

Inside This Issue

Chapter/State News

POW/MIA News

At The Capitol

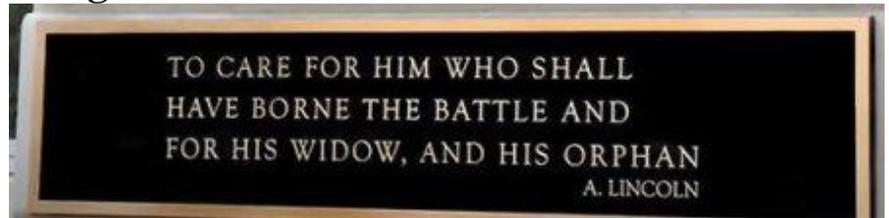
On The Hill

Veterans Affairs News

Remembering Tiger Flight 739

Helping Hands for Our Veterans

New VA Mission Statement recognizes sacred commitment to all Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors



On Thursday Mar.16, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced an updated version of its 1959 mission statement. The new mission statement is: *“To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”*

The new mission statement is inclusive of all those who have served in our nation’s military — including women Veterans — as well as Veteran families, caregivers, and survivors. VA currently serves more than 600,000 women Veterans, the fastest growing cohort of Veterans. VA also serves more than 50,000 Veteran caregivers, more than 600,000 Veteran survivors, and millions of Veterans who did not serve in combat.

In crafting the new mission statement, VA surveyed roughly 30,000 Veterans. Among Veterans surveyed, the new version of VA’s mission statement was chosen over the current version by every age group; by men and by women; by LGBTQ+ Veterans; and by white, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans.

“Whenever any Veteran, family member, caregiver, or survivor walks by a VA facility, we want them to see themselves in the mission statement on the outside of the building,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We are here to serve all Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors — and now, our mission statement reflects exactly that.”

In addition to two rounds of surveys, VA conducted dozens of small-group engagements with Veterans to understand what was most important to them in a VA mission statement, then incorporated that feedback into quantitative research. The new mission statement reflects that VA serves all of the heroes who have served our country, regardless of their race, gender, background, sexual orientation, religion, zip code or identity.

The previous mission statement was: “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise ‘to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan’ by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s veterans.” The previous mission statement is posted in roughly 50% of VA’s facilities. Over the coming months, VA’s new mission statement will replace the previous version.

Meetings

Chapter 120 membership meeting will be held on Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 7:00pm in the Machinists Union Hall, 357 Main St., East Hartford. Elections will also be held at that time. *State and East Hartford COVID-19 guidelines apply.*

The Board of Directors will meet on Thursday, April 27 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 Newsletter Editor at (860) 282-7470, or e-mail the Newsletter Editor at cchapter120@aol.com.

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Chapter/State News

Chapter 120 Elections This Month

Elections for six National Convention delegates and two alternates will be held at the Chapter 120 membership meeting on April 6, 2023. Three members of the Election Committee will also be elected on that date. If you are interested in running for a Delegate to the 2023 National Convention to be held in Orlando, FL on August 8 - 12, you should start planning for your trip and consider expenses necessary to attend the Convention. Historically, Connecticut State Council and Chapter 120 have agreed to assist with the majority of expenses. But that is not guaranteed. If you are interested in a Delegate position or wish to nominate a Chapter member for that position, please contact the Election Committee (Ken Lewis or Tim Siggia). Election Rules are posted below.

Connecticut Chapter 120 Election Rules

Revised November 2, 2006

Section 1. Annual Elections

- The Chapter officers will be elected on even numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term in office. They are the following: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- The Board of Directors will be elected on even numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term of office.
- The State Council Delegates will be elected on even numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term of office.
- The Delegates to the National Convention will be elected on odd numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term in office.
- The three (3) member Election Committee will be elected at the April meeting and will serve a one (1) year term.

Section 2. Candidates

- Candidates must have been a member for a minimum of fifteen (15) days prior to the election.
- Candidates must have on file with the Chapter, or present to the Election Committee their DD-214, or other proof of qualification for membership.
- Candidates may be nominated from the floor on the night of the election. Candidates must be present to accept the nomination or have submitted a letter of intent to the Election Committee.
- Candidates will be allowed space in the newsletter to campaign but not to defame or slander the other candidates. Space allowable will be at the discretion of the Newsletter Editor.
- Candidates will be allowed five (5) minutes to speak at the April meeting if desired.
- Candidates may use the membership list for a mailing pursuant to the Chapter rules and Federal laws governing the membership list.

Section 3. Voters

- To be eligible to vote, you must have been a member for fifteen (15) days prior to the election. This would include new members or reinstated members that are not paid up for the prior year.
- Voting members must have on file with the Chapter, or present to the Nominating Committee, their DD-214 or proof of qualification for membership.
- Voting members must have paid their dues for the current fiscal year. Membership may be renewed the night of the election, but must be paid prior to casting their vote.

Birthday Wishes

Birthday wishes go to our members born in April. May you have many more!

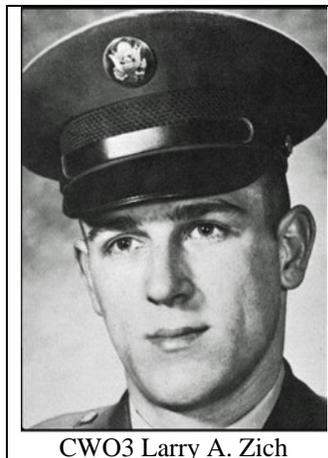
| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Robert Bagge</i> | <i>Arthur Bagnall</i> |
| <i>Stephen Clark</i> | <i>James J. Gavin</i> |
| <i>Steven Harris</i> | <i>Walter Korfel</i> |
| <i>William V. Loder</i> | <i>Nathaniel Milliner</i> |
| <i>Carl Morin</i> | <i>David R. Motowidlak</i> |
| <i>William J. Neligon</i> | <i>John J. Orvis</i> |
| <i>Bruce E. Raccio</i> | <i>Gerald A. Sweeney</i> |
| <i>C. Daniel Thayer, Jr.</i> | |

A special birthday wish to Gary Cutler, son of Chapter member John Cutler.

Section 4. Election Procedures

- A. The voting period will be from the close of nominations until 8:00 PM.
- B. The quorum required to hold the election should be 10 members.
- C. A candidate can request a recount of the ballots for his or her office if the margin between the candidates running for that office is 10% or less based on the number of total votes cast.
- D. The ballots will be kept for one (1) year in a sealed envelope signed by the Election Committee or their appointees.
- E. Results will be announced the night of the election.
- F. If an Election Committee member is running for an elected position, they shall appoint a volunteer vote counter from the floor.
- G. The vote will be taken by a secret paper ballot.

air bases in South Vietnam, an aerial search was initiated but found no sign of the missing aircraft or crew.



CWO3 Larry A. Zich

The Joint Casualty Resolution Center conducted a number of investigation and recovery efforts between 1993 and 2014; a total of twelve investigations were conducted into this loss with negative results. On April 11, 1988, the Defense Intelligence Agency received human remains from a Vietnamese refugee. Reportedly the remains belonged to nine different individuals who died in an aircraft crash and were buried in Quang Nam Province.

Those remains were sent to Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii that same month.

To identify Zich's remains, scientists from DPAA used dental and anthropological analysis. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) analysis.

Zich will be buried in Lincoln, Nebraska on a date yet to be determined. For family and funeral information, contact the Army Casualty Office at (800) 892-2490.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Notifying Chapter 120 of changes to your mailing address and e-mail address is very important if you wish to continue receiving the Chapter newsletter. Over the past few months, several members' newsletters have been returned to us as undeliverable. This means that we will not mail/e-mail future newsletters until a correct address is received.

Please notify the Newsletter Editor of any change of mailing address or e-mail address at ctchapter120@aol.com or leave a voicemail message at 860-282-7470.

At The Capitol

The following Connecticut Veterans Affairs Committee Bills Reported Out in 2023:

- HB05048** - AN ACT CONCERNING THE FEES FOR VETERANS' SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES.
- HB05049** - AN ACT EXEMPTING FROM LICENSING REQUIREMENTS CERTAIN CHILD CARE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN OF MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY.
- HB05205** - AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS AND THE PASSPORT TO THE PARKS MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEE.
- HB05510** - AN ACT INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE IN REFERENCES TO THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.
- HB05511** - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL INCOME TAX DEDUCTION FOR HOME CARE COSTS FOR VETERANS.
- HB06001** - AN ACT CONCERNING AN INDICATION ON MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENSES AND IDENTITY CARDS FOR GOLD STAR FAMILY MEMBERS.
- HB06004** - AN ACT ELIMINATING SERVICE IN TIME OF WAR AS AN ELIGIBILITY CRITERION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS' BENEFITS.
- HB06011** - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL INCOME TAX DEDUCTION FOR MILITARY FUNERAL HONOR GUARD DETAIL COMPENSATION.

POW/MIA News



Soldier Accounted For From Vietnam War

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced on Mar. 17 that U.S. Army Reserve Chief Warrant Officer 3 Larry A. Zich, 24, of Sturgis, South Dakota, killed during the Vietnam War, was accounted for Oct. 25, 2022.

In April 1972, Zich was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 37th Signal Battalion, 1st Signal Brigade. On April 3, a UH-1H Iroquois (tail number 68-16330, call sign "Cavalier 70") with a crew of four, including Zich as the co-pilot. The crew departed from Marble Mountain, Da Nang, South Vietnam, on a combat support mission to Quang Tri City, South Vietnam. During the flight, the pilot told a Hue/Phu Bai Ground Control Approach (GCA) controller that he was lost, and believed they were near Quang Tri. Following the transmission, the GCA controller could not locate the helicopter on the radar, and reported the crew missing. When the helicopter failed to appear at any of the

HB06314 - AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DISCOUNTED HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING LICENSES FOR VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

HB06395 - AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

HJ00022 - RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND HONORING THE MEMBERS OF THE 6888TH CENTRAL POSTAL DIRECTORY BATTALION.

SB00059 - AN ACT CONCERNING FEDERAL VETERANS' BENEFITS AND INCOME ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATIONS FOR CERTAIN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

SB00634 - AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL VETERANS SERVICES.

SB00638 - AN ACT CONCERNING A FEE WAIVER AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD.

SB00642 - AN ACT CREDITING MILITARY TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE TOWARD CERTAIN LICENSES RELATED TO SUBSURFACE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.

SB00643 - AN ACT CONCERNING A REVIEW OF MUNICIPAL OPTION TAX RELIEF FOR VETERANS.

SB01128 - AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR VETERANS.

SB01131 - AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES AND DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR CERTAIN FORMER MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD.

SB01132 - AN ACT EXCLUDING VETERANS' DISABILITY PAYMENTS FROM INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN STATE BENEFITS.

SJ00012 - RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND HONORING VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR WHO WERE EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE.

For details of each bill/resolution, go to:

https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/CommJFList.asp?comm_code=va

On The Hill



House Sends 4 Bipartisan Veterans' Bills to the Senate

On March 9, Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.), the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, released the following statement after the House passed four veterans' bills this week:

"House Republicans work has only just begun to create a better Department of Veterans Affairs for the men and women who have served. Which is why I was proud to see four bipartisan veterans' bills pass the House this week, especially my

bill, the VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act. This legislation is a step in the right direction toward bringing the VA into the 21st century and will ensure VA hospitals are safe by improving medical waste processes where need be. Veteran patients deserve to know that the medical centers they trust with their care are clean and modern, my bill will help VA do exactly that," said Chairman Bost. "Each of the additional bills that we passed this week will also improve the lives of our veterans by ensuring parity between active-duty servicemembers and veterans who are pursuing higher education, and by covering emergency room medical expenses for veterans who are newly enrolled in VA healthcare. These adjustments are long overdue, and I look forward to seeing the Senate send these proposals to President Biden's desk."

The following bills were passed out of the House this week:

H.R. 502, To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays members of the Armed Forces for certain contributions made by such members towards Post-9/11 Educational Assistance, and for other purposes. (Rep. Banks)

H.R. 815, the RELIEVE Act, as amended. (Rep. McMorris Rodgers)

H.R. 753, VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act, as amended. (Rep. Bost)

H.R. 1226, the Wounded Warrior Access Act, as amended. (Rep. Aguilar)

Veterans Affairs News



From Connecting Vets

President Biden proposes 5 percent increase to VA budget

President Joe Biden's budget proposal includes a request for a more than 5 percent increase in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs in the upcoming

fiscal year.

The total FY 2024 budget request for VA is \$325.1 billion, a \$16.6 billion increase over the FY 2023 enacted level, the White House announced on Thursday.

"With these historic investments, we at VA can continue to deliver more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before in our nation's history," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough said in a statement.

The proposal includes a discretionary budget request of \$142.8 billion, a \$3 billion increase over FY 2023. The 2024 mandatory funding request is \$182.3 billion, an increase of \$13.6 billion above 2023.

It requests \$20.3 billion in 2024 to fund the PACT ACT, legislation signed last year that expands VA health care and

benefits to veterans across all eras who were exposed to toxins as a result of their military service. Under the proposal, the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund would receive \$15.3 billion above its 2023 funding for health care, research and benefits delivery associated with exposure to environmental hazards for veterans and their survivors.

“About \$17 billion of that is for health care and health care accounts, medical services, community care, medical support and compliance,” Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer of VA Jon J. Rychalski told reporters Thursday.

VA officials earlier said that more than 300,000 PACT-Act-related claims have been filed and an additional 161,000 veterans have signed up for health care and services as a result of the legislation.



The budget also proposes \$16.6 billion for mental health efforts, including suicide prevention, up from \$15 billion in 2023. That includes \$559 million for veteran suicide prevention outreach programs and an estimated \$2.5 billion in suicide-specific medical treatment.

It also earmarks \$3.1 billion to provide homeless veterans and veterans at risk of homelessness with permanent housing, access to health care and other supportive services.

The proposal also invests \$257 million in women’s health and childcare programs to increase access to infertility counseling and assisted reproductive technology, eliminate copayments for contraceptive coverage and support full-time women veteran program managers at all 172 VA medical centers.

The budget also sets aside \$4.1 billion in discretionary and mandatory spending for construction to begin restoring VA’s aging infrastructure as well as a \$5 billion investment in discretionary medical care funding for non-recurring maintenance to improve medical facility infrastructure.

“This year we are requesting some of our infrastructure funding, both major and minor, as mandatory, \$1.9 billion,” added Rychalski. “That is something a little different that we haven’t done before.”

The proposal also asks for \$1.6 billion for VA’s electronic health record modernization effort and for \$2.4 billion for its Caregiver Support Program. The current fiscal year ends on Sept. 30, giving Congress several months to iron out a spending plan for FY 2024.

From Connecting Vets

VA has goal of finding housing for 38,000 by end of 2023



The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a goal of placing 38,000 homeless veterans into permanent housing by the end of 2023.

That is the same number of homeless veterans VA committed to finding housing for in 2022. Executive Director of the Veteran Health Administration’s Homeless Programs Office Monica Diaz said permanent housing was found for over 40,401 homeless veterans last year, exceeding the VA’s goal of finding housing for 38,000 veterans by 6 percent.

“One homeless veteran will always be one homeless veteran too many,” she told reporters during a roundtable session on Wednesday, Mar. 15.

Diaz said of veterans housed by VA in 2022, 2,443 returned to homelessness at some point last year. But, she said with the help of VA staff and community partners, 86% of those veterans were rehoused or on a path to rehousing by the end of the year.

Diaz also said there are several reasons why veterans may return to homelessness after being placed into permanent housing, such as financial hardship and illness.

“And of those who return to homelessness, we are committed for at least 90 percent are rehoused or on a path to rehousing by the end of 2023,” she said.

VA is also committed to engaging with at least 28,000 unsheltered veterans to help them obtain housing and other wraparound services such as health care, job training, legal and education assistance, Diaz said. This goal represents a more than 10% increase in the number of unsheltered veterans reached during 2022.

The annual Point in Time count, held early last year by VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, showed there were 33,136 veterans who were experiencing homelessness in the United States — down from 37,252 in 2020.

“We are making real progress in the fight to end Veteran homelessness, but even one Veteran experiencing homelessness is one too many,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough in a

statement. "We will not rest until every veteran has a safe, stable place to call home in this country they fought to defend."

VA also announced specific goals for combating veteran homelessness in the Greater Los Angeles area. VA set a goal of providing permanent housing to 1,500 homeless veterans in LA during 2022, but fell short of that number, placing 1,301 vets into permanent housing.

LA has the largest number of homeless veterans of any city in the country. Diaz said this year VA is committed to providing at least 1,500 permanent housing placements to and conducting at least 1,888 engagements with unsheltered veterans to help them obtain housing and other wraparound services.

Veterans who are at risk of homelessness can contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-424-3838.

From Military.com

VA Asks for Historic \$4.1 Billion for Construction as Agency Weighs Closing Some Aging Medical Facilities

The Department of Veterans Affairs' \$325 billion fiscal 2024 budget proposal includes \$4.1 billion for construction -- the largest request ever for the category as the department struggles to maintain aging hospitals, some more than 100 years old.

According to VA budget documents, the funding would be used to update 10 health facilities that "lack resiliency and sustainability." Yet the request comes as the department continues an ongoing assessment of all its properties, many with equally urgent repair or upgrade needs.

The VA rolled out most of the details of its fiscal 2024 budget request last week, the largest ever for the department, representing a 5% increase from this year's approved budget request.

The \$4.1 billion request for construction includes \$3.01 billion for 10 medical facilities and two cemetery projects, and \$1.08 billion to 76 new minor construction projects.

The 10 VA facilities that would receive major construction funds are in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Portland, Oregon; American Lake, Washington; Perry Point, Maryland; El Paso, Texas; **West Haven, Connecticut**; Dallas; San Francisco; San Diego; and St. Louis.

In at least one of the facilities, West Haven, hazards have been known for years: In the months leading up to a steam pipe explosion in 2020 that killed two workers, employees had complained of unsafe or unsanitary conditions such as burst pipes and insect infestations.

And work already is underway at several other facilities on the list, such as an expansion of a clinic in San Juan.

But a comprehensive review of all VA properties that is deemed vital to supporting the VA's long-term building plan has yet to

be completed, leaving the department without guidance for modernizing its health system in the coming decades.



During a roundtable with reporters in January, VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Shereef Elhanal did not give a timeline for the review to be completed, saying that the process is taking into account not only the effects of the pandemic but the impact of the landmark toxic exposure legislation, the PACT Act, which was signed into law last year.

A year ago this week, the VA released the results of a years-long comprehensive asset and infrastructure review, recommending to a congressionally mandated Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission that 30 new hospitals and 225 clinics and other facilities be built, while 17 medical centers and dozens of aging or underused clinics be closed.

But the recommendations met harsh pushback from lawmakers, veterans, advocacy groups and VA employees, and the AIR Commission, which was to review the VA recommendations and draft a final report on VA health facility modernization, was disbanded after the Senate refused to confirm President Joe Biden's nominees for the panel.

Given that experience, Elnahal said the VA is conducting a nationwide review of every health care market in its system and will not consider any closures until it identifies the location and need for new facilities, what he called the "build agenda."

"We can focus much more diligently and upfront on the build agenda. That was always part of the plan, even under the AIR Commission; we can focus on the infrastructure that needs to exist in the first instance, before talking about closures of old facilities," Elnahal said.

He added that closing facilities would be a "secondary matter," but said they may occur, especially in facilities that lacked demand or were unsafe.

Congress tends to look favorably on the VA budget and historically has passed it, and even added to it, given the bipartisan support for veterans care and benefits. This year, however, agency officials may see some opposition because of the vast expansion of benefits under the PACT Act, as well as

issues with modernization, including health care facilities and health infrastructure technology.

In January, Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, introduced legislation that would require the VA to furnish a concrete plan for infrastructure modernization, as well as a budget that includes renovating or selling off old buildings.

And last week, after the release of Biden's \$6.8 trillion budget proposal, House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., called out the VA for what he called "complicated accounting gimmicks" in its budget proposal.

Roughly half of the VA's construction budget request falls under mandatory spending instead of discretionary funds -- a first that department officials say is allowable because the VA has a requirement to complete projects -- but is likely to be questioned by Bost's committee.

"Just like Republicans predicted last year, the Toxic Exposure Fund has less and less to do with supporting toxic-exposed veterans, and more to do with creating a bookkeeping disaster," Bost said, referring to the fund established under the PACT Act to consolidate monies allocated for exposure-related expenses and benefits and concerns expressed last year that the legislation vastly expanded mandatory spending, leaving Congress with little control over a substantial portion of the VA budget.

VA officials said Friday Mar.10 that the switch of construction dollars from mandatory to discretionary funds are part of an overall strategy to fund facility investment.

"The need for funding and investment in facilities is only going to increase, and this is one of the ways the administration thinks we might be able to get to that issue, starting now," said Andrew McIlroy, the VA's deputy assistant secretary for budget.

In comparison, the Defense Department's fiscal 2024 budget proposal for construction, requests four times the VA amount -- \$16.7 billion, including \$1.5 billion for medical buildings and quality-of-life builds like fitness centers and recreational facilities, and \$1.9 billion for housing.

Remembering those lost in the Tiger Flight Line 739 crash, 61 years later

Sixty-one years ago on March 16, 1962, Flying Tiger Line Flight 739 and its crew departed on a secret mission sanctioned by President John Kennedy, to fly to Vietnam.

However, the reconnaissance mission went missing with no trace of the plane or its passengers ever found. Onboard were 93 United States Army soldiers and 11 civilian crewmembers.

"The flight went down five months before I was born," said Jan Stephens, whose father, SFC Lindsay Hester, was onboard the flight.

The names of those lost have not yet been added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. Presently, the only monument that bears their names was erected by a private citizen, Wreaths Across America founder Morrill Worcester, on his balsam tip land in Columbia Falls, Maine.

"When I first heard the story about this mission, I was shocked to learn that nothing has been done for these families," he said. "I said that day, that we would do something to make sure these people are honored and remembered, and to hopefully give some closure to these families."

At 12 p.m. ET on Thursday March 16, Wreaths Across America held a special live ceremony to remember all those lost that day and honor their families.



With help from the Internet in the 1990s, Stephens began searching for more information on the flight.

"Everything I found was redacted," she explained. "There was a second flight on the mission. Both flights crashed. The plane my father was on only carried personnel and they were all lost between Guam and the Philippines."

The aircraft departed from Travis Air Force in California. Those aboard were handpicked by Kennedy from military battalions across the country and sent over to do "who knows what," said Stephens.

"The personnel flight went towards Hawaii and the other flight went towards the Aleutian Islands, where it crashed," she said.

Flight 739 experienced so much mechanical trouble on its trip from California to Hawaii that it was on the ground for six hours instead of the quick refueling stop it had been scheduled for. Nothing mechanical could be found, so it took off and headed for Guam. Stephens said eyewitnesses later recounted seeing the soldiers kiss the ground upon landing.

"When it left there after refueling it was about two hours out and they lost contact," she continued. "There was an explosion in the sky and an oil freighter saw it, immediately changed course and headed towards where they thought it was."

No debris or oil slick was found where the plane went down over the Mariana Trench in the western Pacific Ocean, Stephens said.

“Tiger Flight 739 was one of the 4 largest search and rescue missions in FAA history,” she explained. “It was one of the longest also. They never found anything.”

Stephens said her mom was the quintessential Army wife and was a member of many spouses' clubs.

“They were mid-30s when they got pregnant and that was me,” she said. “They were married for a long time and she finally got pregnant with me.”

Stephens’ mother never spoke of her father, finding the loss too painful.

“I had aunts and uncles that knew him that told me things, all good things,” she said.

The inscription on the FTLF 739 monument in Maine reads:

“Missing in action; Presumed dead. Flying Tiger Line Flight 739 went missing on March 16, 1962, with 93 U.S. Army soldiers on board. These men and their flight crew perished in what would become one of the biggest aviation mysteries out of the Vietnam War era. The names of those who gave their lives and who remain missing are inscribed here so that they will be said aloud and their memory will live on.”

Helping Hands for Our Fellow Veterans

Won't You Please Give a Helping Hand to a Brother or Sister Veteran?

Several veterans have contacted Chapter 120 asking for help in paying the most basic of needs for themselves and their families. These veterans are those who do not qualify for regular federal, state or local assistance – they fall into that financial category where they make too much to qualify for assistance, but not enough to afford basic needs for their families, like food, fuel for heat, or clothing for their children.

Chapter 120 has decided to ask you – our members – to lend a helping hand to your fellow veterans and their families. Even a small amount of \$5 can make a difference – or more if you can afford to help a fellow veteran and his or her family.

Please send your generous gift, made out to Connecticut Chapter 120, to:

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Connecticut Chapter 120
Attention: Helping Hands for Veterans
P.O. Box 4136
Hartford, CT 06145

And don't forget, your donations are tax deductible.

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 May 2023 newsletter is 21 April 2023. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

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