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1. DOD Unveils Budget Priorities: Defense Secretary Leon Panetta unveiled at a Pentagon press conference yesterday what his department's priorities and choices will be as they are forced to reduce their overall budget by \$487 billion over the next 10 years. The Defense Department is expected to request \$525 billion as a baseline budget for FY 2013, with an additional \$88.4 billion for overseas contingencies, which is \$6 billion and \$27 billion less, respectively, than FY 2012. Five key strategies are to drive the future military force, which will be smaller and leaner; repositioned with more emphasis on Asia-Pacific and the Middle East; stronger through better alliances and partnerships; extremely agile and deadly; and second-to-none in technology and capability. Some key priorities and choices in the budget proposal included a comprehensive review of the military retirement system and possible increases in health care fees for retirees. To learn more about the Pentagon's announcement and to read the VFW's reaction, click here: <http://www.vfwonthehill.org/2012/01/vfw-reacts-to-pentagon-budget.html>

2. House VA Discusses VA Rating Schedule: This week the House Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs discussed VA's Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD). The Subcommittee members questioned witnesses on the differences between DOD and VA ratings systems, ratings they feel are often in direct conflict with each other, causing confusion for the veteran. VSO representatives highlighted equitable compensation for like injuries and that the VASRD has not been reviewed or updated to ensure that disability categories, rating percentages and compensation levels remain accurate. Other areas discussed by all included possible restructuring of the Individual Unemployability (IU) benefit, accuracy of claims and measuring quality of life payments. To view the recorded webcast or for more information from the hearing visit the House VA website at: <http://veterans.house.gov/>

3. Combat Brother Visit: The VFW Washington Office hosted a six-member international Combat Brotherhood delegation this week from Russia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. The Combat Brotherhood consists primarily of Afghanistan and Chechnya veterans who banded together to urge their respective governments to care for their wounded, ill and injured veterans. Their visit to Washington included all-day visits and briefings at the Department of Veterans Affairs central office, VA Medical Center, Pentagon and Naval Academy. The VFW also hosted a conference with seven other veteran and POW/MIA family organizations, so that the Combat Brotherhood could better understand the impact of veteran advocates on the legislative process. The Combat Brotherhood is an invaluable partner toward achieving VFW's goal toward the fullest possible accounting of missing American servicemen who, from World War II forward, disappeared inside the former Soviet Union or one of its satellite states. Also present was VFW Senior Vice Commander John Hamilton, Adjutant General Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, and the

American co-chairman of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW-MIAs, retired Air Force Gen. Robert "Doc" Foglesong.

4. Korean War MIA Identified: The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced the identification of remains belonging to Army Pfc. George A. Porter, 21, of Philadelphia. On Feb. 11, 1950, Porter and Battery B, 15th Field Artillery Battalion, were supporting South Korean forces when Chinese forces attacked in what became known as the "Hoengsong Massacre." Porter and more than 100 men were taken as prisoners. Read more at http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/.