



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



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VFW to Meet with President in Phoenix

President Obama is visiting the Phoenix VA Medical Center today, and VFW National Inspector General Ray Thomas is expected to join him in a roundtable discussion on veterans' health care issues. In a newspaper interview, Thomas said most of the veterans he's talked with seem pleased that patient wait times have improved substantially, but that there is still an issue with specialists, especially cancer specialists. Last year, the VFW championed the passage of the *Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act* to help counter the nationwide crisis in care and confidence that Phoenix ignited—but now in hindsight could have been started at a different facility anywhere. The VA still has an uphill climb to fix what's broken, to hold employees accountable, and to restore the faith of veterans in their VA.

Choice Card Survey

The VFW has commissioned a second survey to poll members on their experiences accessing the Veterans Choice Program. Thank you to those who have taken the second survey. Your participation has allowed the VFW to continue to keep its finger on the pulse of this important program and evaluate progress as the Veterans Choice Program enters its fifth month. If you took our first survey, but have not taken the second survey, which went live on February 6, 2015, please help us track any changes in your experiences. If you are taking this survey for the first time, your input is critical to holding VA accountable for delivering timely non-VA care options to veterans. [Take the survey.](#) To learn more about the Veterans Choice Program or to share your stories with us, [click here.](#)

VFW Meets With VA Research and Development Leadership

On Wednesday, the VFW hosted the VA's Research and Development team for a discussion on the status of their research programs. VA has many promising research projects, including women's health, which will increase VA's knowledge on best ways to deliver care for women; health disparities and access needs in minority populations; and the on-going Million Veteran Program (MVP), a genetic data collection and research program that lead to a better understanding of the relationship between genetics and diseases and military-related illnesses. To learn more about VA Research and Development or how to participate in the MVP program, [click here.](#)

DoD Authorizes GWOT-EM For Freedom's Sentinel

Operation Freedom's Sentinel is now a qualifying operation for award of the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. The Defense Department said the award is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2015. Service members deployed to Afghanistan for Operation Freedom's Sentinel continue to be awarded the Afghanistan Campaign Medal. Troops deployed abroad in support of Freedom's Sentinel, but stationed outside of the campaign medal's area of eligibility, are now eligible for award of the GWOT Expeditionary Medal. Also now authorized are service stars on medals or ribbons to reflect multiple deployments. The GWOT-EM, as well as the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, are VFW membership qualifiers. [Read more](#) about the Pentagon's policy change.

Seven Korean War Soldiers Identified

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identification of remains belonging to seven Army soldiers who had been lost and unaccounted-for since the Korean War. Returned home for burial with full military honors are:

- **Sgt. 1st Class Donald R. Strum**, Company C, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, who was lost in North Korea on Nov. 4, 1950.
- **Cpl. Robert Higgins**, 21, of Bucks County, Penn. He was assigned to Battery C, 15th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, when lost in battle in South Korea on Feb. 13, 1951.
- **Sgt. Floyd J.R. Jackson**, 20, of Warrensburg, Mo., died while a POW in North Korea on Feb. 13, 1951. He was assigned to Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, which made up part of the 31st Regimental Combat Team.
- **Pfc. John R. Bowers**, of Greenville, S.C. He was assigned to Company L, 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, when lost in South Korea on Feb. 14, 1951.
- **Sgt. Arnold V. Andring**, 25, of Gary, Minn., died while a POW in North Korea after being captured on Feb 14, 1951. He was assigned to Company L, 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 8th Army.
- **Pfc. Lotchie J.R. Jones**, 18, of Jasper, Tenn., died while a POW in North Korea on Feb. 28, 1951. He was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.
- **Cpl. Lindsey C. Lockett**, 25, of Henrico, Va., died while a POW in North Korea on May 31, 1951. He was assigned to Medical Detachment, Headquarters Battery, 503rd Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division.

As always, we want to share your advocacy stories on the VFW Capitol Hill blog. To share your stories, [fill out our online form](#) or simply email photos and stories directly to vfwac@vfw.org.

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