



2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)



WEBSITE: www.2-1-196th.com

Volume 5

"A Soldier Once... And Always"

August 2015

Commanders Corner: The rains have finally subsided around here and I hope your locale was a lot drier than mine. I am just now finishing up stuff outside that should have been done a month or so ago. I probably should have had it done by now; but golf and goofing off interfered on some of the dry days.

Oh well, being retired has its advantages; I have the rest of my life to attempt to complete all of my chores. I'm just thankful I was born in America where I have the freedom to be productive when I want, go on vacation when and where I want and, goof off when I want. This is all because of the sacrifices made by the men and women that made it possible by serving their country; normal Americans, such as you, my comrades in arms. As we celebrated Independence Day last month, I became more aware as to how far this country has come because of people like you. It's nice to see Vietnam veterans finally get some the recognition which, for so many years, was missing. It's more and more apparent that "Nam Vets" are more open about their service and show their pride in the honor of being there and surviving that horrible, yet, at the same time, wonderful experience. Remember, every day you have is a gift and we all have comrades who never got this chance to experience life to the fullest. God bless them every one! "Thanks for your service" has become a fairly standard comment but, is sincerely appreciated when I hear it, I wish and hope our fallen comrades are hearing it also; for they are and their families are the ones that lost so much. Life isn't fair but, it's the only one we've got; so make the most of it. Help others in need, work around the house, and by all means; GOOF OFF when you can.

Just a quick reminder that the upcoming Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) annual reunion is right around the corner; just two months away. I encourage you to get your reservations into the Reunion Committee to ensure you are counted as a participant for this exceptional reunion event. Your Executive Committee is planning for a great time for us all. Look at the advertisement on page 4 of the Newsletter for additional information. You can also access the information on the Chapter & ADVA websites. We are looking forward to a wonderful reunion. Don't miss it!

Chuck

Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!



World War II & Korean War MIA Identified: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identification of remains belonging to World War II and Korea War. Recovered are:

- **Army Sgt. 1st Class John C. Keller**, 26, of the Bronx, N.Y., who had been missing in action since the Korean War. He will be buried with full military honors on a date and at a location yet to be determined. In November 1950, Keller was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, when his unit was forced into a fighting withdrawal from their position northwest of Unsan, North Korea. He was reported missing on Nov. 2, 1950. It would be later learned he had been captured by the Chinese, but died in 1951 as a result of malnutrition and medical neglect.
- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Edward F. Barker**, 21, of Herkimer, N.Y., will be buried Aug. 1 in his hometown. On Sept. 30, 1944, Barker was piloting a P-47D Thunderbolt that failed to return from a training mission in Papua New Guinea.
- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. William O. Pile**, 24, of Aideville, Ohio, was piloting a B-26C Invader on a mission near Bastogne, Belgium, when he was shot down by enemy fighters on Dec. 23, 1944. He was assigned to the 559th Bombardment Squadron, 387th Bombardment Group, 9th Air Forces, and will be buried with full military honors on a date and at a location yet to be determined.
- **Army Pfc. George L. Rights**, 23, of Winston-Salem, N.C., will be buried Aug. 9 in his hometown. In Feb. 1951, rights and elements of Battery B, 15th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, were supporting the Republic of South Korea when the 15th FA was attacked by Chinese forces near Hoengsong, South Korea. Following the battle, Rights was reported as missing in action.

Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemoration Begins: This month marks 50 years since the first combat troops deployed to Vietnam. The VFW, through DOD's Vietnam War Commemoration partnership program, is working in local communities to recognize the sacrifice, service and tremendous contribution our Vietnam War veterans have made to the security of our nation. The Commemoration will have ongoing events at more than 2,100 locations in local communities around the country.

The VA Announces Initiative to Expand Burial Options for Urban Veterans:

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has launched the Urban Initiative to provide burial options for urban veterans who wish to be inurned closer to home. The Urban Initiative is the result of a study that found an increased interest in cremations among veterans. Also found that veterans in major metropolitan cities choose not to use national cemeteries. Due to lack of sufficient sites large enough to accommodate casketed burials in large metropolitan cities, NCA plans to establish columbarium-only national cemeteries in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Indianapolis and the San Francisco Bay area.



Army's Top Enlistee Proposes 'Ike Jacket' for Army Dress Uniform: The Sergeant major of the Army would like to make the "Ike jacket" part of the service's dress uniform. Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel A. Dailey "has suggested an optional 'Eisenhower jacket' to be added as a more appropriate indoor alternative to the black windbreaker jacket," according to a recent Army press release. Named after Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the short-waisted, slim-fitting jacket was standard issue in 1944. The Army adopted the blue Army Service Uniform, or ASU, to replace the green Class A dress uniform in 2006. Adapted from the formal Dress Blues, the dark blue jacket and light blue pants have been a part of Army history since the Revolutionary War. The proposed change to the ASU for all ranks is part of an online survey to gather soldier-feedback about several other proposed uniforms changes. Dailey and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno authorized the survey to give soldiers a chance to weigh in on Army uniform and wear policy. "The soldiers are the ones who actually wear these uniforms. The senior leaders like to be informed by as many soldiers in the field as possible [on uniform changes,]"

Congress Approves Veterans ID Cards: Congress passed the Veterans ID Card Act (H.R. 91), which will allow all US veterans to receive an ID card issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Under current rules, official ID cards are only issued to those who retire from the military, or who are receiving medical care from the VA health care system. Veterans who are not retirees or utilizing VA medical care must use their DD-214 as proof of military service. The new VA ID card will be available to all honorably discharged veterans. The new VA ID cards will not replace the need for a retired military ID or VA medical care identification card. Now, there are really only two situations in which proof of military ID is required: applying for jobs, and obtaining discounts on goods or services. This new ID card will not be used for verification of veteran status for job hunting, and applicants will continue to use an electronic or photocopied version of their actual DD-214. Therefore, the only purpose (that I can see) to this new ID card is for obtaining veterans discounts from private businesses that generously offer them. I will be very curious to see how many people want to obtain these new cards, and if they are actually used.

VFW ELECTS NEW NATIONAL COMMANDER: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) concluded its 116th National Convention by electing Pittsburgh-native John A. Biedrzycki Jr. as its new national commander. Biedrzycki served in the U. S. Army from 1967-1970. He served in Korea with the 7th Infantry Division, and his decorations include the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and Korean Defense Medal. He is a VFW Legacy Life Member and served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, County, District and Department (state) levels prior to his elections to national office. He has been a member of the VFW for 46 years, having first joined the VFW at Post 418 in McKees Rocks, Pa., in 1969. In his acceptance speech, the VFW's new leader called on the organization's nearly 1.4 million members to recommit themselves in service to others, which was one of the primary reasons his organization's founders formed in 1899, and formerly merged here in Pittsburgh in 1914. He also urged everyone to consider how much poorer the country would have been had the VFW never existed.



COMBAT STORIES:

A Christmas Gift to Remember

John Shoemaker

It's that time of year ...Christmas away from home. It was called Hawk Hill, a firebase halfway between 23rd Infantry Division Headquarters at Chu Lai and the old city of Da Nang, South Vietnam. A bump of a hill, it was home to a battalion of infantry, several batteries of artillery and other units, including dozens of helicopters. One of their many important missions was the constant re-supply to field units engaging the enemy in I Corps from the South China Sea to Laos. The Hueys flew in and out all day and night in a never ending procession...making the signature "whop-whop" sound. No one ever forgets it as you will strain to hear when the Medivac is coming or the Hueys are coming to rescue you from harm's way. More foreboding is when they crank up the Hueys knowing they are taking you back out to a hot landing zone or LZ to chase the enemy. Over the prior six months, I was on 27 of those combat assaults by helicopter. Now, as a Company Commander at Hawk Hill for the 2/1st Battalion in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade my mission was to ensure the safety of all personnel by guarding the firebase, circled with concertina and defensive bunkers. It was a rugged Army base with fearsome 155mm howitzers, firing at all times. There were dozens of bunkers dug deep and covered in sand bags 3 and 4 levels deep to protect against the routine call of "incoming!" when alarms wailed as enemy rockets came smashing haphazardly into the firebase. In a few of the bunkers, the soldiers would erect a symbolic Christmas tree which may only be a foot or two high with crude decorations and even a strand of lights. This was considered luxury compared to those in the "bush" sleeping in foxholes or on the ground while leeches silently crawled on them. Late in December, word came down from Brigade that we were selected for quite an honor. Since we had finished several months of bitter combat, suffering casualties but killing hundreds of the enemy, we learned that we will be transported north to Da Nang to see the incredibly popular "Bob Hope Show". What looked like a very dismal Christmas now had us really pumped up. Over a hundred of us loaded up for the hour plus trip up Highway One to Da Nang. My worries came back about how to protect against a potential enemy attack, but I would soon learn all would be quiet. In an open theater filled with thousands of troops, for several hours we watched and yelled and laughed as Bob Hope did his magic with his troupe of courageous performers. The atmosphere was electric. For a brief moment in time, all was well. Everything seemed right with the world. We wanted to forget the reality of it. Right then, the world was at peace and life was full of fun again. When we got back to Hawk Hill, the Battalion commander ordered a turkey dinner for us. They really tried hard to make it exceptional under the circumstances – and it was. Later, back in my bunker and on my crudely constructed bunk bed, I immediately grabbed pen and paper to write my wife and parents. It really doesn't seem so long ago that we had no cell phones, Internet, landlines, or Skype on laptops – just pen and paper. Drifting off to sleep, I listened to a few Christmas songs on my battery powered, cassette recorder. Then it happened, "Bang!" You could feel the concussion of the explosion as it dropped dirt and dust on me from the roof of the bunker. I can still hear the sound of the projectile screaming on its way to its target. It was back to reality. I would try to sleep anyway with a bandana over my face. My celebration was over, but the Christmas memory lingers. Standing in the cold admiring my home in Natick, I smiled knowing I would sleep in a beautiful, warm bed tonight. I reminded myself of the incredible gift I received when I left Da Nang on my flight home after a solid year of combat; that is, I had survived. Now that is something to celebrate at every Christmas. I will also remember those who were not so gifted.

President Speaks at VFW National Convention:

President Obama is scheduled to speak Tuesday at the VFW's 116th National Convention, which is this Saturday through Wednesday in Pittsburgh. VFW National Commander John Stroud said it's a longstanding VFW tradition to provide the commander-in-chief a platform to address issues of importance to veterans, military service members and their families. Stroud said this is especially important during a time of war and instability abroad, and continued economic belt tightening at home. Other special guests and award recipients include:

- The VFW Eisenhower Award to retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis
- The VFW Armed Forces Award to U.S. Army Medics (68 Whiskies), accepted by Army Medical Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald Ecker
- The VFW National Teacher Awards to Ann Parker Komara of Ottobine Elementary School, Dayton, Va., Melinda Hamilton of River Bend Middle School, Claremont, N.C., and Craig Blackman of Indian River High School in Chesapeake, Va.
- The VFW Citizenship Award to the Arlington Ladies, accepted by Margaret Mensch (Army), Paula McKinley (Navy), Jean Andregg (Air Force), and Maggi Paar (Coast Guard)
- The VFW Gold Medal of Merit to Army National Military Cemeteries Executive Director Patrick Hallinan

VA Secretary Addresses VFW National Convention:

VA Secretary Robert McDonald addressed the VFW National Convention in Pittsburgh, delivering a presentation entitled "Caring for Veterans: Progress and Transformation." In discussing the Veterans Health Administration, Secretary McDonald outlined what he believes are the three pillars of caring for veterans: Research, Education, and Clinical Care. He pointed out that the VA conducted 55 million appointments in 2014, serving 6.6 million unique patients, and remarked that the VA receives higher satisfaction ratings from veterans than private hospitals receive from their patients, per the American Customer Satisfaction Index. He also described the challenges the VA faces in providing the highest quality care. The aging veterans population, increased complexity of conditions, and a higher rate of survivability for the newest generation of veterans after more than a decade of war will all continue to fuel the demand for care. Still, with the proper funding, the Secretary believes that the VA can and will continue to provide the highest quality care for all veterans, when they need it and where they need it. Other topics covered by Secretary McDonald included VA infrastructure, the claims backlog, veterans homelessness and the MyVA initiative, designed to improve the veteran experience at VA facilities.

Your taxes and the Affordable Care Act: Most federally provided healthcare plans (Tricare and FEHB) meet the minimum essential coverage requirement of the Affordable Care Act. Military members will receive a notification letter from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) if their SSN or a family members' SSN needs to be updated in DEERS. It is important to follow the instructions in the letter to ensure information is correctly reported to the IRS. You will receive an IRS Form 1095-B or 1095-C for all healthcare plans you are enrolled. This includes Tricare and the Federal Employee Health Benefit plans, VA and other plans provided through a government agency or purchased by you for yourself and your family members. The IRS 1095 series forms include information already provided to the Internal Revenue Service. These forms contain information you need to complete your individual federal income tax return.

Remains of 36 Unidentified Marines from WWII Battle Return:

The military and a private organization have brought home the remains of 36 Marines killed in one of World War II's bloodiest battles. A group called History Flight recovered the remains from the remote Pacific atoll of Tarawa, the U.S. Marine Corps said. A ceremony was held Sunday in Pearl Harbor to mark their return. History Flight has started identifying the remains, and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency will complete the effort, the Marines said. The Marines plan to return the remains to their families after they've been identified. More than 990 U.S. Marines and 30 sailors died during the three-day Battle of Tarawa in 1943. Japanese machine gun fire killed scores of Marines when their boats got stuck on the reef at low tide during the U.S. amphibious assault. Americans who made it to the beach faced brutal hand-to-hand combat. Only 17 of the 3,500 Japanese troops survived. Of 1,200 Korean slave laborers on the island, just 129 lived. The U.S. quickly buried the thousands of dead on the tiny atoll. But the graves were soon disturbed as the Navy urgently built a landing strip to prepare for an attack on the next Pacific island on their path to Tokyo. About 520 U.S. servicemen are still unaccounted for from the battle. Preliminary work conducted by History Flight indicates the remains of 1st Lt. Alexander J. Bonnyman, Jr., a Marine who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, are among the 36 brought to Hawaii. Gen. Joseph Dunford, the commandant of the Marines Corps, said in a statement he's pleased to learn of the discovery of the remains at Tarawa, the site of one of the service's most significant battles. "It was also the first contested landing against a heavily fortified enemy, and a turning point in the development in our amphibious capability. The lessons learned at Tarawa paved the way for our success in the Pacific campaign and eventual end to the war," Dunford said. History Flight brought attention to the Tarawa missing when its research indicated it had found the graves of 139 U.S. servicemen. The Marathon, Florida-based organization used ground-penetrating radar, reviewed thousands of military documents and interviewed veterans to narrow down possible grave sites.



New "White Pages" Launched on Soldier for Life Website:

The Army recently launched a new "white Pages" open to anyone with either a Common Access Card or Department of Defense Self-Service Logon account. Designed by the U.S. Army Human Resources Command the new "White Pages" are available through a link on the bottom of the Soldier for Life website (<http://soldierforlife.army.mil>). First time users will be asked to opt in to provide their contact information to others in the Army community – active Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, retired, veteran, Department of the Army civilian. Users may opt in or out and update their contact information at any time. For users who do not opt in, the only information provided to others will be their name, rank, status, and .mil email address, if known. Users can find other members of the Army community by using the "White Pages" search feature. Users may also access their official military personnel file through this portal. This is helpful for obtaining a copy of a DD Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) or awards and evaluations.

"A good battle plan that you act upon today can be a better than a perfect one tomorrow."

Gen. George Patton

U.S. Personnel Chief Resigns In Wake of Massive Data Breach: The head of the U.S. government's personnel office resigned abruptly bowing to bipartisan calls for her to step down following a massive government data breach on her watch. Katherine Archuleta, director of the federal Office of Personnel Management, submitted her resignation to President Barack Obama, the White House said. She'll be replaced on a temporary basis by the agency's deputy director, Beth Cobert, who will step into the role. Less than 24 hours earlier, Archuleta had rebuffed demands that she resign, telling reporters she had no intention of leaving and that her agency was doing everything it could to address concerns about the safety of data in its hands. Archuleta told Obama it was best for her to step aside to let new leadership respond to the recent breaches and to improve systems to lessen risks in the future, according to a White House official who wasn't authorized to be quoted on the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity. In a statement, Archuleta made no direct reference to the data breach, saying only that she believed it was best to allow the agency to "move beyond the current challenges." She praised the agency's employees as "some of the most dedicated, capable and hardworking individuals in the federal government." "I have complete confidence in their ability to continue fulfill OPM's important mission of recruiting, retaining and honoring a world-class workforce to serve the American people," Archuleta said. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, a Utah Republican who had called for her resignation for weeks, said the leadership problem should have been addressed "much, much sooner." "In the future, positions of this magnitude should be awarded on merit and not out of patronage to political operatives," Chaffetz said in a pointed jab at Obama. The escalating calls for Archuleta to be replaced came the day after the Obama administration disclosed that the number of people affected by the federal breach -- believed to be the biggest in U.S. history -- was more than 21 million, far greater than previously disclosed. Hackers downloaded Social Security numbers, health histories or other highly sensitive data from OPM's databases, affecting more than five times the 4.2 million people the government first disclosed this year. Since then, the administration acknowledged a second, related breach of systems housing private data that individuals submit during background investigations to obtain security clearances. Although the government declined to name the hackers, officials said the same party was responsible for both hacks. Numerous U.S. lawmakers who have been briefed on the federal investigation have pointed the finger at China. Cobert, the agency's current deputy director and chief performance officer, has been confirmed by the Senate once before, which could make her an attractive candidate to be Archuleta's permanent replacement. Yet it wasn't immediately clear whether lawmakers would oppose her leadership because of her role as the No. 2 at the agency during the data breach. Prior to joining OPM, Cobert worked for nearly three decades as a consultant for the firm McKinsey & Company.

World War II MIA Identified: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of Army Pvt. Arthur H. Kelder, 26, of McHenry, Ill., who was buried July 18 in Chicago. On Dec. 8, 1941, Kelder was assigned to the Philippine Department, U.S. Army Forces in the Far East, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. Thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members were taken prisoner and forced to endure the Bataan Death March en route to Japanese POW camps. Kelder was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor. On Nov. 19, 1942, 14 Americans, including Kelder, were reported to have died. They were buried by their fellow prisoners in a common grave in a local camp cemetery in Cabanatuan.

Military Leaders Question Rush to Arm Troops after Tennessee Shooting: Former senior military officers who are sharpshooters and have served in high government posts are urging caution in the wake of calls in Congress and beyond to arm domestic service members following last week's deadly rampage in Tennessee. In the days since a Kuwaiti-born gunman, Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, shot up a Chattanooga military recruiting center and then killed four Marines and a sailor at a Navy Reserve center in the city, lawmakers have pushed legislation to allow all personnel on bases inside the United States to carry weapons. Weapons were barred from military bases under President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. The prohibition was drafted by aides to his predecessor, President George H.W. Bush, a Republican. "It is clear that our military personnel have become targets, not just abroad but on American soil as well," said Rep. Scott DesJarlais, a Tennessee Republican who introduced a bill Monday to remove the two-decade-long ban. Some governors are not waiting for Congress. From Florida to Texas and North Carolina, chief executives in at least six states have authorized their National Guard units to be armed, moved them to fortified armories or taken other steps to increase security. At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter directed the five military services to give him recommendations for beefing up security at their installations. In the meantime, he ordered Marines to stop wearing their uniforms at recruiting centers, which are especially soft military targets because many are located in shopping centers and other places easily accessible to civilians.

2015 ADVA NATIONAL REUNION

Norfolk Virginia

October 28 thru November 1 2015

The Norfolk Waterside Marriott, 235 East Main Street, Norfolk, VA 23510 will be the main hotel for the reunion. The hotel is noted as the best place to stay. It has just recently been remodeled. The ADVA attendees are offered 3 days before and after the reunion dates based on availability. The reunion guest room rate is \$109 = tax (currently 14 % + \$2



occupancy fee) World War II members will their individual room rate reduced to no-charge when they check-in. There is also a special rate of \$129 + tax for a Concierge Level room. The cutoff date to make reservations is September 25, 2015. Book early to ensure lodging at the reunion hotel. The hotel is offering complimentary overnight parking. There is no parking for RVs in the main street garage or city streets. The hotel is offering free self-overnight parking.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29 - 9:00am - 5:00pm Tour Ft Eustis and Williamsburg

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 - 11:30am - 2:00pm Spirit of Norfolk Lunch Cruise

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31-9:00am - 12:00 Norfolk Botanical Garden Tour

6:00pm - 10:00pm BANQUET DINNER.

As requested by ADVA membership, members and guests can select seating assignments with friends/family before the banquet. We have an exceptional menu and some unique entertainment before, during, and following the banquet that will make for a memorable event that should not be missed.

Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in the hospital, dying of nothing.

Veterans Praise Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for Saving Cross: Calling for an end to a lengthy court battle, Veteran organizations are praising the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for its recent purchase of land from the Department of Defense in order to preserve a 43-foot cross that was erected in 1954. "I hope this ends it," National Commander, American Legion, Michael D. Helm said of the legal case that started in the late 1980s. Helm commended Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., for writing and passing legislation that made the \$1.4 million purchase possible. The ACLU and Jewish War Veterans have sued to have the cross removed because they believe it infringes on their constitutional rights. A 2012 court ruling permitted a cross owned by the National Park Service in the Mojave Desert to be transferred in a private sale to the VFW. The Mount Soledad cross in La Jolla, Calif., is part of a larger memorial, which includes more than 3,700 plaques honoring veterans of various wars.



Official: Not Ruling Out Charging Navy Officer Who Fired on Shooter: A Navy official told Fox News that punishing a lieutenant commander who used an unauthorized weapon to fire back at the Chattanooga gunman who shot and killed five service members could not be "completely ruled out," and two high-profile former military officers, including presidential candidate Jim Webb, say the Navy is at least seriously considering charging the man. The Navy said in a statement that it had not charged any service members with an offense at the present time. "Stories of Navy personnel being charged with an offense are not true," the statement said. "There is still a long way to go in reviewing the facts of this tragic incident, but at this time we can confirm no service member has been charged with an offense." Military personnel are not allowed to carry weapons inside military recruiting and reserve stations. That ban is now facing scrutiny following the July 16 rampage by an Islamic extremist that killed five military members in Tennessee. But the actions of Lt. Cmdr. Timothy White are also facing scrutiny, according to a series of tweets sent by Democratic presidential contender Webb, a former Marine infantry officer and U.S. senator. "Navy charging LCDR Tim White w/ a crime for trying to defend our sailors & Marines in #Chattanooga? He deserves a medal, not an indictment," Webb tweeted Saturday.

Raids Led by US Destroy ISIS Bridges on Iraq-Syria Border: US-led coalition air strikes destroyed two key bridges used by the Islamic State group on the Syrian side of the Iraqi border, a monitoring group said. The Pentagon confirmed strikes in the area, and a senior US officer said they will have a "profound impact" on IS abilities to carry out operations in the neighboring and strategically important Iraqi province of Anbar. The coalition "destroyed two bridges between the Syrian city of Albu Kamal and the Iraqi border. The bridges are strategically important for IS's movements between Albu Kamal and Iraq. The Pentagon confirmed the air raids, saying they had struck IS-held bridges in Deir Ezzor province. "Coalition forces struck multiple Daesh (IS) targets in the vicinity of the eastern Syria border to reduce the freedom of movement of Daesh," said Brigadier General Kevin Killea, chief of staff of the US-led coalition. The coalition began its air campaign on IS positions in Syria in September.

Turkey, Kurd Rebels Gear Up for Return to All-Out Conflict: The military helicopters swooped in over the Kurdish heartland and dropped white incendiary powder on a raging brush fire -- igniting a massive conflagration that raced through the mountains, devouring orchards and livestock. For Kurds living in nearby Lice, the recent Turkish operation brought back memories of the traumatic days in the 1990s when the army twice burned the town to the ground. The military may have been trying to smoke out Kurdish militants, who had allegedly set off a car bomb near Lice killing a soldier and wounding four more. But locals in Lice, where the rebels have widespread support, see a more sinister motive: "Just like the old days," said local journalist Metin Bekiroglu, "they want to spread fear." In an abrupt reversal, Turkey and the Kurdish rebels appear to be hurtling toward the return of an all-out conflict that plagued the nation for decades, before a fragile peace process was launched in 2012. A truce that has helped bring social and economic stability to Turkey evaporated only one week into the government's new offensive against the militant Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which stretches from southeastern Turkey to northern Iraq. Old habits of militancy, killing and retaliation are returning to a region that until recently harbored hopes of joining mainstream Turkish life. Forest firebombing is not the only provocative method Turkey is using to put pressure on the Kurds. In nearby Diyarbakir, the spiritual capital of Turkish Kurds, fighter jets are taking off for dozens of sorties to hit PKK strongholds in northern Iraq. The planes screech over the city as if to send a threat of destruction. Many Diyarbakir residents have relatives in the mountains among the Kurdish targets. The conflict escalated after a suicide attack in a crowd in the town of Suruc along the Syrian border. Turkish authorities say the bomber was trained by the Islamic State group and was targeting a group seeking to help Syrian Kurds across the border rebuild the city of Kobani, which IS had destroyed. But many Turkish Kurds accused the government of responsibility for the explosion, which killed more than 30 people.

VA Hospital Dumped Patient Records With Social Security, Personal Info: A Veterans Affairs hospital in South Dakota has waited more than two months to notify 1,100 patients that files containing their Social Security numbers and other personal information were dumped in a trash bin. The Rapid City Journal reports that the data breach at the VA Hot Springs hospital took place in May, but it wasn't until July 29 that anyone was notified. The paper said the breach was the most recent in a string of embarrassments that has engulfed the nation's VA system over charges of doctored wait lists, poor care and wasteful spending. The VA Black Hills Health Care System blamed the breach on an employee who mistakenly tossed the patient files in a Dumpster. The records were found two days later by another employee who fished them out of the trash and notified hospital security guards. "The investigation found that during a regular office move, that the box of files were inadvertently throw in the receptacle, VA Black Hills spokeswoman Teresa Forbes told the paper, calling it "an unfortunate mistake." The VA alerted the 1,100 military veterans recently of the breach. The letter informed recipients they could request a free credit report to ensure their personal data was not being misused. Forbes defended the lag in making the notification, saying that the VA was following procedures. The files included names, Social Security numbers, phone numbers and addresses. They did not include medical histories.