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NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

1. VFW Calls for Veterans Corporation to Close: VFW Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner is calling on Congress to stop appropriating federal funding for the Veterans Business Development Corporation, which is better known as The Veterans Corporation or TVC. Congress created TVC in 1999 to provide military veterans with the resources and guidance necessary to start small businesses, but an investigation report released last week by the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship revealed that TVC failed to establish and maintain veterans business resource centers, it didn't become self-sufficient as required, and the use of federal funding for executive compensation and questionable expenditures was deemed unacceptable. The Senate committee recommended that TVC no longer receive any federal funding for fiscal 2009 and beyond. The VFW national commander agrees, and now wants TVC's funding redirected to the Small Business Administration to expand their veteran-specific programs. The Small Business Administration, unlike TVC, is subject to congressional oversight and accountability, and with 1,500 small business development centers nationwide is more capable of reaching out and working with veterans. "The Small Business Administration is the right place for Congress to fund and expand small business programs for veterans," said Gardner. "It has a proven track record and provides greater bang for the buck."

To read the Senate committee investigation report, go to:
<http://sbc.senate.gov/Committee%20Report%20on%20TVC.pdf>.

NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. WWII MIA Identified: The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced that the remains of Marine Corps Maj. Marion R. McCown, Jr., have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors next month in his hometown of Charlestown, SC. On Jan. 20, 1944, McCown was the pilot of an F-4U Corsair that failed to return from a combat mission over Rabaul, New Britain, Papua New Guinea. In 1991, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command team excavated an F-4U crash site on Rabaul and recovered human remains and McCown's identification tag. However, forensic science at that time precluded an identification. In 2006, JPAC again surveyed the crash site in preparation for a recovery. While at the site, a local villager turned over human remains that he claimed to have recovered from the site. In 2008, another JPAC team excavated the site and recovered additional human remains. Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC used dental comparisons in the identification of McCown's remains.

2. Vietnam MIAs Identified: The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office also announced that six servicemen will be buried as a group this month at Arlington National Cemetery. They are Air Force Maj. Bernard L. Bucher, of Eureka, IL, and John L. McElroy, of Eminence, KY; 1st Lt. Stephen C. Moreland, of Los Angeles; and Staff Sgt. Frank M. Hepler, of Glenside, PA. Two other servicemen individually identified in October 2007 are also represented in the group. They are Army Capt. Warren R. Orr Jr., of Kewanee, IL, and Air Force Airman 1st Class George W. Long, of Medicine, KS. On May 12, 1968, these

men were on board a C-130 Hercules evacuating Vietnamese citizens from the Kham Duc Special Forces Camp near Da Nang, South Vietnam. While taking off, the crew reported taking heavy enemy ground fire. A forward air controller flying in the area reported seeing the plane explode in mid-air soon after leaving the runway. In 1986 and 1991, U.S. officials received remains and identification tags from sources claiming they belonged to the men from this incident. Scientific analysis revealed they were not American remains, but it was believed the Vietnamese sources knew where the crash site was located. In 1993, a joint/U.S.-Vietnamese team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, traveled to Kham Duc and interviewed four local citizens concerning the incident. They led the team to the crash site and turned over remains and identification tags they had recovered in 1983 while looking for scrap metal. During this visit, the team recovered more human remains and aircraft wreckage at the site. In 1994, another team excavated the crash site and recovered additional remains, pieces of life-support equipment, crew-related gear and personal effects.

3. Reserve Component Mobilization: The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 97,775; Navy Reserve, 5,937; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 10,719; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,445; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 858. This brings the total number of mobilized Guard and Reserve personnel to 123,734, a decrease of 449 from last week. These figures include the totals of voluntary and involuntary activated Reserve Component members. Of this total, 95,803 personnel have been involuntarily mobilized, while 27,931 are voluntarily serving on active duty. Total activated since 9/11 is 684,216.

NATIONAL VETERAN SERVICE

1. VA to Provide Payments to Eligible Surviving Spouses: The VA announced yesterday that it is taking immediate action to quickly identify and pay surviving spouses who are eligible to receive a one-time compensation or pension payment for the month of the veteran's death. A change in law that was effective in 1997 allowed surviving spouses to keep their loved one's month-of-death compensation or pension payment, but the VA didn't properly implement the change electronically. The problem was identified by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee chairman Daniel Akaka (D-HI) from a constituent's complaint. VA Secretary James Peake immediately directed a special task force to identify and pay the beneficiaries who never received the benefit or were inadvertently required to repay the money issued for the month of a veteran's death. Surviving spouses most likely to be affected by this processing problem are those who never applied to VA for survivors' benefits following the death of a veteran. The task force will review VA's payment records for veterans who died after Dec. 31, 1996, and who are survived by a spouse. The review will identify those to whom VA owes retroactive benefits for the month of the veteran's death. VA will begin issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of this month. Because there are deceased veterans for whom VA does not have marital status information, a special Survivors' Call Center has been established for spouses who believe they may be entitled to this retroactive month-of-death benefit. Surviving spouses are encouraged to contact the Survivors' Call Center toll-free at 1-800-749-8387, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. central time. Inquiries may also be submitted online at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>. VA is aggressively changing its processing procedures to ensure this benefit is correctly paid to all surviving spouses in the future.