



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

WEBSITE: www.b-2-1-196lib.com



Volume 7

“A Soldier Once And Always”

September 2017

Commanders Corner: The annual Americal Reunion just ended in Bloomington, MN and was very good except the weather left a little bit to be desired. I attended the Executive Council meeting in place of our chapter representative, Stan Disorda, who was unable to attend. The Council discussed several items which were presented at the general membership meeting which dealt with the financials of the organization, the Legacy program, the Scholarship program, and an archives for the Vietnam War set up at Texas Tech University to help educate anyone interested in learning the history of the war. The web site is <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/>. Of main importance to all of you is the locations of the next few annual reunions so you can make plans accordingly. The next one will be held in Oklahoma City, OK either the last week of September or first week of October. I'll provide complete information on our web site as soon as the dates, etc. are confirmed. 2019 will be held at Providence, RI and 2020 at Indianapolis, IN. Following the general meeting, we held our annual chapter meeting and had 19 members in attendance. I thought that was really a good turnout considering the location of the reunion. The agenda for this year's meeting involved several topics. I don't know if all of you are aware of the “Bravo Brick” campaign but, it involves placing a brick at the Kokomo Reunion Memorial Garden location, a section of which is reserved for honoring our 2/1 Bravo brothers whom we lost in Vietnam and those who have passed on since returning to the “world”. It was proposed to open this effort to the other companies of 2/1 if they were interested in starting a brick program. Anyone interested in participating may contact Gerry “Bo” Borysiak, the program administrator. Bo's email is gerry321@hotmail.com. We also had a beautiful quilt that was raffled off which was made and donated by Renee Hicks, wife of our former Secy/Treasurer, Don Hicks. It went for \$600 and will greatly help support our chapter funds towards future endeavors. Thanks, Renee. Our biennial elections were held for the upcoming 2 year terms of Commander, Vice-commander and Secretary/Treasurer. I decided to take a hiatus for a while and we elected, John Woyanski, as the new chapter Commander, Rich Heroux will retain his position as Vice-commander and Jesse Mendoza will remain as Secy/Treasurer. Stan Disorda, our At-large council member and Americal Executive Council representative informed me in Louisville he will no longer be able to continue in this role and, it was decided in the interim, I will take over Stan's duties until the At-large elections at next year's annual meeting. New terms of office are effective on January 1st, 2018, so you'll have to suffer on with me until then. I want to gratefully acknowledge all of you for being so patient with my throughout my tenure as commander and really appreciate all the members have done the past 6 years. I especially want to thank the chapter



for the beautiful plaque of appreciation I received for being the first commander. I also want to thank the Bravo guys for presenting me as keeper of the “Bravo Knife”, made by our former medic, Bob “Doc” Tatum. I will display it proudly alongside the plaque (See pictures at Page 6). On the way to Minnesota, I stopped in Chicago to pick up Mike “Frenchie” Kosteczko, my ol' buddy from “The Nam”. I spent the night there and was treated to a great dinner and breakfast from his lovely wife, Deedee, a real sweetheart. A couple of final items, I still have about 30 2/1 challenge coins left and there won't be any more. The coins are \$10, including S&H. I also have about 6 videos made by former Company Commander, Dwight Sypolt, available. If you want either of these items, please contact me. The coins are really beautiful and the videos very nice. Well, you only have to suffer through 3 more columns after this. It's been an honor and pleasure to serve you.

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

Chuck

Memorial Bricks: The Kokomo, Indiana Veterans Reunion is hosting its 35th consecutive Reunion. They have relocated to their own property at 8313 E.400 S., Greentown, IN 46936 Ph# (765)-628-0297. And are known today as: Howard County Vietnam Veterans Organization, or H.C.V.V.O. (abbreviation). Their Acreage used to be an old grass airstrip along I-26 just west of Greentown, IN proper. Over the years they have turned it into a First Class Reunion/Campsite. Their website is: www.hcvvo.net/. My favorite spot there is located along the middle of the back fence, where a 50 foot American Flag fly's proudly above their Memorial Garden. This is a place of Reverence, and to my mind, “Sacred Ground”. A place to remember Fallen Comrades, both those lost in combat so long ago, and those who have passed since then. Just simple brick pavers, consisting of room for inscription 13 spaces across, 3 vertical rows. Placed with the understanding that, if some of one's ashes are put under their Brick. It can never be relocated. The cost of each brick is \$25.00. Which as far as I know, is the lowest expense outside of actual Military grounds, and locations? Our first 2/1 Infantry placement consisted of 22 bricks. This number has increased each year since then. The HCVVO's website listed above has further information if needed? HCVVO has designated their location as “A Healing Ground”. And I intend to have my family place some of my ashes below my personal paver, when my time comes, to be back with my “Band of Brothers”...

Respectfully,

Gerry “Bo” Borysiak

Memorial Brick Coordinator

Kokomo Veterans Reunion, Sept. 14-16, 2017
Howard County Vietnam Organization
8313 E. 400 S. (Ind Hwy 26), Greentown, IN 46936
Bravo Company 2/1, 196th LIB Lots 146W-149W
All 2/1 members welcome

My First 2/1 Chapter Reunion: I attended the ADVA (Americal Division Veterans Association) August 24-27, 2017. It was much more than I expected, and was very healthy and healing for me. Our little platoon reunion “Stand To 2016” was also very healing, and at the ADVA reunion I was not prepared for all the comradery displayed by everyone there. I didn’t know any of them, yet they were all so familiar like I knew them all for a long time. Fact is I did know all of them. They were you all, but there was over 300 of you there. It was astounding, and I felt right at ease with all of them. I enjoyed so much the banter between them all, and even the banter from the spouses was endearing. I listened to their stories and experiences, and I shared one or two stories myself. It was very nice and interesting communicating and sharing with all. We share the common bond of combat in a jungle thousands of miles from home. I didn’t realize how strong that bond is until meeting many of these other infantry men at this reunion. You can sense their stories and experiences by looking at them, and even more when you see their eyes. The first day I met Jesse Mendoza, Secretary/Treasurer of 2/1 Chapter. He invited me to visit with other members of the 2/1 Chapter in their Hospitality Room. They had set up the room with tables and chairs; beverages (Non-alcoholic and alcoholic), various snacks and cold-cuts, crackers, breads, mixed nuts, chips, and **COOK-IES**. It was well set up, and the room was also used for their official meeting. Jesse introduced me to all in attendance. Any nervousness I had was quickly dispelled. I was readily accepted with familiar friendliness and smiles. I felt very at ease in their midst and was not shy about asking questions about the schedule. The reunion dress was both casual or dressed; so I stayed casually dressed for the entire reunion. I decided to become a lifetime member 2/1 Infantry Association. It was very convenient to have somewhere else to go, besides the bar or restaurant. There you can be just yourself. The 2/1 Infantry Chapter will always be a part of the ADVA reunions. I am now looking forward to the next reunion in Oklahoma City in September of 2018. If you are not already members, I am encouraging all of you and yours to join the ADVA. We can all meet there, and you will feel the bond even stronger than what we experienced at “Stand To 2016”. It’s amazing.

Larry Tallacus

196th LIB Memorial at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery: Formed in 1965, the 196th went to Vietnam in the summer of 1966. After some hard battles in I Corps as part of Task Force Oregon, the 196th became separate once again when the Americal Division was disbanded. On August 5, 1972 soldiers of the 196th conducted the last American combat infantry patrol of the Vietnam war, thus bringing to a close that part of American history. This memorial is dedicated to those soldiers who wore the “Burning Rope” in difficult conditions against a relentless enemy they kept faith with the proud traditions of the U.S. Army. The memorial was discovered during the ADVA reunion, Sep. 2017.



KIA – 1,004

WIA – 5,591

The Vietnam War: A new 10-part, 18-hour documentary film series directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, will premiere September 17, 2017, on PBS stations nationwide. The first five episodes will air nightly from Sunday, September 17, through Thursday, September 21, and the final five episodes will air nightly from Sunday, September 24, through Thursday, September 28. Each episode will premiere at 8:00 p.m. ET with a repeat broadcast immediately following the premiere (check local listings). Beginning Tuesday, October 3, the series will re-air on a weekly basis through November 28, at 9:00 p.m. ET (check local listings). On September 17, concurrent with the broadcast premiere, the first five episodes of **THE VIETNAM WAR** will be available for streaming on all station-branded PBS platforms, including PBS.org and PBS apps for iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Chromecast, and the final five episodes will be available beginning September 24. All episodes will remain accessible until October 3, when the series begins its weekly rebroadcast. During the rebroadcast period, each episode will be available to stream for two weeks. PBS station members with Passport, a benefit for donors, offering extended access to a rich library of public television programming can view the entire series (all 10 episodes) beginning September 17 (contact your local PBS station for details). The series will also be available in Spanish and Vietnamese on streaming.

Mattis Tells Sailors: 'You're Not Some P--- Sitting on the Sidelines': Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is well known for having delivered some controversial quotes in the past, and he uttered yet another during a speech last week to sailors at Naval Base Kitsap in Washington. During a short speech on Aug. 9 followed by a question-and-answer period, Mattis thanked the sailors of the USS Kentucky for being in the Navy, saying they'd never regret that service. "That means you're living," Mattis said, according to the official Pentagon transcript. "That means you're not some p --- sitting on the sidelines, you know what I mean, kind of sitting there saying, 'Well, I should have done something with my life.' Because of what you're doing now, you're not going to be laying on a shrink's couch when you're 45 years old, say 'What the hell did I do with my life?' Why? Because you served others; you served something bigger than you." The Navy reversed its policy of only allowing males to serve aboard submarines in 2010, according to the US Naval Institute. A spokesman for Submarine Group 9 confirmed the USS Kentucky does not currently have any female sailors assigned to it. Mattis went on to say that he wished he were young enough to go out to sea with the Kentucky's crew, though the retired general joked, "there's a world of difference between a submariner and a Marine, you know what I mean?"

History A Fourth-Generation First ROTC Cadet Meghan Copenhaver, a junior at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Va., has recorded a first in Army history. She is the first fourth-generation paratrooper in Army history. Her mother, maternal grandfather and maternal great-grandfather graduated before her from U.S. Army Airborne School and her great-grandfather, retired Col. John A. Hughes, was a master parachutist who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. What to watch: The 19-year-old completed her first jump Aug. 14 and completed the school Aug. 18. She's now headed back to school for her senior year where she is a business major and part of the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency program and President's Leadership Program.

No man's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session.

– Mark Twain (1866)

VA Health Benefit Handbook: The My HealtheVet team is pleased to announce that the Veterans Health Benefits Handbook is now available on My HealtheVet. This improvement is the result of the continued partnership with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to fulfill the mission of providing Veterans with the best health [...]. You may view the latest post and SHARE WIDELY, especially your patients of this new availability <http://vaww.blog.va.gov/CCM/?p=1813>

Trump Approves Global War On Terrorism Memorial in DC: President Donald Trump recently signed the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Act authorizing the construction of a privately funded Global War on Terrorism Memorial in Washington, D.C. The designate site was not part of the bill, but authorized a memorial somewhere on "federal land in the District of Columbia. Trump also authorized the non-profit Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation to raise funds and oversee the project. The authorization is the first step in a process that will culminate with the design and construction of a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall without using any federal funds. The Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation has on its advisory board retired Army Gen. David Petraeus, the former commander in Iraq and Afghanistan, and retired Army Capt. Florent Groberg, a *Medal of Honor* recipient for valor in Afghanistan. In a statement following Trump's signing, the foundation said the bill exempted the memorial from the 10-year waiting period under the Commemorative Works Act of 1986, and authorized the foundation to oversee the fundraising, design, and construction of the memorial. "Today's historic signing is dedicated to our three million brothers and sisters who have deployed in the Global War on Terror, especially to the ones we have lost, and those who face great obstacles since their return home," said Andrew J. Brennan, a West Point graduate and Afghanistan veteran who started the foundation and serves as executive director. "We're looking forward to building a sacred place of healing and remembrance for our veterans and their families," he said.

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, H.R. 3218: Veterans Assistance Act of 2017, passed by the House and Senate was signed by the President on August 16, 2017. Also known as the *Forever G.I. Bill*, the legislation improves provisions in the existing G.I. Bill and provides more flexibility for using educational benefits. The measure contains a number of provisions that specifically impact disabled veterans and their families, including:

- Increases monthly Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA) payments by about 40 percent effective October 1, 2018 (note: effective August 1, 2018, DEA decreases from 45 to 36 months to be consistent with other VA educational programs);

- Eliminates the 15-year limit for using the G.I. Bill, allowing for the use of the educational benefits for life, for those who were discharged after January 1, 2013;

- Grants full G.I. Bill benefits to Purple Heart Recipients, regardless of total time in service effective August 1, 2018;

- Provides G.I. Bill eligibility for reservists undergoing medical care for active duty injuries effective August 1, 2018;

- Restores used G.I. bill benefits to enrolled students whose school permanently closes after January 1, 2015, effective November 14, 2017; and

- Allows veterans who are National Guard members and Reservists who are receiving Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits, to "pause" their eligibility so their time under the VR&E program is not negatively affected while called up for active duty orders. This provision takes effect immediately.

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Dual Couple Allowances: Senators would cut housing allowances to members married to other members with children. Currently they get two housing allowances with the higher ranked member receiving stateside Basic Allowance for Housing at the with-dependents rate, the other BAH at without-dependents rate. Senators want both to receive the lower "without" rate when assigned to the same locale. Service couples with children but assigned together outside the U.S. also would see their maximum overseas housing allowances pinched. Of 16,500 dual service couples on active duty with dependents, 11,000 are assigned to the same area and would see combined housing allowances fall an average of \$400.

Army to Begin Testing New Jungle Uniform: In January, 2018, the U.S. Army will begin an evaluation of the service's new Improved Hot Weather Combat Uniform by issuing the lighter, more breathable uniform to thousands of soldiers in Hawaii. The new IHWC is the result of a directed requirement to outfit soldier with a jungle uniform suitable for operations in the Pacific theater. This follows a similar effort that recently resulted in the Army fielding 9,000 pairs of new Jungle Combat Boots to the 25th Infantry Division's 2nd and 3rd Brigade Combat teams in Hawaii. "January 2018 is going to be huge," said Capt. Daniel Ferenczy, assistant product manager for Extreme Weather Clothing and Footwear. "They are going to be pure-fleeted in the [Operation Camouflage Pattern] with jungle boots in a hot weather combat uniform." The new uniform is a 57 percent Nylon/ 43 percent cotton blend to make it "faster-drying" and have "greater airflow" than the 50-50 Nylon cotton blend on the ACU. The new uniform has better flexibility and less layers of fabric, retaining less moisture means it dries quicker. There are no breast pockets since soldiers in the field are typically wearing gear that covers them. The back pockets in the trousers are gone as well for the same reason. Uniform officials have added an ID card pocket inside the waistband. The Improved Hot Weather Combat Uniform blouse also features a button-down front instead of a zipper closure.



Navy Dismisses 7th Fleet Commander After Warship Accidents: The commander of the Navy's 7th Fleet was dismissed after a series of warship accidents raised questions about its Pacific operations. A two-sentence statement issued by the Navy said Adm. Scott Swift, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, had relieved Vice Adm. Joseph Aucoin "due to a loss of confidence in his ability to command." The move follows four Navy accidents in the Pacific including two collisions that left sailors dead and missing. The Navy will carry out a "deliberate re-set" of all its ships in the Pacific, focused on navigation, mechanical systems and bridge resource management.

China Opens First Overseas Military Base Next Door to US Camp: China loaded up ships with troops and supplies Tuesday bound for the first People's Liberation Army overseas military base in the tiny and strategic Horn of Africa state of Djibouti, a move that is causing "very significant security concerns" for the U.S. The Chinese base -- about four miles from U.S. Camp Lemonnier, a hub of operations for U.S. Africa Command in the East African country -- will "assist China's contribution to peace and stability both in Africa and worldwide," according to China's official Xinhua News Agency. Djibouti is also host to French and Japanese military bases. The African outpost will be "conducive to China's performance of international obligations" in anti-piracy sea patrols in the region and other commitments with the United Nations, Xinhua said. In addition to the troops posted to Djibouti, China has about 2,200 troops serving throughout Africa in peacekeeping operations.

Retiree Health Costs: Last year Congress voted to raise TRICARE co-pays and enrollment fees for retirees but applied them only to retirees who first join the military in 2018, delaying most savings from higher cost-shares until 2038. The Senate bill would remove that grandfathering protection so that hikes in enrollment fees and copayments apply to new and existing retirees beginning in 2019. Members retired due to disability and certain survivors would not be impacted. The change would affect 600,000 retiree households enrolled in TRICARE Prime, raising out of pocket costs for retirees who use Prime only for themselves from \$530 a year to \$670 and for those with family coverage from \$1270 to \$1615. Out of pocket costs for the 450,000 retirees using TRICARE Select plans also would climb, from an average of \$580 a year for single coverage to \$1105, and from an average of \$1685 for family coverage to \$2655, CBO estimates. If the Senate committee plan takes effect, CBO estimates that by 2021 about 30,000 retiree households would stop using TRICARE, opting instead for health insurance from civilian employers or through spouses' employment.

US Warns of Response to Any North Korean Nuke Test: The U.S. warned recently of unspecified action against North Korea if the regime of Kim Jong-un conducted another underground nuclear test following a failed missile launch. "If it had been a nuclear test, then other actions would have been taken from the U.S.," said a White House foreign policy advisor traveling with Vice President Mike Pence in South Korea. The advisor said that Kim "wants to do both, he wants to do a nuclear test and a missile launch. We've seen one. It doesn't prevent him from doing the other." Separately, Army Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, the White House National Security Advisor, said President Donald Trump was exploring "a range of options" against North Korea but would prefer "to take action short of armed conflict, so we can avoid the worst." In a statement, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said that Trump was in close touch with his military team on the crisis on the Korean peninsula. "The President and his military team are aware of North Korea's most recent unsuccessful missile launch. The President has no further comment," Mattis said but Trump put out tweets stressing U.S. resolve. "Our military is building and is rapidly becoming stronger than ever before. Frankly, we have no choice," he said.

Lord grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can & the friends to post my bail when I finally snap!

Army Veteran Who Wrote Wounded Warrior Creed Dies: A paralyzed veteran who wrote the official Wounded Warrior Creed adopted by the Marine Corps has died. Retired Army Sgt. Joseph "Joey" Smith, a career military man who also served in the Marines, died Sunday at Kindred Hospital in Greensboro, following a massive stroke he suffered in May. Smith, who lived in Thomasville, was 46. "Joe was a patriot more than anything, and he loved his country," said Smith's ex-wife, Debbi, a former High Pointer who remained friends with Smith after their divorce earlier this year. "He said to me many times that even though he was hurt, he would go back to Afghanistan to serve, even in his wheelchair. He was a very proud American, he was proud of his country and he was proud that he could serve." In 2005, during Smith's fourth deployment in Afghanistan, he suffered a spinal-cord injury that left him paralyzed from the waist down.



While hospitalized and watching the struggles of his fellow injured soldiers -- not to mention struggling to find purpose in his own life -- Smith penned the inspirational words that the Marine Corps later would adopt as its own "Creed of the Wounded Warrior." "Though I am wounded," he wrote, "I will always be a warrior. I will never give up, nor quit in the face of adversity. I will do my best in all that I do and achieve. I will not allow my injuries to limit me, and most of all, I will never forget my fallen comrades or leave a fellow injured warrior behind." The creed and what it represented meant a lot to Smith, his ex-wife said. "That was something he was very proud of," she said. "A lot of the wounded warriors said he was very inspirational to them." Smith lived up to the creed, too, competing for several years in the Warrior Games, an annual, Olympic-style sports competition for wounded or ill military personnel and veterans. He won a gold medal in the air rifle competition, and competed in other sports such as swimming and archery. He and his then-wife settled in Thomasville in 2011, when they moved into a new, handicap-accessible house provided through Homes For Our Troops, a nonprofit organization that builds houses for severely injured veterans. The approximately 2,400-square-foot house gave Smith a level of independence he would not have had otherwise.

Trump Signs GI Bill Expansion Legislation: President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed into law an updated veterans' education bill that marks the largest expansion of college assistance for military veterans in a decade. The Forever GI act immediately removed a 15-year time limit on the use of GI benefits. The measure also increases financial assistance for thousands serving in the National Guard and Reserve, building on a 2008 law that guaranteed veterans a full-ride scholarship to any in-state public university, or a similar cash amount to attend private colleges. Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, who joined Trump for the signing, said the new law also provides benefits to Purple Heart recipients whose injuries forced them to leave the service. Benefits can also now be transferred to the eligible dependent of service members who are killed in the line of duty. Veterans would get additional payments for completing science, technology and engineering courses, part of a broad effort to better prepare veterans for life after active-duty service amid a fast-changing job market. The law also restores benefits if a college closes in the middle of the semester, a protection that was added after thousands of veterans were hurt by the collapse of for-profit college giant ITT Technical Institute and Corinthian Colleges.

Charlottesville Driver Who Rammed Crowd Washed Out of Army: The driver accused of ramming his vehicle into a crowd in Charlottesville on Saturday served a brief stint in the U.S. Army but ultimately washed out. James Alex Fields Jr., the 20-year-old from Ohio who was charged with second-degree murder after allegedly killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and critically injuring several others in the incident, served on active duty for about four months from August to December 2015, according to an emailed statement from William Sharp, a public affairs officer for the service at the Pentagon. "The Army can confirm that James Alex Fields reported for basic military training in August of 2015," Sharp said. "He was, however, released from active duty due to a failure to meet training standards in December of 2015. As a result, he was never awarded a military occupational skill nor was he assigned to a unit outside of basic training."

Fort Gordon Cyber District Forming: A partnership is forming in the Augusta, Ga., area in anticipation of the 2020 arrival at Fort Gordon of Army Cyber Command. Called the Fort Gordon Cyber District, the partnership involves the Army, business, and local government and civic officials who are focused on the growth in cyber and advanced technology jobs that will come when the command moves from Fort Belvoir, Va.

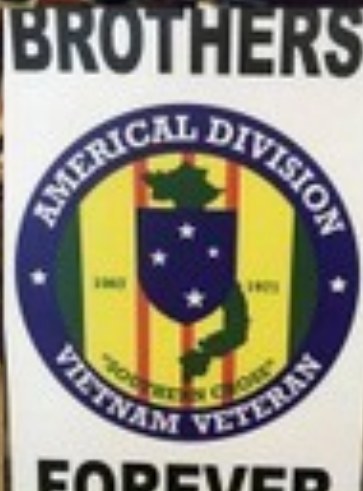
VA Parking Lot Suicides Roil VA Hospitals: In a tragic and disturbing trend, veterans are resorting to suicide on the grounds of VA facilities, VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin said. "As some of you may know, veterans tend to come to a VA -- either drive a car or come to the VA -- and actually suicide on our property," Shulkin said last Tuesday, stressing the need for the Department of Veterans Affairs to do more to curb veteran suicides, estimated at 20 daily nationwide. "There are a number of reasons, not all of which I completely understand," for veterans to choose to end their lives at the VA, he said, "but one of them being they don't want their families to have to discover them." "They know that if they're discovered at a VA, that we will handle it in an appropriate way and take care of them," Shulkin said in his opening remarks at the VA's annual "Innovation Day" at Georgetown University. Shulkin, who has made curbing veteran suicides his top clinical priority, did not state how many suicides are occurring at VA facilities, "but every day I am notified of more and more of these that happen. So we just have to do more, we have to do better, we have to innovate" in seeking out and assisting at-risk veterans. VA officials also did not put a number on what is known in the veterans community as "parking lot suicides." Shulkin "was referring to a number of tragic incidents that have been in the news," a VA spokesman said in an e-mail. "His point was that VA has more work to do when it comes to its suicide prevention efforts."

West Point Cadets Share Veteran Legacies Through National Cemetery Internships: The National Cemetery Administration welcomed two cadets from the United States Military Academy at West Point, this summer who will assist cemetery directors in service and outreach programs that connect Veteran legacy in the cemeteries with the community.



Almost 300 Female Marines in Previously Closed Combat Jobs: There are 278 female Marines now filling jobs formerly reserved for men, with 40 female recruits additionally under contract for these jobs, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps told reporters at the Pentagon on Tuesday. A year and a half after all previously closed ground combat and special operations jobs across the Defense Department opened to women in keeping with a Pentagon mandate, Lt. Gen. Glenn Walters hailed the progress that Marines have made in integrating the ranks, saying the Corps has not gotten adequate credit in the press for recent historic milestones. These include two female lieutenants who graduated with honors from Army Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in May 2016, and the Marines' first female tank officer, 2nd Lt. Lillian Polatchek, who graduated at the top of the Army's Armor Basic Officer Leaders Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, in April. "Do we have hordes [of female Marines entering combat jobs]? No," Walters said. "But we have a pretty good nexus that are attempting to make these choices in life. And I'm very proud of them." There are at least three women currently serving in actual enlisted infantry jobs. The Marine Corps revealed in January that a female rifleman, mortarman, and machine gunner were being assigned to 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. And Walters revealed Tuesday that a female officer is currently attempting the notoriously difficult infantry officers course at Quantico, Virginia, and had made it part-way through. As of this spring, 31 female Marine officers had attempted the course, but none had been able to complete it. Walters' comments come as the Marine Corps eyes a plan that would allow women to attend Marine Combat Training, and potentially boot camp, on the West Coast. The service is also considering further integrating gender-separated training and instruction periods at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina, the only boot camp where female Marine recruits currently train.

Meet the Man Who Deserted the US Army for North Korea in 1965: Charles Robert Jenkins deserted the U.S. Army on a freezing night in January 1965. He pounded 10 beers to quiet his nerves, and abandoned his patrol unit along the border dividing South and North Korea. He unloaded his M-16 rifle to show the enemy he meant no harm; he raised his knees high to avoid triggering tripwires. Several hours later, he crossed into North Korea. He didn't leave for nearly 40 years. Now, Jenkins -- 77 but looking much older, with a deep-lined face and distant expression -- lives a quiet life on Sado, a small, pastoral island in the Sea of Japan. He speaks in the thick Southern accent of his North Carolina childhood, and the stories he tells, 13 years after the end of his North Korean adventure, recall decades of solitude, deprivation and torture. "In North Korea, I lived a dog's life," he said in a rare interview, as he drove his boxy Subaru through Sado Island's rice paddies and sleepy villages. "Ain't nobody live good in North Korea. Nothing to eat. No running water. No electricity. In the wintertime you freeze -- in my bedroom, the walls were covered in ice." Jenkins works now as a greeter in Mano Park, a placid tourist attraction on the Japanese island, selling senbei, a type of rice cracker. Tourists see him and squeal with delight -- "Jenkins-san!" -- as he passively poses for photos. The television news carries a constant drumbeat of stories: Pyongyang's increasingly advanced missile tests, and nuclear threats; the death of Otto Warmbier, a 22 year-old American college student, after 17 months in North Korean custody; the assassination of ruler Kim Jong Un's half-brother in a Malaysian airport. They all carry echoes of the one incontrovertible lesson he learned as a guest of the North Korean government for 40 years. "I don't put nothing past North Korea," Jenkins says. "North Korea could do anything. North Korea don't care."



An Italian - American Combat Picnic

Shortly following the March 1969 “Stand Down” at the Americal (23rd Infantry) Division base camp Chu Lai, South Vietnam, an Infantry company returned to combat operations in Quang Ngai, province of Southern I Corps bordering Laos. Following three days of rest and recuperation most of the soldiers were ready to leave the safety of the cantonment area and resume getting back to the jungle. The news traveling through the unit told of the parent battalion’s engagement in a heavy fire fight near a Special Forces camp near Tien Phuoc. The Special Forces base was important strategically because the camp had a landing strip capable of accommodating resupply aircraft often used by the division to provide much needed provisions to surrounding units deployed in the area. The assumption enumerated by the soldiers centered around the company becoming involved in the conflict as soon as they set down in the effected area.

It wasn’t long after the helicopters reached the Tien Phuoc area and the soldiers unloaded their gear, the Commander was summoned to the Operation Center to receive an operation order. It contained information concerning the enemy, the terrain, and the disposition of friendly and enemy forces employed in the operation. The company was ordered to prepare for a combat assault starting at 0600 hours the following morning to occupy a blocking position near a heavily fortified hill overlooking the airstrip. The airstrip had been receiving heavy disruptive overhead fire from the hill area occupied by the North Vietnamese Regulars. Other units on the ground were involved in eliminating the enemy for several days. During the night soldiers devoted much of the time preparing for the combat assault. The men knew this was not going to be a cakewalk, so they readied themselves for an arduous morning of heavy fighting in dense jungle terrain with temperatures reaching the high 90s and 100 degrees and humidity to match. Six-UH-1 helicopters (Slicks) ferried the first flight to a prearranged landing zone (LZ) at 0600 hours. The first lift went off without incident and soldiers commenced to secure the landing zone for the remanding flights. As the second of three flights arrived at the LZ, all hell broke loose with heavy indirect fire, RPG and small arms fire from all around. Numerous casualties were sustained resulting in chaotic and dangerous circumstances. The third flight was delayed, as the unit returned fire and took cover a short distance away from the LZ. Indirect fire was brought into play with surprising accuracy and the short fire fight was beaten off. For three days following this encounter, the battalion effort to eliminate the enemy from the area of operations was completely successful. Following consolidation, the company packed up and headed forward to a prearranged Remain Over-Night (RON) position. As the unit executed a movement to contact, soldiers were required to pass through a sister company area. While the pass through was being executed the two unit commanders arranged for a brief evaluation of the operation and to coordinate future missions. While the discussions (POW WOW) was taking place one of the two commanders displayed a recently received “Care Package” from home. Home for this Officer just happened to be New York City’s “Little Italy”. He received a large piece of Provolone cheese and a huge piece of Salami. In a token of friendship the officer receiving the care package invited the visiting unit commander to share his good fortune. An immediate area security was established and both units took a short respite to enjoy a relax full moment from the war. Slices of cheese and salami were cut with the commander’s bayonet and for a moment the war stopped and a soldierly picnic ensued. Although no cold beverages were available for consumption save kool-aid flavored water, the picnic was carried off with a delightful sharing of a buddy’s care package. Both officers agreed the contents of the Care Package was the best tasting Italian banquet they had ever eaten. Following the short interlude each unit continued performing combat operations.

Although neither officer had spoken to one another for over 40 years, they finally met at the 2015 National Americal Division Veterans (ADVA) Reunion in Norfolk, VA. After receiving congratulations for having made the Army a career and embracing each other for being fortunate enough to have lived through the Vietnam war and its aftermath, the first war story uttered was the occasion of the combat picnic in 1969 during the battle of Tien Phuoc, Republic of South Vietnam.