



# ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



July 25, 2022



## First Iraq War Veteran Elected to Lead VFW:

Timothy M. Borland was elected as the Commander-in-Chief at the VFW's 123rd national convention held this year in Kansas City, Missouri. Borland earned his eligibility serving in Korea and Iraq. He joined the organization in 2000 and is a Gold Legacy Life member of Post 9972 in Sierra, Arizona. "My slogan this year is 'Every Veteran Counts,'" said Borland. "There's a new wave of veterans that have returned home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and they're ready, willing and waiting to join our ranks. One of those veterans is standing right here behind this podium. I am an Iraq War veteran and very proud to be the first as your Commander-in-Chief." Also elected were Duane Sarmiento of New Jersey as VFW Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and Alfred J. "Al" Lipphardt of Georgia as VFW Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. [Read more.](#)



## Include Major Richard Star Act in FY23 NDAA:

Congress must include the *Major Richard Star Act* as an amendment in the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023*. The VFW firmly believes that DOD retired pay and VA service-connected disability compensation are fundamentally different benefits, earned for different reasons. Purple Heart recipients deserve to receive all the benefits they earned. Now is the time to move this legislation forward. Contact your members of Congress and demand they include the *Major Richard Star Act* as an amendment in the FY23 NDAA. [TAKE ACTION!](#)



**New 988 Veterans Crisis Hotline:** VA announced veterans now have the option to **Dial 988 then Press 1** to connect with caring, qualified responders for 24/7 crisis assistance. “During a crisis, every second counts,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “This new, shorter number makes it easier for veterans and those who care about them to reach lifesaving support without having to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care.” While [Dial 988 then Press 1](#) is a new option for contacting the Veterans Crisis Line, the original number, 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, remains available, and individuals can make contact via chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#) or by texting 838255.



### **Transition Assistance Resources After Service:**

Many individuals need help navigating their benefits when they leave the military, either immediately or years later. Veterans, family members, and caregivers can access online DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) materials and courses at any time following separation from service. With topics including managing transition, financial planning, and VA benefits for spouses and children, veterans can access the broad TAP curriculum as their needs and goals change over time. [Read more.](#)



**MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two burial updates and ten new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

--**Marine Corps Reserve Cpl. William R. Ragsdale, 23**, of Nashville, Tennessee, was assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division on June 28, 1944. His unit was part of the invasion force when American forces participated in the battle for Saipan, which was part of a larger operation to secure the Mariana islands. Ragsdale was initially reported as wounded in action, but his status was later changed to deceased. He will be buried on Aug. 6, 2022, in his hometown. [Read about Ragsdale.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Alevin A. Hathaway, 20**, of Hinesburg, Vermont, was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 6, 1944, when

his unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Hürtgen, Germany. His body was not recovered, and he was declared killed in action Nov. 7, 1945. Following further investigation, Hathaway was declared non-recoverable in December 1950. He will be buried in his hometown on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Hathaway.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Moses F. Tate, 23**, was assigned to 415th Bombardment Squadron, 98th Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Tate was a gunner crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Tate.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Pharis E. Weekley, 21**, was assigned to 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Weekley was a navigator crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Weekley.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Felix M. Yanez, 19**, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was killed in action on July 16, 1950, while fighting the North Korean People's Army along the Kum River, north of Taejon, South Korea. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Yanez.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Melvin J. Little Bear, 21**, was assigned to Able Battery, 15th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. On Feb. 13, 1951, he was reported missing in action after his unit was attacked by the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near Changbong-ni, South Korea. He had been captured and was a prisoner of war at POW Camp No. 1. Subsequent reports and information from the Chinese and North Korean forces indicated he died in captivity on or about July 21, 1951. Interment services are pending. [Read about Little Bear.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. John L. Ferguson, 20**, was assigned to 28th Material Squadron, U.S. Army Air Forces, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula in 1942. Ferguson was among those captured and held at the Cabanatuan POW Camp, where he reportedly died

on Dec. 10, 1942, and was buried. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ferguson.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. John W. Gordon, 32**, was assigned to Company G, 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division. On Jan. 17, 1945, Gordon was killed while his unit was engaged with German forces during the Battle of Reipertswiller in France. His body could not be recovered due to the ongoing battle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gordon.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Sgt. Zelwood A. Gravlin, 21**, was assigned to 343rd Bombardment Squadron, 98th Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Gravlin was the armorer-gunner crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gravlin.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Donald Hofman, 19**, was assigned to Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division. Elements of his unit were supporting five companies attempting to secure terrain near Reipertswiller, France, when they were surrounded by German forces. On Jan. 20, 1945, Hofman was killed as the surrounded companies attempted a break-out through German lines. His body could not be recovered due to the ongoing battle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hofman.](#)

-- **Navy Shipfitter 2nd Class Claude R. Garcia, 25**, was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Garcia. Interment services are pending. [Read about Garcia.](#)

-- **Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Keith W. Tipsword, 27**, was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Tipsword. Interment services are pending. [Read about Tipsword.](#)

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