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## Meetings

The Chapter 120 membership meeting will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2017 at 7:00pm in the Machinists Union Hall, 357 Main St., East Hartford.

The Board of Directors will meet on Thursday, August 31 at 7:00pm. Call the Chapter office for any changes in schedule. Chapter members are welcomed to attend.

## Notice

If you have moved or changed your address, PLEASE notify us immediately. Call the Chapter office at (860) 568-9212, mail us at the address on the back of this newsletter or e-mail the Newsletter editor at [JRCVVA120@aol.com](mailto:JRCVVA120@aol.com).

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## VA Choice program could go bankrupt without prompt Congressional action



While lawmakers may be focused on repealing and replacing Obama Care when they return from recess on July 10, the Department of Veterans Affairs is facing a critical funding deadline that could lead to significant problems for U.S. vets seeking care.

Funding for the Choice program—which expanded veterans’ access to care outside the VA system in 2014 in order to cut down on lengthy wait times—is running out of cash, and fast. VA Secretary David Shulkin said last month that unless funds were transferred into the account, the program could be bankrupt before the end of the fiscal year.

“If there is no action at all by Congress, then the Choice program will dry up by mid-August,” Shulkin said during a Senate testimony in June.

Between March 7 and June 14, the funds available for the Choice account fell from \$2 billion to \$821 million, Secretary Shulkin said, due to unexpectedly high usage of the program.

“We now have too little money in the Choice account, which we’re working to solve ... with legislative authority to replenish funds into the Choice account,” Shulkin said before the Senate Veteran’s Affairs Committee in June.

Shulkin explained the VA essentially has two “checking accounts” to provide care for vets. However, it cannot transfer existing funds between the two accounts without legislative approval—which it has yet to receive from Congress.

“We have enough money to get us through the end of the fiscal year, if we could balance the accounts correctly we could make it through to the end of the year,” Shulkin said.

<b>CHAPTER 120 OFFICE</b>	<b>568-9212</b>
<b>Board of Directors</b>	
Paul Barry	569-3530
Peter Galgano	828-1999
William Chiodo	688-2518
Patricia Dumin	620-4131
Frank Zizzamia	569-0705
<b>Executive Officers</b>	
Frank J. Mello, Jr., President	604-3879
Jerome Blum, Vice President	267-2981
Roger Anderson, Treasurer	528-4338
Peter Lund, Secretary	644-9770
<b>VVA Service Representatives</b>	
John Cutler	568-9212
E-Mail: VVA.Service.Rep@att.net	
Gerald Fabry, MD	887-1755
E-Mail : gerfab@comcast.net	
Gary Waterhouse	656-0430
E-Mail : gwaterhouse@cox.net	
<b>Membership</b>	
Frank J. Mello, Jr.	604-3879
E-Mail: Fmello336@yahoo.com	
<b>Women Vietnam Veterans</b>	
Patricia Dumin	620-4131
<b>Product Sales</b>	
Ted Groenstein	688-5671
<b>Newsletter/Website</b>	
John Cutler	282-7470
E-Mail: jrcvva120@aol.com	
<b>Notary Public</b>	
Gary Gazdzicki, Sr.	812-5703
<b>Vet Centers</b>	
Hartford (Area Code 860)	563-8800
New Haven (Area Code 203)	932-9899
Norwich (Area Code 860)	887-1755
Danbury (Area Code 203)	790-4000
<b>All Telephone Numbers are Area Code 860 unless otherwise noted</b>	

**Newsletter articles/stories/photos**

Any articles, stories and/or photos submitted for the newsletter must be received by the "cut off" date for any given month. Photos must be accompanied by text which describes the event, names, dates and any other pertinent facts so our readers understand the story behind the photo(s). The newsletter editor will announce the "cut off" dates at each Chapter meeting. The "cut off" date for our September 2017 newsletter is 18 August 2017. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

## Birthday Wishes

Birthday wishes go to our members born in July and August. May you have many more!

### July

<i>Frederick E. Arnold</i>	<i>Glenn Beaulieu</i>	<i>Mary Beaulieu</i>
<i>Brian R. Brady</i>	<i>Dwight Burgess</i>	<i>Gary Chappell</i>
<i>William D. Chiodo</i>	<i>Hugo M. Ciaffaglione</i>	<i>Barry Dubofsky</i>
<i>Peter M. Heath</i>	<i>Ken Lewis</i>	<i>Peter Lund</i>
<i>Carlton A. Platt III</i>	<i>Eric J. Remkiewicz</i>	<i>John H. Siemer</i>
<i>Manuel P. Teixeira</i>	<i>James S. Tierney</i>	<i>Geraldine O. Traynham</i>
<i>Robert D. Venti</i>	<i>Harry E. Walters</i>	<i>Charles R. Williams</i>

### August

<i>Paul Blow</i>	<i>Tom Bothur</i>	<i>Wayne B. Burgess</i>
<i>William Cancelli</i>	<i>Frederick Dellaripa</i>	<i>Glenda A. Doughtie</i>
<i>Craig J. DuPrey</i>	<i>Linda A. Dusek-Ravenell</i>	<i>John C. Honor Jr.</i>
<i>Edward Keany</i>	<i>Richard E. Lee Jr.</i>	<i>Kenneth W. Mader</i>
<i>Philip Morneault</i>	<i>Tim L. Oslund</i>	<i>Philip Petricca</i>
<i>Stephen Robillard</i>	<i>James Scanlon</i>	<i>Werner Seidler</i>
<i>Kenneth Seymour</i>	<i>Daniel C. Thurston</i>	<i>Gary E. Waterhouse</i>
<i>Joseph S. Wilusz</i>	<i>James Wisner</i>	

*A special Happy Birthday wish to Bob DuBois, Korean War veteran who was a combat medic with the famed 65th Infantry Regiment ("The Borinqueneers"), 3rd Infantry Division. Bob is uncle to Chapter 120 member John Cutler.*

## Chapter/State News

### National Convention



August 8 - 12, 2017

In addition to electing National officers, members of the National Board of Directors and a Region 1 Director, our Chapter delegates will be deciding on proposed Constitutional amendments and VVA resolutions. Some more important amendments include:

- The state council shall seat the elected AVVA representative or state president on the state council and/or board of directors, who shall serve as a non-voting special advisor entitled to be heard on all matters.
- Membership in the Corporation is open to any veteran of the military service of the United States of America, who served on active duty during the dates established by federal law for any conflict or War, paying in advance annual dues set by the national board, and conforming to, and complying with, this Constitution, bylaws, and rules of the Corporation now or hereinafter in effect....
- Change the name of Vietnam Veterans of America to Veterans of America
- All (State Council) elected officers and committee chairs shall attend all council meetings. Committee chairs shall attend all meetings until such time as the committee is dissolved.

All resolutions are continuing resolutions from previous years.

Our delegates will report on Convention activities and results at the Chapter meeting on September 7, 2017.

## Riverfront Recapture and the Connecticut Adaptive Rowing Program

The Riverfront Recapture and the Connecticut Adaptive Rowing Program offers Veterans and service members kayaking and rowing led by therapeutic recreation specialists and physical therapists from Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital - all at no charge!

Dates for classes are July 8 followed by subsequent Saturday dates: July 22, August 5, August 19, September 2 and September 16. All classes are held from 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at the Greater Hartford Jaycees Community Boathouse Riverside Park, 20 Leibert Road, Hartford.

Register for classes by contacting Paige McCullough-Casciano at 860-714-2421 or pmccullo@stfranciscare.org

## Run for the Fallen

Registration is open for the Run for the Fallen CT 2017 on Saturday, September 16 at the Veterans Memorial Park, Middletown.

Run for the Fallen CT honors the 65 service men and women who have lost their lives in the line of duty since 9/11.

The run is comprised of 8, 5 mile loops beginning at 6 am.

Run for the Fallen CT is dedicated to honoring Connecticut's fallen heroes through public events and community outreach. It also serves as a larger reflection of all United States service men and women killed in all conflicts to ensure our heroes are never forgotten.

The annual memorial run is an apolitical remembrance gathering in support of the families, friends, and comrades of service members killed in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom and other post-9/11 conflicts.

This is a FREE EVENT and is open to the public.

The first lap kicks off a 6 am and each subsequent lap will start at the top of each hour.

For more information, please see: [www.runforthefallenct.org](http://www.runforthefallenct.org)

### Receive "The Connection" by E-Mail

The monthly Chapter 120 newsletter, *The Connection*, is available by e-mail. Currently, 97 members receive the newsletter by e-mail, saving the Chapter over \$600 in postal fees annually. The newsletter is available in Adobe format (.pdf), attached to your e-mail. If you wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail, please e-mail the newsletter editor at [jrcvva120@aol.com](mailto:jrcvva120@aol.com)

## POW/MIA News



## HR 2765 POW/MIA Forever stamp

Introduced in House (05/30/2017)

### Perpetual POW/MIA Stamp Act

This bill directs the Postmaster General to provide for the issuance of a forever stamp that honors the sacrifices of the members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have been prisoners, missing, or unaccounted for and that depicts the National League of Families POW/MIA flag.

Call your Representative to ask them to co-sponsor this bill.

John Larson – 202-225-2265

Joe Courtney – 202-225-2076

Rosa DeLauro – 202-225-3661

Jim Himes – 202-225-5541

Elizabeth Esty – 202-225-4476

## At The Capitol



## Failing Veterans - Again

Unless you are a farmer who wants to pay for special veteran farm plates, or you are still a member of the National Guard (at our age?), or you work for the State as a veterans service officer, or you are Gold Star parents, not much came out of the 2017 legislative session that affects Vietnam veterans.

One bill, HB-7100 (Public Act 17-189), does affect certain veterans who did not previously qualify for property tax exemptions. But the bill assumes that municipalities can afford to give additional veterans tax exemptions – something that very few municipalities would actually do in these times of tight budgets. The bill also recognizes American Legion records related to the administration of the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund (SSMF) as public records and subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). See the summary below:

HB-7100 (as amended by House "A" and "B")\*  
Public Act No. 17-189

AN ACT CONCERNING AMERICAN LEGION STATE FUND COMMISSION TRANSPARENCY.

### SUMMARY

This bill establishes an additional optional municipal veteran's property tax exemption by allowing municipalities, with their legislative body's approval, to provide a property tax exemption

to certain veterans who do not qualify for certain veteran property tax exemptions (i.e., wartime, disabled, and severe service-related exemptions). A municipality may exempt up to \$5,000 or 5% of the property's assessed value. The bill establishes application requirements and procedures.

Existing law allows municipalities, with their legislative body's approval, to provide 100% disabled veterans, under certain income thresholds, with three times the amount provided under the state-mandated disabled veterans' exemption. The bill increases such income eligibility thresholds from (1) \$18,000 to \$21,000, if single and (2) \$21,000 to \$24,000, if married.

The bill also, generally, deems any American Legion records related to the administration of the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund (SSMF) as public records and subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). It prohibits the state treasurer, as the SSMF custodian and trustee, from disclosing certain personal information.

\* House Amendment "A" (1) exempts certain personal information from FOIA disclosure, (2) deems SSMF administrative records as public records, and (3) makes minor and technical changes.

\* House Amendment "B" (1) establishes an optional municipal property tax exemption for certain veterans and (2) increases the income threshold for the municipal option of tripling the state-mandated property tax exemption.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon passage for the FOIA provision, and October 1, 2017 for the property tax provisions, and the property tax exemptions apply to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2017.

***So what more important bills didn't make the passing grade in the legislature?***

**HB-5578: ELIMINATING THE FEE FOR ISSUANCE OF PURPLE HEART NUMBER PLATES.**

**HB-7181: HONORING DECEASED VETERANS.** To require certain military honors at funerals for deceased veterans.

**HB-6065: BUS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOR VETERANS.** To allow a passenger who is a veteran, upon presentation of a motor vehicle operator's license or identity card indicating such passenger's status as a veteran, to ride state-owned or controlled bus public transportation free of charge.

**SB-919: VETERANS' SERVICES AT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.** To implement recommendations of the Board of Regents for Higher Education regarding the establishment and operation of OASIS centers at public institutions of higher education in this state.

All the above would have cost the State money - something that is "taboo" in this year's financial crisis - even for those who defended this State and country during war.

***On The Hill***



**Trump signs VA bill to protect whistleblowers, expedite firing of problem workers**

On June 23, President Trump signed legislation designed to protect whistleblowers while making it easier to fire problem employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The "VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017" makes permanent an office created by a Trump executive order earlier this year to look into claims made by whistleblowers and to protect them from retaliation.

It also shortens the timeframes allowed for employee appeals of disciplinary actions and mandates that courts reviewing the actions uphold them if there is "substantial evidence" they are warranted.

Trump referenced the VA wait time scandal in 2014, when veterans died waiting for appointments, and some VA workers who put them on secret wait lists weren't disciplined because of federal employment laws.

"What happened was a national disgrace, and yet some of the employees involved in these scandals remained on the payrolls," he said. "Today, we are finally changing those laws."

The new law marks the second time Congress is trying to short-circuit the disciplinary process. The Choice Act passed in 2014 sought to do away with senior executives' rights to appeal discipline to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

But a court ruled that was unconstitutional because the expedited procedure violated the Constitution's so-called "appointments clause" by placing too much power with an administrative judge.

The new law also gets rid of senior executives' right to appeal to the MSPB but replaces that process with an internal VA grievance procedure.

The legislation also allows the VA to take back bonuses paid to employees found guilty of misconduct and prohibits employees who are appealing discipline from being placed on paid administrative leave.

Concerned Veterans for America, a conservative advocacy group, hailed the legislation as an important step forward in a "new era of accountability, customer focus, and integrity at the department."

"Unions tried to defend the status quo and block these reforms, but members on both sides of the aisle finally recognized just

how severe the problems at the VA really are,” CVA Policy Director Dan Caldwell said. “Americans should be proud of the way Congress and this administration came together to take decisive action to help our veterans.”

*From Military Times*

## **Senate panel advances VA appeals legislation, eyes a busy July**

Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee members quickly passed a comprehensive overhaul of the veterans’ benefits appeals process, setting up what they hope will be a flurry of major advances on veterans’ issues before the August congressional recess.

The legislation, dubbed the Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, was approved unanimously by the panel and could face a full Senate vote in early July. The House passed similar legislation in May, but would need to vote on the Senate measure because of technical changes in the bill.

If it becomes law, the new plan would create new options on how veterans can appeal benefits decisions they think are too low or missed critical health evidence. In some cases, veterans in the new system would waive the chance to submit new evidence or official hearings in favor of quicker resolutions. In others, they’d retain those rights, but face more reasonable timelines for submissions and decisions.

The average wait for an appeals decision today tops five years. Nearly 500,000 appeals cases are currently pending in the VA system, a number that lawmakers have called appallingly high.

VA officials have asked for major changes to the benefits appeals process for more than a year, but have only seen legislative progress in the last few months. That’s due in part to lingering concerns among veterans groups that have now been addressed, but also due to the politics surrounding a host of other veterans’ issues.

Last year, Senate officials tried to tie the appeals overhaul to new accountability legislation for the department and an expansion of numerous VA services, a move that effectively stalled all of those priorities.

This year, an accountability overhaul was passed as a stand-alone measure by the House and Senate, and signed into law by President Trump earlier this month. Congress has also passed a series of smaller veterans’ measures, including an extension of the VA’s Choice program, which provides funds for veterans to seek medical care outside the department’s health system.

Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., said he hopes the Senate will vote on the appeals legislation shortly after the July 4th congressional break. If House leaders can move on the measure quickly as well, it could become law before the month-long August congressional recess.

Isakson said he’s hopeful his committee can also advance several other pending VA issues before the end of July. The committee has scheduled a hearing on pending VA leadership

nominations on July 19, and will hear from department officials on proposed changes to the Choice program in a July 11 hearing.

Both chambers also need to pass a funding transfer agreement before the start of August to make sure veterans using the Choice program aren’t affected by a shortfall of available funds, a problem that VA Secretary David Shulkin has told lawmakers is potentially disastrous for thousands of veterans using those services.

But those moves will likely be affected by the ongoing health care overhaul fight in the Senate, which has snarled a host of other unrelated business earlier this week and could do the same when the chamber returns.

When the House and Senate come back from the July 4th week-long recess, they’ll have only 15 legislative days left before the start of September.

In a Statement for the Record by VVA President John Rowan, VVA is strongly opposed to the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 as written. President Rowan stated in his conclusion that, “The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 is an attempt to improve the appeals process for VA. VVA is strongly opposed to enactment of this legislation as it does nothing to fix the fundamental problems with the appeals system. The system is broken and needs urgent repair; however, enacting a bill that will ultimately fail veterans is not a conscionable choice.

This bill is a tool for VA to more expeditiously process cases, while simultaneously limiting a veteran’s due process rights. VVA believes veterans and their families will be harmed with this so-called appeals modernization bill. The immense pressure to “fix the problem” does not mean we must support a bill that does just the opposite. As the saying goes, “delay, deny, until we die”; sadly, due to the bill’s inadequacies, VVA fears that enactment of this bill will be to the detriment of veterans and their families.”

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### *Veterans Affairs News*



## **VA Secretary Formalizes Expansion of Emergency Mental Health Care to Veterans with Other-Than-Honorable Discharges**

On June 27, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released finalized plans that lay the framework for providing emergency mental health coverage to former service members with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges.

This is the first time a VA Secretary has implemented an initiative specifically focused on this group of former service members who are in mental health distress.

“Suicide prevention is my top clinical priority,” said Secretary Shulkin, also a physician. “We want these former service members to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency — whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a Vet Center or through the Veterans Crisis Line.”

Effective July 5, all Veterans Health Administration (VHA) medical centers will be prepared to offer emergency stabilization care for former service members who present at the facility with an emergent mental health need. Under this initiative, former service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for their mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days, which can include inpatient, residential or outpatient care.

During this time, VHA and the Veterans Benefits Administration will work together to determine if the mental health condition is a result of a service-related injury, making the service member eligible for ongoing coverage for that condition.

Since Secretary Shulkin announced his intent in March to expand VA mental health coverage to service members with OTH administrative discharges, VA has worked with key internal and external stakeholders, including members of Congress, Veterans Service Organizations and community partners on the issue.

Veterans in crisis should call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 (press 1), or text 838255.

*VVA Press Release*



**VVA Lauds VA Secretary for leading on OTH, Urges Support of Congress**

“VA Secretary Shulkin leads with the heart of a physician, and takes seriously his oath to ‘do no harm,’ ”

said John Rowan, national president of Vietnam Veterans of America. “That’s why he’s working to correct the VA’s self-imposed policies, which have denied care to our most vulnerable veterans for decades. We are heartened that as of July 5, every VA emergency room will be prepared to receive veterans with a ‘bad paper’ OTH administrative discharge, who are experiencing a mental health crisis, and that they are now eligible to be treated for an initial period of up to 90 days, which can include inpatient, residential, or outpatient care.”

Previous VA Secretaries have allowed the problem of denying healthcare to veterans with so-called “bad-paper” discharges fester. By law, the term “veteran” is a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. By VA regulation alone, the VA has denied access to healthcare for hundreds of thousands of veterans who meet the definition of “veteran.”

A Brown University Study, released June 20, “‘Bad Papers’: The Invisible and Increasing Costs of War for Excluded Veterans,” by Ali R. Tayyeb and Jennifer Greenburg, finds, “one of the most invisible and devastating costs of the post-9/11 wars for our nation’s veterans is the denial of benefits and services to a growing portion of former service members who are most in need of support – six percent of the entire veteran population of this era – and that most of these military discharges result from minor disciplinary infractions which are actually symptomatic of trauma sustained during military service.”

VVA, in partnership with Swords to Plowshares and the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Harvard Law, have developed a legislative proposal called the Leave No Veteran Behind Act to ensure that Secretary Shulkin's initiative is as successful as possible. “Secretary Shulkin can’t solve this problem alone,” said Rowan. “That’s why VVA is calling on Congress to introduce and pass the Leave No Veteran Behind Act.

**Proposed Cuts to Individual Unemployability a Non-Starter, Administration Acknowledges**

“It was a bad idea to begin with, unworkable and essentially uncaring for almost a quarter of a million veterans over the age of 62,” said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America, referring to a provision in the President’s \$186.5 billion budget proposal for FY18 that would take thousands of dollars in Individual Unemployability (IU) benefits from the most vulnerable of veterans. “Now the administration has seen the light and retreated from their poorly-reasoned plan.”

“Here at VVA, we have been deluged by calls from our members,” Rowan said. “They are concerned. They are scared. Some are angry. They fear a personal financial disaster that could cost them their house, their savings, their very life.”

“The administration's plan was, in effect, to take from Peter to pay for Paul, to eviscerate the IU program to make available funds to enhance and expand the so-called Choice program, to the tune of \$3.2 billion in FY18,” noted Rowan.

“Just as an avalanche of calls and e-mails struck all through the VSO and MSO community, so too did VVA and our fellow organizations send letters and offer firm and focused testimony blasting the proposal at a Senate hearing,” Rowan said.

“Once the politically astute in the administration recognized the folly of cutting benefits, which could cost certain veterans almost \$20,000 a year, they reversed field, acknowledging that theirs was a non-starter, and that Congress wasn't going to go along with the proposal,” Rowan concluded.



Military Times

## Veterans can register now for chance at early access to online military exchange shopping



The verification process began Monday June 5th, allowing honorably discharged veterans to get their credentials in order before the online exchanges open to veteran shoppers Nov. 11. The new benefit is for online shopping only, and doesn't

extend to exchange stores on installations.

The exchange provided a breakdown of the verification process as of noon Friday June 9th:

- Of the 38,622 applications, 18,011 have been approved. Of those approvals, 3,200 came as part of a soft launch of the process, prior to Monday's announcement.
- Of the applicants who likely are honorably discharged veterans, about 73 percent have completed the process successfully. The site relies on veteran records that exist in the Defense Manpower Data Center database; if a veteran's records are not there or aren't complete, the veteran will receive instructions on how to upload the information.
- Nearly 14,000 applicants either weren't veterans or already were eligible to shop at exchanges.

All 3,200 veterans who were verified prior to Monday's launch received early access to the online exchanges, part of a beta testing program that will give some veterans the chance to shop prior to Nov. 11. Officials will add more beta shoppers as they continue to verify veterans for shopping privileges, Ward said.

Along with evaluating the technical support end of the veterans benefit, exchange officials will monitor shopping patterns so they'll stock the right mix of items on their online sites. At this point, among the veterans who have been shopping, officials have not seen any major differences in online shopping patterns compared with current shoppers, Ward said.

Veterans who have problems with the verification process can contact the VetVerify.org customer call center, toll-free, at 844-868-8672.

**Ed Note:** I was selected as one of the "beta shoppers" and have ordered a few items on-line through the Army & Air Force Exchange. Prices and shipping charges are comparable to Amazon, but the important issue is that there is no sales tax. The ordering process is as easy as Amazon shopping, and like Amazon, includes email notifications for order confirmation and shipping/delivery status.

First published in Vietnam Magazine's August 2016 issue

## The First Stealth Aircraft

On July 26, 1968, the North Vietnamese fired two SA-2 surface-to-air missiles at SR-71A No. 976. Neither crewman saw the SAMs detonate about 2 miles behind the supersonic "Blackbird", whose crews called it "Habu", after the deadly pit viper in Okinawa, Japan. No missile in the world came as close as the North Vietnamese SAM did to catching a Blackbird.

The Lockheed SR-71 and its A-12 predecessor derived from the CIA's 1956 Rainbow Study initiated in recognition of the Lockheed U-2 spy plane's vulnerability to Soviet SAMs. The study stated that a plane capable of surviving SAM systems must have a small radar cross-section, use radar-absorptive materials, operate above 80,000 feet and fly at supersonic speeds. Those requirements far exceeded the aviation and engine technology of the time.

On Aug. 20, 1959, the CIA selected a Lockheed design conceived by the company's Advanced Development Department, aka the Skunk Works, headed by engineer Kelly Johnson. Virtually every aspect of the aircraft had to be developed from scratch. Problems with the Pratt and Whitney J-58 engines delayed the initial A-12 flight until Jan. 15, 1963.

The Air Force's two-seat version, the SR-71, first flew on Dec. 22, 1964. It included a backseat reconnaissance systems officer to operate its electronic surveillance systems, electronic countermeasures equipment, better cameras and ground-mapping radar.

The SR-71 began to replace the CIA's A-12s at Kadena Air Force Base on Okinawa in March 1968 and flew its first mission over North Vietnam on March 21. During the next seven years, Kadena-based SR-71s flew more than 200 missions over North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Only two were lost, and that was because of mechanical failure. The Blackbirds provided the best imagery of the Son Tay prisoner of war camp, supported B-52 raids by jamming enemy radar and conducted sonic booms over the "Hanoi Hilton" POW camp to bolster morale and facilitate the prisoners' intelligence activities.

The SR-71, with upgrades, served the Air Force from 1967 to 1998 and was its only warplane never to suffer a combat loss. Virtually everything about it was a first: the stealth features, computer-assisted avionics, inertial navigation system and engines. The Blackbird's longevity and unequalled combat record marks it as the 20th century's most advanced high-performance aircraft.



**50 Years Ago**

**July 4** - MELVIN EARL NEWLIN, MEDAL OF HONOR.

**July 6** - INFILTRATION SURVEILLANCE CENTER, HO CHI MINH TRAIL MONITORING CENTER, CONSTRUCTED. The Infiltration Surveillance Center, also known as ISC or Task Force Alpha, is constructed at Nakhon Phanom, a northeast province of Thailand. The ISC is the monitoring location for the sensors placed along the Ho Chi Minh Trail as part of Projects IGLOO WHITE. IGLOO WHITE is a ground and air based sensor system designed to detect vehicles moving along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The ISC sifts through the data using sophisticated computers and passes it along to analysts who would then assign air strikes against selected vehicle targets. The ISC also mines data collected by Igloo White to predict the times and routes of future convoys moving along the Ho Chi Minh trail system. The interdiction system is a 24-hour, all-weather operation and requires no ground forces.

**July 11** - THAI QUEEN'S COBRAS DEPLOYED. The Royal Thai Army Volunteer Regiment (the Queen's Cobras) is deployed to South Vietnam in four phases. The engineer company leaves Bangkok by Royal Thai Navy LST on July 11 and arrives July 15. They then travel by convoy to Bearcat to build a base camp. Movement of the advanced party arrives in Bearcat on August 20 and the main body of the Queen's Cobras Regiment arrives between September 19 and 23.

**July 15** - TRAWLER CAPTURED. Cutter Point Orient captured an enemy trawler.

**July 26** - DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POW POLICY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED. To bring strong central direction to the Department of Defense's POW program, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul C. Warnke is given overall supervision of the program. The DoD POW Policy Committee is established to advise and assist him.

**July 29** - USS FORRESTAL ACCIDENT KILLS 134 CREWMEMBERS. While USS Forrestal prepares to launch her second strike of the day off Vietnam a Zuni rocket ignites and shoots across the carrier's flight deck, detonating a bomb beneath an aircraft and causing a series of explosions that rock the ship. Fire engulfs the after end of the flight deck and spreads below decks. All told, 134 members of her crew and embarked air wing are killed and sixty-two more are injured. Twenty-one aircraft are destroyed. Forrestal's combat deployment ends after just three days. This was one of three major accidental fires that occurred on U.S. aircraft carriers during the war. The other fires were on Oriskany on October 26, 1966, and Enterprise on January 14, 1969.

**August 11** - ROY M. WHEAT, MEDAL OF HONOR.

**August 19** - STEPHEN W. PLESS, MEDAL OF HONOR.

**August 26** - GEORGE E. DAY, MEDAL OF HONOR.

**Hartford Vet Center**



25 Elm Street, Suite A  
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Phone: (860)-563-8800  
Fax: (860)-563-8805

We are the people in VA who welcome home war veterans with honor by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.

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**Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.  
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P.O. Box 4136  
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