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**1. VFW Testifies at Blue Water Navy Oversight Hearing:** On Wednesday, VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs regarding VA's preparation to process Blue Water Navy Agent Orange claims starting on Jan. 1, 2020. Subcommittee members discussed the importance of providing timely benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans and reducing the complexity of the disability claims process. At the hearing, Ryan Gallucci stated, "Secretary Wilkie must lift the stay immediately. Waiting until January not only harms veterans but creates an unnecessary backlog for VA at a time we can ill afford it." [Read the VFW's Testimony.](#) [Watch the hearing.](#)

**2. VFW Attends Meeting with Secretary of Defense:** On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended a meeting with Secretary of Defense Dr. Mark T. Esper and other veteran community stakeholders. Their discussion touched on key issues facing the military community such as suicide, toxic exposure, military housing, and other quality of life issues. "The VFW thanks the Secretary for his commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our service members and their families," said Executive Director B.J. Lawrence.

**3. House Markup Hearing Ends Abruptly:** This week, the House Committee on Veterans Affairs held a hearing to mark up and amend certain veteran bills that essentially ended after a dispute over procedures. House Republicans and Democrats on the committee disagreed over the addition of amendments to a significant women veterans piece of legislation. "It was disappointing to see what happened during today's hearing," said VFW Deputy Director, National Legislative Service Pat Murray. "We hope all members of the committee can put today's hearing in the past and get back to being one of the more productive and bipartisan committees in all of Congress." While the hearing this week did not end as planned, the VFW is

confident the House committee will continue to move essential legislation just as they have historically done before. [Watch the hearing.](#)

**4. Hackers Target Job-Hunting Service Members and Veterans:** Service members and veterans seeking employment need to be aware of a scam circulating the web. The website, “Hire Military Heroes,” prompts users to download an app that contains malicious malware that allows hackers to access a significant amount of personal information, according to cybersecurity researchers at Cisco Talos. The phony site shared a similar URL to the site “Hiring Our Heroes,” an employment site the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation launched. It is unknown at this time who may be the culprit behind the cyberattack. [Learn more.](#)

**5. American Troops Continue to Be Identified:** It was reported this week that at least 41 American troops have been identified among the remains returned from North Korea last year, according to officials at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), paving the way for them to be returned to their families nearly seven decades after the Korean War. North Korea turned over 55 cases of bones and artifacts to the United States in July 2018, weeks after its leader, Kim Jong Un, agreed to do so as a goodwill gesture during his first nuclear summit with President Donald Trump. In advance of the June 12, 2018, Singapore Summit, then-VFW Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence sent a letter to President Trump to urge him to include the return of American remains as a discussion point with Kim Jong Un. [Read more.](#)

**6. Gold Star Family Members Now Have Opportunity to be a Congressional Fellow:** This week, House Resolution 107 – *SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Congressional Gold Star Family Fellowship Program Act* was agreed to in the House. This resolution establishes the Congressional Gold Star Fellowship in which an eligible individual may serve a 12-month fellowship in the office of a member of the House. An eligible individual is defined as the child, spouse, or sibling of a person who dies while serving as a member of the Armed Forces, to include National Guard & Reserve, that has been ruled “in the line of duty” and a veteran who dies from a service-connected disability, per VA, within four years of their discharge from the Armed Forces.

**7. Veterans Day Discounts and Freebies:** As a display of gratitude and appreciation, community partners around the nation have joined together on Veterans Day to honor servicemen and women, veterans, and their families for their sacrifice and dedication to this nation. Take advantage of the numerous discounts and freebies, ranging from discounted and free meals to discounts at local retail stores, in your area on Veterans Day. [Learn more.](#)

**8. VFW Attends Reveal of WWP Annual Warrior Survey:** On Tuesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended the reveal of the 2019 Wounded Warrior Project Annual Warrior Survey. Surveys of this kind are important to understand where veterans are with regards to their mental and/or physical health, and their economic opportunities. [Read the Executive Summary.](#)

**9. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced four new identifications, and three burial updates for service members who have been missing and

unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Robert J. Hatch**, 21, of Woods Cross, Utah, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Hatch on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Hatch will be buried Dec. 14, 2019, in Bountiful, Utah. [Read about Hatch.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Jasper V. Marquez**, 21, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950, when enemy forces attacked his unit near the Kunu-ri, North Korea. Repatriated American prisoners of war reported that Marquez had died at Hofong Camp while a prisoner of war, in January 1951. Marquez will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Marquez.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. William C. Holmes**, 21, of Smyth County, Virginia, was killed during the Korean War. Holmes was a member of Heavy Tank Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. On Sept. 21, 1951, his unit participated in a patrol located near the Iron Triangle, North Korea. After a prolonged firefight, Holmes was killed in action. Following the battle, his remains were not initially recovered. Holmes will be buried Nov. 23, 2019, in Middleway, West Virginia. [Read about Holmes.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Everett G. Windle**, 20, of Kansas City, Missouri, was killed during World War II. On Dec. 7, 1941, Windle was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Windle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Windle.](#)

-- **Navy Coxswain Layton T. Banks**, 20, of Dallas, Texas, was killed during World War II. On Dec. 7, 1941, Banks was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Banks. Interment services are pending. [Read about Banks.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman First Class Bethel E. Walters**, 25, of Dallas, Texas, was killed during World War II. On Dec. 7, 1941, Banks was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing, and it came to rest on the shallow harbor floor. The attack resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Walters. Interment services are pending. [Read about Walters.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Jerome B. Morris**, 22, of Paragould, Arkansas, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Morris was killed on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Morris.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm>.

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to [vfwac@vfw.org](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).

To view this week's and previous editions, visit: <http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>.