

Washington Weekly
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1. WikiLeaks Update: The Pentagon demanded this week that WikiLeaks “do the right thing” and remove tens of thousands of classified documents from its website, and return the 15,000 others it has not yet made public. Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said the website’s disclosure of some 77,000 documents gave the Taliban and others insight into American military tactics and techniques, and revealed the names of Afghan informants. How WikiLeaks — an international online organization shrouded in secrecy — obtained the classified documents is under investigation by the Departments of Defense and Justice. One person of interest is Army intelligence analyst Pfc. Bradley Manning, currently in the brig at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va. He has been charged with downloading large amounts of classified information from a computer at a base in Iraq and sending it to WikiLeaks.

2. Stop-Loss to End March 2011: The Pentagon expects the involuntary military service extension program called "Stop-Loss" to be eliminated by March 2011. More than 15,000 personnel, mostly Army, were impacted at the peak of the controversial program in 2005. Today, the monthly number has shrunk to about 4,000. Defense Secretary Robert Gates declared last year that the practice had to end, saying it was "breaking faith" with those who volunteered to serve. Right now the Pentagon is trying to reach about 100,000 former servicemembers who were stop-lossed between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009. They are due \$500 for every month they were kept beyond their initial separation date, but they must apply before the reimbursement program ends Oct. 21. The VFW is asking its members, Posts and friends to spread the word. The average benefit paid exceeds \$3,500. For more information and to apply, go to www.defense.gov/stoploss.

3. VA Removes Online Signature Requirements: The VA has removed the signature requirement for veterans who electronically submit an online 10-10EZ “Application for Health Benefits.” The initiative will reduce the time it takes to evaluate online applications "by days, if not weeks," said VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. Previously, veterans filling out online applications were required to print a copy, sign it, then mail it.

For additional information, go to www.va.gov/healtheligibility or call VA's toll free number at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). The online form is available at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/>.

5. Senate VA Committee Action: The Senate VA Committee cleared several VFW-supported bills, to include:

- S. 3234, **Veteran Employment Assistance Act of 2010**, to improve employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans, especially those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.
- S. 3447, **Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010**, to improve educational assistance for those who served in the Armed Forces after Sept. 11, 2001.
- S. 3517, **Claims Processing Improvement Act of 2010**, to improve the processing of claims for disability compensation filed with the VA.
- S. 3325, **Veterans Telehealth and other Care Improvements Act of 2010**, to improve the quality of health care provided by the VA, would increase access to health care and benefits, and authorize major VA medical facility construction projects.
- S. 3107, **Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2010**, would on Dec. 1 increase the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities, as well as increase DIC compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans.
- S. 3609 to extend the temporary authority for the performance of medical disability examinations by contract physicians for the VA.

For more bill details or to watch a recorded webcast of the mark-up, visit the Senate VA Committee website at <http://veterans.senate.gov/>.

5. August Recess: August is a great time to visit your legislators in their home districts and state offices. Urge them to finish work on the veterans' employment bill, benefits package, and to support legislation to update the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Let them know that the VFW expects them to pass legislation that offers solutions to the VA claims backlog, and to provide critical funding for mental health research, women veterans, veterans who reside in rural areas, and to our homeless veterans. Urge your U.S. senators and representatives to do the right thing for our servicemembers, veterans and all their families. For a list of VFW legislative priority goals, go to <http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=caphill.level&did=3694>.

6. WWII Airman Identified: The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced the identification of the remains of Army Air Force Sgt. John P. Bonnassiolle of Oakland, CA. On April 29, 1944, he was aboard a B-24J Liberator with nine other crewmen who failed to return from bombing mission over Berlin. German documents captured after the war established the aircraft had crashed near the town of East Meitze, north of Hannover. The full press release can be read at http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/.

7. Korean War Soldier Identified: DPMO also announced the identification of the remains of Army Cpl. Harry J. Reeve of Philadelphia. In early November 1950, Reeve was assigned to the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, occupying a defensive position near the town of Unsan in the bend of the Kuryong River known as the "Camel's

Head.” Enemy attacks collapsed their perimeter and forced a fighting withdrawal. Almost 400 men of the 8th Cavalry Regiment were reported as MIA or KIA from the battle at Unsan. The full press release can be read at http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/.