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1. VA Releases Comprehensive Veteran Suicide Findings: On Wednesday, a few weeks after releasing initial findings from the most comprehensive study of veteran suicide, VA released 46 more pages of data from their research. The study examined more than 55 million veterans' records from 1979 to 2014. Last month's initial release showed approximately 20 veterans commit suicide each day. On average, 14 of those 20 were not VA users. The new release investigates the breadth and depth of information pertaining to characteristics of suicide in the veteran population. Having this information will allow VA and DOD to move forward with a better understanding of specifically how to intervene and prevent veteran suicide. In the year 2014, suicide was the 10th leading cause of death for the general population, and current Centers for Disease Control data shows that number has been increasing. To view the study findings, please visit:

<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicidedatareport.pdf>.

2. Joint Commission's VHA Special Focused Survey Project: For the past two years, the Joint Commission—an independent not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies nearly 21,000 health care organizations throughout the country—has reviewed 189 VA medical facilities to assess areas identified in whistleblower complaints, including timeliness of care, the environment of care, leadership, culture, patient flow, and coordination of care. While the report found VA facilities have improved access to patient appointments, it identified 225 requirements for improvements. VA has provided evidence that corrective actions have been implemented for all 225 requirements. The report also includes 10 recommendations on how to improve the VA health care system. To read the report and its recommendations,

visit: http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/VFW_in_DC/JointCommission-VHASummaryReport-FocusedSurveysOct2014-Sep2015.pdf.

3. New TRICARE Contracts: DOD recently announced the winners of the next five-year TRICARE contract, which will begin in late 2017. In an effort to provide more

seamless support to service members, retirees and their families, DOD has consolidated the current North and South Regions into one East Region, thus reducing the number of contractors from three to two. Starting next year and after a 9-month transition period, Health Net Federal Services will administer the West Region and Humana Government Business will administer the East Region. The Government Accountability Office has notified the Defense Health Agency that several vendors have filed formal protests against the TRICARE 2017 contract. Protests of previous award decisions led to awardee changes. For information on how this change will impact your TRICARE coverage, visit: <http://www.tricare.mil/changes>.

4. Veterans' Preference Now Extends to Both Parents: New Office of Personnel Management guidance now extends veterans' preference to both parents of deceased or permanently disabled veterans. Previous law only extended it to mothers of veterans. A July 14 memo from Acting OPM Director Beth Cobert said the agency was currently updating the "Delegated Examining Operations Handbook; the Vet Guide; chapter 211 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations; the SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veterans' Preference; and relevant website pages" to accommodate the new changes.

5. New Federal Leave Benefit for Disabled Vets: OPM is announcing today a new transition benefit for disabled veterans hired by the federal government after Nov. 5, 2016. The policy will provide new employees up to 104 hours of leave for medical treatment within their first year of employment on qualified service-connected disability ratings of 30 percent or more. The new leave policy is being implemented under the *Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015*. Acting OPM Director Beth Cobert said, "We want these veterans to have sufficient leave during their first year of federal service in order to take care of any medical issues related to their service-connected disability." Learn more at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2016-18516.pdf>.

6. Purple Heart Phone Scam: The Military Order of the Purple Heart is warning about a telephone scam being conducted in its name. Unknown individuals have been cold-calling people across the United States, often from 315-516-2512, and requesting donations for the upcoming presidential election. The callers say they're doing so on behalf of MOPH and mention the name of the group's national commander, Robert Puskar. "These calls are a hoax," read a MOPH statement, which asks people to contact local authorities if they receive such calls.

7. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency recently announced the identification of remains of 11 Americans who had been missing in action since World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Air Forces Flight Officer Judson B. Baskett**, 26, of Harris County, Texas, is scheduled to be interred Aug. 12 in Houston. As previously announced, he went missing on Nov. 28, 1946, while piloting a C-47B Dakota aircraft with two other crewmen over Malaysia. He was assigned to the 1305th Army Air Base Unit. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/879947/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-baskett/>.

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Robert L. McIntosh**, 21, is scheduled to be interred Aug. 13 in his hometown of Tipton, Ind. On May 12, 1944, McIntosh was piloting a single-seat P-38 aircraft on a strafing mission against an enemy airfield in Piacenza, Italy. As visibility worsened, his formation was ordered to climb above the overcast. McIntosh's aircraft was observed diving through the clouds and was not seen again. He was assigned to the 27th Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/881579/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-mcintosh/>.

-- **Army Cpl. Ronald M. Sparks**, of Cambridge, Mass., is scheduled to be interred Aug. 19 in Everett, Mass. On Feb. 12, 1951, Sparks was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, and was declared missing in action when his unit was clearing a roadblock held by enemy forces in the vicinity of Hoengsong, South Korea. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/885472/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-sparks/>.

-- **Marine Pvt. Dale R. Geddes**, 21, is scheduled to be interred Aug. 22 in his hometown of Grand Island, Neb. In November 1943, Geddes was assigned to Company H, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Geddes died sometime on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/885554/marine-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-geddes/>.

-- **Marine Pfc. George H. Traver** is scheduled to be interred Aug. 28 in Chatham, N.Y. In November 1943, Traver was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Traver died sometime on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/879998/marine-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-traver/>.

-- **Army Cpl. Curtis J. Wells**, 19, of Huron, Mich., is scheduled to be interred Sept. 10 in Harbor Beach, Mich. In late November 1950, Wells was assigned to Company C, 65th Engineer Combat Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, when his company joined with Task Force Wilson to fight the Chinese in the vicinity of Unsan, North Korea.

Wells was reported missing in action following the engagement. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/901112/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-wells/>.

-- **Army Master Sgt. Charles J. Brown** is scheduled to be interred Sept. 26 in Sarasota, Fla. In early November 1950, Brown was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, when Chinese forces attacked the regiment and forced the unit to withdraw to the village of Ipsok, North Korea. The survivors attempted to set up a defensive perimeter, but many soldiers became surrounded and attempted to escape and evade the enemy. The majority were captured and marched to POW camps. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/901163/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-brown/>.

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Lawrence J. Smith** is scheduled to be interred Sept. 30 in Crowley, La. On Feb. 11, 1951, Smith was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, supporting South Korea's attack on Chinese forces in an area known as the central corridor. The Chinese launched a massive counterattack, forcing the Americans to fight at Changbong-ni. Smith would be reported as missing the next day. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/901188/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-smith/>.

-- **Army Cpl. Frederick G. Collins**, 23, was a member of the 263rd Quartermaster Company, Quartermaster Corps, stationed at Nichols Field in Manila, Philippines, when the Japanese invaded on Dec. 8, 1941. Following the April 9, 1942 surrender, Collins and thousands of others began the torturous 65-mile "Bataan Death March" northward. On Nov. 19, 1942, 14 Americans, including Collins, were reported to have died and were buried by their fellow prisoners in a common grave. Interment ceremonies have yet to be announced. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/840711/soldier-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-collins/>.

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Marvin B. Rothman** was piloting a single-seat P-47D Thunderbolt on a bomber escort mission over New Guinea, when he was attacked by enemy fighter aircraft. He would be declared missing on April 11, 1944. He was a member of the 311th Fighter Squadron, 58th Fighter Group. Interment ceremonies have yet to be announced. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/878681/airman-missing-from-world-war-ii-accounted-for-rothman/>.

-- **Army Cpl. Larry M. Dunn** was a member of Company B, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, when his unit was fighting through a heavily defended roadblock near Sonchu, North Korea. He would be declared missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950. Interment ceremonies have yet to be announced. Read more at: <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/878696/soldier-missing-from-korean-war-accounted-for-dunn/>.