VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA
NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION'S WEEKLY REPORT

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September 8 – 14, 2024

Meetings

- The National Adjutant held an "All Hands" meeting where he focused on his vision for American Legion staff.

- NS Staff briefed the National Commander on the National Security Division Portfolio, including the Division's work on consolidating immigration-related resolutions, the BASE Program, efforts to assist with the recruiting crisis, POW/MIA outreach and advocacy, and global national security issues.

- NS Staff attended a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) event titled *"The Cyber Safety Review Board: Reflecting on the Past and Charting the Future"* to understand better how the government is mitigating risks to our digital borders.

- NS Staff watched a hearing from the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics (House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology) titled *"Risks and Rewards: Encouraging Commercial Space Innovation While Maintaining Public Safety"* on the role of the private sector in space technology and security. This hearing can be viewed here.

- NS Staff listened to a discussion hosted by CSIS titled *"Navigating the National Security Inflection Point: A Conversation with the Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement."* Assistant Secretary Matthew Axelrod informed the audience about what measures were being taken to ensure that sensitive technology did not fall into the hands of authoritarian regimes.

- NS Staff listened to a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing titled *"Great Power Competition in Africa"* to understand Africa's role in geopolitics better. The hearing can be viewed here.

- NS Staff attended the 2024 President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Annual Meeting. Speakers discussed how they help promote healthy eating and physical activity in the past year.

- NS Staff attended a 9/11 Commemorative Memorial Service hosted by TAL Post 180 and the city of Vienna, Virginia where NatSec Commission Chairman Matt Shuman was keynote speaker.

- NS Staff attended a meeting with the CEO of Sync.MD to discuss signing onto a Letter of Support for House NDAA (H.R. 1080) Section 567.

- NS Staff escorted the National Commander and Sons of the American Legion National Commander to the "First Illumination" Ceremony, unveiling the "A Soldier's Journey" statue at the National World War I Memorial in Washington, DC.

- NS Staff participated in a roundtable discussion hosted by the Department of Defense. The focus was on Secretary Austin's fourth memorandum in his series, which will include seven additional initiatives to further his commitment to our force, their families, and everyone in the Department.

Policy

- NS Staff continued updating a position on immigration reform, which focused on mitigating illegal and irregular immigration patterns.

- NS Staff continued streamlining a position to oppose the deportation of veterans and their immediate family members, given they have no felony on their record.

- NS Staff continued its comprehensive research on the Department of Defense's (DoD) ongoing recruiting crisis. This included analyzing current enlistment trends, identifying factors contributing to the decline in recruitment numbers, and evaluating the effectiveness of existing outreach programs.

- NS Staff completed a bill review on a House Resolution to commemorate National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

- NS Staff completed a Letter of Support to the Senate NDAA staff to keep the House NDAA Section 567 provision that directs DoD to solicit transfer and storage capabilities, then pilot a limited program for Transition Assistance Program attendees whereby they can opt-in to use complaint records transfer application at no cost.

- NS Staff signed on to support two House NDAA Sections 627 and 705 that would eliminate service-connected injury of illness requirement for IVF and ART coverage and require TRICARE Prime or TRICARE select coverage for IVF and ART without regard to sex, sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation, diagnosis or marital status.

- NS Staff reviewed the Senate and House FY25 NDAAs to begin drafting a letter to HASC and SASC staff outlining the provisions The American Legion requests to be included in the bill's final markup before the conference.

- NS Staff drafted and reviewed the annual Congressional Report.

Programs

- NS Staff reviewed the current Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for TACOM to ensure it aligns with their newly updated trifold.

The American Legion Military Surplus Equipment

- Items requested: Ammo – 4960; Rifles – 25; Clips – 15; Static Displays - 0
- Requests submitted by: Departments – 4; Posts - 4

POW/MIA

Reminder: Friday, September 20th is National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), partnered with the American Battle Monuments Commission, will host a rosette Ceremony to honor more than 950 veterans commemorated at the Honolulu Memorial at the National Memorial Ceremony of the Pacific, also known as the "Punchbowl." You can tune in live at: www.dpaa.mil/Livestreams

Sept. 10, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Beaty, C.)
- Airman Accounted for from WWII (Tarbert, J.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Ramos, I.)
- Soldier Accounted for from Korean War (Vorel, C.)

Sept. 9, 2024

- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (MacDonald, J.)
- Airman Accounted for From World War II (Huff, M.)
- Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Reiser, C.)
- Brazil Maru Soldier Accounted for from WWII (Gaebler, F.)

DPAA has identified/repatriated 145 service members this year. *

Be The One (BTO)

According to the Department of Defense, in 2023, 280 active-duty Army soldiers, reservists, and National Guard members died by suicide. *Stop Soldier Suicide* reports that veterans have a 72% higher suicide rate compared to individuals without military service experience. Recent research has improved their understanding of the relationship between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and suicide. Studies from 2020 indicate that suicide rates are more than twice as high in individuals who have suffered a TBI, with risk increasing alongside the severity of the injury.

This year, the Department of Defense released statistics indicating that suicide rates among Infantry and Armor servicemembers are among the highest within the U.S. military. Last month,

the Army began implementing cognitive testing centers to establish baseline assessments for all incoming trainees, aiming to prevent serious traumatic brain injuries.

Focus Topic:

Unlock Your Health with Patient Advocates and Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinators

Did you know military hospitals and clinics have support staff to help you navigate healthcare? These include patient advocates and Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinators. You can find them at any military hospital or clinic. Read below to learn about patient advocates and BCACs. You will learn how they differ and how to contact them when needed.

What is the role of the patient advocate?

You may have already heard about patient advocates. Every military hospital or clinic has a patient advocate. They are the go-to resource when you have concerns or questions about healthcare services you received at a military hospital or clinic. Or perhaps you want to let someone know about a great experience you had at a military hospital or clinic.

Patient advocates are trained experts on the Patient Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. They're also there for you when you or a family member has a concern you'd like addressed, investigated, and resolved.

If you have a question or concern, contact the patient advocate. Their responsibilities include:

- Listening to patient concerns
- Responding timely to complaints
- Explaining military hospital or clinic policies, procedures, and operations
- Mediating concerns between the patient and medical team

What is the role of the Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator?

BCACs can explain your TRICARE plan and how your benefit works. BCACs can address TRICARE-related questions, including:

- Eligibility
- Enrollment
- Referrals and pre-authorizations
- Claims processing delays
- Covered services
- The Military Health System Nurse Advice Line
- Getting healthcare services outside the military hospital or clinic

How do you find a patient advocate or BCAC?

Each military hospital or clinic has the patient advocates and BCAC's contact information. You can ask the hospital staff for their office location or look up their information online on the Find a Military Hospital or Clinic page or in the Customer Service Community Directory.

Want to email your patient advocate? They're just a few clicks away. Look on the homepage of your military hospital or clinic website for the blue tile that says, "Connect with a Patient Advocate." Clicking on this tile will let you email your patient advocate directly.

It is important to know what resources are available to help you and your family make the best healthcare decisions. If you have questions or concerns about your care, unlock your health by seeking help from a patient advocate or BCAC.