

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

No meeting

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.
Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings TBA

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John is listed in the phone book - good luck finding one

NO MEETINGS TILL FURTHER NOTICE

Ten pounds of C-4 missing from Marine Corps Twentynine Palms

By ANDREW DYER, FEB. 5, 2021, San Diego Union-Tribune

Military investigators are searching for 10 pounds of plastic explosives reported missing from a Southern California Marine Corps base, according to a report from 10 News.

Jeff Houston, a spokesman for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, confirmed in an email the agency was investigating but declined to answer several additional questions about the case.

“Out of respect for the investigative process, NCIS does not comment on or confirm details relating to ongoing investigations,” Houston said.

The explosives are thought to have disappeared during training at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms two weeks ago, according to the report. Marine officials declined to specify what units on the base had custody of the explosives or when they were last accounted for.

There is a reward for the return of the explosives, 10 News reported.

Marine officials at I Marine Expeditionary

Force, based at Camp Pendleton, declined to comment, as did a spokesman from Marine Corps Headquarters in Quantico, Va. A spokesman for the base, located in the Mojave Desert just north of Joshua Tree National Park, did not respond to a request for comment Friday.

The missing explosives are 1.34 times as powerful as TNT. Plastic explosives are relatively stable compared to other explosives, have an indefinite shelf life and require a detonators to explode. About one pound of C-4 is powerful enough to destroy a car or truck, an explosives expert told 10 News.

The Marine Corps base at Twentynine Palms is used for training by Marine units from both the west and east coasts. Photos recently published by the Defense Department show several units trained at the base in January, including the Camp Pendleton-based 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment and the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, based at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

VA mask invention enhances communication

by Vantage Point Contributor Megan Kon is a public affairs specialist at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System, November 6, 2020



This collage of mask prototypes shows the evolution of development.

The Clear Talker mask is the latest invention from the Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS), meant to aid in communication between patients and staff. The device, a product of the hospital's Assistive Technology (AT) team, could revolutionize this key piece of Veterans' everyday lives.

When masks became a requirement at all federal health care facilities, AT realized how much current surgical masks hindered communication.

"I noticed after wearing a mask all day that I would come home and my eyes were tired," said Melissa Oliver, occupational therapist and program coordinator of the AT team. "I had to rely on just my eyes to physically express my greeting."

John Miller, Brian Burkhardt, and Seth Hills are rehabilitation engineers who work with Oliver. Their expertise ranges from vacuum forming, injection molding, laser cutting, electronics, 3D printing, and a whole range of other valuable skills used to help Veterans return to a sense of normalcy.

Rehabilitation engineers Miller and Burkhardt, pictured above, wearing the Clear Talker masks.

Catching social cues so important

"The Clear Talker mask may not make the cover of a fashion magazine," said Seth Hills. Hills has developed several adaptive sports tools, custom

mounting solutions and a novel wheelchair interface while with AT. "The fact that you can see each other's faces and catch those social cues is invaluable."

The Clear Talker meets FDA's requirements for surgical masks under the emergency use authorization for single-use surgical masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, says Burkhardt. When the pandemic is over, the AT team will submit the Clear Talker for approval to become the new surgical mask standard.

The inspiration behind the mask

John Miller from the AT team was the inspiration behind the Clear Talker mask. He was born with progressive hearing loss in both ears.

"As a person with hearing loss, I do have hearing aids that allow me to hear sound," Miller said. "But I also rely on lip reading to fill in the blanks that I miss with my hearing. After the pandemic started, I was grateful everyone was wearing masks, but it made my day-to-day life harder."

Miller's personal experience inspired him to pursue an engineering degree that would allow him to directly help people with disabilities.

The Clear Talker mask is composed of a thermoplastic polyester. It provides significant chemical resistance, durability and excellent formability for manufacturing. The mask sizes are universal. Designers based the sizes on The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health standards.

"The first time the three of us had these masks on, I almost felt like a weight came off of my shoulders," said Burkhardt. "I felt lighter knowing the burden of understanding was diminished with the ease of seeing the whole face."

The clear masks on the market today have filters located directly in front of the mouth, obstructing visibility.

"The idea behind the Clear Talker was to create a product with the fewest manufactured parts while still being able to read lips," Burkhardt added.

AT held focus groups to test the design to ensure it helps people read body language and facial expressions, and it improved the overall connection.

Oliver said she hopes to have all testing completed within a few weeks to begin distributing the masks to staff at the hospital.

It's betrayal, not patriotism.

Enough with America's 'thank you for your service' culture.

Dennis Laich and Erik Edstrom

Joseph Biden just became America's fourth post-9/11 "war president." He now ends all speeches with "May God protect our troops." First Lady Jill Biden even penned a children's book titled, "Don't Forget, God Bless Our Troops." Their son, Beau, was a soldier — and his parents suspect toxic "burn pit" exposure on his Iraq tour caused the brain cancer that later killed him. Both Jill and Joe repeatedly foreground military and veteran sacrifices — with good reason.

But just what is the best way for Americans to honor and respect veterans' sacrifices?

Responses to this question tend to be as diverse as America, itself. There's no single "right answer," but there are plenty of wrong ones. One thing has become abundantly clear: America's "thank you for your service" culture doesn't help veterans — or society.

Our country's military is continually misused, and no amount of pyrotechnics, flag-waving, priority airline boarding, discount nachos, bumper stickers, or military flyovers can fix that. For over 19 years, the U.S. government knowingly sent its service members to self-perpetuating and self-defeating wars.

That's not patriotism — that's betrayal.

Deception in broad daylight

A more effective alternative to such lobotomized patriotism — and a better way to honor veteran's service — is to get informed about how the troops are used, and to dissent whenever the military is not used wisely. Historically, veterans sacrificed plenty to preserve the rights that Americans enjoy.

Return the favor. Get informed, demand transparency, prevent the squandering of such service.

But respect for our military must begin before they become veterans — before they've sacrificed limbs, lives, and mental health supporting bad policy. Because by then, it's already too late. Instead, respect military service by ensuring that everyone who dons a uniform — beginning the moment when minors approach recruiting tables in high school lunchrooms — has informed consent about what they're actually signing up for.

Isn't it fascinating that many teachers would never expose children to graphic images of dead soldiers in classrooms, but those same students can be misled in broad daylight, at schoolhouses turned

de-facto recruiting stations? Consequently, American youths could unwittingly become those very dead bodies.

Informed consent is a critical component of respect. And if our society believes images of amputees or dead civilians — and statistics about suicide, PTSD, or drug abuse — too explicit for underage audiences, perhaps its military should quit recruiting children.

Therefore, we advocate for our Pentagon and the rest of America's war making machine — the ever-euphemistic defense establishment — to adopt a code consistent with the American Medical Association's ethics opinion on informed consent: that "Patients have the right to receive information and ask questions about recommended treatments so that they can make well considered decisions about care." The AMA guidance further states that physicians — in our scenario, war doctors — should present relevant information about the "burdens, risks, and expected benefits of all options."

Needless suffering, home and abroad

What, then, are some of the recruiting risks worth mentioning?

For starters, a survey by the Washington Post and Kaiser found the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan "have caused mental and emotional health problems in 31% of vets" — more than 800,000 of them. In one of the largest surveys available on post-9/11 soldiers, "40% of veterans polled had considered suicide at least once after they joined the military" and roughly 20 veterans and active-duty service members committed suicide daily in the past several years — a truly staggering figure. That's "more suicides each year than the total American military deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq," as a New York Times editorial board member characterized it.

Divorce, alcohol, drugs, depression, endless "zombie" medication to mitigate endless deployments — the whole nine yards. All of it ought to be raised before any American enlists but we do not know of a single instance where a recruiter discussed the risks of military service.

Likewise, since it is one of the most traumatic, highly personal elements of combat, recruits should recognize that America's war on terror has

Continued next page

Enough continued

resulted in the deaths, often violent, of more than 100 9/11s' worth of civilians from Africa to Central Asia. In the final sense, war offers only needless suffering. Ignorance to its evils is more needless still.

Taken collectively, burdens and risks seem subtle and are more easily dismissed. Most citizens prefer to avert their eyes than view war through honest lenses of fear, apathy, ignorance, and guilt. The Pentagon, incidentally, seems quite happy with the current arrangement.

More money, fewer victories

Americans have hardly exercised informed consent for their own defense, since so few even comprehend the immensity of Pentagon largesse — the largest segment of the discretionary budget — its tradeoffs, or that it's more than the next 10 countries combined (many of them U.S. allies). Informed consent's absence extends to the Overseas Contingency Operations account, a slush fund designed by defense hawks to circumvent spending controls imposed on all other government agencies.

Such consent-free exorbitant expenditures might be excusable if they produced positive results. Only the U.S. military's win/loss record since

French court hears Agent Orange case against chemical firms

25/Jan/2021

A French court will on Monday hear a case against more than a dozen multinationals, accused by a French-Vietnamese woman of causing grievous harm to her and others by selling the Agent Orange defoliant to the US government which used it to devastating effect in the Vietnam War.

Tran To Nga, born in 1942 in what was then French Indochina, worked as a journalist and activist in Vietnam in her 20s. She filed the lawsuit in 2014 against 14 firms that made or sold the highly toxic chemical, including Monsanto, now owned by German giant Bayer, and Dow Chemical.

Backed by several NGOs, she accuses the companies of being responsible for injuries sustained by her, her children and countless others, as well as for damage done to the environment. "A recognition of Vietnamese civilian victims would constitute a legal precedent", said international law specialist Valerie Cabanes.

So far, only military veterans -- from the US, Australia and Korea -- have won compensation for the after-effects of the chemical whose toxic properties

WWII is paltry at best: a tortured tie in Korea, losses in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and embarrassments in Beirut and Somalia — hardly offset by "big" wins in small wars like Grenada and Panama. That scarcely justifies such extravagant spending. Yet fear mongering from the military-industrial-congressional complex, and cynically crafted cries to "support the troops," stifles patriotic dissent.

Demands for informed consent are unlikely to emerge among Americans long-trained to quietly capitulate to war industry whims. So, for now, it may fall on veterans themselves to disavow endless wars — the death and injury caused — and the unsustainable spending underpinning it all.

Maj. Gen. Dennis Laich retired from the United States Army after more than 35 years of service. He is a graduate of the Army War College and author of "Skin in the Game ... Poor Kids and Patriots."

Erik Edstrom graduated from West Point and deployed to combat as an infantry officer in Afghanistan. He is the author of "Un-American: A Soldier's Reckoning of our Longest War." Both authors are senior fellows at the Eisenhower Media Network (EMN) — an organization of independent military and national security veteran experts.

Cabanes said were "absolutely phenomenal" at around 13 times the toxicity of herbicides in civilian use such as glyphosate.

Four million people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were exposed to Agent Orange, according to NGOs, over a decade when the US military sprayed an estimated 76 million litres (20 million gallons) of the herbicide and defoliant chemical to halt the advances of communist North Vietnamese troops and deprive enemy combatants of food sources.

The US ended the use of defoliant chemicals in the war in 1971, and withdrew from Vietnam in 1975, defeated by the Viet Cong. Agent Orange destroyed plants, polluted the soil and poisoned animals, and caused cancer and malformations in humans, NGOs say.

The plaintiff and her lawyers are expected to argue that the makers of Agent Orange misled the US government as to its true toxicity. The trial in the southern Paris suburb of Evry was originally due to open in October, but its start was postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Agent Orange Exposure Doubles Risk of Dementia, Study Finds

By Patricia Kime, Military.com, 26 Jan 2021

A new study of more than 300,000 Vietnam-era U.S. veterans has found that those who were exposed to Agent Orange are nearly twice as likely to develop dementia as those who were not.

The new finding, published Monday in JAMA Neurology, is among the most substantial to date linking cognitive decline with chemicals used for defoliation during the Vietnam War.

For the study, researchers at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System examined the medical records of thousands of veterans and found a two-fold risk of dementia for those whose medical records indicated evidence of exposure.

According to Deborah Barnes, a researcher with the University of California San Francisco and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the study authors found that, over the course of time, 5% of veterans with a documented exposure to Agent Orange were diagnosed with dementia compared with 2.5% of vets with no known exposure.

“Even though the absolute rates ... are low, these veterans were still relatively young, so if the risk holds, we would expect that to increase as they age,” Barnes said in an interview with JAMA Neurology.

The research also discovered that the exposed vets were diagnosed an average of 15 months earlier than non-exposed veterans -- a finding that can have a huge impact on former personnel, their families and society as a whole, Barnes said.

“Studies have found if we could delay the onset of dementia by a year or 15 months, it would have a huge impact on the population prevalence over time,” she explained.

For the study, the researchers reviewed the medical records of Vietnam veterans who received care through the Veterans Health Administration from Oct. 1, 2001, to Sept. 30, 2015. They excluded anyone already diagnosed with dementia and those whose Agent Orange exposure was unclear.

They found that even after adjusting for other factors and conditions that can play a role in the development of dementia -- psychiatric conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, medical conditions like diabetes and Parkinson’s, or demographic variables -- the two-fold risk remained.

“We did observe that veterans who had a history of Agent Orange exposure were more likely

to have PTSD in their medical records or traumatic brain injury, so they did have other conditions that could increase their risk of dementia, so we adjusted statistically and ... yes, there [still] is an association,” Barnes said.

Throughout the Vietnam War, U.S. forces sprayed more than 19 million gallons of defoliant, including 11 million of Agent Orange, to clear the jungle and destroy crops. From 1962 to 1971, at least 2.6 million U.S. service members were stationed in Vietnam and other places where the herbicides were sprayed or stored.

Thousands of veterans have been diagnosed with varying types of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson’s disease and peripheral neuropathy as a result of exposure to the herbicides, according to the VA.

The research didn’t explain why exposure may be linked with the development of dementia, but one of the main ingredients of the defoliants -- dioxin -- is known to be stored in fat tissue where it “sticks around for a long time,” Barnes said.

“It’s possible that Agent Orange stayed in the fat tissue and is slowly being released and causing toxic effects on the brain. But we also know that Agent Orange increases the risk of other disorders that themselves are risk factors for dementia, so it’s unclear if it’s a direct effect of the dioxin, an indirect effect or possibly a combination,” she added.

The researchers said that their study has some limitations, including concerns over the accuracy of Agent Orange exposure documentation in medical records or misclassification of a dementia diagnosis.

Also, the study did not include veterans who receive care outside VA or contain any baseline cognitive scores, which could have revealed whether any of the veterans had undiagnosed dementia at the start.

The researchers suggested that additional studies be conducted to determine the relationship between Agent Orange exposure and dementia and added that they hoped it would encourage physicians to screen their patients for the condition as they age.

Dementia is on the rise in the aging veterans community, with a 20% increase expected among VA patients over the next decade, according to the department.



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