

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 4 Things to Remember Every Memorial Day

Meeting Notice

17 January, 2024

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.
Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.
21 February, 2024

Future Meetings
2024

Mar 20, Apr 17, May 15

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

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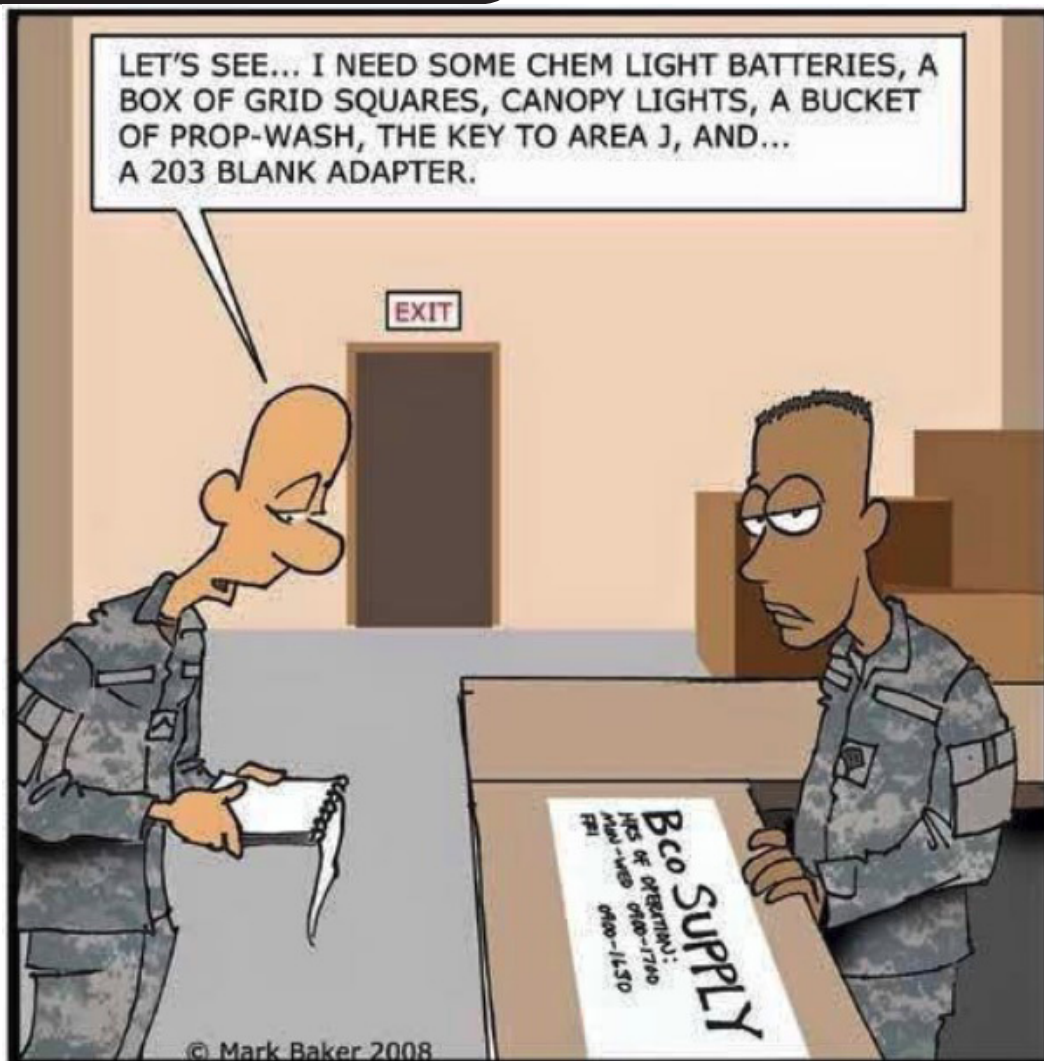
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John is listed in the phone book - good luck finding one



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 234
January 17, 2024

Meeting called to Order at 7:00 pm

A Moment of Silence was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us, for all POW/MIA's and their families and for all serving our country

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance – Pat Ciofani, John Morgan, Pat Moore, Ed Boyes, Richard Muras

Minutes of the November 15, 2023 meeting reviewed and accepted

Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore - \$4,088.95 balance in our checking account

Communications –

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA/AVVA Membership Update – Pat Moore –
New Member Richard Muras

Allied Veterans – Paid \$40.00 dues for 2024

Website – Contact Pat Moore to post items of interest on our website

OLD BUSINESS

Everyone seemed to have a good time at the December Christmas Party

NEW BUSINESS

\$500.00 Donation to Elks Club.

\$300.00 For March Stand Down

\$50.00 Towards New Membership for Mr. Muras

VA rejects more PTSD claims linked to sexual trauma than to combat

JOHN VANDIVER, STARS AND STRIPES, January 17, 2024

Veterans with PTSD stemming from sexual trauma experienced in the military are more likely to have disability claims denied than their counterparts who submitted combat-related PTSD claims, according to a new study by Yale University researchers. (Ken Scar/U.S. Army)

Yale University researchers examined nearly five years of Department of Veterans Affairs data and found that military sexual assault-related claims were denied 27.6% of the time, compared with 18.2% for combat-related PTSD claims. The study, released earlier this month in the medical journal PLOS One, also found disparities based on race and gender.

For example, men who filed PTSD claims related to sexual trauma were 1.78 times more likely than women to have their claims denied. The rejection rate was 36.6% for men and 25.4% for women, according to the study. Meanwhile, Black veterans had 1.39 times higher odds of denial of their claims of PTSD from sexual trauma than white veterans, 32.4% for the former and 25.3% for the latter, researchers found.

Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from sexual trauma experienced in the military are more likely to have VA disability claims

denied than their counterparts who submitted combat-related PTSD claims, according to a new study by Yale University researchers. (Laurie Pearson/U.S. Marine Corps)

“This is the first empirical study to identify racial and gender disparities in awarding of (military sexual trauma)-related PTSD VA benefits, and as compared to combat-related claims,” researcher Aliya Webermann, an instructor at the Yale School of Medicine, said in a statement Tuesday.

The findings are based on 102,409 combat-related claims and 31,803 claims related to military sexual trauma that were submitted between October 2017 and May 2022. But the study also found that while disparities persist, the approval rate for military sexual trauma-related PTSD claims is on the rise, suggesting that the VA is making progress in closing the gap.

During the period covered by the study, 72.4% of sexual trauma PTSD claims were granted, up from 35.6% in 2011, researchers said. Future studies should include interviews with veterans to examine whether variables such as sexual orientation and gender identity factor into how VA sexual trauma disability claims are adjudicated, the researchers said.

Strange New Wounds

By Dave Philipps, Nov. 5, New York Times

When Javier Ortiz came home from a secret mission in Syria, the ghost of a dead girl appeared to him in his kitchen. She was pale and covered in chalky dust, as if hit by an explosion, and her eyes stared at him with a glare as dark and heavy as oil.

The 21-year-old Marine was part of an artillery gun crew that fought against the Islamic State, and he knew that his unit's huge cannons had killed hundreds of enemy fighters. The ghost, he was sure, was their revenge.

A shiver went through him. He backed into another room in his apartment near Camp Pendleton in California and flicked on the lights, certain that he was imagining things. She was still there.

A few days later, in the barracks not far away, a 22-year-old Marine named Austin Powell pounded on his neighbor's door in tears and stammered: "There's something in my room! I'm hearing something in my room!" His neighbor, Brady Zipoy, 20, searched the room but found nothing.

"It's all right — I've been having problems, too," Lance Corporal Zipoy said, tapping his head. The day before, he bent down to tie his boots and was floored by a sudden avalanche of emotion so overwhelming and bizarre that he had no words for it. "We'll go see the doc," he told his friend. "We'll get help."

All through their unit — Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines— troops came home feeling cursed. And the same thing was happening in other Marine and Army artillery units.

An investigation by The New York Times found that many of the troops sent to bombard the Islamic State in 2016 and 2017 returned to the United States plagued by nightmares, panic attacks, depression and, in a few cases, hallucinations. Once-reliable Marines turned unpredictable and strange. Some are now homeless. A striking number eventually died by suicide, or tried to.

Tommy McDaniel was part of a Marine Corps gun crew that fired 7,188 rounds in a few months. In 2021, after years of suffering from headaches and depression, he died by suicide. Credit...Matthew Callahan/U.S. Marine Corps

Interviews with more than 40 gun-crew veterans and their families in 16 states found that the military repeatedly struggled to determine what was wrong after the troops returned from Syria and Iraq.

All the gun crews filled out questionnaires to screen for post-traumatic stress disorder, and took tests to detect signs of traumatic brain injuries from enemy explosions. But the crews had been miles away from the front lines when they fired their long-range cannons, and most never saw direct fighting or suffered the kinds of combat injuries that the tests were designed to look for.

A few gun-crew members were eventually given diagnoses of P.T.S.D., but to the crews that didn't make much sense. They hadn't, in most cases, even seen the enemy. The only thing remarkable about their deployments was the sheer number of artillery rounds they had fired.

The United States had made a strategic decision to avoid sending large numbers of ground troops to fight the Islamic State, and instead relied on airstrikes and a handful of powerful artillery batteries to, as one retired general said at the time, "pound the bejesus out of them." The strategy worked: Islamic State positions were all but eradicated, and hardly any American troops were killed.

But it meant that a small number of troops had to fire tens of thousands of high-explosive shells — far more rounds per crew member, experts say, than any American artillery battery had fired at least since the Vietnam War.

Military guidelines say that firing all those rounds is safe. What happened to the crews suggests that those guidelines were wrong.

The cannon blasts were strong enough to hurl a 100-pound round 15 miles, and each unleashed a shock wave that shot through the crew members' bodies, vibrating bone, punching lungs and hearts, and whipping at cruise-missile speeds through the most delicate organ of all, the brain.

More than a year after Marines started experiencing problems, the Marine Corps leadership tried to piece together what was happening by ordering a study of one of the hardest-hit units, Fox Battery, 2nd Battalion, 10th Marines.

The research was limited to reviewing the troops' medical records. No Marines were examined or interviewed. Even so, the report, published in 2019, made a startling finding: The gun crews were being hurt by their own weapons.

More than half the Marines in the battery
continued next page

wounds continued had eventually received diagnoses of traumatic brain injuries, according to a briefing prepared for Marine Corps headquarters. The report warned that the experience in Syria showed that firing a high number of rounds, day after day, could incapacitate crews “faster than combat replacements can be trained to replace them.”

The military did not seem to be taking the threat seriously, the briefing cautioned: Safety training — both for gun crews and medical personnel — was so deficient, it said, that the risks of repeated blast exposure “are seemingly ignored.”

Despite the concerns raised in the report, no one appears to have warned the commanders responsible for the gun crews. And no one told the hundreds of troops who had fired the rounds.

Instead, in case after case, the military treated the crews’ combat injuries as routine psychiatric disorders, if they treated them at all. Troops were told they had attention deficit disorder or depression. Many were given potent psychotropic drugs that made it hard to function and failed to provide much relief.

Others who started acting strangely after the deployments were simply dismissed as problems, punished for misconduct and forced out of the military in punitive ways that cut them off from the veterans’

Tuskegee Airmen Won the First Air Force ‘Top Gun’ Gunnery Competition

By Blake Stilwell, Military.com, February 22, 2022

Lt. Col. James Harvey had one wish for much of his Air Force career. He wanted the 332nd Fighter Group -- the Tuskegee Airmen -- to be recognized for winning the Air Force’s first-ever aerial gunnery competition.

“We were the original ‘Top Gun,’” he told AARP Studios. “Our competitors didn’t think we were real. We were Black and flying this obsolete aircraft. We weren’t supposed to win it.

The 1949 Air Force Annual ‘Top Gun’ Weapons Meet winners with the competition trophy. (U.S. Air Force)

Harvey was drafted into the Army in 1943 as an Army Air Corps engineer. Just a few years earlier, he’d seen a group of Curtiss P-40 Warhawks flying over his home in Pennsylvania, which planted the idea of flying one someday into his mind. So when the chance to apply to the Air Corps’ Aviation Cadet Training Program came up, he jumped at it.

In October 1944, he graduated from the Tuskegee Flight Program and was commissioned a

health care benefits that they now desperately need.

The Marine Corps has never commented publicly on the findings of the study. It declined to say who ordered it or why, and would not make the staff members who conducted it available for interviews. Officers who were in charge of the artillery batteries declined to comment for this article, or did not respond to interview requests.

The silence has left the affected veterans to try to figure out for themselves what is happening.

Many never have.

Lance Corporal Powell, who was hearing things in his room, left the Marines and became a tow-truck driver in Kentucky, but he kept having paralyzing panic attacks on the road. In 2018, a year and a half after returning from Syria, he shot himself.

His neighbor in the barracks, Lance Corporal Zipoy, moved back to his parents’ house in Minnesota and started college. In 2020 he began hearing voices and seeing hidden messages in street signs. A few days later, in the grips of a psychotic delusion, he entered a house he had never been in before and killed a man he had never met.

When the police arrived, they found him wandering barefoot in the driveway. As they handcuffed him, he asked, “Are you going to take me to the moon?”

second lieutenant. Like many of the new Tuskegee Airmen, he was assigned to replace pilots in the 332nd fighting in Europe. Although Harvey never saw action during World War II, he and his fellow Black pilots continued serving.

The postwar Tuskegee Airmen made history just a few years later, but their accomplishment went unrecognized for decades afterward.

Despite what the movie “Top Gun” will tell you, the U.S. military’s first real-world “Top Gun” program wasn’t set up by the Navy. It was an Air Force program that first took place in 1949. Tuskegee Airmen Capt. Alva Temple, 1st Lt. Harry Stewart, 1st Lt. James H. Harvey III and alternate Halbert Alexander, competing in P-47N Thunderbolts, would win it.

In January 1949, the chief of staff of the Air Force put a call out to all USAF fighter groups to send their three top scorers to represent their group at the

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Airmen continued first Top Gun “weapons meet.”

The airmen went to Las Vegas Air Force Base, now called Nellis Air Force Base, and pilots competed in five events -- aerial gunnery, dive bombing, skip bombing, rocket firing and panel strafing. Lt. Col. James Harvey calls it the “highlight of my career.”

Harvey has a reason for being proud of his team’s achievements. Despite flying obsolete aircraft, they led the 10-day event almost every step of the way. Their competitors were flying the P-51 Mustang and the P-82 Twin Mustang fighters.

“It didn’t matter, though,” Harvey said. “It’s the skill of the pilot that determines what’s gonna happen. They were there to compete, and we were there to win.”

The competition is now called “William Tell,” and the winner of the annual event has their name added to the list of past winners in the Air Force Association’s yearly almanac. For 46 years, the winner of the 1949 competition was listed as “unknown.” It wasn’t until 1995 that it finally listed the winner as the 332nd Fighter Group.

“When it was announced that we, the 332nd, had won the trophy, the room was quiet,” Harvey recalled. “There was no applause or anything like that. Because we weren’t supposed to win it. Little did I know, this was the last time the public would see the trophy for 55 years.”

The trophy sat in storage at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, for much of that time. Harvey went on to fight in the Korean War, becoming the first Black jet pilot in combat, flying 126 combat missions. He retired in 1965.

Historian Zellie Rainey Orr discovered the trophy and the story of the 332nd’s epic “Top Gun” victory. In 2004, the trophy was finally put on display in the Air Force museum. Harvey’s wish that Nellis Air Force Base would recognize the win took a few more years and intervention from AARP.

AARP’s Wish of a Lifetime program seeks to change the way society views the values of older people by granting them one of their lifelong wishes. It learned about Lt. Col. Harvey’s story and looked into the true story. The result was that Nellis Air Force Base recognized the victory with a commemorative plaque posted there in January 2022, honoring the achievement of the Tuskegee Airmen.

“It proves that if you believe in something and you stay at it, you’ll finally get the recognition you deserve,” said Harvey, who turned 98 in 2021. “This plaque, finally, after many years, will be at the top, number one.”

IN-COUNTRY



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