



# Disabled American Veterans Department of Florida Newsletter



By Al Linden, Executive Director

November 30, 2015

As of November 30, 2015 our membership was 60,445. The goal for life membership for this year 1,225 are needed.

## STATE COMMANDER RICKMAN MESSAGE

The Mid-Winter Conference is quickly approaching and I hope to see many new faces as well as our regular members in attendance. Remember that our School of Instruction is very informative and will help you as you learn how to help your fellow veterans and their families. In addition, the Mid-Winter Conference is a learning tool for what is happening and changes at state and national level.

This year I hope to see many CSO's stay for the Mid-Winter Conference. The DAVA Auxiliary has a Great Blind Auction to help raise money for their projects. They need your participation.

As your Commander, I cannot stress the importance of contacting your local, state and national political representatives to let them know we need their support to get our bill passed. It will not only benefit you but millions of our Brothers and Sisters.

I hope all of you had a great summer but now it is time to get back to work. Get those new members and show them what we are all about.

I wish all of you a safe and happy Holiday Season.

## Proposed Caregiver bill to Expand coverage

DAV has worked diligently for several years as a part of a larger coalition of veterans organizations that promoted the advent of family caregiver support services for severely injured and ill veterans. Congress finally responded five years ago by enacting Public Law 111-163, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. However, that act limited services and supports to family caregivers of veterans injured or who became severely ill in military service only on or after September 11, 2001. That omission left thousands of veterans' families without the level of caregiver support and services they have needed because those veterans' health challenges, many from war injuries, occurred before that effective date.

On June 25, 2015, Representatives Elizabeth Esty and Ryan Costello introduced H.R. 2894, the "Caregivers Access and Responsible Expansion for All Veterans Act," or the "CARE for All Veterans Act."

If enacted, this bill would responsibly and finally address these families' needs on the same basis as those of veterans injured after September 11, 2001. Ultimately, when fully implemented, the bill would improve the lives of tens of thousands of veteran families, and will save the federal government massive sums that otherwise would need to be spent to provide institutional solutions to these veterans' health challenges and health maintenance. Therefore, this bill is both beneficial to these families and a taxpayer-friendly measure.

Also be reminded that **Chapter Annual Financial Reports are due by September 30 each year.**

**Chapter Officers Reports** are due within 10 days after installation each year or when changes are made.

ALL chapters make \$50,000 and less and do not file any other IRS form must file a N990 by November 15 each year. Last year 4 chapters failed to do so and their tax exempt was removed and it cost them over \$400 to get it reinstated.

## Reminder

All financial disbursements of the chapter must be made by check. All checks must include the signature of at least two officers. **There should be no debit or credit utilized by the chapter.**

Source: National Chapter Officers Guide

	<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>	
	As Of Nov 30, 2015	
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,231,634	
TOTAL LIABILITIES		\$80,512
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TOTAL LIABILITIES&FUND BALANCES	\$1,231,634	

Bay Pines VAVS	\$1900
Gainesville VAVS	\$1000
Tampa VAVS	\$1370
Lake City VAVS	\$3809
WPB VAVS	\$0
Miami VAVS	\$2600
Orlando VAVS	\$2900
Eglin CBOC	\$0



***about***  
**Disabled  
American  
Veterans**

**☒ on your next  
drivers license application,  
then they know you care!**

## VA BETTER THAN PRIVATE SECTOR

A little-noticed [recent report](#) by three leading research groups found that on critical measures, **the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) consistently performs as well as and often better than private sector health-care providers.** The VHA does this with patients who are sicker, older, and poorer than many of their counterparts seen in the private sector.

Among the key findings of the report, conducted by the consulting firm Grant, Thornton & McKinsey Company and by two nonprofit research companies—the RAND Corp and the MITRE Corporation—were that:

- Postoperative morbidity was lower for VA patients compared with non-veterans receiving non-VA care.
- Inpatient care was more or as effective in VA as in non-VA hospitals.
- VA hospitals were more likely to follow best practices in the use of central venous catheter line infection prevention and rates of mortality declined more quickly in VA over time than in non-VA settings for specific conditions.

The report also found that veterans in nursing homes were less likely to develop pressure ulcers; that outpatients and those suffering chronic conditions got better follow-up care, and that VA health providers offered better mental health and obesity counseling and blood pressure control, particularly for African Americans. Importantly, income and educational disparities were smaller at VHA facilities in such areas as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer screenings. The report confirmed what many fighting for what is known as “right care”—defined as avoiding toxic, unnecessary tests, medications, and procedures—have long understood: that the VHA, contrary to its status as a GOP and media whipping boy, [has been a pioneer](#) in providing clinically appropriate care to veterans.

Elderly patients in the VHA were less likely to receive the kinds of medications that can make them sicker and sometimes even kill them, the report found. VHA patients were more likely to be spared toxic chemotherapy within 14 days of death or be admitted to an ICU 30 days before death. This was attributed to the VHA’s commitment to palliative and hospice care.

Health care quality expert Charlene Harrington, a professor emeritus the University of California at San Francisco, called the report “really impressive, particularly given the patient mix and chronic underfunding.”

The findings of the 600-page report, released in volumes [one](#) and [two](#), might come as a surprise to the VHA’s many critics on and off Capitol Hill, including the news media. Media coverage of the VHA has focused on the negative, with little reporting on successful VHA programs. A recent [USA Today cover story](#) on performance bonuses for over 150,000 VHA employees, for example, glossed over the bigger picture and cherry picked findings of poor performance by a handful of senior executives. A follow-up [editorial](#) called for an end to all all bonuses at the VHA.

Republican members of Congress determined to privatize the VHA have similarly ignored its actual overall performance. At a November 18 hearing, House Committee on Veteran’s Affairs Chairman Chairman Jeff Miller, a Republican from Florida, declared that the VHA’s future success would not depend on continuing a record of significant accomplishment, but on “non VA providers.” Indeed Miller warned of “difficult conversations” ahead about “the purpose of the VA health-care system and what it should and feasibly can achieve.”

To be sure, the report also details a number of ways the VHA can improve—remedying chronic shortages of primary care and specialist physicians in some areas of the country; dealing with lack of space in older VHA facilities, and repairing an aging information-technology architecture.

The report also points to variation in treatment and quality in a system that has more than 150 hospitals and almost 1,000 community outpatient clinics. Here, however, it offers an important caveat: Variation in the private sector is sometimes even more pronounced. On some measures of care recommended to achieve clinical targets, the report found that “commercial HMOs, Medicare HMOs, and Medicaid HMOs all exhibited much more variability than the VA facilities” on this measure.

Despite recent public criticism of the VA for long patient wait times, the study found the VA is actually performing well on this measure. To wit: “VA’s reported wait times for new patient primary and specialty care are shorter than wait times reported in focused studies in the private sector.” For those who live in rural areas short on VA facilities, the report added that “expanding access to non-VA providers may help with routine or emergency room care, but not with advanced or specialized care.” Nor would veterans living in these areas have better access to teaching or academic facilities.

Significantly, most of the clinical research studies summarized in the report were conducted before Congress allocated additional funds last year to hire more doctors and nurses and other staff, thereby improving access to and quality of VHA care. In other words, there was a legitimate basis for many VHA employees getting 2014 bonuses for their individual contributions to overall institutional **performance so favorably rated.** Unfortunately, the VHA’s better-than-average standard of care has received little notice in the news media and Capitol Hill.



# INCOME / EXPENSES VS BUDGET

## Nov 30, 2015

	Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>			
<b>Income</b>			
6001 - Convention Income			
6003.2 - Convention Chptr Rm Income	550.00	680.00	-130.00
6006.2 - Convention Men Registration	0.00	60.00	-60.00
Total 6001 - Convention Income	550.00	740.00	-190.00
6030 - Midwinter Income			
6031.1 - Midwinter Chapter Room	340.00	1,186.00	-846.00
6032.1 - Midwinter Testimonial	270.00		
6030 - Midwinter Income - Other	60.00	70.00	-10.00
Total 6030 - Midwinter Income	670.00	1,256.00	-586.00
6050 - Dues from National	146,506.00	145,000.50	1,497.50
6140 - National Fund Raisers	91,357.50	86,992.75	4,364.75
6200 - Chapter & Unit 10%	29,053.26	15,001.02	14,052.24
6300 - Department Publication	0.00	178.75	-178.75
6310 - Chapter Closeouts	9,072.38	7,949.50	1,122.88
6315 - Orange City Income			
6317 - Other Orange City Income	7,500.00	9,000.00	-1,500.00
Total 6315 - Orange City Income	7,500.00	9,000.00	-1,500.00
6330 - Lake Panasoffkee	1,708.40	2,050.08	-341.68
6331 - Lakeland Bldg Mortgage	8,190.00	5,390.44	2,799.56
6332 - Sarasota	0.00	1,500.00	-1,500.00
6350 - Drivers License Income	10,127.90	23,701.66	-13,573.76
6410 - 2015 Service Officer's	840.00	910.00	-70.00
6411 - Service Program Donations	55.99	1,279.47	-1,223.48
6413 - Service Income	0.00	15,000.00	-15,000.00
6450 - VAVS Donations			
6455.3 - Donations VAVS-Miami	1,900.00		
6460.3 - Donations VAVS-Bay Pines	1,800.00	600.00	1,200.00
6465.3 - Donations VAVS-Gainesville	1,000.00		
6470.3 - Donations VAVS-Lake City	1,625.00	897.00	728.00
6475.3 - Donations for VAVS-Tamp	1,300.00		
6476.3 - Donation to Orlando VAMC	3,250.00		
6477.3 - Donations for VAVS-West Palm	1,000.00		
Total 6450 - VAVS Donations	11,875.00	1,497.00	10,378.00
6800 - Miscellaneous	19,304.04	9,907.54	9,396.50
Total Income	336,810.47	327,362.71	9,447.76
Gross Profit	336,810.47	327,362.71	9,447.76
<b>Expense</b>			
7000.2 - Convention Expense	0.00	120.60	-120.60
7006.2 - Convention supplies	238.01		
Total 7000.2 - Convention Expense	238.01		
7030.1 - Midwinter Expenses			
7033.1 - Mid Winter Mailing Exp	200.00	0.00	200.00
Total 7030.1 - Midwinter Expenses	200.00	0.00	200.00
7040.1 - Service Expenses			
7050.1 - Accounting	15,168.97	8,213.77	6,955.20
7070.1 - Auto	6,350.57	4,586.84	1,763.73
7091.1 - Contingency, Misc.	1,818.62	10,228.76	-8,410.14
7130.1 - Employee Benefits	1,746.77		
7134.1 - Employee's Insurance(WC)	1,146.00	2,091.42	-945.42
7150.1 - Equipment Maintenance	1,461.45	2,469.72	-1,008.27
7152.1 - Equipment	495.27		
7190.1 - Legal Fees	1,436.50	3,000.00	-1,563.50
7200.1 - Office Supplies	3,560.72	3,491.04	69.68
7210.1 - Payroll Taxes	13,185.35	11,505.75	1,679.60
7230.1 - Postage & shipping Expense	833.30	1,542.38	-709.08
7250.1 - Printing & Publication	594.69	62.28	532.41
7260.1 - Hdq Facility Maint. Exp	1,634.89	3,105.40	-1,470.51
7270.1 - Salaries, Benefits, & Payroll Expenses-sick lv	11,833.52	11,002.05	831.47
7270.1 - Salaries, Benefits, & - Other	147,719.66	156,215.72	-8,496.06
Total 7270.1 - Salaries, Benefits, &	159,553.18	167,217.77	-7,664.59
7271.1 - Employee Medical Benef	2,661.00	3,574.21	-913.21
7273.1 - Employee 401k Benefit	12,076.00	0.00	12,076.00
7330.1 - Taxes & Licenses	0.00	131.00	-131.00
7350.1 - Telephone			
7350.1 - Telephone-Miami Office	30.00		
7350.1 - Telephone - Other	4,441.40	3,091.28	1,350.12
Total 7350.1 - Telephone	4,471.40	3,091.28	1,380.12
7430.1 - Travel-Service & Train	16,156.42	16,101.64	54.78
7440.1 - Executive Director	717.05	531.11	185.94
7441.1 - Commander Nat Travel-Svc	979.30		
7442.1 - SVC Travel	0.00	765.92	-765.92
7446.1 - Commanders per diem	1,123.75	1,327.80	-204.05
7450.1 - Director per diem	113.20		
7470.1 - Donation to Svc Foundation	0.00	1,100.00	-1,100.00
7515.1 - NSO Travel & Office Ex	0.00	173.80	-173.80
7524.1 - Service Outreach Program	1,114.96	2,229.65	-1,114.69
7525.1 - Donation to ColumbiaTrust	5,000.00		
7526.1 - Donation to National Svc Fd	5,000.00		
9218.2 - Donation to DAVA	3,242.68		
7040.1 - Service Expenses - Other	0.00	183.35	-183.35
Total 7040.1 - Service Expenses	261,632.14	245,724.89	15,907.25
8000.3 - VAVS Expenses			
8012.3 - Bay Pines	600.00	100.00	500.00
8013.3 - Gainesville	0.00	1,000.00	-1,000.00
8014.3 - Lake City	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
8021.3 - Orlando VAMC VAVS Expense	130.00		
Total 8000.3 - VAVS Expenses	1,730.00	1,100.00	630.00
8260 - Headquarters Expense			
8310.2 - Bank Charges	699.42	798.50	-99.08
8320.2 - Adjusting	0.00	-126.86	126.86
8360.2 - Conferences, Conventions, Mtg	1,374.47	65.49	1,308.98
8380.2 - Contingency	887.47	250.00	637.47
8480.2 - Insurance-Property	4,320.31	894.85	3,425.46
8560.2 - Commander Natio Trav- nonsvc	0.00	938.70	-938.70
8561.2 - Natl Convent, Exec Dir & Asst	3,728.69	950.18	2,778.51
8800.2 - Office Supplies	0.00	35.00	-35.00
8820.2 - Payroll Taxes	19.65	142.49	-122.84
8840.2 - Postage & Printing	331.98	220.59	111.39
8870.2 - Hdq Facility Maint. Exp	905.41	987.33	-81.92
8880.2 - Salaries & Wages	7,772.52	0.00	7,772.52
8940.2 - Telephone & Telegrams	547.66	1,384.76	-837.10
9160.2 - Travel State Inspector	0.00	94.00	-94.00
9200.2 - Travel Miscellaneous	0.00	230.49	-230.49
9215.2 - Travel Finance Committ	0.00	215.80	-215.80
9260 - Headquarters Expense - Other	0.00	6,548.76	-6,548.76
Total 8260 - Headquarters Expense	20,587.58	13,630.08	6,957.50
8545 - chapter 30 trustee legal	0.00	27,873.88	-27,873.88
8562.2 - National Convention Expense	0.00	6,457.26	-6,457.26
9500.1 - Foundation expenses	199.18		
Total Expense	284,586.91	294,906.71	-10,319.80
Net Ordinary Income	52,223.56	32,456.00	19,767.56
<b>Other Income/Expense</b>			
Other Income			
11001.4 - Testimonial Income	0.00	315.00	-315.00
Total Other Income	0.00	315.00	-315.00
Other Expense			
11000.4 - Testimonial Expenses 2015			
41000.4 - Testimonial Printing Exp	134.00		
Total 11000.4 - Testimonial Expenses 2015	134.00		
Total Other Expense	134.00		
Net Other Income	-134.00	315.00	-449.00
Net Income	52,089.56	32,771.00	19,318.56



**MEMBERSHIP**  
**FOR**  
**Nov 30, 2015**

Chapter	Last yr	trial	part life	full life	total	Goal	% goal	chapter	name 11/30/2015	
001		1,923	4	173	1,681	1,858	1,757	95.67%	-76	JACKSONVILLE #1
002	G	10,737	1,336	913	8,419	10,668	8,404	100.18%	15	EVERGLADE STATE #2
004		2,544	1	149	2,370	2,520	2,429	97.57%	-59	JOHN C MCCARTHY II #4
005		572	0	64	501	565	532	94.17%	-31	THE TALLAHASSEE #5
006		271	0	26	251	277	259	96.91%	-8	ST AUGUSTINE #6
007		748	0	237	575	812	683	84.19%	-108	W WASHINGTON #7
011		1,679	1	90	1,560	1,651	1,590	98.11%	-30	CLEARWATER #11
012		1,472	0	93	1,365	1,458	1,405	97.15%	-40	CORAL GABLES #12
013		2,486	0	104	2,340	2,444	2,383	98.20%	-43	BAY PINE HLDY ISL #13
014		310	0	22	283	305	294	96.26%	-11	JOHN D STROUD #14
016		2,765	0	189	2,518	2,707	2,593	97.11%	-75	CENTRAL #16
017		730	0	30	694	724	704	98.58%	-10	PANAMA CITY #17
018		1,716	0	159	1,548	1,707	1,607	96.33%	-59	MANATEE COUNTY #18
020		348	0	19	325	344	333	97.60%	-8	LAKE CITY #20
022		312	0	17	287	304	295	97.29%	-8	JACKSON COUNTY #22
023		2,131	1	93	2,020	2,114	2,055	98.30%	-35	AL GRAY #23
029		592	1	46	545	592	558	97.67%	-13	PEMBROKE PINES-MIRAMAR
030		1,305	0	94	1,161	1,255	1,195	97.15%	-34	SEMINOLE #30
032		1,351	1	90	1,219	1,310	1,244	97.99%	-25	J L GOLIGHTLY #32
038		1,527	0	201	1,261	1,462	1,345	93.75%	-84	ORANGE PARK #38
042		1,818	0	85	1,712	1,797	1,738	98.50%	-26	WEST PALM BEACH #42
049		313	0	23	279	302	288	96.88%	-9	RIDGE #49
057		431	1	28	390	419	401	97.26%	-11	CRESTVIEW #57
063		166	0	9	152	161	157	96.82%	-5	TRI-COUNTY #63
065		542	0	29	502	531	512	98.05%	-10	ZEPHYRHILLS #65
067		1,265	0	63	1,158	1,221	1,184	97.80%	-26	HERNANDO COUNTY #67
070		611	0	29	548	577	562	97.51%	-14	GERALD A SHONK #70
073		354	2	22	323	347	329	98.18%	-6	TAMARAC #73
078		1,201	0	47	1,116	1,163	1,132	98.59%	-16	NEW PORT RICHEY #78
082		1,094	0	58	1,031	1,089	1,048	98.38%	-17	R L COCHRAN JR #82
083		958	0	133	848	981	887	95.60%	-39	C W BYERS SR #83
084		1,325	0	53	1,198	1,251	1,219	98.28%	-21	GREATER DAYTONA #84
085		1,150	0	46	1,081	1,127	1,101	98.18%	-20	SOUTH MARION #85
086		605	0	58	544	602	566	96.11%	-22	JIM BOOE #86
87		740	0	36	689	725	701	0.9829	-12	SGT WM E HILL #87
90		880	0	76	793	869	822	0.9647	-29	GATOR #90
94		1069	0	43	1004	1047	1017	0.9872	-13	C GUSTAFSON #94
97		545	0	32	514	546	521	0.9866	-7	BEE RIDGE #97
98		242	0	11	226	237	230	0.9826	-4	EUCHEE VALLEY #98
101		796	0	41	746	787	763	0.9777	-17	VENICE GULF #101
108		589	0	52	556	608	572	0.972	-16	JAMES D RADER #108
109		498	0	29	471	500	479	0.9833	-8	TITUSVILLE #109
110		483	0	26	457	483	464	0.9849	-7	SUN CITY CENTER #110
111		89	0	2	84	86	85	0.9882	-1	PEACE RIVER #111
112		755	1	42	712	755	721	0.9875	-9	BAY AREA #112
113		687	1	35	643	679	652	0.9862	-9	PORT ST LUCIE #113
119		383	0	14	349	363	354	0.9859	-5	ANTHONY P DADDI #119
122		499	0	61	447	508	467	0.9572	-20	MARATHON #122
123	G	620	0	18	600	618	600	1	0	SPACE COAST #123
125		542	0	20	516	536	520	0.9923	-4	CPL P D LYON JR #125
126		176	0	9	166	175	169	0.9822	-3	SUWANNEE MEM #126
129		365	0	16	337	353	344	0.9797	-7	SO BREVARD BCHS #129
133		922	0	81	843	924	874	0.9645	-31	THE GOLD COAST #133
144		97	0	9	86	95	91	0.9451	-5	LA BELLE #144
148		803	0	70	729	799	753	0.9681	-24	AGNES M TAYLOR #148
150	G	788	0	38	849	887	835	1.0168	14	ORANGE BLOSSOM GDNS #150
152		692	0	30	650	680	658	0.9878	-8	SOUTH PALM BEACH #152
155		369	0	9	347	356	351	0.9886	-4	SEBASTIAN RIVER AREA #155
158		118	0	35	149	184	161	0.9255	-12	CRYSTAL RIVER #158
Dept. Total		61099	1350	4327	54768	60445	55993	0.9781	-1225	



**Legislation  
FOR  
NOV 30, 2015**

## COLA INFORMATION

On October, 15, 2015, the Social Security Administration (SSA) announced that due to low inflation this year, no cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) would be made in 2016 for Social Security beneficiaries. Since that decision would also apply to veterans receiving financial benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, DAV issued a Commander's Action Network alert on November 4, 2015, calling on our members and supporters to contact their House Members and Senators to urge them to introduce and enact legislation that would guarantee a reasonable COLA for wounded, injured, and ill veterans and their dependents and survivors.

Senator Elizabeth Warren and 18 of her colleagues have jointly introduced a bill, S. 2251, the Seniors and Veterans Emergency Benefit Act. The bill would provide veterans and others in receipt of VA financial support a one-time payment of about \$580 (calculated based on 3.9 percent of the average annual Social Security payment). This one-time payment would soften the financial blow associated with the lack of an increase through a COLA, and the payment would be tax free. Payments would be disbursed to beneficiaries beginning 120 days after enactment. Even if eligible for multiple federal benefits payments, individuals could receive only one payment under this bill.

A one-time payment is not comparable to an annual COLA, and a one-time payment becomes less valuable to more seriously disabled veterans because of their higher cost of living. However, in absence of a COLA or other viable alternative, DAV calls upon its members and supporters to contact their elected officials in Congress and urge their support, co-sponsorship and passage of S. 2251. A letter for this purpose has been prepared for your use, or you may write a personalized message to inform your House Member and Senators of your support for this bill.

Thank you for your participation in the Commander's Action Network, and for your support of DAV and our mission on behalf of wounded, injured and ill wartime veterans. Your activism makes DAV a more effective organization.

Click the link below to log in and send your message:

<https://www.votervoice.net/BroadcastLinks/tgSvAhcjG9bdLyEFpFD20g>

## Academic affiliations key to Veteran care

This year, VA and medical schools around the country commemorate 70 years of partnerships in training medical professionals in the care of our Veterans. Last month, , [we shared a video](#) highlighting achievements, as well as testimonials from leading doctors of medical and osteopathy colleges and their VA colleagues, discussing a strong and growing relationship between VA, medical schools, students and faculties.

More than 7,200 individual affiliation agreements between VA and more than 1,800 educational institutions have made VA the largest provider of health-care training in the United States. In fiscal year 2014 alone, clinical training was provided to more than 120,000 interns, residents, fellows and students in more than 40 professions.

Daniel Hoffmann, network director of VA's Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) based in Durham, North Carolina, provides his perspective on these crucial relationships. Hoffman has been one of the primary supporters, facilitators and developers of the outstanding relationships between the Richmond VA Medical Center and Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Medicine, the Durham VA Medical Center and Duke's School of Medicine and the Salisbury VA Medical Center and Wake Forest University's School of Medicine, and a number of other medical schools in Virginia and North Carolina.

Look for more of these testimonials until we reach the 70th anniversary on Jan. 30, the day that [Policy Memorandum #2](#) was issued, creating the association between VA and medical schools 70 years ago



## POW/MIA UPDATE

**AMERICANS ACCOUNTED FOR:** In mid-October and again more recently, DPAA posted changes to the list of Vietnam War missing and unaccounted-for US personnel, now numbering **1,624**. For various reasons, including wishes of the family, DoD announcements are often delayed far beyond the ID dates and sometimes not even made, as was the case with the most recent changes. Several of those named in DPAA announcements this year demonstrate how remains repatriated many years ago can now be identified using scientific technology and processes that weren't available in earlier years. The number of Americans now listed by DoD as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is 959. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and identified before the end of the war, bring the total of US personnel accounted for from the Vietnam War to **1,022**. Of the 1,624 still missing and unaccounted-for, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,266 (VN-467, VS-799); Laos-302; Cambodia-49; PRC territorial waters-7. These country-specific numbers can and do fluctuate when investigations result in changes to locations of loss. Since formation in 1970, the League has sought the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

**DPAA DIRECTOR COMPLETES VISITS TO CAMBODIA, LAOS & VIETNAM:** DPAA Director Mike Linnington recently returned from his first-ever trip to any of the most directly engaged Vietnam War countries. He first visited Cambodia, though for just one day, then made official calls in Vientiane, Laos, then flew by helicopter to visit DPAA and Lao personnel conducting field operations. He returned to Vientiane before going on to Hanoi to meet with senior officials there. This important visit appears to have been mostly introductory and came at a time of ever-increasing political and economic relations, as well as bilateral military-to-military cooperation. He also visited US and SRV personnel conducting field operations in Vietnam before flying back to the US, arriving in time for a DPAA-hosted Family Update in Portland, ME, on November 14<sup>th</sup>. A report will be provided when available.

**GENERAL FOGLESONG VISITS MOSCOW:** US Chairman of the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs General Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret) traveled to Moscow to meet on November 9<sup>th</sup> with the Russian Co-Chairman, General Colonel Valery Aleksandrovich Vostrotin. The two Co-Chairs outlined their hope for renewing and restoring the work of the USRJC and noted the importance of the new Russian Office of the USRJC located in the Embassy of the Russian Federation. This important office was opened in July of this year and is headed by Maxim N. Alekseev, an impressive Russian official with a diverse background and record of experience. The League welcomes this new initiative and looks forward to working with Mr. Alekseev and senior Russian officials in Moscow. It is past time to press forward and end the seemingly endless delays.

**MORE GOOD NEWS:** DPAA Director Linnington has decided to invite representatives of responsible national Veteran organizations to attend and observe briefings at DPAA-hosted Updates. The League deeply appreciates this return to including our Veterans in these meetings around the country. Though pretty general in content, the briefings given are firsthand and provided by responsible US officials. Since DPAA is stressing the importance of outreach and transparency, the DPAA-hosted Updates provide an opportunity for both.

**ACCOUNTING RESULTS:** Although the pace of joint field recoveries and investigations related to the Vietnam War has resumed to a higher level, the Vietnamese, in particular, have repeatedly called for increasing the pace and scope of such operations, in fact since 2009. It is crucial that there be no reduction in DPAA's budget or the number of personnel to enable overdue responsiveness to Vietnam's longstanding request. Now is not the time to pull back on fielding teams to accomplish the Vietnam War accounting. In fact the political climate, regionally and bilaterally with Vietnam, lends itself to expanding cooperation across the board.

It is the League's hope that there will be no further reluctance to moving full speed ahead. The Vietnam War POW/MIA accounting mission is running out of time; that is the reality in terms of eye-witness accounts, immediate family members and preservation of skeletal material under very hostile conditions. **NOW IS THE TIME TO CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THERE MUST BE NO REDUCTION IN BUDGET AND PERSONNEL FOR THE NEW DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY (DPAA).**

**WASHINGTON — Two high-ranking officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs were demoted Friday in response to allegations that they manipulated the agency's hiring system for their own gain.**

The VA said in a statement that Diana Rubens and Kimberly Graves were demoted from senior executives — the highest rank for career employees — to general workers within the Veterans Benefits Administration. Rubens was paid \$181,497 as director of the Philadelphia regional office for the VBA, while Graves earned \$173,949 as leader of the St. Paul, Minnesota, regional office.

The VA's acting inspector general said in a report this fall that Rubens and Graves forced lower-ranking regional managers to accept job transfers against their will. Rubens and Graves then stepped into the vacant positions themselves, keeping their pay while reducing their responsibilities. Rubens and Graves refused to testify to Congress earlier this month, telling lawmakers they were asserting their Fifth Amendment rights to protect themselves against self-incrimination. Before taking the regional jobs, Rubens was a deputy undersecretary at the VA's Washington headquarters, while Graves was director of VBA's 14-state North Atlantic Region. Rubens and Graves kept their top-level salaries in their new positions, even though they had less responsibility and a lower pay range than their previous positions. Rubens grew up near Philadelphia, while Graves has family in Minnesota, the IG's report said. In addition to naming themselves to vacancies, Rubens and Graves obtained more than \$400,000 in questionable moving expenses through a relocation program for VA executives, the IG's report said. The two face possible criminal prosecution.

The relocation program has since been suspended, the VA said in congressional testimony this month. Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said Rubens and Graves "clearly should have been fired," adding that, "for those wondering whether VA is committed to real accountability for corrupt employees, VA leaders answered that question (Friday) with a resounding 'no.'"

The VA's failure to fire Rubens and Graves "gives me no hope the department will do the right thing and take steps to recover the more than \$400,000 in taxpayer dollars Rubens and Graves fraudulently obtained," Miller said. "The millions of American veterans who depend on VA and the hundreds of thousands of VA employees who are dedicated professionals deserve better than this broken status quo."

Dale Barnett, national commander of the American Legion, said the VA's failure to fire Rubens and Graves was "an insult and a disgrace to all veterans. Any promises that VA officials make about accountability in the future need to be taken with a grain of salt."

Allison Hickey, the former head of the Veterans Benefits Administration, resigned in October amid criticism of a backlog in disability claims and questions about her role in the transfers obtained by Rubens and Graves. The IG's report said Hickey and other top VA officials may have encouraged the scheme.

Rubens will serve as assistant director of the VBA's Houston regional office, while Graves will serve as assistant director of the Phoenix regional office, the VA said. Both will take unspecified pay cuts.

Cheryl Rawls has been named acting director of the Philadelphia regional benefits office. Kay Anderson will serve as acting director in St. Paul.