

# The AMERICAN LEGION

# Department of France



Volume 13 / Issue 2

February 2015



## DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

James Settle

My Fellow Legionaries

I was invited to, and attended John Wayne Post GR79's ceremony event on 11 January 2015, honoring the 30th anniversary of three soldiers' who died in a missile mishap on 11 January 1985, at Red Leg Waldheide Heilbronn. The ceremony was done with respect and honored those fallen warriors of the COLD WAR.

Kaiserslautern Post GR01 will have a farewell dinner for Vice Commander Stephen Ward, on the 2nd of February 2015. Vice Commander Ward has been reassigned to the United States, and will depart Germany on or about the 8th of February 2015. Vice Commander Ward will be sorely missed within the Department of France, we thank Vice Commander Ward for his support to the Department of France over the last several years, and wish him and his family the best of luck in their new duty assignment.

The Departments next big event will be the Department Oratorical Contest, which will be held on Patch Barracks (Stuttgart), at the Patch high School Forum on the 21st of February 2015 (Hosted by Stuttgart Post GR06). The event starts at 1300 hours. Contestants should be on site not later than 1230 hours. Those Post's that have contestants please ensure that you contact the Department Adjutant with contestants names, also please ensure that you have completed the Department winner forms prior to the event. If you have the time I encourage you to attend this event and see for yourself our possible future leaders in action.

The Department 3rd DEC will be held in Kitzingen at GR30's Post Home on 21 March 2015, the Department Adjutant should be sending out the call shortly, with exact location of

the Post Home. Make sure your delegates have a delegates letter or they will not be allowed to vote on any motions presented.

It is time for Post Commanders and Adjutants to start working on their proposed Awards. The Awards packets are due to the Awards Chairman, Comrade Brown not later than 18 April 2015. the Awards Committee will meet on the 25th of April 2015 in Heilbronn. If your Awards packets are completed they can be turned in during the 3rd DEC in Kitzingen in March.

On 31st of January 2015 members of GR06, along with department officers conducted a membership drive at the P.X on Panzer Kaserne from 1000 till 1700 hours. The membership drive was a success, and GR06 even had a few of their current members renew for 2015.

### **Important information...**

The Department Sergeant-at-Arms/POW/MIA Chairman Comrade Hal Rittenberg(Post GR09)had to resign due to health reasons. I have appointed Comrade Christopher Buchanan (Post GR1982)to perform these duties until the Department Convention. We wish Comrade Rittenberg a speedy recovery, and wish him and his family the very best in the future.

I also had to appoint Comrade Keith Abernathy (Post GR13) to perform the duties of the Department Judge Advocate. This appointment was necessary due to Comrade George Seeburger Post GR14) reporting to POST EVERLASTING, on the 30th of December 2014. These appointments need to be ratified at the next DEC.

In closing, Please stay safe and watch out for one another. Please keep those in harm's way and their families, in your thoughts and prayers also.

James M. Settle  
Department Commander

Phone: 07138-67359

E-Mail: james.settle@kabelbw.de

The Department Web Page is: [www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org](http://www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org)

The department has a Face Book page at the following [www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance](http://www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance). Please visit and like this page. Thanks



## Department Officers - 2015 Membership Year

<b>COMMANDER</b> <b>James M. Settle GR42</b> <a href="mailto:james.settle@kabelbw.de">james.settle@kabelbw.de</a>	<b>ADJUTANT</b> <b>Maxwell Rice GR79</b> <a href="mailto:colwichboy@yahoo.com">colwichboy@yahoo.com</a>	<b>NECMAN</b> <b>John Miller GR1982</b> <a href="mailto:miller-roth@t-online.de">miller-roth@t-online.de</a>	<b>ALT. NECMAN</b> <b>Liam Kane IR63</b> <a href="mailto:commliam@gmail.com">commliam@gmail.com</a>
<b>VICE COMMANDER AT LARGE</b> <b>Joe D. Brown GR79</b> GR03 GR07 GR13 GR30 GR42 & New Post Development <a href="mailto:Joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com">Joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com</a>	<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <b>Stephen Ward GR01</b> GR20 PO01 FR05 SP292 IR63 <a href="mailto:wardtrans@yahoo.com">wardtrans@yahoo.com</a>	<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <b>Quincy Foster GR05</b> GR01 GR02 GR14 FR01 IT01 <a href="mailto:achange@qcfoster.com">achange@qcfoster.com</a>	<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <b>Jerry Aman GR09</b> GR06 GR1982 CH01 GC01 IR02 BE02 IR03 <a href="mailto:Jerrya503@aol.com">Jerrya503@aol.com</a>
<b>VICE COMMANDER</b> <b>Casby Logan GR07</b> GR05 GR09 GR45 GR79 DK01 NL01 <a href="mailto:casbyj@hotmail.com">casbyj@hotmail.com</a>	<b>CHAPLAIN</b> <b>Ronald Moore GR05</b> <a href="mailto:gypsy_moore@yahoo.de">gypsy_moore@yahoo.de</a>	<b>HISTORIAN</b> <b>Michael Keating IR02</b> <a href="mailto:michael.keating@t-online.de">michael.keating@t-online.de</a>	<b>FINANCE OFFICER</b> <b>Gary Miller GR06</b> <a href="mailto:billsfan_gary@hotmail.com">billsfan_gary@hotmail.com</a>
<b>SERVICE OFFICER</b> <b>George Hall GR03</b> <a href="mailto:hallgt@hotmail.com">hallgt@hotmail.com</a>	<b>JUDGE ADVOCATE</b> Keith Abernathy GR79 <a href="mailto:keithabernathy1942@yahoo.com">keithabernathy1942@yahoo.com</a>		<b>SERGEANT-AT-ARMS</b> <b>Christopher Buchanan GR1982</b> <a href="mailto:christoperbuch@hotmail.com">christoperbuch@hotmail.com</a>

To all Department of France Officers, Past Department Commanders,  
 Post Commanders and Delegates, Committee Chairpersons  
 and Program Directors...

The Third Department DEC is planned for 21 March 2015 and  
 it will be hosted by GR30 / GR42

*The Official Call will be sent out at a later date*



For God and Country,

Mike Helm  
American Legion National Commander

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,

Because of its dedicated members, The American Legion is the nation's largest and most powerful veterans service organization.

Strength in numbers allows us to fight for – and win – legislation benefitting veterans on Capitol Hill. Our large membership fulfills vital missions on behalf of veterans and active-duty servicemembers in every community across our great nation. It is the combined strength of the Legion, Auxiliary, Riders and Sons of The American Legion that honor those who served in ways no one else can – from laying flowers at gravesites to raising funds to help military families in need.

Our programs to support veterans, mentor youth and provide for military families facing hardships would not be as successful without strong and vibrant membership. But don't take just my word for it. Consider the impact that The American Legion has:

- Sarah Ball, a disabled Army veteran, lost everything when her home was destroyed by a tornado in Oklahoma. The Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program helped her and her fellow veterans recover from the disaster. "Without the assistance, I would not have been able to put coats on my kids' backs. I don't know what we would have done for food if the Temporary Financial Assistance wasn't there."
- For the past 32 years, the Department of Idaho American Legion Family has provided three state veterans homes with nearly \$1.5 million in food and funds. Around Veterans Day every year, a convoy of trucks and cars delivers a bounty of food to all the state veterans homes. "This has been a Legion

Family event since its first year, and it's a tradition that's looked forward to," said Idaho Department Commander Michael Thurlow, who has been involved with the convoy for the past 18 years. "We are very proud of this event; this is how we in Idaho choose to take care of our veterans."

- Army veteran Steve Brauss has been a member of American Legion Post 53 in Buckeye, Ariz., for 14 years. "I knew the Legion did a lot of good things, and so I wanted to join," he said. "They provide us a voice with legislation, and they are great with helping the community. That's one of the reasons I'm still involved because they feed soldiers and their families before a deployment. The Legion is a great benefit to the Arizona National Guard."

These are just some of the success stories that happen every day, thanks to members of The American Legion. If you haven't renewed for this year, I strongly encourage you to do so. Renewing is easy. Simply visit [www.legion.org/renew](http://www.legion.org/renew) to get the process started.

Your membership plays a critical role in sustaining American Legion programs, such as those that provide comfort items for wounded servicemembers, scholarships and programs for young people, as well as immediate financial assistance for veterans coping with the aftermath of natural disaster or economic trouble. Our ability to continue doing what we do – one family and community at a time – depends entirely on you and your continued membership.

Your continued membership is so very important to keep our programs and services strong. If you have not renewed please do so [now](#). Thank you if you are a current member. Please help us by reaching out to get your comrades to also renew.



***Doug Haggan...***

*National Vice Commander/ FODPAL Secretary/ Past Department of France Commander*

Guys and Gals

From the Northeast Region, We had a trying two months, but we are coming through it with flying colors and are now showing a positive upswing. I want to thank you for your hard work and support that you have given to all of the American Legion Programs, for without YOU we would not have an American Legion.

YOU GUYS ROCK !  
Thank You

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## DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE PAST COMMANDERS CLUB

Congratulations to Casby Logan as being elected PCC President  
For the remaining 2015 Membership Year

Who is illegible to join the Department of France Past Commanders Club?

**PAST AND PRESENT** Department Commanders, Department Vice Commanders At Large,  
Department Vice Commanders, Post Commanders, SAL Detachment Commanders, SAL  
Squadron Commanders, Auxiliary Department Presidents, Auxiliary Unit Presidents...*so if you  
were just voted into office you are illegible to join*

Initial dues for the Past Commanders Club is only \$25.00 which will entitle the new member to a Past  
Commanders Club cap, Past Commanders Club pin and membership card

Renewal dues for the Past Commanders Club is only \$10.00

Our next meeting will be on 21 March 2015 at the Third Legion DEC

**HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE...** *David Greaux, PCC Secretary "2015"*

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**DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER AT LARGE /**

**MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN *Joe D. Brown***



Heilbronn Oberbürgermeister Harry Mergel and Polizeihauptkomisar Patrick Fuchs



Stuttgart army at Red LEG



Members from GR79

**LEST WE FORGET**

Today is cold and windy but there is no snow as was here on this date 30 years ago. It was cold and snowy on January 11, 1985, when a Pershing II rocket motor accidentally ignited here on the U.S. Military installation at Fort Red Leg upon the Waldheide in Heilbronn. The explosion killed three American Soldiers, SSG John Leach; SGT Todd A. Zephier; and PFC Darryl L. Shirley and seriously injured nine others. The final investigation said electrostatic buildup caused the rocket fuel to ignite.

We, members of John Wayne Post #79 have gathered today to honor those that have paid the ultimate price for freedom. Also present today are active duty soldiers; the Lord Mayor of Heilbronn; the Department of France Commander and Auxiliary President. First respondents such as the local police, firemen, and veterans of different nationalities and organizations are also paying their respect as well as members of the local communities of Heilbronn.

Thirty years ago the Heilbronn community was the home away from home for many American soldiers to include the three soldiers to whom we pay respect today. This spot remains their bivouac area, their home away from home, their resting place. As the flag is raised above their names, we salute and wish for renewed strength and power to preserve all for which they died. As we stand here today, we pledge anew the flame of valor, love, and honor which shall never be extinguished. We plead for renewed strength and power to preserve all for which they died.

The next 30 minutes was filled with different speakers that spoke emotionally of the three soldiers, Fort Red Leg, and conditions after its closure. There were moments when speakers touched on things that in some cases warmed the attendees and in other cases heated them. As the meeting drew to a close, we realize once again that the tragedy that happened here 30 years ago had bitter sweet ending. It was bitter in that some had to die and sweeter because the cold war ended and the wall came down and many found a freedom they had never known before.

Finally, the ceremony came to a close and people began to depart. They, as did we, had gathered here today to pay tribute to those who have made the supreme sacrifice. The stone and bronze that marks the dwelling place of SSG Leach; SGT Zephier; and PFC Shirley lay silent as we walk by. "Because of your sacrifice, many have found new freedom. We will be back.

Commander  
Charlie Brown

Chaplain  
Wilson Bailey

**LEST WE FORGE**



**DEPARTMENT VICE  
COMMANDER**  
*Stephen A. Ward*

Greetings, Commander's & Legionnaires,

As the Department of France Vice Commander, I have been assigned the following Posts:

John F. Kennedy Post IR63 Facebook site: [www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionIRL](http://www.facebook.com/AmericanLegionIRL) Eifel Post GR-20, Riveria Post FR-05, Madrid Post SP-292, and Portugal (Nunv Alvares Pereira) Post PO-01. Doug Haggan (FODPAL Secretary) is asking the Department and Posts to submit pictures and small articles to the FODPAL website: <http://www.legion.org> Click Members FODPAL site listed at Quick Links. FODPAL (Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion) is asking for special programs & events and Facebook sites. The Department of France Newsletters is posted on the FODPAL website. Click Newsletters. Also, listed in the FODPAL Newsletter site is Lisbon Portugal Post PO01. It's listed in the FODPAL site: [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) Click Members Click FODPAL Click Newsletters.

Irish Veterans Charter #1 plans to dedicate (tentative April 17-19, 2015) to the memory of U.S. SEAL Lt. Michael P. Murphy, Medal of Honor, Killed in Action Afghanistan, 2005. His parents from the States plans to bring the MOH at the dedication ceremony. A special evening dinner is planned at the White House Hotel town of Kinsale (West Cork). The Irish Veterans Charter #1 plans to establish Irish Veterans International Research & Heritage Centre in the town of Kinsale, Ireland. Commander Ron Howko (Commodore John Barry Post IR-03) is a guest speaker at the event. For more information of the event, contact Declan

Hughes Declan@irishveteans.org or James Sikora james@irishveterans.org

I stress the importance of membership in the Posts, Department, and the National Organization. Membership is our Voice on Capitol Hill. I encourage the Posts to transmit each month to the Department Membership Chairman (Joe Dan Brown). Check out the Online Renewal at: [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

The Kaiserslautern Post GR01 has sent the registration/hotel form (Department of France Convention) to the Department Adjutant (Rice) and VCAL Brown. If you require the registration/hotel form, please contact the Kaiserslautern Post Adjutant (Janice Lukacsko). Its listed on the Kaiserslautern Post website: [www.kaiserslauternamericanlegion.org](http://www.kaiserslauternamericanlegion.org) Please Commanders & Comrades, don't wait till the last minute to register.

Commanders & Fellow Legionnaires, many thanks for what you do for your Posts and the communities you serve. The Department of France Commander asks to continue membership and Post Renewals. Retention maintains strong membership within the Posts, Department, and the Organization. The Good Fellow Award must be submitted to the Department of France before the 3rd DEC. It's a Recognition Award to a non-member of the Organization who had demonstrated outstanding service (Volunteer work) to the Legion Post. Please prepare the students for the Oratorical Contest (Department level, February 2015), Boy State and Girl State candidate. With a sad note, the family and I will be departing Germany to the States (8 Feb.15) I have been re-assigned to William Beaumont Army Medical Center (El Paso, Texas). I will greatly miss the Commanders and Comrades (Department of France) and Posts. God Bless America.

### **Sons of The American Legion**

The Sons of The American Legion membership for 2015 currently stands at 219,275 members or 61.2% on January 14, 2015. At present, the Sons are running 12,767 members ahead this same date last year.

Thirty-two detachments have already achieved 60% membership for this next target goal.

The winter edition of the Sons National Update Newsletter has been printed and mailed on December 30<sup>th</sup> to all Sons members. The next SAL membership target date is January 21 which will be their 60% membership goal.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> SAL renewal postcard mailing is scheduled for late January subsequent to the January membership target date.



## DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER

### Jerry Aman

On 13 January I accepted GR 1982's standing invitation and attended their monthly General Membership meeting, chaired by Post Commander Will Godard.

As always there was a good turnout and everyone demonstrated a sincere interest in the meeting and the activities of their post. In typical GR 1982 fashion whenever the comment "We need some individuals to assist ...." hands were quickly raised and generally there were more volunteers than needed. Those Legionnaires who one can always count on volunteered but it was encouraging to see that some "new faces in attendance" also offered their support.

As a result of Past Commander Buchanan's efforts, the Ansbach Middle School offered their full support for the Department's Oratorical Contest and three students participated. In addition to the chance to participate in the Department's contest GR 1982 also rewarded the candidates by giving the 1<sup>st</sup> place winner a prize of \$100, 2<sup>nd</sup> place \$75 and 3<sup>rd</sup> with \$50. This was not the reason these students volunteered but rather their genuine interest in taking part in this important Americanism contest.

Although GR 1982 is able to operate with minimum advice from Department they always welcome and appreciate the visit of a Department Officer. During the part of the meeting "For the Good the Legion" I could not help but again compliment the post on their support of American Legion programs and that "GR 1982's activities exemplifies what the American Legion is all about; Supporting youth, Service members, and Veterans".

## *Post Everlasting*



*Department Judge Advocate Comrade George W. Seeburger reported to PEL on 30 December 2014. Comrade Seeburger was a long time member of GR14, and SAL Squadron GR14.*

*I sadly report the death of Ronald Jordan, a longtime member of Thomas W. Barnett Post GR14.*

*I regret to inform you that Rev. Paul Freemesser; a Life Member of Paris Post 1 transferred to Post Everlasting.*



## DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN *Ronald Moore*

Greetings Comrades,  
Greetings Sisters and Brothers  
of the American Legion  
Family,

The above greeting sends a warm feeling through me as I contemplate on all of the family I have in The American Legion. Comrades are those women and men who have served our great Nation in the military, including Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard and WWII Merchant Marines. Add their family members and then you see how large our family really is. Funnily enough though, I keep meeting people who are qualified to be members of The American Legion Family through their own service or service performed by relatives and guess what? They aren't members. Just ask, "Did you serve? Did your husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, sister, stepfather, stepmother or stepbrother serve?" If they answer yes, sign them up, not as a selling point, but as a privilege because of their service to our country.

I know the Department Chaplain isn't supposed to sound like the Membership Chairmen in our

organizations, but just as a pastor cares for his flock, a chaplain also has to find lost sheep and bring them into the fold. We enjoy our association together for God and Country, so why shouldn't we share that with our "lost" Sisters and Brothers. Just ask, and have that application ready.

Let us ensure that every returning veteran knows that we appreciate his or her service and let them know they have a place where they have friends and a caring ear. Tell them about the American Legion family and accept them into our fold with no hesitation or doubt.

The Four Chaplains Sunday is on February 1, 2015. In memory of the sacrifice given by the Four Chaplains, I hope each Post will hold a special service in their honor. Let us also remember our servicewomen and men who are serving in our defense. We ask that God bless them and I pray that He may also bless you and your families for helping them.

**Rev. Ronald Moore, Chaplain**  
**Department of France**  
**Detachment of France**  
**Mobile: 0049-(0)172-7417812**  
**Email: gypsy\_moore@yahoo.de**

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**Special Days/Legion Events:** Abraham Lincoln and George Washington birthdays; Americanism Month; 1<sup>st</sup> - Four Chaplains Sunday; 14<sup>th</sup> - St. Valentine's Day; 21-25 DC Conference.

**Christian Religious Days:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Candlemas/Presentation of Christ in the Temple; 15<sup>th</sup> - Meatfare; 18<sup>th</sup> - Ash Wednesday-Beginning of Lent; 23<sup>rd</sup> - Beginning of Lent (Orthodox).

**Jewish Holidays (Year 5775):** 3<sup>rd</sup> Tu B'shvat

**Islamic Holidays:** None that I know of.

**Other:** 19<sup>th</sup> - Chinese New Year

Please visit the church, temple, synagogue or mosque of your choice.

### **Post Everlasting reported in January:**

George Seeburger, GR14, Department Judge Advocate and GR14 Past Post Commander

Father Paul Freemesser, PUFL member FR01

Father-in-Law of James Dennis, GR30

### **Prayers for the Sick & Ill:**

James Settle, GR42, Department of France Commander

Joe D. "Charlie" Brown, GR79 Department of France Vice Commander at Large

George Hall, GR03, Department of France Service Officer

Chuck Wilson, BE02 and WWII Vet

are undergoing, were undergoing or were scheduled for, medical treatment.

No other deaths or other illnesses were reported to me, but we continue to pray for those comrades, family members and friends of the Legion who have passed away or are ill.

# The American Legion

## National High School Oratorical Contest

### *"A constitutional speech contest"*

The American Legion Oratorical Contest exists to develop deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution among high school students. Since 1938, the program has presented participants with an academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities, the history of our nation's laws, the ability to think and speak clearly, and an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.

Young orators earn some of the most generous college scholarships available to high school students. Over \$138,000 in scholarships can be awarded each year. The overall national contest winner gets an \$18,000 scholarship. Second place takes home \$16,000, and third gets \$14,000. Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the national contest's first round receives a \$1,500 scholarship. Those who advance past the first round receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship. The American Legion's National Organization awards the scholarships, which can be used at any college or university in the United States. High school students under age 20 are eligible.

Speaking subjects must be on some aspect of the U.S. Constitution, with some emphasis on the duties and obligations of citizens to our government. Speeches are eight to 10 minutes long; three- to five-minute speeches on an assigned topic also are part of the contest.

### ***The Prepared Oration***

The oration must be on some aspect of the Constitution, with emphasis on a citizen's duties and obligations to our government. The same subject and oration used in the department contest must be used in the national contest.

Contestants may have a copy of their prepared oration while waiting in the first holding room. They may consult the copy until they exit to begin the contest. The copy will then be surrendered to the contest official monitoring the first holding room.

Quotations must always be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally.

It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases in a foreign language to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. It should be understood that the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must still be delivered in English. Singing is not permitted and will result in immediate disqualification. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song(s) provided proper attribution is made.

### ***Assigned Topics***

The assigned topic discourse must not consume less than three (3) minutes or more than five (5) minutes for delivery. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution.

### **Assigned Topics for 2015 Oratorical Contest**

#### **Amendment 5**

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

#### **Amendment 6**

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining Witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

#### **Amendment 8**

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

## **Amendment 19**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

## ***Rules and Regulations***

### **Eligibility**

Eligible participants must be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States. All contestants must be bona fide students herein described as any student under the age of 20 years on the date of the national contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private or home school). The curriculum of the school must be considered to be of high school level, commencing with grade 9 and terminating with grade 12. Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school during the time of participation at any level of The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest. Contestants must either be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department that they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition through only one department.

High school students that graduate early during the school year are eligible to compete if they are not enrolled in a college, university, trade school or other institution of higher learning at the time of the department finals contest.

The three finalists of the national contest are ineligible for further participation at any level.

### **Regulations**

The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand or any manner of prompting is not permitted. Props are not permitted.

Contestants and audience members may not use any form of electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment.

Contestants must deliver their prepared oration in no fewer than eight minutes and no more than 10 minutes. The assigned topic runs no fewer than three minutes and no more than five minutes.

### **What to wear**

Uniforms are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required for all contestants. Contestants may not wear awards and medals from previous competitions.

## ***National Finals***

The 2015 National Finals is April 10-12 in Indianapolis, at the Wyndham Indianapolis West Hotel, 2544 Executive Dr, Indianapolis, IN 46241. Quarterfinal and semifinal contests are scheduled for Saturday, April 11, with the finals scheduled for Sunday, April 12.

All contestants and chaperones will arrive the Friday of the contest weekend. All contestants and chaperones will stay at the official contest hotel.

A mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will take place the Friday evening of the contest weekend. A banquet honoring all contestants will be Sunday afternoon, following the national championship contest. All contestants and chaperones will depart for home later that afternoon.

## **State and Local Oratorical Contests**

Arrangements for contests leading up to the department finals shall be the responsibility of each American Legion department.

Each department may certify one contestant to the national contest. If for any reason the department finals winner is unable to compete in the national contest, the runner-up may be substituted following approval from the National Americanism Commission. A runner-up accepted into national competition will be entitled to all national awards, entitlements and compensation that the department winner would have received had he or she participated.

Department of France Competition – TBD

Stuttgart Post 6 Competition – Tuesday, 13 Jan. 2015

For more information on the American Legion Oratorical Contest please visit the American Legion National Website at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org). Post 6 Oratorical Director: Douglas Clemence – [refclemence@yahoo.de](mailto:refclemence@yahoo.de)



### Membership Campaign

The Flanders Field Post BE02 family begin the New Year with a membership drive at the AAFES PX on Chièvres Airbase on Saturday, 03 January. Members of Post BE02, the Auxiliary and the Legion Riders spoke with potential members regarding the benefits of joining the American Legion. During the campaign we were able to recruit 8 new members and renew 3 existing members. The Campaign was assisted by cadets from the SHAPE AFJROTC demonstration team and members of the Venture Crew 511. **3 videos were discovered**

These 3 videos were discovered which displays the earliest record of the Flanders Field Post BE02 banner in a ceremony. The National Commander of the American Legion is seen giving a speech during the opening of the Flanders Field American Cemetery in Belgium.

Flanders Field American Cemetery Chapel Dedication in 1937

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7545-cliQLU>

Kemmel American Monument Dedication in 1937 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwfMKAPQNSY>

Audenaerde American Monument Dedication in 1937

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5flqFMlhac>

### American Legion Auxiliary Bake Sale

On Thursday, 15 January, new Legion Auxiliary members conducted a bake sale at NATO headquarters in Brussels. This also was an opportunity for the NATO personnel to visit with the Auxiliary members and learn more about the American Legion.

**The American Legions Post BE02's Oratorical Contest Winners:** The American Legion Post BE02 conducted their 2<sup>nd</sup> annual High School Oratorical "Scholarship" Contest on Saturday, 24 January at the Brussels American High School. The results of the contest are:

1st Place - Austin Muraille, International School of Brussels 2nd Place - Alexander Cossey, SHAPE American HS 3rd Place - Anna Sweet, SHAPE American HS

Austin will now advance to the Department of France's Oratorical Contest scheduled for Saturday, 21 February at Stuttgart, Germany. The members of the American Legion family would like to congratulate all the contestants on their outstanding performance and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

### Post BE02's Chaplain Gavin Wainwright



During the Jan. 14 Martin Luther King breakfast at the SHAPE Club, keynote speaker Post BE02's Chaplain Gavin E. Wainwright brought up the idea that so many people who have benefited from King's social activism weren't even alive during King's lifetime. King's nonviolent message reinforced the message of equality that other, more militant groups, such as the Black Panthers, championed. "I remember the black berets and black sunglasses. I remember the cool leather jackets and the big afros," Wainwright said of the Black Panthers. As a child, Wainwright had been lured

into their "clubhouse" with its wall full of weapons by the promise of a candy bar. After being cautioned by his mother and grandmother never to go back there, Wainwright accepted another candy bar and entered the Black Panthers' world again. He eventually came to understand that his mother and grandmother didn't buy into the Panthers' methods for equality. "Violence wasn't the way," Wainwright said. "Violence isn't the way." Wainwright said that America has come a long way since 1963. However, although opportunities are greater, apprehensions still exist because of the color, name or nationality of a person. Wainwright has a plan of action for fulfilling King's dream. "Before the dream can be fulfilled, we have to acknowledge the challenges, discuss them and work to overcome them," he said.





## The American Legion Riders

### *Department of France Collection Date- July 2015*

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund is for children of fallen Veterans killed while on active duty or called to federal duty since 09/11/2001.

The sole purpose of the American Legion Riders and the Department of France A.L. Pony Express is to bring Legacy Scholarship donations from outlying Posts to the National Commander. Status as a Way Station or Messenger is open to all members of The American Legion Family regardless of affiliation with the A.L. Riders or having a motorcycle.

Several Posts function as Department of France Pony Express Way Stations and several members were sworn in as Department of France Pony Express Messengers. Although the period from June 20 to August 31 was very short, we were able to pass funds from three Posts (GR14, GR05, GR1982) directly to the National Commander at the Convention in Charlotte, NC last year. These Posts should receive a letter directly from the National Commander in thanks for their donation.

If your Post hasn't started collecting for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, please start now rather than wait until I come knocking on your door looking for the donations.

We now have a little more time until the end of July 2015 and I hope that we can use that time effectively to raise funds for the Scholarship Fund. I'll be riding again this year will register for the ride from Indianapolis to Baltimore, MD.

What you can do?-

1. Please register your Post as a Department of France A. L. Pony Express Way Station. Each Way Station is authorized two messengers who will be sworn in and receive a badge from Ron "Gypsy" Moore as Coordinator for the Department of France A.L. Pony Express System.

2. Set out a collection can for the Legacy Scholarship Fund and hold these funds as dedicated funds until collection time at the end of July. Talk to people, set up an event to raise donations and then issue your Post's U.S. \$ check drawn on a U.S. bank or a U.S. Money Order for the amount you collected. These checks and money orders will be passed to the National Commander in an open envelope showing your Post's name and address.
3. Let people know about the Legacy Scholarship Fund and the fact that they can also donate online at the Legion.Org site.
4. Have members of your Post directly sign up as a "Supporter" of the 2015 Legacy Run by registering directly with the Legacy Run Registration in Indianapolis. Their registration fee lets them receive the same packet and patch that the riders who participate in the Run do. Wear it with pride.

The following link leads to the information page about the Legacy Run and there has to be a Donate button somewhere. The registration should also be available after February 2<sup>nd</sup> .:

<http://www.legion.org/riders/legacyrun>

I'm riding on the Run because it's fun, it's for a good cause and it gives the Department of France a lot of visibility because we send someone from so far away. I'm proud to wear the patch with Department of France on my vest and happy to let them know the Department of France is one of the best departments of The American Legion. I ride for and with you. Thank you in advance for your support and help.

For God and Country!

**Ron "Gypsy" Moore, ALR Department Director**  
**Dept of France AL PE Messenger Service Coordinator**  
**Mobile: +49-(0)172-7417812**  
**Email: gypsy\_moore@yahoo.de**

**The National American Legion Riders Advisory Committee** will convene in Indianapolis March 5-6 to discuss American Legion Riders programs, including the 2015 American Legion Legacy Run to Baltimore. Contact information for the Committee is located at [www.legion.org/riders/contacts](http://www.legion.org/riders/contacts) and in the National Commissions and Committees reference booklet.

**2015 Rolling Thunder.** Each year Emblem Sales and national staff have supported the annual Ride to the Thunder (RTTT) rally hosted by the Department of Virginia American Legion Riders over Memorial Day weekend, May 22-25, 2015. The Virginia American Legion Riders have developed a close relationship with the RT organization and the national ALR gathering in Washington, DC continues to grow in popularity.

**ALR Training and LEAD events.** Staff and volunteer travel for LEAD training and staff assistance visits:

- **Ohio Mid-Winter Conference** in Columbus on January 17, 2015.
- **New York Mid-Winter Conference** in Albany on January 23-24, 2015.
- **West Virginia Mid-Winter Conference** in Martinsburg on February 7, 2015.
- **New Mexico Mid-Winter Conference** in Albuquerque on February 7, 2015 (ALR LEAD module presented by Mark Clark (MO), National American Legion Riders Advisory Committee-Midwest Region)
- **Nevada Legion College** in Las Vegas on February 27 thru March 1<sup>st</sup>. Vance Crowder (NV), a graduate of Legion College 2014, will assist national staff instructors with training in MyLegion.org.

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

## **LEGACY RUN** Baltimore, Maryland August 23-26, 2015

This year will be the tenth anniversary of The American Legion Legacy Run. Planning is underway for a four-day run from Indianapolis to Baltimore and the 98<sup>th</sup> annual National Convention. Online registration will open by February 1, 2015. We expect 400-500 motorcycles to participate in 2015.

### **Critical dates:**

Assembly and final registration on Saturday, August 22.

Departure from Indianapolis on Sunday, August 23

Arrival in Baltimore area on Wednesday, August 26

National American Legion Riders Meeting Thursday, Aug 27 (tentative).

National Convention Parade on Sunday, Aug. 30.

National Convention activities Sunday-Thursday, Aug. 30-Sept 3.

# John F. Kennedy Post IR63



Two U.S. Navy veterans -- John Shanahan, representing Paris Post 605 of the VFW, and Frank Ekstrom, representing Dublin Post IR-63 of the American Legion -- present Irish WWII veteran and French Legion d'Honneur winner Mickey d'Alton with the VFW Distinguished Service Award.

For more details go to:

<http://afloat.ie/blogs/sailing-saturday-with-wm-nixon/item/27736-mickey-daltons-legion-dhonneur-celebrates-a-great-sailor-in-war-peace#.VMj7D6x5pOk.gmail>



## DETACHMENT OF FRANCE

Squadrons: GR01, BE02, GR03, GR06, GR07, GR14, GR42, GR79, CH01

**Re:** Detachment of France 3<sup>rd</sup> DEC to be held on Saturday, March 7, 2015

**From:** GR07 Sons of The American Legion Squadron Commander Ronald Moore

**Time:** Registration 1100 to 1200 hours                      DEC Meeting- 1200 hours until adjourned

**Location:** Wiesbaden, Germany, specific location to be announced (TBA)

**Registration Fee:** EUR 5 per attendee including officers, delegates, alternates and guests.

GR07 S.A.L. Squadron is hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Detachment of France Executive Committee Meeting on Saturday, March 7, 2015 in Wiesbaden, Germany. Every effort will be made to ensure that the location is within walking distance of the Wiesbaden Main Train Station. The meeting place will probably not be on base.

Due to changes in Wiesbaden Military Command Policy concerning access and use of base facilities and services, only registered ID card holders and their accompanied guests may use such facilities (previously food courts could be used without the sponsor being present). ID card holder or sponsor are now required for access to Exchange, Commissary, Shoppette and Food Courts. If you are not a SOFA ID card holder, it is necessary to have a retired or DAV ID card and a pink customs card for access to the Commissary, Exchange or Shoppette. Just a reminder, there are cameras at all counters (Exchange, Commissary and Shoppette) and your ID card is scanned for purchases in the Commissary.

Attendees are kindly requested to inform GR07 SAL Squadron Commander Moore of your planned attendance. Please also advise if you require overnight accommodations at a local hotel.

Please inform Ronald Moore of your planned attendance or accommodation needs at Email address [gypsy\\_moore@yahoo.de](mailto:gypsy_moore@yahoo.de)

Don't forget your flags, stands and delegate letters please. Drive safe and arrive alive.

Signed: Ronald Moore  
2014-15 GR07 SAL 3<sup>rd</sup> DEC Committee Chairman

# 1,000 82nd Airborne Paratroopers Headed to Iraq



Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer | Jan 26, 2015 | by Amanda Dolasinski

The 82nd Airborne, and more specifically its 3rd Brigade Combat Team, are no strangers to Iraq.

Since 2003, parts of the brigade have deployed in support of U.S. efforts there on at least three occasions.

Now, more than three years after the U.S. military presence in Iraq was thought over, about a quarter of the Panther Brigade will return with a new mission to help train Iraqi forces to fight ISIS.

About 1,000 paratroopers from the brigade will deploy this week as part of the Operation Inherent Resolve mission.

The deployment was officially announced in December and is expected to last nine months.

As his paratroopers prepared for the mission, the brigade commander, Col. Curtis A. Buzzard, has watched tensions boil in the Middle East -- and Iraq in particular -- as forces have fought against ISIS, also known by the acronym DAESH based on the group's Arabic name, ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wash-Sham.

"We've seen the impact of DAESH over the last year and a half, not just on Iraq, but on the region," Buzzard said. "It's clearly an existential threat.

"It's an absolutely brutal element that has impacts all across the region and instability in the region and you can see that clearly in Syria, Iraq, potentially Libya and Yemen," he said. "The world can't stand by and watch."

Starting this week, Buzzard's troops are done watching.

They'll join about 250 paratroopers from the brigade already deployed to provide security to U.S. personnel. But these latest troops will instead advise and assist Iraqi forces with the planning and execution of the counter offensive against ISIS.

## Pivotal for Iraq

Buzzard said his troops are ready.

They share the 82nd Airborne's mindset that its soldiers could be sent anywhere at any time and the deployment comes just a few months after the brigade finished its rotation on the nation's Global Response Force, a quick-reaction force of sorts that stands ready to deploy at any time for humanitarian or combat operations.

"As the situation in Iraq has evolved, I think we all recognized at some point we might be in a position to help advise them," he said. "As part of the GRF, we're prepared to go anywhere globally. Iraq has been out there as a potential."

The 1,000 paratroopers were be working at a site near the Iraq capital of Baghdad, Buzzard said.

According to the Department of Defense, there are four training sites for Iraqi forces, all at familiar sites for soldiers who deployed in years past to support Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn.

The sites include Al Asad, Bismaya, Camp Taji and Irbil, according to the Pentagon. The last, Irbil, opened on Friday and eventually the sites will be able to train 12 brigades at one time.

The Iraqi forces have been receptive to the training, Buzzard said.

He said American forces already in the country have told him the Iraqis want to be successful on their own.

They want to re-establish their credibility, he said.

"They absolutely recognize this is important to their country's future and they're dedicated to the mission," Buzzard said. "There's a level of energy that's there, too, among senior Iraqi leadership."

Buzzard said his troops won't reinvent the wheel in Iraq. They won't dictate how the Iraqis will operate, but will instead try to work within systems and practices already in place.

"We'll have to figure out how to adapt to their history of an army and apply our best practices to that in a way that's not, you know, we're not going in and trying to mirror image the American Army," he said.

### **More than airstrikes**

Now, as the Panther Brigade again heads for Iraq, other U.S. forces have been busily working to affect ISIS's ability to operate in other ways.

The U.S. has been involved in numerous airstrikes aimed at destroying ISIS targets, according to military officials.

Last week, U.S. and coalition forces conducted dozens of strikes in Syria and Iraq, destroying buildings, a weapons manufacturing facility, vehicles and bunkers in Iraq and multiple tactical units, a trailer and an oil drilling rig in Syria.

But officials have said airstrikes alone won't be enough to turn back ISIS.

"It's a sophisticated enemy," Buzzard said. "There's limits to what air power can do.

"I think it's been very effective so far targeting leadership and headquarters, but it will require a ground force to control the terrain," he said. "The Iraqis have that ground force."

In preparing for the deployment, the paratroopers took part in a five-day training exercise last week that included Iraqi-Americans -- including some former Iraqi soldiers -- who now work for the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

The training, which occurred on Fort Bragg, served as a refresher for soldiers who will soon be asked with teaching their Iraqi counterparts about command systems and basic soldier skills.

It also added a level of authenticity that is hard to recreate, Buzzard said.

"They do a great job modeling the scenarios to replicate what we'll see overseas," he said. "It adds to the realism, particularly having to use a linguist. That's a challenging thing in and of itself in terms of how long you speak before they translate, their ability to communicate your intent."

### **Taking back from ISIS**

For many of the paratroopers who will deploy, it will not only be a familiar mission, it will be a personal one.

Soldiers said they remember seeing progress in Iraq on previous deployments.

Their latest mission will be, in part, to help the Iraqi forces retake the gains that have been stunted or reversed by ISIS.

Staff Sgt. Patrick Neal served in Iraq for 15 months as part of the surge of U.S. forces in 2006.

At that time, Neal was part of the surge. His unit was supporting Marines in Karmah, just outside of Baghdad, which was considered one of the most violent cities in the country at the time, even for Iraqi citizens.

Snipers and IEDs were constant threats, Neal said.

But he also began to see markets open and people wander the streets.

"It took a while, it was hard fought, but we were able to start to secure that town," he said. "It became a much safer town to be in. More people were able to get out and do stuff and not worry about being killed just going to get food for their family to eat."

Now Neal said he is looking forward to training the Iraqi army and helping degrade ISIS and again improve the quality of life for the people of Iraq.

"I want to enable the Iraqis to take care of their nation," he said. "That's what I believe that we should focus our energies on; helping them to help themselves. If we go over there and do it for them, we'll end up staying there much longer than we hope for."

Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Severino has similar memories from his 12 months in Iraq in 2008.

"The area that we were responsible for, yes, I saw progress," he said. "Iraq seemed like a more competent force."

When Severino first deployed, he said there were walls protecting markets.

As American troops secured the cities, those walls came down.

"It was huge to me when they said, 'We don't need it,' " Severino said. "To me, it was a positive sign."

Neal and Severino are both experienced soldiers.

Neal has four deployments under his belt, including two in Afghanistan and one in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Severino is one of only a few soldiers to have undertaken a combat jump in Afghanistan. He was part of a group of about 70 82nd Airborne paratroopers to jump into Afghanistan in 2003, the division's first combat jump since Panama in 1989.

Now, the pair are ready to get back into the action.

"Everybody's motivated to go," Neal said. "3rd Brigade has been itching for a deployment for awhile now. We finally get the chance. Of all the chances we get, we get the deployment the entire country's looking at right now."

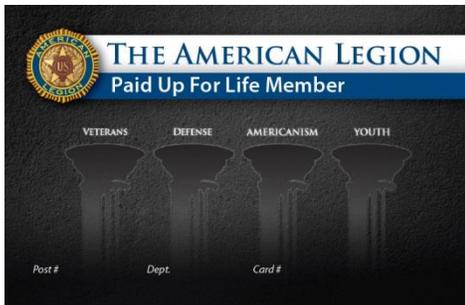
# Consolidated Post Report

The 2014 – 2015 Consolidated Post Report is being printed and will be ready for shipment to department headquarters and via a post's mylegion.org site the middle of February.

Major changes for this year are in the mylegion.org site input. A text box will be added at the bottom of the form to allow those posts to make any needed comments to clarify their input.

The American Legion's Consolidated Post Report (CPR) show the many ways Legionnaires are making differences in their communities and beyond. The CPR was established nearly 40 years ago to assist departments in the documentation of activities that a specific post completed during the 12-month (June 1 through May 31) reporting period.

## Paid Up For Life



The Paid Up For Life (PUFL) membership campaign has been a resounding success. At one day short of its anniversary, 19,605 American Legion members elected to become Paid Up For Life. In just the last three months, 3,270 members converted their annual dues paying memberships into a PUFL membership.

Plans for this year will focus on signing up the newest members along with a good mix of emails and direct mail solicitations. Various discounts for payment in full at time of application and extra giveaways will continue to be used.

For more information regarding the program please visit [www.legion.org/pufl](http://www.legion.org/pufl) or call customer service at (800) 433-3318.

Mail in	Full Pay	2,235	1,315,977.24
	Time Pay	530	440,739.00
	<b>Sub Tot</b>	<b>2,765</b>	<b>1,756,716.24</b>
Online	Full Pay	10,662	6,298,183.08
	Time Pay	5,592	4,624,242.32
	<b>Sub Tot</b>	<b>16,254</b>	<b>10,922,425.40</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,019</b>	<b>\$12,679,141.64</b>	

### Traditional PUFL Program

Source	Payment Type	Count	Total\$
Mail in	Full Pay	480	292,359.81
	Time Pay	106	84,574.08
	<b>Total</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>\$376,933.89</b>

**	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19,605</b>	<b>\$13,056,075.53</b>
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**Report: Changes May Hit Military Basic, Special and Retirement Pays**



A blue-ribbon panel on military compensation and retirement will probably recommend changes to basic, special and retirement pays, researchers say.

The congressionally mandated Military Compensation and Retirement Commission will release its long-awaited report Thursday afternoon after a two-year review.

While the document is likely to call for changing certain forms of troop compensation, it probably won't include more radical reforms to cut personal costs, according to a white paper released Tuesday by the Center for a New American Security, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

"Early reports suggest the commission will produce modest recommendations for reform of military compensation, focusing on changes to the calculation of base pay, special pay and retirement," states the document, which was co-authored by senior fellow Phillip Carter and research associate Katherine Kidder.

"These proposals may have more likelihood of enactment in the near term, based on the difficult political environment that currently surrounds military compensation," they added. "However, these ideas will not adequately reach the core questions that now face the military compensation system as the [all-volunteer force] enters its fifth decade."

The commission's report is likely to set off a massive political fight over the future of military compensation. The Defense Department is already bracing for backlash to the legislative proposals, with a special team of high-level officials standing by to review the recommendations and provide feedback to the White House within weeks.

The panel's sweeping changes will include phasing out the military's 20-year defined-benefit retirement plan -- payable immediately upon retirement -- and allowing Tricare beneficiaries to move into the federal health care system, according to a report by Military Times.

Congress has generally agreed with troop advocacy groups in recent years in rejecting or watering down many of the Pentagon's proposals to reduce military personnel costs by curbing such troop benefits as basic allowances for housing, retirement pay and funding that helps subsidize the prices of groceries and other items at commissaries.

During more than a decade of U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, lawmakers from both parties approved higher-than-proposed pay raises, expanded education benefits for service members and their families through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and boosted special pays and bonuses to maintain the military's recruiting and retention goals.

With Republicans taking control of the Senate and maintaining power in the House after electoral victories last fall, many members of

Congress will oppose any proposals that could hurt troop morale and translate into less household income for military families. Yet the GOP now includes increasingly vocal Tea Party supporters who want to cut all forms of government spending, including defense.

None of the commission's recommendations, if approved, would affect the retirement pay of existing retirees or that slated for currently serving troops. In general, a service member who leaves after 20 years receives half of his or her base pay upon retirement and every year thereafter.

Sen. John McCain, a Republican from Arizona and the new chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, hinted as much in recent weeks when he said, "Anybody who has already joined the military is eligible for those pay and benefits, but as of a certain date, people joining may be subject to changes in those benefits."

As part of the 2013 Balanced Budget Act, lawmakers agreed to a 1 percent cut to the cost-of-living adjustment for future military retirees. Much bigger changes to the military retirement system could be in store, including 401(k)-like plans and lump-sum payments. After all, currently serving or retired service members aren't prohibited from opting into a possible new retirement system.

To offset a reduction of as much as 10 percent in lifetime retirement benefits, the Pentagon has already proposed offering troops cash payments earlier in their careers, including a 401(k)-style benefit at six years of service, a retention bonus at 12 years of service, and a possible lump-sum "transition" bonus at 20 years of service. The options were among those included in a report acting Deputy Defense Secretary Christine Fox submitted last year to commission.

At least one survey has suggested more troops would support an overhaul to the pension system -- even if they receive less money in the long term -- so long as they get a lump-sum retirement check when they leave.

Pentagon officials have said the changes are needed curb personnel costs, which are budgeted at \$177 billion in fiscal 2015, or more than a third of the department's non-war budget of \$496 billion. Including civilian personnel, the percentage rises to almost half of the spending plan.

The CNAS researchers noted that the Pentagon currently supports some 2.3 million retirees, a population that will soon exceed the size of the active and reserve forces. "If current cost trends continue, and considering both retirement pay and retirement health benefits, DoD will soon pay more to support its retired military population than its current force," they wrote.

Officials at the Military Officers Association of America, a powerful troop advocacy group in Alexandria, Virginia, have argued that manpower costs consume about the same share of the defense budget as they did in the 1980s. The increased personnel spending helped eliminate a pay gap between the military and civilian sector, and expand troop benefits that improved the quality of the force, they said.

The CNAS researchers took aim at these arguments.

They noted that the overall size of the active-duty force has declined since that time, from more than 2.1 million troops in 1990 to less than 1.4 million troops in 2015. "Defense personnel spending in 2015 is roughly equal to defense personnel spending in 1990, in constant dollars, even though there are roughly 759,000 fewer active and reserve service members than 25 years ago," they wrote.

They also pointed out that the median civilian earnings for the 25- to 34-year-old age group increased just 4 percent, from \$29,526 in 1990 to \$30,759 in 2013, while military compensation rose an average of 17 percent during the same period. "Interestingly, service members fared significantly better than median U.S. civilian workers aged 25-34 with respect to compensation," they wrote.

-- *Brendan McGarry can be reached at [Brendan.McGarry@monster.com](mailto:Brendan.McGarry@monster.com).*



## DD 214 Increased Social Security Benefits For Vets

DD FORM 214 — EXTRA SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT for those with active duty between January 1957 to December 31, 2001 See the web site & notes below to possibly increase your Social Security Benefits. DD FORM 214 — SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT Please share this with anyone who had active duty service between January 1957 to December 31, 2001, and planning for retirement. In a nutshell it boils down to this: You qualify for a higher social security payment because of your Military service, for active duty any time from 1957

through 2001 (the program was done away with 1 January 2002). Up to \$1200 per year of earnings credit credited at time of application – which can make a substantial difference in social security monthly payments upon your retirement. You must bring your DD-214 to the Social Security Office and you must ask for this benefit to receive it! Soc Sec website: <http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm> This is something to put in your files for when you apply for Social Security down the road.. It is NOT just for retirees, BUT anyone who has served on active duty between January 1957 to December 31, 2001.

Note the below information was retrieved from <http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm>

Since 1957, if you had military service earnings for active duty (including active duty for training), you paid Social Security taxes on those earnings. Since 1988, inactive duty service in the Armed Forces reserves (such as weekend drills) has also been covered by Social Security.

Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for your military service from 1957 through 2001 can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings credits may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Special extra earnings credits are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Special extra earnings credits are **not** granted for inactive duty training.

If your active military service occurred

**From 1957 through 1967**, we will add the extra credits to your record when you apply for Social Security benefits.

**From 1968 through 2001**, you do not need to do anything to receive these extra credits. The credits were automatically added to your record.

**After 2001**, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

**Note:** In January 2002, Public Law 107-117, the Defense Appropriations Act, stopped the special extra earnings that have been credited to military service personnel. Military service in calendar year 2002 and future years no longer qualifies for these special extra earnings credits

### **How You Get Credit For Special Extra Earnings**

The information that follows applies **only** to active duty military service earnings from 1957 through 2001. Here's how the special **extra** earnings are credited on your record:

#### Service in 1957 Through 1977

You are credited with \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

#### Service in 1978 through 2001

For every \$300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional \$100 in earnings up to a maximum of \$1,200 a year. If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn't complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with Social Security for details.

## Step-by-Step to a VA Loan: #2 Obtain Your COE

Following 6 easy steps to a VA mortgage can prevent slipups and delays. Learn the DOS and DON'TS of the second step: obtaining your COE. COE (see-oh-e) stands for Certificate of Eligibility. It's a document generated by the Department of Veterans Affairs that tells your VA-approved lender if you meet certain requirements for home loan benefits based on your military service. It also contains important information that can help your loan officer calculate your entitlement (how much the VA will guarantee for you) and fees (costs associated with the loan). If you've served in one of the seven uniformed services, or are a surviving spouse, you may have earned home loan benefits. Obtaining your COE will help you know for sure. To help you obtain this important document, here are some "do's" and "don't's" to consider at this second step in the VA loan process.

### 1. Do ask your lender for help.

Common delays may be prevented if you go straight to your VA-approved lender to get your COE. Most approved lenders have access to the VA online system and can print most COEs on the spot in a matter of seconds. Not all COEs can be obtained this way, but many can. If your document cannot be obtained instantly, it's still a very good idea to enlist your lender's help in obtaining it another way.

### 2. Do familiarize yourself with the three ways to get it.

There are three ways to get your COE.

- VA eBenefits Portal via the Internet
- Atlanta Regional Loan Center by U.S. mail
- VA Online Portal through your VA-approved lender

No matter how you get it, your COE is a vital part of the VA loan process. With some methods above it can take just a few minutes to obtain! And the good news is that unless you originally applied for your COE while on active duty, it never expires. If your COE was obtained while on active duty, you'll need to get another one after discharge. Surviving spouses may only use option #2.

### 3. Do learn the basics of VA loan eligibility.

Here's the bottom line: your COE shows VA eligibility for home loan benefits. To be clear, just because you're eligible doesn't mean you qualify. Once you prove VA eligibility to a lender, then they will still need to determine if you qualify for a VA home loan. Your eligibility is based on the Department of Veterans Affairs' service guidelines. You may be eligible if you've served:

- 2 years on Active Duty
- 6 years in the Reserve/National Guard
- 90 days of Wartime Duty (called up Under U.S.C. Title 10)
- 181 Days of Peacetime Duty (called up under U.S.C. Title 10)

*(Complete eligibility requirements can be found at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)).*

Eligibility is also extended to certain veterans discharged honorably from active duty for service-connected injuries or other reasons outlined by the VA. Additionally, many surviving spouses may also be eligible. Eligibility requirements have recently been extended to include more surviving spouses. If you weren't eligible in the past, your status may have changed due to new extended rules.

### 4. Don't try to make sense of your COE without help.

Your COE contains alphanumeric codes and other information that your licensed VA loan officer is trained to decipher. Unfortunately, some potential borrowers try to interpret their COE on their own and misinterpret their loan entitlement. A common mistake is seeing a zero on the form and thinking there's no entitlement available.

"Just because your COE says \$0 basic entitlement doesn't automatically mean you have no entitlement," shares Retired Major Tim Lewis, 23-year Army veteran and customer experience manager for iFreedom Direct®, referring to an option called Tier Two Entitlement. Tier Two enables qualified borrowers to tap into additional entitlement to purchase a home over a certain dollar amount. It makes good sense to take advantage of the expertise of a Regional VA Loan Center representative or an experienced VA loan professional, as entitlement calculations can be confusing.

### 5. Don't forget proof of service.

Proof of service should accompany your COE application. The VA provides some pretty clear direction on which forms can serve as proof. For instance, if you received DD Form 214 when you were discharged, then you'll need to dig it out. If you're still serving regular active duty, you'll need an original statement of service signed by, or by direction of, the adjutant, personnel officer, or commander of your unit or higher headquarters. It must show your date of entry and period ordered for current active duty and how much, if any, time lost.

No single form like the DD 214 exists for Reserves or National Guard. Reservists and National Guard members need copies of adequate documentation of at least 6 years of honorable service. For Army or Air Force National Guard, you may submit NGB Form 22, Report of Separation and Record of Service, or NGB Form 23, Retirement Points Accounting.

If you were discharged from the Selected Reserve, you may submit a copy of your latest annual points statement and evidence of honorable service. Reservists and Guard members still serving must have an original statement of service showing length of service like the one used by those still serving regular active duty.

### 6. Don't use the wrong form.

You may have been told you need to fill out VA Form 26-1880 in order to obtain your COE. Fact is, not everyone uses this form. Veterans, active duty, Reservists and National Guard members may be asked to fill out this form 26-1880. However, surviving spouses use a different form — VA Form 26-1817. But don't worry! Your VA-approved lender can help make sense of all the forms you need to complete the VA loan process.

Next Step: If you've earned home loan benefits, crossing the COE off your list can get you one step closer to becoming a homeowner.

# *The Bravery of Four Chaplains*



On Feb. 3, 1943, the United States Army Transport *Dorchester* – a converted luxury liner – was crossing the North Atlantic, transporting more than 900 troops to an American base in Greenland. Aboard the ship were four chaplains of different faiths: Reverend George Fox (Methodist), Jewish Rabbi Alexander Goode, Reverend Clark Poling (Dutch Reformed) and Father John Washington (Roman Catholic).

Around 12:55 a.m., a German U-boat fired a torpedo that struck *Dorchester's* starboard side, below the water line and near the engine room. The explosion instantly killed 100 men and knocked out power and radio communication with *Dorchester's* three escort ships. Within 20 minutes, the transport sank and more than 670 men died.

As soldiers rushed to lifeboats, the four chaplains spread out, comforting the wounded and directing others to safety. One survivor, Private William Bednar, later said, "I could hear men crying, pleading, praying. I could also hear the chaplains' preaching courage. Their voices were the only thing that kept me going."

Another survivor, John Ladd, watched the chaplains' distribute life jackets, and when they ran out, they removed theirs and gave them to four young men. "It was the finest thing I have seen, or hope to see, this side of heaven," he recalled.

As *Dorchester* sank, the chaplains were seen linked arm in arm, praying.

Fox, Goode, Poling and Washington were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart, and in 1948, Congress declared Feb. 3 to be Four

Chaplains Day. The four chaplains were also honored with a U.S. postage stamp that year.

Because of the Medal of Honor's strict requirements of heroism under fire, Congress authorized a one-time Chaplain's Medal for Heroism on July 14, 1960. The award was presented to the chaplains' next of kin Jan. 18, 1961.

On Feb. 3, 1951, President Truman dedicated a chapel in the chaplains' honor at Grace Baptist Church in Philadelphia. When the building was sold, the chapel fell into disrepair, and the foundation overseeing the chapel moved it to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in 2001. The chapel was repaired in 2004 and given the name Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

In 2006, at The American Legion's 88th National Convention in Salt Lake City, the National Executive Committee passed a resolution that supported awarding the Medal of Honor to Fox, Goode, Poling and Washington.

Every year, American Legion posts nationwide remember Four Chaplains Day with memorial services. To request information on how to conduct a Four Chaplains Memorial Service, contact Charles Graybiel (cgraybiel@legion.org) of the Americanism and Children & Youth Division at (317) 630-1212.

Learn more about the four chaplains by visiting The Immortal Chaplains Foundation ([www.immortalchaplains.org](http://www.immortalchaplains.org)) and The Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation ([www.fourchaplains.org](http://www.fourchaplains.org)).

- See more at: <http://www.legion.org/library/6245/bravery-four-chaplains#sthash.wgYnwzJt.dpuf>

# Valentine's Day History



The idea of Valentine's Day seems to have originated during the Middle Ages, somewhere around the 14th or 15th century. The holiday is named after a Saint Valentine who was martyred. Chaucer, a famous poet, wrote about "Seynt Valentyne's day" in his famous Parliament of Fowles. Other historians attribute the holiday as a celebration of the life of Saint Valentine who lived in Constantinople 150 years after Constantine turned the city in a Christian one. There was a pagan celebration on February 15th where lots of unmarried men chose a bride and were married on this day. Married men didn't want to go to war, so Roman Emperor Claudius II forbade young men to marry. Valentine ignored the decree and was executed on February 14, in the year A.D. 270.

## Facts about Valentine's Day

Symbols for Valentine's day include hearts, chocolate, flowers, and Cupid - the Roman God of Love.  
52% of US consumers will send out at least 1 Valentine's Day card, 47% will send candy, and 34% will send flowers.

In 2012, consumers spent over \$13.19 billion on Valentine' Day.

180 million Valentine's Day Cards were sent in 2012.

## Valentine's Day Top Events and Things to Do

Send someone you care for a Valentine's Day card.

Go to a special dinner with your sweetheart. Tip: Book early as this is one of the busiest days of the year for restaurants.

Send someone flowers.

Write a love poem to your sweetheart.

Send a "Secret Valentine" to someone several days before, and then reveal your identity on February 14th.