My Fellow Legionaries

I hope all of you had a safe and happy Labor Day weekend. John Wayne Post GR79 conducted a 9-11 Memorial on the 13th of September, myself along with Vice Commanders Casby Logan, Quincy Foster, and Department Auxiliary Isolde Settle attended this memorial along with members of John Wayne Post, and Auxiliary Members of Unit GR79. I hope that all the members of the Department took time out to remember those that lost their life's, and their families on this tragic day.

It has been brought to my attention that some believe, that the new membership year starts in October, nothing can be further from the truth. The membership year starts during the Department Convention in June. While I am on the subject of membership I would like to see all our membership renewals completed by December 31st 2014. I encourage and challenge all Commanders, Adjutants, and Membership Chairmen to contact those members who have not renewed for 2015, and have them renew their membership ASAP.

The Department 2nd DEC will be conducted on the 25th of October, at GR1982's Post Home. Commanders Adjutants ensure that your delegates have their Delegates Letter. For more information contact the Department Adjutant.

The American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm will be visiting the Department of France from May 29th till June 3rd 2015. We will be discussing more on his visit during the 2nd DEC. If you would like the National Commander to visit your post please have a presentation available during the 2nd DEC.

Our next upcoming event will be Veterans Day, which will be conducted on the 11th of November at 100 hours at Saint Avold France, in the Lorrain Cemetery Chapel. Hopefully you will be able to take time out of your busy schedule, and join us for the Memorial Service.

MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP. I cannot stress membership enough. It is the bloodline of our organization. It enables us to perform our missions to the Veterans and their Families, and supports not only National Programs but ours also. While you are out there recruiting, new members do not forget your current members, get them to renew in a timely manner. If you have any questions on membership do not hesitate to contact the Membership Chairman Comrade Brown, at joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com. He can answer your questions and resolve any problems you are having, with membership.

In closing, 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
The department has a Face Book page at the following www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance. Please visit and like this page. Thanks
Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,

The mission to help veterans and their families was at the heart of our organization’s birth nearly 100 years ago. Service above self still guides The American Legion today.

Consider that during the recent American Legion Legacy Run, a record $1 million was raised. These funds provide scholarship money for the children of servicemembers who lost their lives on active duty since 9/11. This is one example of how The American Legion demonstrates its commitment to the families of servicemembers.

Donations to American Legion Charities also help fund Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW), Child Welfare Foundation (CWF), Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA), National Emergency Fund (NEF) and other important programs.

When I became national commander a couple of weeks ago, I announced my 4 x 4 program. One “4” stands for raising $4 million among The American Legion Family – the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and Legion Riders. The other “4” also represents 4 million – that’s 4 million members of the Legion Family.

The goals are well within our reach. The rewards will represent significant progress for our organization.

I devised the 4 x 4 program so that all of our charitable outreach initiatives would benefit. You may have a passion to help our wounded servicemen and women, so a donation to OCW would be appropriate. Or you may want to send a contribution to a program that assists children, such as CWF, TFA or the Legacy Scholarship Fund. In any case, I am asking for your kind donations to whichever program or programs you wish to support.

These programs are effective because of our volunteers. These are men and women who deliver checks to victims in disaster zones, hold fundraising events and purchase comfort items for recovering troops in warrior transition units. Without these volunteers in the Legion, Auxiliary and SAL on the front lines, our organizations would all cease to exist.

To keep these programs viable, we must keep our membership strong. I am asking you to recruit all eligible veterans you meet. Invite their sons and grandsons to join the SAL. Encourage wives and daughters to join the Auxiliary.

On behalf of the nation’s largest and most influential veterans service organization, thank you for what you do every day on behalf of veterans, their families and young people.

Mike Helm
National Commander
The American Legion

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Department Officers - 2015 Membership Year

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Hello fellow Legionnaires,

LET’S MOVE THIS DEPARTMENT AHEAD. We can do this, but my fellow Legionnaires we need your help and support. Remember this is our department, let’s move it ahead together, and have fun in doing so. We are a family of Legionnaires with a common goal, to keep the American spirit and tradition alive, we can do this and do it well, with your added support.

I visited GR05-GR06-GR09-GR13 and GR79 Membership meetings. There was a nice turn out of members supporting the posts.

The charter for GR02 will be presented at the 2 DEC in Ansbach on the 25 October 2014.

SEPTEMBER 13, GR 79 hosted a 911-2001 Remembrance Ceremony at the Post Home, the Department Commander James Settle, Vice Commander Casby Logan, Vice Commander Quincy Foster and Auxiliary President Isolde Settle were in attendance. On 27 September, there was a Legion Riders Bike fest at the post home with 10 Bikes, 30 Legionnaires and family members in attendance.

Membership is moving slowly, but we are working on it, we still have posts out there that have not transmitted a single member this year.

In closing, I would remind all of us to say a prayer for all our service members and their families deployed into harm’s way, that the good Lord protects them and brings them home safely.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY
VCAL COMMANDER
Charlie Brown
GR09 Membership Meeting

GR09 Post Legionnaire of the Year

GR13 Membership Meeting

GR13 Farewell to Past Commander Robert Burdette (m) who will be moving back to the US

GR42 General Membership Meeting
GR79 911 Remembrance Ceremony

GR79 New Member from USA

GR79 Member Ross Shephard with VCAL Brown

GR79 BIKE FEST
DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER  Jerry Aman

On 9 and 11 September I was able to visit representatives of post IR 02 and IR 03, the two posts in Ireland that were assigned to me during the convention.

My first stop was IR 02 in Limerick where I was greeted by Francis Duffy Post Adjutant Sean Rickard. After an initial meeting we retired to a local restaurant where we were joined by Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Willis. The whole evening was quite informative as were able to exchange ideas and information on the post and department.

On 11 September I met IR 03 Commander Ron Howko and his lovely wife Helen at their home near Swinford. Shortly after my arrival Ron piled me into his car and we toured sites, cemeteries and memorials of former Irish citizens who in earlier years emigrated to the US and became heroes serving in America’s wars.

What is remarkable about IR 02 and IR 03 is their ability to display their patriotism together with host nation’s veteran’s organizations and they are recognized as an integral part of the local and national community. Whether present at a statue unveiling, dedication ceremonies or remembering relatives of former legion members it can truly be said that the American Legion’s footprint is all over Ireland.

It would occupy all of the space of this newsletter to list the activities, highlights and dedication to worthwhile causes that these two posts participate in and there can be no question that the Irish posts of the American Legion are fine examples of what our organization is all about and earnestly display their patriotism for the flag they served under.

It is a privilege to represent these posts for the Department of France.

Recruiters to be honored with ‘Stay On Course’ pin

During the 2014-2015 membership year, American Legion National Commander Mike Helm will award his national commander pin to any American Legion Family member who obtains three new members into the Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2015 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2014 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of SAL members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

To maintain the integrity of the national commander’s pin incentive program, only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. Commander Helm’s pin incentive program will end June 30, 2015, or when supplies are exhausted.

www.legion.org/commander/pin
Greetings Commanders & 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, Eifel Post GR-20, Rivera 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 Post IR63 Spring Newsletter 2014 (check-out there events. November 11, 2014, Flowers and Memorial Service at the grave of John O’Sullivan Carstown County, Louth. November 27, 2014, Thanksgiving Dinner and Annual General Membership Meeting. If you like a copy of the Spring Post Newsletter 2014 from Post IR-63, Dublin, Ireland, please contact jshanahan@aol.com Post IR-63 has many activities in the coming months, if you like to attend.

Irish Veterans Charter #1 plans to dedicate (Spring, 2015) to the memory of U.S. SEAL Lt. Michael P. Murphy, Medal of Honor, 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). 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 couldn't meet the Detachment Commander at the U.S. Embassy Lisbon, Portugal (26 September 14) because of work commitment. The Marine Detachment at the U.S. Embassy Lisbon, Portugal dedicated the Heritage Room at the American Embassy to Lance CPL Joaquim Vaz Rebelo served in the Marine Corps and went above and beyond the call of duty. I’m planning to travel to the U.S. Embassy (Lisbon) timeframe January 2015.

I stress the importance of membership in the Posts, Department, and the National Organization. Membership is our Voice on Capitol Hill. Please send your Post transmittal to the Department Membership Chairman. I encourage the Posts to transmit each month to the Department Membership Chairman (Joe Dan Brown). Join the Paid Up For Life Program instead of paying Annual dues each Month and receiving renewal notices from National. If you have interest in the Paid Up For Life Program, please contact me at wardtrans@yahoo.com.

Commanders & Fellow Legionnaires, many thanks for what you do for your Posts and the communities you serve. Friday, September 19, 2014 was POW/MIA Recognition Day. It was an honor to present the POW/MIA speech with the Comrades from The American Legion Post GR01 (Kaiserslautern), VFW Kaiserslautern Post, and the VFW Sembach Post at Rhine Ordnance Barracks (Kaiserslautern). I conducted an interview with AFN Kaiserslautern to be aired later this week. The 2nd DEC schedule 25 October 14, 1 P.M. at the Ansbach Legion Post Home (Katterbach). Navy Day is 27th of October. God Bless America.

STEPHEN A. WARD
VICE COMMANDER
DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE

DEPARTMENT ADVOCATE  George W. Seeburger

The SOP – Finance has been revised and distributed to all Officers and Posts. If anyone needs a copy, please contact me.

George W. Seeburger
Judge Advocate
gwseeburger@gmx.de
Greetings Sisters and Sisters of the American Legion Family,

My apologies for not getting a newsletter article in last month. With Legacy Run preparation, Legacy Run participation, acting as a Convention delegate for both Sons and Legion in Charlotte/NC, as well as returning, cleaning and storing the motorcycle, things were a little hectic. All of those activities involved intensive interaction with The American Legion Family from all 55 departments. Being designated as the Legacy Run Chaplain again was a high honor, and now a lot more people know there is an active Department of France that firmly believes in, “For God and Country”.

I just got back Tuesday from the Chaplains Conference in Indianapolis. There were Legion, Sons and Unit chaplains attending, as well as the National Chaplains from the three organizations. We also had the two National Commanders and National President as speakers at our Chaplains Conference and they all expressed grave concerns about the position of God in our country. The use of prayer and mentioning God no longer seems to be as important as it used to be. One of the Chaplains even referred to the “erosion” of God in our country in general, and we discussed what we can do to combat it.

We are a family that puts God in first place with our mouths when we open our meetings. “For God and Country,” is anchored in all three of the Legion Family’s preambles, and we often quote that when we pray or discuss what we do. Honestly though, please take a look around your Post/Unit/Squadron and see if you have elected/appointed a chaplain and that the Commander or President has explained that the chaplain is one of the most important people in the Post/Unit/Squadron because he ensures that God remains in first place in our hearts, minds and organizations.

During the Chaplains Conference, a memorial service was held for those members who have reported to Post Everlasting during the year and our Department of France PEL comrades were recognized with members from other departments. It was a moving ceremony led by the three National Chaplains.

In closing, please have your chaplain contact me to discuss plans of action and materials available to ensure that God is first and foremost in our organizations as well as community, state and nation.

God bless all of you and God bless our servicemen and women who are serving to keep us safe.

Rev. Ronald Moore,
Department of France Chaplain
S.A.L. Detachment of France Chaplain
Mobile: 0049-(0)172-7417812
Email: gypsy_moore@yahoo.de

Sick Call

Department Commander James Settle has been in and out of the hospital with his ongoing medical problems. Last information is that he was home again recuperating.

Department Adjutant Maxwell Rice reported that Department VCAL Joe Brown went to the hospital on 01 October again because of his leg problems. Adjutant Rice will let us know when he has more information.
Post Everlasting

It is my sad duty to report to you that Comrade Arthur Beasley (Post GR07) reported to PEL on 6 August 2014, and laid to rest on the 18th of August 2014 in Hocheim, Worms.

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

SUBJECT: Call for the 2nd Department Executive Committee Meeting

REFERENCE: Department of France Constitution and By-Laws dated June 2011

The 2nd Department Executive Committee Meeting will convene at 1300 hours on 25 October 2014, at GR1982s Post Home, Ansbach, Germany

The agenda of business to be considered at the meeting will be provided at the registration desk. Registration of DEC delegates will begin at 11:00 hours on Saturday 25 October 2013

Representation for the DEC is covered by the Department Constitution, Article IX, Section 2, “two (2) representatives from each Post of the Department which shall be members in good standing within their own Post and have written delegation from their Post Commander or Adjutant.”

A quorum for the DEC is covered by the Department By-Laws, Article II, Section 4, “fourteen (14) voting members of the Department Executive Committee representing not less than nine (9) Posts, shall constitute a quorum and of this quorum, at least five (5) members present must be Department of France Officers with voting privileges.”

All Past Department Commanders have a voice and vote in accordance with Article IX Department Executive Committee Section 2 The Voting Members

The schedule of events follows:
11:00 – 12:00 Registration
12:00 – 12:45 Past Commander’s Club Meeting
13:00 Second DEC
DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER  George Hall

I am now set up at my home for VA, DAFS, SSA, ACG, CA.
The address is AmKirchwald 3, 69251 Gaiberg

Phone H 06223 5475
Phone M 0176 7227 6350
Email hallgt@yahoo.com

From Department Americanism Chairman
Carl Hackworth...

A reminder to all posts to send in their quarterly Americanism report to Carl Hackworth along with a copy to the Department Adjutant

Carl R. Hackworth
Dudenroder Str. 1
D-63654 Büdingen

carl@hackworth.de

Department of France Past Commanders Club

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

The 2015 membership cards, pins, caps and all PCC funds will be on hand at our next meeting, Second DEC

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE...  David Greaux, PCC Secretary “2015”
HALLOWEEN PARTY
26TH October 2014
14.00 h
Klostergartenlaube Kloster str 1
74348 Lauffen am Neckar

Pumpkin Carving
Barbeque
Games for Kids

Kids free
Drinks pay as you go

POC Charlie Brown joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com / 0170-1888034
2 Vice Commander Roy Martin roym0903@gmail.com / 0176-97833972

NOTICE: FODPAL FALL MEETING

FODPAL President Jim Grosset has called the Fall FODPAL Meeting for Wednesday October 15, 2014 at 0730hrs, in room 301, at the National Headquarters of The American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana.

All FODPAL Officers and NECmen are expected to attend. Other FODPAL Members (Commanders / Adjutants) attending the Fall C&A meetings are welcome and very much encouraged to attend.

Doug Haggan
FODPAL Secretary
Past Department of France Commander
“Still Serving America’s Veterans…Around the World”
New Electronic Form to Streamline Chaotic VA Claims Process

The Department of Veterans Affairs is changing the way veterans file disability claims, in the hopes of speeding up the process.

The new system, which introduces standardized electronic forms for veterans to fill out, is aimed at streamlining a chaotic process that had led to delays in handling claims and appeals. In the past, veterans could file claims and appeals on any piece of paper, which often caused delays because of missing information, according to a VA news release.

"We must do everything that we can to make it as fast and easy as possible for veterans and their survivors to file for and receive an accurate decision on their claim," VA Secretary Robert McDonald said in a press release.

The VA is also standardizing the intent-to-file form - after veterans or survivors submit that form, they have one year to gather documentation and evidence for the claim.

The new regulations go into effect in late March.

Lauren Augustine, legislative associate for the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said veterans groups have long been pushing for such a change.

"We view it as a move in the right direction to creating an efficient process," she said.

The VA has come under heavy criticism in recent months for its treatment of veterans amid a health care scandal that included hospital administrators falsifying records and patients dying while on secret wait lists. McDonald has promised vast reforms to the VA, including major changes by Nov. 11, which is Veterans Day.

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Paid Up For Life Campaign Update

Since last reported one month ago, the Paid Up For Life (PUFL) campaign has added just over 2,000 new members. To date 15,424 American Legion members have become PUFL members. 56% paid in full with the remainder opting for the 12 month time payment option. 73%, are Vietnam era veterans and later with the overall applicant average age being 65. An email blast was sent over a week’s time to about 200,000 members, thus providing the spike in new PUFL applicants.

Becoming a Paid Up For Life member in The American Legion is easier than ever before. For more information regarding the fund go to www.legion.org/pufl. After providing a name and ID number, the member will receive a cost quote; he or she can pay by credit card or print out a personalized form and mail it in with a check. Those without an ID number can contact Customer Service at 1-800-433-3318 for their personalized offer.
Commander: not the time to shortchange DoD

WASHINGTON (Sept. 25, 2014) -- American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm said U.S.-led air strikes against ISIS militants in Syria this week amplify our nation’s need to protect the Department of Defense from drastic budget cuts and force reductions.

“The air-strike strategy is certainly an effective way to kill the enemy and destroy its war-fighting capabilities, at least in the short term,” Helm said. “But the large-scale use of high-tech missiles is expensive. Launching 1,000 Tomahawks is going to cost DoD about $1.5 billion, and the Pentagon has already said this week’s air strikes are only the beginning. Also, lasting security and protection against resurgence of this army of terrorists can only be attained through complete military superiority, including ground forces.”

Costs of the air campaign in Syria are currently being covered by the Overseas Contingency Operations fund, which has about $85 billion through fiscal 2014.

“But if these air strikes continue for months or years – and with more budget cuts kicking in from sequestration – then funding this war is going to be a serious issue,” Helm said.

“The American Legion wants Congress to avoid any further cuts to the defense budget and to properly fund combat operations against ISIS, Khorasan and other militant Islamic groups, by air, sea and land. These threats must be annihilated, and now is not the time to shortchange DoD on funding necessary to conduct critical military operations in the ongoing war on terrorism.”

The first air strike by U.S. and Arab allies happened in the early hours of Sept. 23, Syria time. Two days later, Pentagon spokesman Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby commented to CNN about fighting the Islamic militants. “I think we are in this for a matter of years. We are steeling ourselves for that period of time.”
POW/MIA Update

**Army Cpl. Alva C. Groves.** 18, of Four States, W.Va., was buried on Aug. 7, in Prunytown, W. Va. In November 1950, Groves was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment (IR), 2nd Infantry Division (ID), when his unit was attacked by a vast number of Chinese forces while occupying a defensive position northeast of the village of Kujang, North Korea. On Nov. 25, 1950, Groves’ unit consolidated its defensive lines and continued its withdrawal east. Groves was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950.

On Aug. 8, 1953, Chinese forces reported that Groves was captured during the battle and died on April 14, 1951, from tuberculous peritonitis in a prisoner of war camp in Pyokdong, North Korea.

Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea turned over to the U.S. 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain 350 - 400 U.S. servicemen who fought during the war. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from a North Korean prisoner of war camp in Pyokdong, where Groves was believed to have died.

To identify Groves’ remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including mitochondrial DNA.

**Army Pfc. Lawrence S. Gordon.** 28, a Canadian citizen, will be buried Aug. 13 in Canada. On Aug. 13, 1944, Gordon and elements of the Reconnaissance Company, 32nd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division were deployed to France. Gordon was the commander of an M8 armored car traveling near the village of Carrouges, France, when his vehicle was struck in the gas tank by German anti-tank fire, which caused the armored car to catch fire and burn. During this attack Gordon was reported as missing in action. His remains were not recovered after the attack.

Military salvage records later indicated that an M8 armored car, bearing Reconnaissance markings, was recorded to have burned due to enemy fire, and that the vehicle and crew members that had not survived the attack were recovered on Aug. 15, 1945. Two weeks after Gordon’s disappearance, his wallet was received by the Effects Quartermaster Corps. On April 3, 1945, Gordon’s status was changed to killed in action.

On July 22, 1947, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) was conducting field investigations on the loss of Gordon during anti-tank fire near Carrouges, but failed to locate Gordon’s remains. The investigators noted that prior to Aug. 18, 1944, two sets of unknown remains, clothed in German uniforms but believed to be those of American service members, were delivered to a temporary U.S. cemetery in Gorron, France. Due to lack of necessary documentation for identification and the high number of casualties between August 1-18, 1944, the AGRC concluded there was insufficient information to pursue further identifications. On May 25, 1961, remains were transferred from the temporary cemetery to the custody of the German War Graves Commission and interred at Mont-de-Huisnes, France.

In August 1951, the AGRC issued a final report determining that due to paucity of remains and lack of information, there was no association between the remains buried at the temporary cemetery and Gordon. Therefore, Gordon was determined to be non-recoverable by a military review board on Sept. 25, 1951.

An independent researcher, Jed Henry, provided historical research that led to the disinterment and the subsequent identification of Gordon. Scientists from Bode Technology and the University of Wisconsin’s Biotechnology Center used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as mitochondrial DNA sequence data.

The U.S. Army provides escort to ensure the fallen service member is properly transported, cared and accounted for until they are returned to their family. Gordon was returned to the family in July and a special escort was provided as he was returned to the U.S. The family has chosen to return Gordon to Canada via ground transportation and will be reimbursed for the transportation costs from Wisconsin to Canada. Honors are being provided at the funeral and were provided at brief ceremonies when Gordon was transitioned from one transportation mode to another.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died.

Today, 7,882 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Korean War. Using modern technology, identifications continue to be made from remains that were previously turned over by North Korean officials or recovered from North Korea by American teams.
American Legion National Commander slams lack of accountability at VA in Letter to President Obama

‘We are hearing little about pervasiveness of corruption and incompetence’

WASHINGTON (Sept. 19, 2014) – Angered by a recent IG report on the Department of Veterans Affairs and the testimony of senior VA officials, American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm sent a pointed letter to President Obama reminding him that he promised to institute “a critical culture of accountability” within the troubled health care system.

Helm said that the change in culture has still not been achieved.

“We were shocked when the VA Inspector General’s Report examined case after case of VA mismanagement, acknowledging that veterans died as they waited for health care but then stated ‘we are unable to conclusively assert that the absence of timely quality care caused the deaths of these veterans,’” Helm wrote yesterday.

“Mr. President, I understand that you cannot be held responsible for every act of malfeasance that occurs in the federal government. But let me assure you that if someone on my staff were found to be cooking the books, committing fraud or putting career ambitions ahead of veterans’ lives, they wouldn’t be transferred or suspended with pay. They would be fired immediately. Our VA employees should be held to the same standard,” Helm said.

He vowed that The American Legion will continue to keep the issue alive until VA makes the needed reforms. “A perception exists that scandals in Washington are resolved by ignoring the problem and counting on the American people to forget. Mr. President, some Americans may forget what happened at VA, but I can assure you that The American Legion never will,” Helm said.

With a current membership of 2.4-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 14,000 posts across the nation.
As the U.S. expands its war against the Islamic State, the Army is preparing to deploy a division headquarters to Iraq.

Officials have not identified the division that will deploy — the first division headquarters to go to Iraq since the U.S. withdrawal in 2011.

An official announcement is expected in the coming days. But Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno recently confirmed the Army “will send another division headquarters to Iraq to control what we’re doing there, a small headquarters.”

It’s unclear how many soldiers will be sent, or how long they will deploy. Division headquarters average between 100 and 500 soldiers and deploy for one year.

The division headquarters deploying to Iraq is expected to be responsible for coordinating the efforts of the 1,600 troops President Obama has sent to Iraq. Many of these troops are advising and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces, others are providing extra security, while others are providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. The headquarters also is expected to head up the joint operations center that since July has been run by Maj. Gen. Dana Pittard, the deputy commanding general for operations for U.S. Army Central.

Odierno’s comments were made Friday to a group of defense reporters in Washington, D.C. During the wide-ranging interview, Odierno discussed the critical role played by the Army’s two-star division headquarters.

“If you ask me one of the stress points in the Army, it’s our headquarters.”

The Army has 10 division headquarters, including two in Afghanistan and one in South Korea. On Monday night, the U.S. mounted its first airstrikes in Syria, targeting the Islamic State and also the Khorasan group, a little known terrorist cell.

Monday night’s massive air assault hitting 22 targets across Syria was a historic operation that signals a new expansion of a war that is likely to last for years.

U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft dropped precision-guided missiles on two separate and distinct extremists groups, targeting command-and-control headquarters, barracks, training camps logistical nodes and other sites, defense officials said.

“You are seeing the beginning of a sustained campaign,” Lt. Gen. William Mayville, the Joint Staff’s director of operations, told Pentagon reporters Tuesday.

On Friday, Odierno also emphasized that destroying the Islamic State will be a long-term effort. “We have to realize this is a long-term threat, this is a long-term commitment,” he said. “If you don’t believe they want to attack the West and America, you’re kidding yourself. That is their goal.”