



ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



July 31, 2023



Desert Storm Veteran Elected to Lead VFW:

Duane Sarmiento was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at the 124th VFW National Convention held this year in Phoenix. He earned his VFW eligibility serving in Operations Desert Shield/Storm. He joined the VFW in 1990 and is a Gold Legacy Life member of Post 5579 in Gibbstown, New Jersey. Sarmiento said, “The VFW has been a beacon of hope and support for veterans, and as your Commander-in-Chief, I am committed to continuing the legacy and advancing the mission of the VFW’s three key pillars: advocacy, assistance, and camaraderie.”



VA Secretary Attends VFW National Convention:

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough addressed the attendees at our national convention. He explained that there are various individuals and entities trying to convince veterans that they need to pay fees to help them apply for their VA benefits. McDonough said, “That’s just not true. Do not pay anyone to file your initial VA claim with VA. Working with VA or with a VSO, like the incredible team here at the VFW, it’s free, and it’s easy to apply.” [Learn more and find an accredited representative.](#)



PACT Act Implementation Hearing: The Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held a hearing on VA’s implementation of the PACT Act for the purpose of assessing progress made during the last 12 months since its enactment. Committee members and witnesses from VA covered issues related to VA’s processing of PACT Act claims, automated decision technology, and communications to veterans about their benefits. [Watch the hearing.](#)



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced five burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

--**Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Noel E. Shoup, 25**, of Dublin, Texas, was assigned to the 359th Bombardment Squadron, 303rd Bombardment Group. He went missing in action on Feb. 28, 1944. The War Department issued a finding of death on July 14, 1945. He will be buried in his hometown on Sept. 11, 2023. [Read about Shoup.](#)

--**Army Sgt. 1st Class James L. Wilkinson, 19**, of Bowden, Georgia, was a member of G Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Sept. 8, 1950. The Army issued a presumptive finding of death on Dec. 31, 1953. He will be buried on Sept. 16, 2023, in Barrow County, Georgia. [Read about Wilkinson.](#)

--**Army Sergeant John W. Radanovich, 23**, of Mount Olive, Illinois, was assigned to Company G, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1944. The Army issued a presumptive finding of death in December 1945. He will be buried in his hometown on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Radanovich.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Sgt. Donal C. Aiken, 22**, of Everett, Washington, was assigned to the 678th Bombardment Squadron, 444th Bombardment Group, 58th Bombardment Wing, Twentieth Bomber Command. He went missing in action on June 26, 1944, and was declared non-recoverable on Jan. 2, 1948. His status was changed to recoverable in 2018. He will be buried in Madison, Tennessee, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Aiken.](#)

--**Army Cpl. Gordon D. McCarthy, 20**, of Palmer, Michigan, was a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about McCarthy.](#)

[Click here to view this week's edition.](#)

[Click here for past editions of the VFW Action Corps Weekly.](#)

[Click here to sign up new veterans' advocates.](#)

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.