

VFW Shares Concern with President

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WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. met with President Obama in the Oval Office this afternoon and expressed the VFW's sympathy and support to the Fort Hood, Texas, shooting victims and their families.

"The president shares our concern that more has to be done to help prevent similar tragedies from occurring elsewhere," said William A. Thien, who leads more than 1.9 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliaries. "The president also understands the great challenges of dealing with individuals whose emotional problems and/or post-traumatic stress can range from invisible to debilitating," he said.

"This is a national problem with no blanket solution," said Thien, a Vietnam veteran from Georgetown, Ind. "That means we as a nation have to continue to increase our education and outreach efforts and anti-stigma messaging, and to have the care available when and where needed for those folks who want to be helped."

Other topics addressed were the proper care of military veterans, service members and their loved ones, as well as the looming threat of sequestration on the Defense Department and its potential impact on the Department of Veterans Affairs, should Congress allow the sequester to continue in 2016. The VFW national commander reiterated his organization's great relationship with the VA, and that the VFW supports all efforts to reduce the claims backlog.

Thien also praised the great military family support work of first lady Michelle Obama and second lady Dr. Jill Biden. "Our military is fully aware and sincerely appreciative of their outspoken support of military families," he said. "Likewise, the VFW will continue to do whatever we can to support those who have singularly borne the brunt of more than a dozen years of war."

The final topic was America's Full Accounting Mission and the VFW's support of Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's reorganization of the accounting community tasked to accomplish it.

"As Secretary Hagel recently said, 'You take care of the people who gave their lives to this country and you take care of their families,'" echoed Thien. "Any effort that helps to recover, identify and return more missing service personnel to their loved ones is a positive

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initiative, and the VFW looks forward to continuing to work with him and his team to make this happen.”