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1. VFW Demands Answers on the Delayed Decision on Agent Orange Conditions: Military Times [reported](#) on Oct. 23, that White House officials, including Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, are responsible for the delayed decision on additional Agent Orange diseases. “In light of today’s news regarding the continued delay to add four presumptive diseases to the Agent Orange list, the VFW is extremely upset and dissatisfied with the backdoor political games that are being played in Washington as the lives of our veterans are at stake,” said VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz. “The health and welfare of our nation’s veterans should, and must, be our number one priority.” Read the [VFW press release](#).

2. VFW Testifies at Hearing on Pending Legislation: On Tuesday, the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing to discuss 10 pieces of pending legislation to enhance veteran benefits programs, strengthen protections, and improve access. VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Pat Murray encouraged the subcommittee to not allow VA to report a debt to the credit agencies if the debt is under dispute. Many of the draft bills introduced are supported by the VFW, such as greater protection for veterans who receive VA debt notices, increasing the number of locations from which a veteran can appear in disability compensations before the Board of Veterans’ Appeals, and conducting a study on VA benefits provided to members of the National Guard and Reserves. [Read VFW’s Testimony](#). [Watch the hearing](#).

3. VFW Delivers Vietnam War Artifacts to Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency: Today, the VFW returned six artifacts and personal effects to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency as part of its promise to help advance the noble POW/MIA missions. “It is vital that we return any known artifacts, documents, and personal items back to the Vietnamese government, who have continued to foster a good relationship with the United States as we diligently search for our missing servicemen. This display of diplomacy will only help in our efforts to reach our true goal and promise to our families affected by the Vietnam War – and that’s to achieve the fullest possible accounting of those Americans missing from the Vietnam War,” stated VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence. [Read more](#).

4. VFW and Gratitude Initiative to Collaborate to Support Military Families: On Wednesday, VFW announced that it will be teaming up with [Gratitude Initiative](#) to provide vital support for the children of service members and veterans. America's military families face unique educational challenges, as many relocate six to twelve times before graduating high school. "The VFW's 120-year mission to support military and veteran families aligns effortlessly with Gratitude Initiative's work to ensure the children of our heroes have the support and assistance they need to be successful, no matter where their parent's service takes them," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. [Read more.](#)

5. House Holds Hearing on Protecting Benefits for All Service Members: On Wednesday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing to discuss creating parity of benefits for National Guard and Reserve Components. The subcommittee focused on the issue of the DD Form 214, which is not issued to all National Guard and Reserve members. Not receiving a DD Form 214 can complicate their ability to access veteran benefits. The VFW is working closely with DOD and members of Congress to address the loopholes these service members face. [Watch the hearing.](#)

6. VA and DOD to Fund New Research on Traumatic Brain Injury: The Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of a new joint research project focused on mild traumatic brain injuries (TBI). The five-year study is budgeted for up to \$50 million with half of the funding coming from each department. The project will be led by Virginia Commonwealth University Professor Dr. David Cifu. Dr. Cifu is also a senior TBI specialist for VA and will work with the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va. [Learn more.](#)

7. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification, and six 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:

-- **Army Cpl. Lloyd B. Odom**, 19, of Odessa, Mo., was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Odom will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Odom.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Charles H. Grubb**, 21, of War Eagle, W. Va., was a member of Company M, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Grubb.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Willard R. Best**, 24, of Staunton, Ill., was a member of the 407th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 92d Bombardment Group (Heavy), 40th Combat Bombardment Wing, 1st Air Division, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 24, 1944, Best was the top turret gunner aboard a B-17G Flying Fortress aircraft, carrying nine crewmembers, which was struck by German anti-aircraft fire and crashed during a bombing raid over Merseburg, Germany. Best's remains will be buried in his hometown in the spring of 2020. [Read about Best.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. John F. McTigue**, 22, of Astoria, N.Y., was a member of the 407th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy,) 92d Bombardment Group (Heavy,) 40th Combat Bombardment Wing, 1st Air Division, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 24, 1944, McTigue co-piloted a B-17G Flying Fortress aircraft, carrying nine crewmembers, which was struck by German anti-aircraft fire and crashed during a bombing raid over Merseburg, Germany. McTigue's remains will be buried Nov. 18, 2019 in Woodside, NY. [Read about McTigue.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve 2nd Lt. Ernest A. Matthews, Jr.**, 34, of Dallas, Texas, was assigned to Headquarters Company, Headquarters Battalion, Division Special Troops, 2nd Marine Division. On Nov. 20, 1943, Matthews participated in a landing against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. He was killed that day in an attempt to secure the island. Matthews remains will be buried Nov. 5, 2019, in San Antonio, Texas. [Read about Matthews.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Connie Cagle**, 23, of Sweetwater, Tenn., was a member of Company K, 126th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division, when his unit was engaged with enemy forces along the Soputa-Sanananda Track, near Buna, in the Australian Territory of Papua (present-day Papua New Guinea.) Cagle was killed in action on Nov. 22, 1942. Cagle will be buried in Grand Rapids, Mich. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Cagle.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Sgt. R.L. Tyler**, 22, of Denton County, Texas, was a member of Headquarters Squadron, 19th Bombardment Group, when taken prisoner after the fall of Bataan in the Philippines on April 9, 1942. He reportedly died July 18-19, 1942. Tyler will be buried at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Tyler.](#)

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.

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