the 7th Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis-McChord south of Tacoma, Washington](https://www.facebook.com/2.1legion/). Look at today's 2-1 INF at: <https://www.facebook.com/2.1legion/>



I have attempted to get in touch with the Adjutant of 2-1 INF to open a dialogue with the battalion and its soldiers. Hopefully in the weeks to come we'll get a discussion going on how we as veterans can help our battalion of soldiers serving in today's Army. I have not had a reply as of this writing. Again, best wishes for the Holiday season and keep in mind that the Nation has soldiers around the world and away from their families. Keep them in your prayers.

Got a comment, idea or complaint, contact me at:
commander.2.1.jgw@gmail.com

Respectfully,

John

Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!

Esper Confirmed as 23rd Army Secretary: By a vote of 89-6 the Senate has confirmed Mark T. Esper, a retired Army combat veteran and business executive, to become the 23rd secretary of the Army. The post as the top Army civilian has been filled by acting secretaries since President Donald Trump took office in January. The long delay is the result of two nominees dropping out before Senate hearings could be held, and then because of a lengthy number of holds on Senate action for a variety of reasons that had nothing whatsoever to do with Esper's qualifications for the job. Counting his time at the U.S. Military Academy, from which he graduated in 1986, Esper has 25 years of experience in uniform. "During my military career, I had the privilege of leading soldiers in both wartime and peace, in a broad range of command and staff assignments, and in locations extending from the United States, to the Middle East, and to Europe," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "All of this experience gives me an invaluable understanding of the Total Army—its culture, organization, and functions—and the critical role that our Soldiers, their families, and the civilian workforce play in defending our country." His experience extends beyond the Army. He was a congressional aide working on national security issues for the House and Senate, and served as deputy assistant defense secretary for policy. He also worked for a defense-related think tank and, most recently, at Raytheon, a top defense contractor. Retired Army Gen. Carter F. Ham, Association of the U.S. Army president and CEO, said Esper's approval from the Senate is good news. "With Dr. Esper's confirmation, the top leadership of the Army is now fully in place and, ideally, will remain so for the next few years. Dr. Esper, General Milley, Undersecretary McCarthy, General McConville and Sergeant Major of the Army Dailey comprise exactly the right team to lead the Army during a particularly critical time. All of us at AUSA stand ready to support them and the Soldiers they lead." Ham gave a special thanks to McCarthy, "who has so admirably served as Acting Secretary of the Army since August."

A Employee Charged with Stealing Veteran Disability Benefit Funds: A former Department of Veterans Affairs employee has been indicted on charges of wire fraud, bribery and theft involving veteran disability benefit funds. Maryland resident Russell M. Ware was charged with four counts of wire fraud in conjunction with a scheme to steal up to \$66,000 from the VA, one count of bribery and one count of government property theft. Between September 2013 and May 2014, Ware allegedly schemed to take almost \$21,000 in VA disability benefit money and from October 2014 to February 2015, had directed \$46,000 in disability benefits to Jacqueline Crawford, who was not entitled to said funds. Through Walmart money transfers, Crawford subsequently kicked \$13,000 back to Ware, according to authorities. In February 2017, she pleaded guilty to one count of government property theft related to Ware's plan. Both Crawford and Ware are currently awaiting trial.

World War II Vet Get Moroccan Award Decades Later: A 90-year-old World War II veteran is finally getting the military decoration he earned fighting a large blaze in Morocco more than 70 years ago. Kenneth F. Lincoln recently received a Moroccan award for meritorious conduct in North Attleborough, Massachusetts. The U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, sent one of its leaders and a Moroccan officer studying at the college to make the presentation. Lincoln said he’s “tickled pink” to get it because he earned it, but he’s a little overwhelmed because he wasn’t expecting a big to-do. “I’m 90. I should be in my rocking chair,” he said with a chuckle. Lincoln was sent to Morocco after he joined the U.S. Navy in 1945. The fire broke out among straw huts in Rabat in the summer of 1946 and he and other young sailors rushed to the scene. Lincoln was awarded the medal then, but didn’t receive it before he went home. He recently asked the veterans service officer in North Attleborough, Rebecca Jennings, for help acquiring it so he could pass it on to his children. She got the medal and arranged the ceremony. Jennings asked the war college if any active-duty service members could come. Command Master Chief Craig Cole said he’d love to and will be accompanied by Lt. Cmdr. Chakir El Aissaoui, of the Royal Moroccan Navy. “We’ve learned so much from those who served in the past through all of our conflicts,” Cole said. “It’s very important to show the world that they’re still getting recognized, years and years later.” Lincoln had five brothers, including three who also served during WWII. Lincoln said he joined the military to honor and take the place of his brother Lawrence, who was killed serving as a paratrooper in Belgium. Lincoln was assigned to a fire department at a naval station in Morocco. Lincoln returned to Massachusetts in 1946, got married and raised four children.

26,000 US Troops Total in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria: The U.S. has almost 26,000 troops deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, according to a new DoD report, far exceeding the Pentagon’s previously acknowledged troop levels. The U.S. has 8,892 forces in Iraq, 15,298 troops in Afghanistan and 1,720 in Syria, for a total of 25,910 troops serving in the three war zones as of Sept. 30, according to DoD. The figures were released to the public Nov. 17 as part of DoD’s quarterly count of active duty, Reserve, Guard and civilian personnel assigned by country by the Defense Manpower Data Center. DoD has not historically included some special operations forces or temporary personnel rotating into or out of the country in that official figure, so the actual number could be even higher. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis pledged to bring more transparency to the actual number of forces on the ground as he assumed leadership of the Pentagon earlier this year under President Donald Trump. DoD’s previous official response to queries about the number of forces had been to provide the “force management level” — a cap set by the previous administration. Using that figure, the Pentagon had only previously said there were 5,262 troops in Iraq. The Defense Manpower Data Center, which tracks actual numbers and not policy-driven force management levels, was reporting that there were 6,812 U.S. forces in Iraq in December 2016, the last report completed under Obama’s presidency. The actual number of forces in Syria is also substantially higher than the previously acknowledged figure, according to the database. The Pentagon had previously provided the force management level number — 503 troops — when queried. The actual number is 1,720, plus three DoD civilians, according to the database. Afghanistan also has many more U.S. troops on the ground than previously acknowledged, according to the database.

Libyan Convicted of Terrorism in Benghazi Attacks but Acquitted of Murder: A former militia leader from Libya was convicted of terrorism charges arising from the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya, that killed a United States ambassador and three other Americans. But he was acquitted of multiple counts of the most serious offense, murder. The defendant, Ahmed Abu Khattala, 46, was the first person charged and prosecuted in the attacks. Yet the seven-week trial in federal court in Washington received relatively little attention from such quarters. Mr. Khattala was convicted on four counts — including providing material support for terrorism, conspiracy to do so, destroying property and placing lives in jeopardy at the mission, and carrying a semiautomatic firearm during a crime of violence — but acquitted on 14 others. He faces life in prison. The mixed verdict showed the difficulty of prosecuting terrorism cases when the evidence is not clear-cut. The outcome was reminiscent of the 2010 federal trial of Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a Tanzanian man and former Guantánamo Bay detainee who was charged in federal court as a conspirator in the 1998 bombings of two American embassies in East Africa that killed hundreds. Mr. Ghailani was acquitted of most of the charges, including each murder count for those who died, but he was still sentenced to life in prison for a conviction on one count of conspiracy. Mr. Khattala, wearing a white shirt, betrayed no emotion in response to the verdict.

Air Force Failed to Report Dozens of Service Members to Gun Database: Dozens of Air Force service members charged with or convicted of serious crimes were never reported to the federal gun background-check database as required, Air Force officials said. The revelation came after the Air Force disclosed that it had failed to report the domestic violence conviction of Devin P. Kelley, the gunman who opened fire at a church in Texas this month. Under federal law, Mr. Kelley’s court-martial conviction for domestic assault should have prevented him from purchasing at a gun store the rifle he used in the attack, as well as other guns he acquired over the past four years. After the Air Force admitted on Nov. 6 that officials at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico had failed to report the results of Mr. Kelley’s court-martial to the federal background database, it began an investigation into how many other serious incidents had not been reported. Although officials have only examined a portion of the cases, several dozen have already surfaced that were not reported but should have been. “The error in the Kelley case was not an isolated incident and similar reporting lapses occurred at other locations,” the Air Force said in a statement. Air Force officials say they are reviewing the results of the inquiry to date to assess whether to take any punitive action against personnel who failed to report Mr. Kelley’s conviction. The Air Force review is only one part of a wide-ranging investigation into the background-check reporting process underway inside the military and the Justice Department in the aftermath of the church massacre. Mr. Kelley, who pleaded guilty at a 2012 court-martial to assaulting his wife at the time and fracturing his stepson’s skull, killed 25 people in Sutherland Springs, Tex., on Nov. 5. The victims included a pregnant woman whose fetus also died. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, citing the lapses in the Kelley case, last week ordered a federal review of the background-check database by the F.B.I. and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to ensure that the military and other federal agencies are reporting all required cases. “The National Instant Criminal Background Check System is critical for us to be able to keep guns out of the hands of those that are prohibited from owning them,” Mr. Sessions said. “The recent shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, revealed that relevant information may not be getting reported to the N.I.C.S. — this is alarming and it is unacceptable.”

SMA Dailey: Army Looking to Recruit 80,000 New Soldiers in 2018: The Army is looking at another end strength increase in 2018, and, this time, the focus will be on recruiting new soldiers, the service's top enlisted leader, SMA Dan Dailey said. Following a 26,000-person increase in 2017, the Army has asked for another 17,000 for the total force this coming year. The plan is to focus most of the effort on recruiting, Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey told Army Times during a senior enlisted leader panel at the Pentagon. “We did so well last year in our in-service retention program that our in-service retention, actually, is not that significant of a number, because we’ve already accomplished ... the preponderance of that in [fiscal year 2017],” he said. The Army will not have final numbers on its end strength increase until President Trump signs the National Defense Authorization Act, which the House and Senate both passed just before Thanksgiving. Army Recruiting Command is slightly below glide path for its working goal, Dailey said, but the fall and winter months are generally a slow time for accessions. Traditionally, those numbers pick up in the spring and summer months following high school and college graduations. Dailey did not expand on the kinds of incentives that might be available to potential recruits this coming year, but as recently as 2017, the Army temporarily authorized two-year enlistments — which come with partial GI Bill benefits worth up to 80 percent. “What we won’t see is a whole lot of an increase in bonuses unless we specifically need that skill level and MOS,” Dailey said of retention perks. Dailey also clarified that the Army will continue to meet Defense Department recruiting standards, despite controversy over a recent memo that appeared to open up enlistments for recruits with a host of mental illness and substance abuse issues.

VA Delays Adding New Agent Orange Illnesses: After 18 months of review, VA Secretary David J. Shulkin awkwardly announced he plans to “further explore” adding ailments to the list of compensable conditions VA presumes were caused by exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the Vietnam War. The decision to punt long-anticipated decisions on Agent Orange-related ailments will disappoint thousands of aging veterans with bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson-like tremors and hypertension (high blood pressure). Veterans and survivors were hopeful some or all of those conditions would be added to VA’s presumptive list of ailments linked to wartime herbicides, based on the latest and final review of medical and scientific literature on Agent Orange from the National Academy of Medicine (formerly known as the Institute of Medicine). Instead, on the Nov. 1 deadline date that VA itself had set for this packet of decisions, Shulkin issued a brief statement at 6 p.m. promising only more delay. “After thoroughly reviewing the National Academy of Medicine (NAM)’s latest report regarding veterans and Agent Orange, and associated data and recommendations from [VA’s] NAM Task Force, I have made a decision to further explore new presumptive conditions for service connection that may ultimately qualify for disability compensation. I appreciate NAM’s work and the commitment and expertise of [my] Task Force, and look forward to working with the [Trump] administration on the next steps in the process.” A last sentence, not attributed to Shulkin, explained that the VA “will begin work with the administration to concurrently conduct a legal and regulatory review of these potential presumptive conditions for awarding disability compensation to eligible veterans.”

***BUYING THE FARM *** This is synonymous with dying. During WW1 soldiers were given life insurance policies worth \$5,000. This was about the price of an average farm so if you died you “bought the farm” for your survivors.

North Korean Soldier Defects to South, Suffers Gunshot Wounds from North: A North Korean soldier defected to South Korea through the Joint Security Area (JSA) in the Demilitarized Zone, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. He received gunshot wounds to the shoulder and elbow from North Korean forces while defecting. The soldier was airlifted by a United Nations Command helicopter to a hospital for treatment after arriving in South Korea, the military said. “A North Korean soldier defected from a guard post on the North Korean side of the JSA toward our side,” according to a military official. After hearing several rounds of gunfire, the South Korean military found him fallen and bleeding on the southern side of the JSA. He was unarmed and wearing a combat uniform for a low rank, with his identity yet to be found, the military also said. The JSA is a small strip of land on the border between the Koreas where troops from both sides stand face-to-face. There was no armed conflict between the two sides, the military said. “Currently, there are no unusual signs in the North Korean military, but we are increasing alertness against the possibility of North Korean provocations,” officials said. The defection through the JSA marks a very rare case, given that North Korean soldiers stationed on the frontline are reportedly cherry-picked for their loyalty to the North Korean regime.

Air Force Leaders: 'We're Going to Break the Force': The Air Force’s pilot shortage has now swelled to roughly 2,000 pilots — a shortfall of about one in 10 — in a significant worsening of the service’s most pressing personnel emergency. The falling numbers prompted Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson and Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Goldfein to issue alarming warnings about the long-term health of the service’s pilot ranks — and the nation’s ability to continue to fight its wars overseas. “With 2,000 pilots short, it’ll break the force,” Wilson told reporters during the annual State of the Air Force news conference at the Pentagon. “It’ll break it.” As recently as last month, Air Force officials were citing a pilot shortfall of about 1,500 in all across the total force, including about 1,300 fighter pilots. But the latest tally of manning figures at the end of the fiscal year showed that the shortfall had grown by about 500. Updated figures on the fighter pilot shortage were not immediately available. The Air Force’s pilot corps needs to number about 20,000 across the active duty, Guard and Reserve. This significant undermanning is threatening the Air Force’s readiness. So far, the Air Force has been able to keep its pilot shortages stateside and fully man its deployed squadrons to make sure combat missions do not suffer. But, Goldfein said, that won’t last forever at this rate.

Sexual Assault Reports Increase 28 Percent at Fort Bragg: A summary released by the Department of Defense shows reports of sexual assault from Fort Bragg increased by 28 percent in 2016 over the year before. The summary says Fort Bragg received 146 reports of sexual assault in 2016 compared to 114 reports in 2015. The [News & Observer of Raleigh](#) reports that the summary notes that the location of the assault and the location of the report don’t necessarily coincide. Camp Lejeune had 169 reports of sexual assault in 2016, compared to 164 the year before. At Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, the number of reports dropped, from 49 in 2015 to 27 in 2016. Seymour Johnson Air Force Base had 13 reports in 2016, unchanged from the previous year.

**DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD
TO GAIN A MINUTE
YOU NEED YOUR HEAD
YOUR BRAINS ARE IN IT. Burma Shave**

VA Study Shows Parasite from Vietnam May be Killing Vets: A half a century after serving in Vietnam, hundreds of veterans have a new reason to believe they may be dying from a silent bullet — test results show some men may have been infected by a slow-killing parasite while fighting in the jungles of Southeast Asia. The Department of Veterans Affairs this spring commissioned a small pilot study to look into the link between liver flukes ingested through raw or undercooked fish and a rare bile duct cancer. It can take decades for symptoms to appear. By then, patients are often in tremendous pain, with just a few months to live. Of the 50 blood samples submitted, more than 20 percent came back positive or bordering positive for liver fluke antibodies, said Sung-Tae Hong, the tropical medicine specialist who carried out the tests at Seoul National University in South Korea. "It was surprising," he said, stressing the preliminary results could include false positives and that the research is ongoing. Northport VA Medical Center spokesman Christopher Goodman confirmed the New York facility collected the samples and sent them to the lab. He would not comment on the findings, but said everyone who tested positive was notified. Gerry Wiggins, who served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969, has already lost friends to the disease. He was among those who got the call. "I was in a state of shock," he said. "I didn't think it would be me." The 69-year-old didn't have any symptoms when he agreed to take part in the study, but hoped his participation could help save lives. He immediately scheduled further tests, discovering he had two cysts on his bile duct, which had the potential to develop into the cancer, known as cholangiocarcinoma. They have since been removed and — for now — he's doing well.

VA Introduces Paperless Care Coordination: This Holiday Season, we are Thankful for paperless care coordination of electronic health records between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and your participating community care providers! By electronically sharing your record with participating providers through the Veterans Health Information Exchange (VHIE), your participating community care providers can better manage your care, so you and your family will not need to request and carry paper medical records from one health care provider to another. Examples of other potential benefits of paperless care coordination using VHIE include: "Care Coordination at its Best" A Veteran, traveling on vacation became ill and was transported to the emergency room. While receiving emergency care, the doctors were able to see the Veteran's VA health record where the community provider was able to see the patient's health summary, which included immunizations, labs, allergies, and medications list - preventing drug interactions and possible misdiagnosis. "Within a Few Days of Her Hospital Admission" Recently at a VA facility, a maternity patient receiving prenatal care from a participating Community Care Provider was able to access the Veteran's VA health records quickly, securely, and electronically. The participating Community Provider was able to view and access the patient's hospital admission and discharge summary. Because the Veteran gave VA permission to share her electronic health record with VHIE ensuring both providers were able to view and better manage her health care. We encourage you to sign up today, to share your VA health record with your participating community care provider! Learn more about how the Veterans Health Information Exchange is simplifying Veterans healthcare at www.va.gov/vler.

In the old west a .45 cartridge for a six-gun cost 12 cents, so did a glass of whiskey. If a cowhand was low on cash he would often give the bartender a cartridge in exchange for a drink. This became known as a "shot" of whiskey.

Veterans are Prime Targets for Phone Scams, Pitches for Upfront Benefits Buyouts: Military veterans are a prime target for telephone scams and even more likely to end up as fraud victims than the general public, according to a new survey released by AARP. The AARP survey reports that veterans can be victimized twice as often as the rest of the public. The research indicates that about 16% of U.S. veterans have lost money to fraudsters, compared with 8% of others during the past five years. "What makes them more vulnerable is technology and patriotism," said Doug Shadel, lead researcher for AARP's Fraud Watch Network. Con artists will tell you, he said, the best way to scam a vet is to pretend to be a vet. In general, veterans may be more willing to trust someone who claims to have served in the military than those who have not. And they may ask fewer questions about donating money to a charity that claims to support service members and veterans. November is National Veterans and Military Families Month and a good time to remind vets that a call that seemingly comes out of the blue isn't really a fluke at all. An amazing amount of information is available on databases and via social media that can help con artists accurately target veterans. The AARP Fraud Watch Network and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service announced on Wednesday the launch of Operation Protect Veterans — a national campaign to warn the military about scams. Operation Protect Veterans will use ads, email messages, social media and a new website called www.aarp.org/ProtectVeterans to get the word out.

Online VA Scheduling Now Available Through my HealtheVet: You can now manage your primary care and certain specialty care VA appointments online at participating VA facilities. You will need a Premium My HealtheVet Account to use online scheduling. If you do not have a Premium account, please visit My HealtheVet or contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at your nearest VA facility. U.S. Army Veteran G. Paul Moffett, who helped test online scheduling at the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System in Murfreesboro, TN, says it's about giving Veterans greater control over scheduling their care. "Rather than making a phone call and playing go fish, now I can [go online and] pick the date that best fits my schedule," he says. "You can use it anytime, anywhere — on whatever Internet-access device you have. I'm excited about it. It's great stuff." Currently, online scheduling is available at more than 100 VA facilities and their associated Community Based Outpatient Clinics. VA plans to add more appointment types in the future and is working to make online scheduling available at nearly all VA facilities next year. Check to see if your VA facility offers online scheduling. Where can I find the online scheduling tool? If you are eligible to use online scheduling, you will see a "Schedule a VA Appointment" option when you log in to your My HealtheVet Premium Account. To make an appointment online, you need to be registered as a patient in My HealtheVet and have a Premium Account. To schedule a primary care appointment, you must have had a primary care appointment at that facility within the last two years. Contact your facility for information about available specialty care appointments. With online scheduling tool, You can:

- Self-schedule primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you have had a primary care appointment in the past two years.
- Request help scheduling primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you receive care.
- Self-schedule or request help scheduling specialty appointments, such as outpatient mental health, optometry and audiology, at participating facilities.
- View or cancel appointments and requests.
- Track the status of appointment requests.
- Send messages about requested appointments. Get notifications about appointments.

Woman Raises Nearly \$200K for Homeless Marine Veteran Who Gave Her His Last \$20 For Gas: (A story of kindness toward a homeless Veteran)

Kate McClure, 27, was driving into Philadelphia on southbound I-95 last month to visit a friend when her car started sputtering. She pulled onto the nearest exit ramp and made it to the bottom just as she ran out of gas. It was 11 p.m. Dark. She was alone. "My heart was beating out of my chest," McClure said. "I didn't know what the heck to do." She called her boyfriend, Mark D'Amico, 38, who said he'd come get her. That's when Johnny, a homeless man who often sits on the guard rail at the exit ramp, reading a book, depending on the kindness of strangers, appeared out of the night. Johnny told her to lock her doors and sit tight. "He said, 'I'll be back. Trust me,'" said McClure. "Ten minutes later," D'Amico said, "she called me and said the guy brought her gas." It turns out Johnny had spent his last \$20 to buy gas a few blocks away. McClure had no cash to pay Johnny. She promised to come back and repay him. He trusted her as she had trusted him, and one random act of kindness soon inspired another. The next day, the couple drove by, thanked Johnny again, and repaid him. "We drove away and went on with our lives," D'Amico said. But they kept returning, giving Johnny a few dollars each time, and talking for a few minutes. They learned he is Johnny Bobbitt Jr., 34, from the Raleigh, N.C., area. He was an ammunition technician in the Marines. His Facebook page includes photos and posts that trace a romantic relationship from its happier days to its 2014 breakup. He studied hard while training to be a paramedic and then worked long shifts, according to his Facebook posts, where a smiling Johnny stands tall in front of a medical rescue helicopter. In August 2014, Johnny posted that he aspired to be a flight nurse. D'Amico, a building contractor, said one day they were talking about luck in people's lives. "Johnny said, 'Yeah, tell me about bad luck. But don't get me wrong. I'm here because of my own decisions. I got nobody to blame but myself.'" A friend in North Carolina who had been close to Johnny said he has a "good heart," was a talented paramedic, and was smart enough to become a doctor. The friend, who did not want to be identified by name, said Johnny's life took an unfortunate turn because of drugs, and eventually money problems. According to public records, he had involvement with the criminal justice system in North Carolina. In perhaps a premonition of his future, Johnny posted in November 2014: "It's never too late to turn it all around. Be honest with yourself and others." He's been homeless in Philadelphia for a year and a half. The couple was struck by Johnny's willingness to take responsibility for his situation, and by his caring attitude toward two homeless buddies he lives with under a bridge. Recently, D'Amico texted McClure, "I can't stop thinking about this guy. I think about him all the time." To his surprise, McClure texted back, "OMG! Me, too!" D'Amico went through his old winter clothes and pulled out an Eagles hoodie, a black knit cap, and black insulated gloves. He and McClure went to a Target and bought a six-pack of tube socks, a bunch of granola bars, and basic toiletries. They put everything into a backpack and brought it to Johnny, along with a blanket and two \$10 Wawa gift cards. "He was very excited," D'Amico said. "He shook my hand and he gave her a bear hug," McClure said, "He said he'd go to Wawa right away and buy dinner. He loves the pepperoni hoagies." "And the pepperoni and cheese bagels," D'Amico said. McClure said Johnny made it clear that he would share their gifts with his two buddies. "They all look out for each other," she said. "Mark and I got back in the car and we were like, 'Man, if we could change this guy's life.' And that's when we came up with the idea of GoFundMe." The fundraiser has exceeded their \$10,000 goal (It was at nearly \$200,000 at time of publication). The couple made it clear that they would manage all the GoFundMe donations, using them to rent an apartment for Johnny and pay for his food, clothing, cellphone, and transportation, and giving him a small amount of cash for walking-around money. "Johnny has reflected on his life," D'Amico said. "He just needs a push in the right direction. I can't imagine how hard it is. He's from the Carolinas. He's a thousand miles from home with nothing, nobody. Things probably snowballed to where he's living under a bridge." McClure said Johnny told them he wants to live in Robbinsville, N.J., and work at the Amazon warehouse there because the company offers health benefits. "He definitely has the drive," D'Amico said. "He doesn't want to be on the streets anymore. He wants to be a functioning member of society and not be sitting on a guard rail in Philadelphia. He knows where he's at and he knows what he has to do to dig himself out," D'Amico said. "It's almost impossible to dig himself out if he has nobody and nothing. If we can raise enough money to set him up for a few months, where he doesn't have to worry about where he's going to sleep and what he's going to eat, then he can get a job and go about his life." McClure said that maybe what they're doing for Johnny is selfish in a way. "Just to see him react the way he does is such a good feeling," she said. "I mean, it really feels good."