

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

18 June, '14

Elks Lodge

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday each month. You are also invited to join members for conversation and discussion after the meeting.

Chapter web page :

National web page: www.vva.org

Future Meetings

2014

18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 17 September,
15 October, 19 November, 17 December

2015

21 January, 18 February, 18 March, 15 April

Chapter 324 Officers

President - Pat Ciofani 702-7734

Vice Pres. - Oliver Williams 538-4416

Secretary - Dennis Symanski 453-3600

Treasurer - Pat Moore 354-2533

Director - Ron Coppersmith 262-255-2832

Director - John Morgan 871-9274

Director - Joe Murray 262-389-7325

Director - Mike Ducette 262-968-5508

Chapter Members Needed

We need a few hours of your time.

Chapter 324's Orange Blossom fundraiser generates almost all of the chapter's operating funds as well as all of the money we give away during the year. Chapter members and friends stand outside Miller Park and ask for donations in exchange for paper flowers.

It's a job anyone can do, but the important thing to remember is – more members soliciting donations equals a larger bottom line. More bodies equal more money. The chapter would like to borrow your body for a few hours to help gather some of those donations. The Chapter will pay for your parking and buy you a sandwich and a can of soda, or water.

We have three dates for which you can volunteer – come for one day, or more if you can:

Friday, July 25 vs. Mets 7:10

Tuesday, Aug 5 vs. Giants 7:10

Wednesday, Aug 6 vs. Giants 1:10*

Parking lots open 3 hours before game time. That gives us 3 hours to do our thing. Meet on the first base side, just outside home plate. Please help.

Please tell us you will be joining us in the parking lot. Contact Pat Ciofani 702-7734

* Day games allow kids and Senior Citizens (that's us) in for half price.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
May 21, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Pat Moore

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Prayer – Mike DuCette

Member Self-Introductions-Dennis Szymanski, Paul Balge, L. Barnett, John Morgan, Mike DuCette, David Titter, Joe Herbert, Patrick Moore, Pat Ciofani, Oliver Williams Joe Campbell

Installation of Officers – Pat Ciofani – President, Oliver Williams – Vice President, Pat Moore – Treasurer, Dennis Szymanski – Secretary were sworn in as newly elected/re-elected officers. Meeting was then turned over to new President Pat Ciofani.

Minutes of the April 16, 2014 meeting were reviewed and approved

Treasurer's Report - \$4718.86 current balance in our checking account

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA/AVVA Membership Update – Joe Herbert – 120 members

Education Outreach – Joe Campbell – Joe gave presentation at South Milwaukee High School – member George Banda gave presentation at Brookfield library on May 22nd

Fund-Raising dates at Miller Park – July 25th – August 5-6th – Details will follow – We need your help!

Website – We have a facebook site-VVA 324

OLD BUSINESS

State Council Sweepstakes – Moved and passed to a lot \$360 to purchase the “Sweepstakes” tickets sent to us from State Council. Since State is not allowed to be involved in fund raising, this was looked on as a donation to be kept within the organization.

NEW BUSINESS

Memorial Day Parade – Details were shared with those interested in participating

Cav Reunion – 2nd of the 1st is having their reunion August 28th – 31st in Milwaukee – We are looking into a way to welcome them

National Veterans Art Festival – will be held in Milwaukee at the VA October 27th – November 2nd – We are looking for a way to take a leadership role in this event

For the Good of the Chapter – Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of member Kent Draper who recently passed away.

Adjournment – 8:00 pm



Bush administration was aware of the backlogs, wait lists

By Mariah Blake Fri May 30, 2014

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/05/veterans-affairs-backlogs-waiting-lists-george-bush>
According to VA inspector general reports and to comment on whether it had actually done so.

other documents that have gone overlooked in the current firestorm, federal officials knew about the scheme at the heart of the scandal—falsifying VA records to cover up treatment delays for years. VA officials first learned of the problems in 2005, when George W. Bush was entering his second term, and the problems went unfixed.

The underlying issues date back even further. In 1995, as part of a broader overhaul, the VA began pressing clinics to cut wait times for new patient appointments to 30 days. But there was no system for tracking which facilities were meeting this target until 2002, when the VA introduced electronic waiting lists to keep tabs on patients who couldn't be seen within a month. Managers who slashed wait times were given bonuses and other perks. This created an incentive to game the system, especially after veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars began flooding into VA clinics and straining the already stretched resources.

The efforts to mask delays burst into public view last month, when CNN reported that at least 40 patients—many of whom never made it onto electronic waiting lists—had died while awaiting care from the VA system in Phoenix.

Since then, the VA has faced a volley of scathing allegations about the use of “secret” paper waiting lists to hide lengthy treatment lags. These accusations echo the findings of a 2005 VA inspector general's report that documented a raft of violations—including the widespread use of paper lists in place of the electronic ones to hide the glut of veterans awaiting appointments. The report urged the Veterans Health Administration “to ensure the electronic waiting list is complete and accurate” and proposed steps to remedy the problem.

Two years later, another inspector general audit found that the VA had failed to act on these recommendations and that schedulers were still using paper lists and other tactics to mask the backlogs. The report recommended that the VA “establish procedures to routinely test the accuracy of reported waiting times and the completeness of electronic waiting lists, and take corrective action when testing shows questionable differences.”

At the time, the VA agreed to convene a work group to tackle the issue. A VA spokeswoman declined

After the 2007 audit, the inspector general's office continued to field complaints about schedulers cooking the books. In 2008, then-Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), the chairman of the Senate Committee of Veteran Affairs, asked the inspector general to investigate allegations that supervisors at VA facilities in northern Florida and southern Georgia were “manipulating their waiting list.” The IG later received an anonymous tip alleging that managers in the Portland VA hospital were instructing employees “to use paper wait lists to hide the access problems,” which had created a backlog of more than 3,500 patients in one clinic alone.

According to a memo obtained by the Washington Times, Obama's transition team briefed him on the issue before he took office. The document noted that scheduling problems were “systemic throughout” the VA medical system and that the agency had made “only limited progress in addressing” issues such as the “accuracy of reported waiting times, and completeness of electronic waiting lists.”

“This is not only a data integrity issue,” the memo continued. “It affects quality of care by delaying—and potentially denying—deserving veterans timely care.”

VA higher-ups certainly knew about the ongoing problem. In April 2010, William Schoenhard, the VA's deputy undersecretary for health for operations and management, sent a lengthy memo to the VA's regional directors that outlined 17 “gaming strategies” schedulers were using to hide treatment delays—including paper waiting lists. Politicians and pundits have seized on this as evidence that the Obama administration dropped the ball. And Robert Petzel, the undersecretary of health for Veterans Affairs, was forced to step down after being confronted with the memo during a congressional hearing earlier this month. But the 2010 memo shows that the VA took some steps to solve the problem. Schoenhard called on VA network directors across the country to take “immediate action” to “identify and eliminate” the gaming strategies and offered detailed instructions for detecting these schemes, which he warned “will not be tolerated.”

Leaving the Crew of the USS Liberty Behind

by RAY MCGOVERN JUNE 09, 2014

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/06/09/leaving-the-crew-of-the-uss-liberty-behind/>

On June 8, 1967, Israeli leaders learned they could deliberately attack a U.S. Navy ship and try to send it, together with its entire crew, to the bottom of the Mediterranean – with impunity. Israeli aircraft and torpedo boats attacked the USS Liberty, a state-of-the-art intelligence collection platform sailing in international waters off the Sinai, killing 34 of the 294 crew members and wounding more than 170.

On the 47th anniversary of that unprovoked attack let's be clear about what happened: Israeli messages intercepted on June 8, 1967, leave no doubt that sinking the USS Liberty was the mission assigned to the attacking Israeli warplanes and torpedo boats as the Six-Day War raged in the Middle East. Let me repeat: there is no doubt – none – that the mission of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) was to destroy the USS Liberty and kill its entire crew.

Referring last week to the controversy of the swap of five Taliban prisoners for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, President Barack Obama claimed, "The U.S. has always had a pretty sacred rule: We don't leave our men or women in uniform behind." The only exception, he might have added, is when Israeli forces shoot them up; then mum's the word.

Mr. President, try explaining that "pretty sacred rule" to the USS Liberty survivors. I know them well enough to sense the hollow echo that Obama's claim will leave in their ears – and in the ears of the families of those who did not survive.

The crew of the USS Liberty has been "left behind," in a figurative as well as a physical sense. There is no way to retrieve the bodies of those washed out to sea through the large hole made by the Israeli torpedo that hit the Liberty amidships, killing 26 of the crew.

There is a way, however, to stop throwing salt in the survivors' wounds, as every U.S. president since Lyndon Johnson has done in acquiescing to the false narrative that it was all a terrible case of mistaken identity and confusion by Israeli command and control. That salt burns – especially on anniversaries of the tragedy, raising troubling questions about the power of the Israel Lobby and the Israeli government over U.S. politicians.

In apparent fear of the Israel Lobby and

not wanting to offend the Israeli government, U.S. officials including the Navy have refused to come clean on what happened 47 years ago. The mainstream U.S. media has been a willing partner in this failure to face the facts and demand accountability.

Here, for example, is the text of an intercepted Israeli conversation, just one of many pieces of hard, unambiguous evidence that the Israeli attack was not a mistake:

Israeli pilot to ground control: "This is an American ship. Do you still want us to attack?"

Ground control: "Yes, follow orders." ...

Israeli pilot: "But, sir, it's an American ship – I can see the flag!"

Ground control: "Never mind; hit it!"

The Israelis would have been able to glory in reporting "mission accomplished, ship sunk, all crew killed" save for the bravery and surefootedness of then-23 year-old Navy seaman Terry Halbardier, whose actions spelled the difference between the murder of 34 of the crew and the intended massacre of all 294.

Halbardier skated across the Liberty's slippery deck while it was being strafed in order to connect a communications cable and enable the Liberty to send out an SOS. The Israelis intercepted that message and, out of fear of how the U.S. Sixth Fleet would respond, immediately broke off the attack, returned to their bases, and sent an "oops" message to Washington confessing to their unfortunate "mistake."

As things turned out, the Israelis didn't need to be so concerned. When President Johnson learned that the USS America and USS Saratoga had launched warplanes to do battle with the forces attacking the Liberty, he told Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to call Sixth Fleet commander Rear Admiral Lawrence Geiss and tell him to order the warplanes to return immediately to their carriers.

According to J.Q. "Tony" Hart, a chief petty officer who monitored these conversations from a U.S. Navy communications relay station in Morocco, Geiss shot back that one of his ships was under attack. Tellingly, McNamara responded: "President Johnson

Liberty continued on next page

Liberty continued from last page

is not going to go to war or embarrass an American ally over a few sailors.”

For the Israelis, the tight U-turn by the U.S. warplanes over the Mediterranean was proof positive that the Israeli government can literally get away with murder, including killing U.S. servicemen, and that Official Washington and its servile media could be counted upon to cover up the deliberate nature of the attack.

John Crewdson, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for the Chicago Tribune, asked McNamara about this many years later. McNamara’s answer is worth reading carefully; he said he had “absolutely no recollection of what I did that day,” except that “I have a memory that I didn’t know at the time what was going on.”

Crewdson has written the most detailed and accurate account of the Israeli attack on the Liberty; it appeared in the Chicago Tribune, and also in the Baltimore Sun, on Oct. 2, 2007. Read it and you’ll understand why Crewdson got no Pulitzer for his investigative reporting on the Liberty. Instead, the Tribune laid him off in November 2008 after 24 years.

Several of the Liberty survivors have become friends of mine. I have listened to their stories, as Crewdson did. When June 8 comes around each year I remember them. And on special occasions, as when Terry Halbardier was finally awarded the Silver Star for his bravery, I write about them.

The mainstream U.S. media has avoided the USS Liberty case like the plague. I just checked the Washington Post and – surprise, surprise – it has missed the opportunity for the 46th consecutive year, to mention the Liberty anniversary.

On the few occasions when the mainstream U.S. media outlets are forced to address what happened, they blithely ignore the incredibly rich array of hard evidence and still put out the false narrative of the “mistaken” Israeli attack on the Liberty.

And they attempt to conflate fact with speculation, asking why Israel would deliberately attack a ship of the U.S. Navy. Why Tel Aviv wanted the Liberty and its entire crew on the bottom of the Mediterranean remains a matter of speculation, but there are plausible theories including Israel’s determination to keep the details of its war plans secret from everyone, including the U.S. government.

But there is no doubt that destroying the

Liberty and its crew was the mission assigned to Israel’s warplanes and torpedo boats. One Navy Admiral with a conscience, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (and before that Chief of Naval Operations) Thomas Moorer, has “broken ranks,” so to speak. Moorer helped lead an independent, blue-ribbon commission to investigate what happened to the Liberty.

The following are among the commission’s findings made public in October 2003:

-That the attack, by a U.S. ally, was a “deliberate attempt to destroy an American ship and kill its entire crew”

-That the attack included the machine-gunning of stretcher-bearers and life rafts

-That “the White House deliberately prevented the U.S. Navy from coming to the defense of the [ship] ... never before in naval history has a rescue mission been cancelled when an American ship was under attack”

-That surviving crew members were later threatened with “court-martial, imprisonment, or worse” if they talked to anyone about what had happened to them; and were “abandoned by their own government.”

Will the USS Liberty survivors ever enjoy the opportunity to know and to tell the real story with all its evil cruelties? Or will silence continue to reign? In a different context, Russian dissident author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote this warning about what silence about evil does to the foundations of justice:

“In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are implanting it, and it will rise up a thousand fold in the future. When we neither punish nor reproach evildoers, we are not simply protecting their trivial old age, we are thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations.” Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

President Obama, the crew of the USS Liberty has been “left behind” for way too many years. Do the right thing by them. Face down those who warn that you cannot risk Israel’s displeasure. And add more substance to your rhetoric about our “pretty sacred rule” that we do not leave anybody wearing the American uniform behind.

Ray McGovern was an Army officer and CIA analyst for almost 30 year. He now serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity.

Sign Up Now With Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 324

Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Vietnam Veterans (A copy of your DD214 must be included):

- Individual Member - 1 year \$20 • Individual Member 3 year \$50 • Life Member \$250
- Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Anyone Else:

- Associate Member - 1 year \$20 • Associate Member 3 year \$50 • Associate Life Member \$250
- Associate Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Please Print

Name _____ Membership # _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

I would like to help Chapter 324 by donating \$ _____

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this application to:

VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, PO Box 18631, Milwaukee, WI 53218



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