



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

WASHINGTON WEEKLY

May 4, 2012

Defense Bill Update

The House Armed Services Committee is set to hold a full-committee markup next week on the fiscal year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. The bill being considered would set the base defense budget at about \$554 billion, about \$4 billion above the president's request and \$8 billion above the caps set by the Budget Control Act. It is expected that the bill will eliminate the controversial TRICARE fee hikes proposed by the administration, as well as slow the pace of the planned 100,000 active duty troop reduction that will primarily impact the Army and Marine Corps. The bill would also allocate money for an environmental impact study of potential locations along the East Coast for weapons capable of shooting down ballistic missiles. VFW Resolution 405 calls a ballistic missile defense system a national security priority.

Camp Lejeune Exposure

The House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees joined forces to request that the Administration provide immediate VA healthcare to Camp Lejeune veterans and their families who were exposed to contaminated water over a 30-year period. After receiving [correspondence](#) from VA Secretary Eric Shinseki that it was "premature" to provide healthcare to these veterans, House Chairman Jeff Miller (R-Fla.), Ranking Member Bob Filner (D-Calif.), Senate Chairman Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-N.C.) sent a [letter](#) to President Obama to plead their case. The VFW will continue to monitor developments. If you or someone you know was stationed at Camp Lejeune during the time of exposure (1957-1987), please [contact](#) the VFW. [Learn more](#) about the exposure of Camp Lejeune veterans.

Seeking Desert Shield/Storm Veterans

The VA's War Related Injury and Study Center in East Orange, N.J., is asking all Desert Shield/Storm veterans to complete an anonymous online survey to help the VA better understand the problems and needs of first Gulf War veterans. The survey asks for demographic information, deployment experience, physical and mental health problems, and treatments or wellness practices that veterans may or may not be currently using. [Complete the survey.](#) [Learn more](#) about the VA's War Related Injury and Study Centers.

Promote Veteran Retraining Assistance Program

Over the next couple of months, the VFW will continue to raise awareness of a new VA employment training assistance program called the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), authorized by last year's VOW to Hire Heroes Act. VRAP offers 12 months of training assistance to veterans age 35 to 60. Eligible participants will receive up to 12 months of training assistance at the full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill–Active Duty program (currently \$1,473 per month). The Department of Labor will also offer employment assistance to every veteran who participates or applies to the VRAP program. [Learn more](#) about VRAP. Learn more about each of the [new programs](#) authorized under VOW.

Nine Thousand Marines to Move

U.S. and Japanese officials agreed to move 9,000 U.S. Marines off Okinawa to other locations in the Pacific. Approximately 5,000 Marines will head to Guam, with the rest to Hawaii, Australia and possibly California. Approximately 10,000 Marines will remain on Okinawa when the relocation is complete. [Read more](#).

Bataan, Corregidor Survivors

The VFW Washington Office joined five Bataan and Corregidor survivors last week to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the infamous Bataan Death March. The veterans included past national commanders of the now-disbanded American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, who traveled to Japan in 2010 and 2011 to receive an official apology from the Japanese government for their maltreatment, and to visit their former POW camps. The five veterans, who represent only about 200 remaining Bataan and Corregidor survivors, are:

- [Dr. Lester Tenney](#), 92, from San Diego, formerly assigned to Company B, 192nd Tank Battalion, Illinois Army National Guard;
- [Mr. Joseph Alexander](#), 85, San Antonio, 440th Ordnance Aviation Bombardment Squadron, Army Air Corps;
- [Mr. Donald Versaw](#), 91, Lakewood, Calif., E Company, 2nd Battalion 4th Marines (China Marines);
- [Mr. Ben Steele](#), 94, Billings, Mont., 7th Material Squadron, 19th Bomb Group, Army Air Corps;
- [Mr. Roland Towery](#), 89, Austin, Texas, Battery C, 60th Army Coast Artillery.

WWII MIA Identified

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel announced the identification of remains belonging to Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Charles R. Moritz, 21, of Effingham, Ill. On June 7, 1944, Moritz, of the 555th Fighter Squadron, was piloting a P-51C Mustang when it collided with another U.S. aircraft while on a training flight over Lincolnshire, England. A witness reported the crash, but officials were not able to recover his remains at the time. [Read more](#).

Was this *Washington Weekly* forwarded to you by a friend? [Sign up](#) to get your own free issue each week.

—