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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

Office of Director

STATEMENT OF

JAMES N. MAGILL, SPECIAL ASSISTANT
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

WITH RESPECT TO
VARIOUS PROGRAM EXTENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC

APRIL 21, 1982

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to present to this distinguished Committee the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States with respect to various program extensions and legislative proposals.

It is our understanding legislation will be introduced to extend the authority of the Veterans Administration to enter into contract agreements to provide medical care to certain veterans in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. As you know, when a VA health care facility is unable to provide needed medical care due to an inadequate facility or where there is no VA facility, authorization may be granted by the Administrator to enter into contracts with the private sector to supply the needed care. Such is the case in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. According to the VA, there are more VA medical, surgical, and psychiatric beds available per 1,000 veterans in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands as compared to the United States. However, the reverse is true in the private medical sector and the conditions in these facilities in most cases, can be best described as dismal. With the inability of the private sector to meet the demands placed upon it by the general populace,



particularly in psychiatric medicine, a severe limitation is placed on alternatives to VA health care for veterans. Other factors contributing to the imbalance are the veterans inability to pay for private treatment, the veterans refusal to accept "un-earned" care, and the questionable level of quality care available in the private sector.

The best information available to us indicates veterans in Puerto Rico are suffering a much higher incidence of service-connected disability for psychiatric reasons than the veteran population as a whole. It has also been brought to our attention that the work load for processing these claims has reached such a level that some case files must be sent to the United States for adjudication, many times putting the veteran and/or the VA at a disadvantage.

Mr. Chairman, last year the VFW testified in support of extending the contract authority in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands until September 30, 1982. Since then, the VA has published a report on the health care needs of veterans in this region, recommending expansion of the VA facility in Puerto Rico to provide the much needed VA care these United States citizens deserve. By expanding this facility, greater control over the level of care can be exerted, more complete and comprehensive psychiatric evaluations can be made, and the need to contract with the private sector eliminated. In addition, information available to us indicates the expansion could be amortized in approximately 5-6 years inasmuch as annual contracting out expenditures are in excess of \$20 million. It must be understood the VFW is supportive of the expansion of the psychiatric facility with the view that mental health care be supplied solely within the limits of the Veterans Administration and contract authority be suspended when the facility is operational. Mr. Chairman, we support the extension of the contract authority, and for the previously stated reasons recommend this Committee consider expanding the capabilities of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Puerto Rico in order to eliminate the costly necessity of contracting out.

Mr. Chairman, the programs authorizing the exchange of medical information and the authority for the VA to make grants to affiliated medical schools are considered by the VFW as very beneficial to the VA medical care system. We urge they be extended and encourage the VA to utilize them to their fullest extent. The VFW also supports the extension of the authority of the Administrator of the VA to make grants to the various states to assist in the construction, alteration, modernization, and repair of state veterans extended care facilities. Resolution 717 entitled, "Matching Fund Construction Grants to States," adopted at our most recent National Convention is appended to my testimony for your review.

Mr. Chairman, legislation has been introduced to amend 38 USC 641 to provide for a more equitable formula for payments by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to states for the cost of care provided to eligible veterans in state nursing homes. Historically, the contribution of the Federal Government to state veterans homes was in the nature of assistance in domiciliary care and was on a per annum basis. Through the years amendments have been enacted to include nursing home and hospital care and payment is now calculated on a per diem rate. Because of the advancing population of elderly veterans and the increasing costs incurred in caring for these veterans, the VFW believes the Veterans Administration should assume a more equitable and realistic role in providing financial support to state homes. Therefore, the VFW supports legislation requiring the Administrator to periodically redetermine per diem rates for state domiciliary, nursing home, and hospital care facilities allowing the state home system to continue to provide a vital service to our nation's elderly veterans while at the same time increasing both the quantity and quality of that care.

Finally Mr. Chairman, legislation is being proposed to enhance the recruitment and retention of VA registered nurses. As you know, the VA has been experiencing a shortage of nurses for quite some time. Because of this shortage, entire wards in some VA medical care facilities have been forced to close. In addition, nearly

800 beds in the VA medical care system have been eliminated for this same reason. The VA must remain as competitive as possible with the private sector regarding the nursing profession; thus, the VFW supports any initiative that would serve as a viable recruitment and retention tool as long as the Administrator and the Chief Medical Director deem such an initiative would not be detrimental in providing high-quality health care to our nation's veterans. In addition, the VFW is appreciative of this Committee's recommending the restoration of funding for the Nurses Scholarship Program; a valuable program whose benefits far exceed its costs. Whereas funding is being restored for a single fiscal year, the VFW would support a no-end funding formula; thus assuring future VA registered nurses their education would not be interrupted for lack of funding.

This concludes my statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

Office of Director

STATEMENT OF

PHILIP R. MAYO, SPECIAL ASSISTANT
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION, PENSION AND INSURANCE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE COMPENSATION
AND PENSION PROGRAMS OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D C

APRIL 22, 1982

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of our more than 1.9 million members, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States with respect to various legislative proposals affecting the compensation and pension programs of the Veterans Administration.

The first bill under consideration today is HR 4308, introduced by the ranking minority member of the full committee, the Honorable John Paul Hammerschmidt, for the purpose of providing that progressive muscular atrophy on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis developing a 10 per centum or more degree of disability within seven years after separation from active service during a period of war shall be presumed to be service-connected. Although the VFW has been mandated in the form of a convention resolution to support such a legislative initiative in the past, no such action was



taken at our most recent national convention. As a result, therefore, we have no official position on HR 4308; however, we would not object to its passage into law.

The second measure under consideration today, HR 5144, introduced by the Honorable Thomas A. Daschle, would make members of the Senior Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs who are injured during summer military camp eligible for compensation benefits administered by the Veterans Administration. Again, Mr. Chairman, no resolution addressing this issue was adopted by the delegates to our most recent national convention; consequently, we have no official position thereon. However, we would point out that under Titles 5 USC 8140 and 10 USC 2109, medical and compensatory benefits are already available to these individuals, and making such available under Title 38 USC would appear duplicative. In addition, it should be noted that Section 101(13), Title 38 specifies that the "term 'compensation' means a monthly payment made by the Administrator to a veteran (underscoring supplied) because of service-connected disability..." and that a veteran (Section 101(2), Title 38 USC)" means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable." Including those in the ROTC in these definitions would alter their meaning by including those who have not been sworn into service or who have not been or are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Mr. Chairman, the third bill under consideration today, HR 6039, introduced by yourself, would amend Title 38, USC to correct a technical error with respect to entitlement to dependency and indemnity compensation to clarify the interpretation of Section 410(b)(1). We have no objection to its passage.

The fourth bill, HR 6040, also introduced by yourself, would amend Title 38 USC to provide eligibility for burial benefits from the Veterans Administration for certain veterans whose remains are unclaimed. Mr. Chairman, the voting delegates to our most recent convention adopted Resolution No. 774 entitled, "Burial Benefit

Allowance," a copy of which is appended hereto, calling for the restoration of eligibility for the burial allowance for veterans that was eliminated during the first session of this Congress. We, therefore, would view the quick passage of HR 6040 as the first step toward restoring that entitlement for those 27 million veterans by insuring that wartime and certain other veterans whose remains are held by a state or local government in an unclaimed status, or whose estate is insufficient to defray the costs of burial, may be buried at the expense of the Veterans Administration.

Mr. Chairman, the fifth piece of legislation under consideration, HR 6041, introduced again by yourself, would authorize the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to furnish a burial flag to the next of kin of persons who are buried in Arlington National Cemetery or in national cemeteries administered by the Veterans Administration but who are not currently eligible for burial flags. As you know, Section 1002 (6) Title 38 USC provides that the Administrator is permitted to authorize the interment of certain persons or groups of persons as he deems appropriate. While this section of Title 38 provides that those who have rendered a long or distinguished service to our nation, but who are not veterans, such as a career diplomat or a Justice of the Supreme Court, may be buried in a national cemetery with the permission of the Administrator, it does not authorize the Administrator to furnish the burial flag utilized in that ceremony to the decedent's next of kin. While we have no official position concerning this measure, we would note that such an honor has historically been conferred exclusively upon the next of kin of veterans.

The final measure under consideration, Mr. Chairman, is HR 5709, introduced by the Chairman of the Full Committee, the Honorable G. V. Montgomery, at the request of the Administration. The bill provides for an 8.1 percent cost of living increase in the rates of compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation; for the discontinuance of duplicative payments to certain veterans; for the increase in the

level of disability required for the payment of dependent's allowance; and for various cost saving modifications in veterans programs. Mr. Chairman, we support the cost of living increases in the compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation programs, realizing that the proposed increase for such was made in January of this year and that some adjustment may occur therein by the date of enactment. We would suggest, however, that the proposals made recently by the full Veterans' Affairs Committee to the Budget Committee be considered as a substitute for the remainder of this measure. Those recommendations are much more evenhanded and realistic and occur in program areas that maintain the integrity of those programs. We would like to commend this Subcommittee and the Full Committee for their continued responsiveness to the needs of veterans during these times to budgetary constraint.

In addition to the foregoing, Mr. Chairman, the VFW was asked to comment upon a proposed legislative measure providing that payment of veterans' compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, and pension shall be suspended in a case in which the beneficiary has received another financial settlement for the same injury until the amount of the settlement has been recouped. Although we have no Convention Resolution dealing with this issue specifically, the voting delegates to our most recent National Convention did adopt Resolution No. 687 entitled, "Oppose Curtailment or Elimination of Earned Veterans Benefits and Privileges", a copy of which is appended hereto for your review. Mr. Chairman, we would view the implementation of this proposal as a curtailment and an elimination of compensation and DIC benefits. Those benefits have not been subjected to a "needs" test heretofore, and this measure, we believe, would accomplish such. In addition, it is well documented within the annals of this Subcommittee that the VFW has opposed the offsets to veterans benefits that are currently in law, and we view this proposed measure as the precursor of additional offsets, notwithstanding those specifically formulated therein. Therefore, we are opposed to the introduction and passage of this measure.

Again, Mr. Chairman, the VFW appreciates the interest of this Subcommittee in

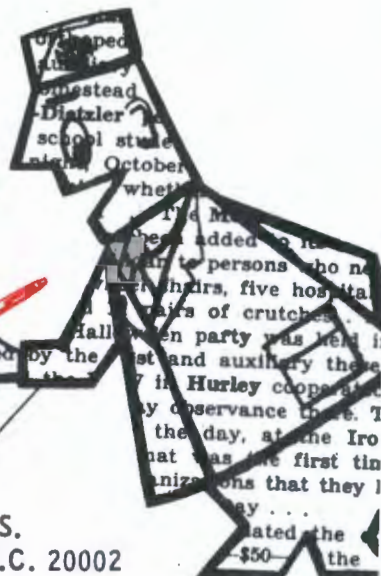
maintaining the integrity of veterans' benefits programs for those who have rendered a great service to our nation.

This concludes my statement, and I would be happy to respond to questions you may have at this time.



Telephone
543-2239

NEWS Release



From:

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U. S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(11 MAY 1982)

VFW: PRESIDENT'S ARMS REDUCTION PROPOSAL WORTHY OF SUPPORT

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Mr. Arthur Fellwock, National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, today characterized President Reagan's most recent strategic arms reduction proposal as being "clearly worthy of support."

"When coupled with the President's November call for a U. S.-USSR 'zero option' on European-based theater nuclear missiles, no fair-minded person can doubt the President's commitment to a stable, non-threatening nuclear balance at sharply reduced levels.

"In all frankness," the VFW leader continued, "while we may hope that the Soviets agree to our President's proposal, their unrelenting, 20-year, across-the-board arms buildup combined with their prompt suppression of any 'nuclear freeze' movement in the communist bloc offers no basis for euphoria."

Mr. Fellwock concluded by noting that twice President Carter had been "rudely rebuffed" by Chairman Brezhnev on comparable proposals.

"In March, 1977, former President Carter sought to sharply reduce the central strategic offensive systems on both sides. He was flatly turned down by Brezhnev.

"Then, again, during June, 1979, the former President proposed both a freeze on the deployment and production of nuclear weapons and a renunciation on the use of force in Europe. True to form, Brezhnev rejected both the 'freeze' and the 'no force' proposals.

(MORE)

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"Now, for the fourth time in five years, an American President has made a bold, balanced disarmament proposal to Chairman Brezhnev; U. S. and European 'nuclear freez-niks,' please note and learn."

Here follows a summary and an analysis of President Reagan's May 8th arms reduction proposal:

What the President is proposing is a plan that stresses eventual equality in striking power and seeks, above all, to reduce or remove the big Soviet lead over the United States in very large land-based missiles.

Of the roughly 2,400 Soviet missiles, 1,400 are land-based. This includes 308 of the huge SS18s, each of which carries 10 atomic warheads. The United States has nothing to match this weapon. There are also 450 four-warhead SS17 and six-warhead SS19 missiles.

The 1,700 U. S. missiles include the land-based MINUTEMAN and 52 older TITAN missiles already scheduled for retirement. The rest are on submarines. The American missile force is less of a threat to Moscow's missiles than the Soviet force poses to this country.

Each side now has roughly 7,500 individual warheads on land and sea missile forces. Until now, a figure of roughly 9,000 warheads for the United States and between 7,000 and 8,000 for Moscow has been used in official statements. The difference is the 7,500 figure does not include bombs carried on long-range bombers of both sides. The initial thrust of the U. S. proposal is to focus on the most destabilizing weapons, meaning Soviet land-based missiles, which are most accurate and therefore the gravest threat to knock out the MINUTEMAN in a first strike.

The President proposes reductions to an equal ceiling "at least a third below current levels" of warheads. In effect, this means a cutback from 7,500 to around 5,000 warheads on all missiles on both sides.

Most importantly, however, President Reagan then asks that "no more than half of those warheads be land-based." This means roughly 2,500 warheads on land-based missiles. This is crucial because the Soviets have 72 percent of their 7,500 or so warheads on land-based missiles -- more than 3,000 of them on the 308 SS18s -- while the United States has only 22 percent of its nuclear punch based on land with the rest on submarines and bombers.

from the desk of

Memo

COOPER T. HOLT

February 25, 1982

For your information.

[Handwritten signature]



Telephone
816-756-3390

NEWS Release

National Headquarters
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
V.F.W. Building, Kansas City, Missouri 64111



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

KANSAS CITY, MO -- (Special) -- February 19, 1982 -- "When actor Ed Asner, who plays the role of television's Lou Grant, publicly attacked United States policy on El Salvador, I wondered what special qualifications made him an expert on foreign policy," stated Arthur J. Fellwock, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States today.

Asner earlier this week handed over \$25,000 for medical aid to leftist rebels in that country who are trying to overthrow their shaky government.

Fellwock concluded, "Ed Asner should stick to acting and let those more qualified in government spell out foreign policy which the people of this country can support. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and their 2.6 million men and women support our nation's policy in El Salvador."

from the desk of *Memo*
COOPER T. HOLT

January 13, 1982

For your information.

Cooper



Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS Release

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(Jan. 13, 82)

VFW AFFIRMS VETERANS RIGHTS TO VA MEDICAL CARE

WASHINGTON, D.C.--"I wish to express the sorrow of the members of the VFW after reading the comments of VA Administrator Robert Nimmo who indicated that the VA medical care system may have to stop treatment for veterans now authorized care by the Congress of the United States", said Arthur Fellwock, National Commander-in-Chief of the VFW.

Nimmo's statements indicated that he would propose changes to those who are presently eligible for medical care in VA facilities.

"May I remind Nimmo on behalf of all veterans that he merely administers programs and should do that to the best of his ability. Congress has passed laws to take care of those who performed special service. The Congress has seen fit to provide medical care second to no other for these veterans who served their country," said Fellwock.

"The VFW means to see that the Congress cares for those veterans who need and deserve care and that enough funds are available to provide that care," he said.

Memo
from the desk of

COOPER T. HOLT

January 8, 1982

For your information.

Cooper



Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS Release

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(7 January 1982)

VFW HAILS PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO EXTEND DRAFT REGISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- "Our President acted presidentially. He did the right thing and not only do we in the VFW, who have long urged that draft registration be extended, applaud President Reagan's political courage and massive common sense, we will do everything in our power to help the Administration get this program back on track."

Mr. Arthur J. Fellwock, National Commander-in-Chief of the 2.6 million Americans in the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary continued by noting that:

"If ever in recent world history there was a time for unity among Americans, that time is now. I urge groups opposed to draft registration, for whatever reason or reasons, to consider what their continued public opposition now would mean: a divisive replay of the worst of the 1960s after these groups have had their full day in court with a President inclined their way.

"I know, of course, that more than 800,000 young Americans are in technical violation of the law. For this reason, I urge the Administration to forgive young men currently in technical violation of the law, if they come forward promptly and register. A 'home free' period of, say, 60 days should do the greater part of the job.

"Again, I applaud the President and those among his principal advisors -- notably Secretaries Haig and Weinberger -- who properly urged this extension upon him.

"You in VFW Posts across the country can take quiet pride in your pivotal role on this matter. You stayed the course. You kept the faith. You persevered and you -- and our beloved country -- are the clear winners."



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VFW

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NEWS Release

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Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATE
(29 DECEMBER 1981)

STATEMENT OF

ARTHUR J. FELLWOCK, NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

ON

THE VISIT OF FOUR U. S. VETERANS TO VIETNAM

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Prior to the six-day visit of the Robert Muller group to Hanoi, I set forth what I then forecast as the probable results of this widely-publicized trip. I attach my pre-trip forecast to these remarks.

My worst fears about this trip were more than fully realized; my modest hopes were left unfulfilled.

I have no idea if Mr. Muller and his associates are "frauds" as some Vietnam veterans have charged. Their motivation must remain between these four veterans and God. The results of the trip, however, are clear beyond any reasonable doubt.

1. The Muller group was manipulated by the Vietnamese; i.e., they were persuaded, however "reluctantly," to lay a wreath on Ho Chi Minh's grave. Muller was photographed holding a deformed Vietnamese child.

2. There is no agreed "time table" for any progress on either the POW/MIA issue or Agent Orange. The so-called "agreement in principle" on these issues, is, as George Marshall once termed all "agreements in principle," no agreement at all.

(MORE)

3. A spokesman for the National League of Families of POW/MIAs described the reaction of this organization as being "greatly disappointed" by the Muller group. This is a moving example of polite understatement.

4. As is commonly known, Penthouse Magazine paid for the Muller group's visit and can be expected to exploit it aggressively. This commercial link with a periodical, whose principal sales pitch is visual not analytical, does suggest one answer to the question: who profits? It will not be Vietnam veterans across the country.

5. Mr. Muller stated he was neither a "diplomat nor a geo-politician." I thoroughly agree with his self-assessment. Unlike the "ping pong diplomacy" which opened the diplomatic door to the Peoples Republic of China, the Muller group's diplomatic venture was promptly and unequivocally rejected by State Department spokesman, Dean Fischer, who termed recognition of Vietnam as being "out of the question."

6. I note that the Muller group is planning to return to Vietnam in February. Should this occur, I can only conclude that this group believes that hurtful publicity is better than none at all.

7. As for the Agent Orange issue, the Muller group discussed this concern, presumably in apologetic terms, with the regime currently using "Yellow Rain" against hapless Cambodians and Laotians.

A final word:

If ever America's war-time veterans needed to be unified, now is the time. The Muller trip is an assault on this hard-won unity.

As I stated on December 16th, "I hope that the Muller group, in earning some new dollars will not, however unwittingly, betray some old comrades."

They did and they did.



Telephone
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200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(18 DECEMBER 1981)

VFW LEADER CAUTIONS VETS ON VISIT TO HANOI

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Mr. Arthur J. Fellwock, National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, today cautioned veterans across America, and most directly the more than 500,000 Vietnam veterans in the 1.9 million member VFW, as to the probable results of a trip to Hanoi being undertaken by Vietnam veteran Robert Muller and his associates.

"While the stated trip objectives, long fought for by the VFW -- new information on Agent Orange and about our POW/MIAs -- are unexceptional, certain aspects of this trip to Communist Hanoi should be borne in mind:

"(1) I am deeply concerned that the Muller group is setting itself up for a Communist Holiday Season propaganda barrage;

"(2) contrary to the impression left by some press accounts, this trip is not being officially sponsored by the U. S. State Department. It is being paid for by Penthouse Magazine which will, of course, exploit the resultant publicity;

"(3) the Muller group does not plan a visit to the Joint Casualty Resolution Center in Hawaii for a briefing on POW/MIA matters; and,

"(4) while Muller and his group were briefed by the National League of Families on POW/MIAs, no offer was made to the League to include a National League member in the visiting party. The Muller visit is neither endorsed nor supported by the National League."

(MORE)

The VFW leader concluded by noting that "of course the Vietnamese Communist will produce pitiable, deformed 'victim' after 'victim' of the war (or a more recent traffic accident) for avid Penthouse exploitation. They may even present some remains of our honored dead; after all, there's a reported 400 sets of remains in a Hanoi warehouse.

"I hope that the Muller group, in earning some new dollars will not, however unwittingly, betray some old comrades."

from the desk of

Memo

COOPER T. HOLT

December 18, 1981

For your information.

CH



Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS Release

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE V.F.W. AND ITS AUXILIARY"

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(18 DECEMBER 1981)

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"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(17 DECEMBER 1981)

VFW CALLS FOR FREE POLAND

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- As a positive demonstration of concern and a show of support for the freedom seeking Polish people, Arthur J. Fellwock, the National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, called upon all Americans to join together in prayer for the future of Poland.

"We have been anxiously watching the recent events in Poland with the hope that the heroic people of that often subjugated land will finally achieve the goals of freedom which they both cherish and deserve," Fellwock said.

"The more than 2.6 million members of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary join with me in urging our government to do all within its power to assist and support the citizens of Poland and their freely chosen leaders who founded their unique Solidarity Movement.

"As Americans, we owe a great debt of gratitude to the many Poles -- including General Casimir Pulaski and General Thaddeus Kosciuszko -- who assisted our founding fathers in the birth of our free nation and we should do everything we possibly can to encourage the people of Poland in their freedom seeking efforts.

"As Americans also, we will never forget that the Poles were the first to stand up to Adolph Hitler and fought valiantly throughout World War II at the horrendous cost of six million Polish lives, a fifth of the nation's population. Their historic motto, 'For your freedom and ours,' typifies the heroic heritage of the Polish people."



Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS Release

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

*Tip Marlow
VFW*

FOR RELEASE:

IMMEDIATELY
(Oct. 15, 81)

*file
VFW*

VFW DEMANDS
VIETNAM TV FILM BE
REMOVED FROM NOV. 11 SHOWING

WASHINGTON, D.C.--"The VFW has demanded the removal of a controversial Public Broadcasting System Veterans Day showing," said Art Fellwock.

The National Commander-in-Chief indicated to the President of PBS that to show the film, "Frank: A Vietnam Veteran", would be a travesty.

The Vietnam veteran who presents himself as an average GI claims to be a dope addict prior to entry into Service and while on duty, a war criminal, an alcoholic and now unable to cope with his wartime service.

"While the VFW realizes that some veterans had difficulties, most all returned to their communities as responsible citizens," said Fellwock.

PBS President Grossman was asked to reconsider the showing of "Frank: A Vietnam Veteran" on Veterans Day which is the day to recognize honorable service to one's country.

"VFW members are asked to protest the showing to their local PBS stations if it is shown," Fellwock said.



AREA CODE 202
543-2239

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE
UNITED STATES**

THORNE MARLOW
DIRECTOR
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON OFFICE
200 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002

MEMO TO: United States Veterans Organizations
FROM: Bob Ferrante, Vince Canzoneri
SUBJECT: VIETNAM VETERANS, a special 2-hour
evening of programs that will air on
PBS stations nationwide this coming
Veterans Day, November 11
DATE: October 5, 1981

Enclosed, please find a press release for an upcoming evening of programs on the stations of the Public Broadcasting System. As you will see, this evening explores the readjustment problems of troubled Vietnam veterans. It will offer an unprecedented opportunity for general viewers to understand troubled veterans, and (through its phone-in outreach component) for troubled veterans themselves to begin finding help.

We encourage you to distribute this information to veterans in any way you can, but especially through inclusion in your publications. If we can help in any way, please call:

Bob Ferrante -- PBS Current Affairs Group
617/492-2777 extension 2501

Vince Canzoneri -- Co-Producer, FRANK: A VIETNAM
VETERAN
617/492-2777 extension 2520

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 5, 1981

VIETNAM VETERANS: A MATTER OF LIFE & DEATH

A 2-hour evening of programs for Veterans Day

PBS Air-Date: Wednesday, November 11, 9:00 PM

Elements: FRANK: A VIETNAM VETERAN (60 minutes)

WARRIOR'S WOMEN (30 minutes)

Interviews with black leaders and reports
on Viet-vets in prisons (30 minutes)

Off-air phone-ins around the US

All-night talk-show on the Mutual
Radio Network

"It's like the shadow that never leaves,
that's always there."

-- FRANK: A VIETNAM VETERAN

Larry King, of the Mutual Radio Network, will host a 2-hour evening of programs on PBS, looking at readjustment problems of troubled Vietnam veterans, beginning at 9:00 PM this Veterans Day, November 11. He will follow-up the evening by devoting his all-night (midnight to 5:00 AM) talk-show to these problems via the nationwide stations of the Mutual Radio Network.

The evening will commence by airing FRANK: A VIETNAM VETERAN. FRANK is one man's story, told in his own words, of his experience as a foot-

soldier in Vietnam and his subsequent 10-year struggle to readjust to civilian life.

Frank recounts both the horrors of war and the thrill of combat as a twice-wounded, oft-decorated Navy sniper. A high-school drop-out who has since earned a master's degree, Frank tells of Stateside bouts with alcohol, drugs, recurrent nightmares, a divorce, flashbacks and occasional violent impulses. The program ends by noting that, after its taping, Frank was once again hospitalized for stress -- and then returned to his job as a social worker. His last words on-air reflect the intent of the program:

My feeling is that we need for people to talk like I'm talking right now. To be honest about what happened over there so that these guys who are walking the streets and holding this stuff inside can feel the freedom to talk about it somewhere. And not be judged for it.

FRANK: A VIETNAM VETERAN is a powerful experience. (Variety listed it as one of two standout entries at this year's International Public TV Conference.) When it aired locally in Boston last Memorial Day, it moved other vets to start talking about their problems. A team of 30 Vietnam

combat-veterans handled over 300 calls in the next 2 1/2 hours, mostly from Vietnam vets seeking help. Local veterans agencies each reported an average of 40 contacts per day -- in direct response to FRANK -- over the next few days.

To replicate this outreach success nationwide, many PBS stations will be mounting off-air phone-ins on their local levels -- with help from the American Red Cross and veterans organizations. FRANK will be followed with on-air appeals to phone-in, and similar appeals will air throughout the 2-hour evening.

WARRIOR'S WOMEN will follow. This 30-minute documentary explores the situations of four wives of troubled Vietnam vets. This too is a powerfully moving, deeply sympathetic look at a hitherto unexplored legacy of the Vietnam era.

Larry King will then interview leaders from the black community -- exploring the impact of the veterans' readjustment problems on a group that supplied disproportionate numbers of combat soldiers to the Vietnam effort. He will also introduce two short reports on the disproportionate number of Vietnam-era veterans now in prison.

VIETNAM VETERANS: page 4.

Taken as a whole, VIETNAM VETERANS will be an evening to participate in, as well as a night to remember.

CONTACT:

Vince Canzoneri, TV News

-- 617/492-2777

Diane Carasik, Publicity

FRANK: A VIETNAM VETERAN

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Special Thanks to:
Boston Film/Video Foundation
The Boston Children's Museum
Mike Fitzgerald
Bob Harlow
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A Production of WGBH & Canzoneri/
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responsible for its content.

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Design Consultant
CHRIS PULLMAN

It has been estimated that more than 500,000 Vietnam veterans still feel stresses like those Frank talks about in this film. These feelings and experiences seem to be a natural aftermath of the Vietnam War. Because they have been so long in developing, they have been described as "the Vietnam delayed stress reaction".

- A good place to start looking for help is the local store-front VIETNAM VETERANS OUTREACH CENTER. These centers are staffed by Vietnam veterans and are independent of the Veterans Administration, which funds them. For the center in your area, call the nearest VA Hospital or facility.
- Another way which has helped many veterans with these stresses is the DAV VIETNAM VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM, also run by veterans. It is a private non-profit organization which is not part of a federal or state agency; it is dedicated to helping any veteran, disabled or not, in any way it can. These centers are in most major cities. To locate the center in your area, call the DAV at this toll-free number: 800-638-2777 (in Maryland, dial 800-492-2748).

Team leaders and other Vietnam era veterans are available at these local centers across the country for informal group and individual rap sessions, and for referral for such services as legal assistance, alcohol and drug counseling, and family counseling.

Frank: A Vietnam Veteran

The following program is
the story of one Vietnam veteran --
his experiences in Vietnam,
and what his life has been like
since his return home
more than ten years ago.

There are times that I wish I would've died there. I would say it's mostly about guilt and just wishing that it was over with, that I'd never have to see it again. That I'd never have to go through it again. That I'd never have another nightmare. And just wishing that it would've ended over there and I could've come back and been put in a box and it would be all over with, y'know...and that it'd been the military funeral...you know, all that shit.

I think it was in '76 I really started having some intense nightmares. I was afraid to talk to people about the nightmares. Who would understand? Who would really understand? You can't talk about Vietnam with different people; I mean, there's so many moral judgements and different values about what happened to people over there: "Oh, you're a baby killer," or "you're a mutilator." Even if they don't say it, it's the expression on their face.

I guess I wish everybody understood what it's like to take another human life and not know whether it's right or wrong. And to live with it.

PART I

VIETNAM 1970-71

Frank B: Navy I.D. #5942222
Born: August 23, 1944
Education: 9th Grade
Enlisted 1962
Age at enlistment: 18

The first time I joined the Navy, I joined the Navy because I had to. I was out of school. I was wheeling and dealing in drugs. I got caught. I was given an alternative. It was either go in the Navy, or...probably go to jail. So, I chose the service. I got out of the Navy two years later, in '64. I stayed out about a year. I went back in in late '65. I got out in '67. And then I went back in in 1969. I was a runner. Y'know, I couldn't stay in one place and face the problems in the situation. So then I saw the Navy as a way out. So I ran back into the Navy.

And, I guess it's important to realize, too, ...well, even for me... before I got out of the Navy the very first time, I had a lot of responsibility. OK? I had people working for me. OK? And I liked that.

I think when I went back in the Navy in 1969, I went in looking at it that I was gonna make a career of it.

December 1969

Survival Training
Patrol Boat River School

February 1970

Sniper Training

I was all wrapped up in the excitement of it and carrying a gun and being a special person over there. Y'know, there was only a hundred snipers in the Navy. I mean, I was gonna be in an elite class of people. But the thought...to me, it never entered in my mind, y'know, that I might die doing this. I just never thought about it. I don't remember ever sitting down and thinking, "Jesus, y'know, I could get killed doing this."

March 11, 1970

Arrival in Vietnam

Assignment: River Division 543

My first day there I was scared. I was scared to death. I had no idea what this was all about, what these boats really meant. I heard a lot of guys talking about getting wounded, a lot of friends that got killed. And I guess, for a split second, to me it was real. Some of these guys were talking with tears in their eyes. It was real.

I think the scariest I was, at this point in time over there, was the first time I ever went out on a night ambush. And I remember it being very quiet, and mosquitoes, and the frogs, "Fuck you. Fuck you." And that's what it sounded like to me. I really...it was hard to distinguish for awhile whether they were really saying that or I was imagining it. And, I remember trying to sort that out and then, all of a sudden, there was all this noise. I mean, people were shooting and it was crazy. And I had no idea what anybody was shooting at, but I was shooting, too. You know. I mean, it was just a reaction. And we backed out and we split. And we were going down the river, and I remember seeing something. I wasn't sure what it was. But I remember lighting up. And I started shooting that 50-caliber machine gun like nobody ever shot a 50-caliber machine gun.

And I remember watching a tree. I hit a pretty small tree, and I must've hit it 3 or 4 times. And this tree just, "bchow!" --- and, just

this incredible sense of power. Incredible sense of relief. I mean, when I stopped shooting that gun, I felt like a man. I mean, I felt good! OK? And I could feel it -- it was from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. I just felt great, y'know.

And I went on patrol after patrol after patrol. And I guess the first time that I knew that I killed somebody was another incredible sense of power. Seeing somebody on the opposite shore, OK, and lighting them up and being able to see...being able to see parts of that person just fly. I don't ever remember thinking about, ah...looking at a body and thinking about, "Geez, how many brothers and sisters does this guy have? Is he married? What are his parents like? Where does he live?" I don't remember ever doing that. Y'know, it was just kind of, "I got another bad guy." It was never any thought about, y'know, "Holy shit. This is another person. And maybe in another time and another place, I might really like this person. Y'know, maybe we could be friends." I mean, there was none of that. I mean, they were gooks. I mean, they weren't like you and me...I mean, they were things. I never made a connection that they were people.

April 1970

After about a month of this, I was asked if I wanted to go out, if I wanted to put to use some of the things that I had learned in sniper school. And, oh, it was the second time that I really killed somebody. That I knew that I did it, OK? That it was all planned. It was calculated.

And, y'know, when you're patrolling the river, you're the hunted. OK? I mean, that's the feeling I had. I mean, that's the feeling I had, y'know, you're always paranoid. You're always watching the banks. You're watching the trees, and you're always scared when you go through a village because you never know if somebody's gonna throw a grenade or what.

But when you go out at dusk, y'know, all by yourself or with another person, and you set up and you're quiet, you're waiting---you're the hunter. You are the hunter. And this incredible, just this incredible sense of power in killing five people...ah, between the two of us, it was five people. And the only way I can equate it is to ejaculation. Just an incredible sense of relief, y'know, that I did this. I was very powerful. Everywhere I went I had a weapon and I had authorization to carry a weapon everywhere I went.

I mean, I had a 38 with a western holster, y'know what I mean, and I wasn't afraid to pull that 38 out. Y'know, I remember being in scivvy houses, y'know, whorehouses in and around Danang, and pullin' it out. I mean, it was loaded. There wasn't a blank shell in there. I mean, it was loaded. I remember laying in bed with some woman on top of me and just shooting holes in the ceiling. Y'know, just really getting off on it. I mean, where else, where else in the world did you have this kind of freedom? And it was OK. As long as you didn't push it too far.

The fear came on patrols. I don't ever remember a time having any kind of contact at all, any kind of a fire fight at all, and not being fearful. And not being scared. Scared.

June 1970

I was on a sweep one night, and we were taking 105's. OK? And just seeing those flashes, those white flashes of steel flying over my head, and just knowing, just knowing that I was dead. Knowing that it was all over. Knowing that the next one was gonna be right in my pocket.

I remember once just actually freezing for a couple of seconds. Just being there and not being able to do anything...just petrified. Just petrified. I don't know. I can't tell you what happens to you when you're just there, and you can't...I mean, there's 2 handles on a 50, and all you have to do is just push the trigger. I mean, and just not being able to do that. Not being able to do it.

The panic. I mean, what do you do? You can't fight this invisible thing that's coming out of the sky. You can't do anything. And you're on flat ground. And when that bomb blows up and you're laying on the ground and you look up and you can see white flashing all over the place, and that's metal. And that's pieces of that bomb; they're gonna take your fuckin' head off. There was nothing I could do. Y'know, I don't know how long it lasted. I know that I was crying and I know that I was saying, "Make it stop. Make it stop! Please stop." I remember being on the radio and screaming, "Motherfucking get that shit stopped! Stop it!" Y'know? "We're fucking gonna die." Y'know? "Stop it!"

But this friend of mine by the name of Bob -- he and I had a pact. The older guys, they did a lot of drinking, OK? The younger guys did a lot of drugs. And Bob and I had a pact that whenever either one of us was out on the river, that the other one would be sober. OK? And, that way back there, if I needed help, if I was on the river and I needed help, I knew that I could call back and that there would be somebody who would get a boat underway and come out. OK? And it was the same way for Bob, y'know, and know that somebody on the boat was sober, y'know, or straight, or had a clear head, that would do something.

Bob and I were like brothers over there. He was, without a doubt, the closest person to me over there. But anyway, this night, Bob really got screwed up. He took some...he had shrapnel all over his body, in the neck, in the leg. And...that hurt. Because not only had I lost a friend, but I lost a real counterpart -- somebody that I could depend on.

I think while Bob was in the hospital, I really went through that, y'know, where I wanted to go on war patrols. Y'know, I really wanted to light up. I just wanted to blow the shit out of people.

May 1970

But there was another period in time in which we were doing a rescue operation for a flood. I mean, there were people drowning and we were going around in these Boston whalers pulling people out of the water, taking them to higher ground. And we had some of the public forces police with us. And to the people on the boat, they could only bring one thing aboard with them.

And I remember this older woman had a kid in one hand and a pig in the other hand. And the cop was telling her, "You can't bring them both aboard." And she drowned the kid, and brought the pig aboard. I mean, I didn't understand that. For weeks, I did not understand that. I mean, I wanted to kill the cop and her and the pig and, y'know, what the fuck was I doing this for? Y'know, she drowned this kid! It couldn't have been, I don't know, 6 months old. She drowned him. She held him under the water and drowned him. And put the pig in the boat and got in the boat.

But that's their survival. She could have another kid. She might never be able to buy another pig. Y'know? I mean, that's kinda the way it was explained to me. I understand it, but my whole insides tell me something totally different. Y'know? But that's just kinda the way it was. I don't know.

June 1970

I guess the point of insanity for me came...we were on a sweep. The boats had been hit from this village. And we had gone in right at dusk, or excuse me, right at dawn. And we were working our way up off a knoll. It was like on a hill. OK? And we were working our way up this hill and there was a clear spot. And we came to this clear little ridge like, and there were four stakes in the ground. OK? And there were four American helmets on these stakes. And y'know, there was a lot of blood and stuff around. And I remember looking at it and just saying, "My God. No." I just couldn't believe what I was seeing. When we dropped down and you looked up, you could see where the guys had been decapitated and they had their gonads in their mouths.

And, it was just...I don't know. I cried a little bit. And I couldn't pull myself together. Just totally, totally freaked. And I just couldn't pull it back together. Y'know? Y'know, "what is this?" Just all kinds of things went through my head when that happened. "Jesus, what is this?" Y'know, "Why? Who? What? How can somebody do that?" All those things. Millions of things.

Anyway, about four days later, I went back down and we went on patrol. No, we set up an ambush. We set up the ambush and we got two people. OK? And I remember after we killed these people, I was the first one to break the ambush, OK? And I now had a buck knife. And I remember running up to

the body and stripping the body. In other words, what I mean by stripping is I took money, I took whatever -- cigarette lighter -- whatever they had in their pockets was mine. OK?

I remember looking at their teeth -- seeing if they had any gold. And, while I was doing this, out came the knife, and I started mutilating. And, I mean, it was just incredible. This overwhelming sense of, "I've got to. You're gonna pay." And I remember stabbing over and over, just stabbing, and ripping at the body.

I guess my justification is revenge. I mean I saw it done to us first. So I guess that made it OK. What did I feel like when I was doing it? I was hyper, I was like somebody on speed. Just, ah, I don't know. All this energy. Yeah, I was not Frank. Y'know? I was John Wayne, I was Steve McQueen. I was Clint Eastwood. I was all these other people. But I was not Frank, y'know? I was living a fantasy. And it became a reality when I got wounded the second time.

Then I knew it wasn't a game. But I still didn't really identify myself as myself. I mean, I was still looking for ribbons and rainbows. Y'know? I wanted to be recognized. I wanted to be somebody.

November 1970

*Recommended for Navy Commendation Medal for action in
flood rescue operation*

I think that was very important to me. That meant a lot to me. Y'know, that I was able to really...I kind of saw myself in a different role, y'know, it wasn't the kind of "killer", but it was, y'know, helping and saving our own kind. Y'know, actually pulling guys out of the water that were drowning. Y'know, because there was no more limbs on the trees, y'know? And really feeling good about it. And meeting a lot of different people.

Like, I met a lot of pretty senior Marine officers that respected what I knew and respected what I was doing. And it was a nice feeling, that they could have that kind of respect for me.

I guess I had it in my mind that I was over there fighting for freedom. That...my view of it was that communism was taking over South Vietnam, and this was their fight against the communism. OK? But I guess, just before I left, I allowed myself to really get to know some of the very real people that were there. Here I could speak a little bit of the language and I had some Vietnamese counterparts. We were friends. They'd take me to their home and I'd eat with their families. Y'know, I'd eat their food. I don't know. I came to understand a different view of Vietnam, in that the local farmer, all he wants to do is harvest his rice. He don't care whether it's communist, or democratic or socialistic. He didn't care. All he wanted to do was grow his rice. And harvest it. And fish. And just live.

July 1970

Wounded: shrapnel fragments...leg, face, groin

November 1970

Wounded: shrapnel fragments...face

I think it really hit home the second time I got wounded. At that point, it became a reality to me that I could die over there. OK? I knew that it wasn't a game any more...at some level. Because I became very disinterested in any patrols. And I became very disinterested in going out on foot. It just didn't excite me the way it did before.

March 3 1971

I wasn't sure what date I was leaving. The last patrol I was on, I didn't know it was gonna be my last one. We got in a fire fight. We went out about 11 o'clock at night. We were coming back. It was about 5:30 in the morning, and we just took a lot of fire from both banks and we went up. We just made a couple of firing runs. We went up and down the river.

And I left Vietnam at 11 o'clock that day.

And I was walking the streets of San Diego at about midnight that night.

PART II
1971-1981

On the flight on the way back, it was really a happy flight. Y'know, I mean, everybody was coming home. There was a lotta wine, a lot of booze, and the airplane pilots let us drink, y'know, as long as you didn't get drunk, they didn't care. And they let us play music.

But I remember, I don't know...somewhere in my head, I remember thinking, "Y'know, it's gonna be great to walk off the plane. And the band playing." I know, "welcome home or welcome home...or, ah, America, Star Spangled Banner, something." But the plane landed and we got off the plane and there was nothing. There was nothing!

My sister picked me up and she had asked me what it was like and stuff, y'know, but I couldn't really bring myself to talk about it. Y'know? And, ah, anyway, she lived outside of San Diego. I remember it was about 11 o'clock at night and I had borrowed her car and I was just walking the streets of San Diego. Y'know? "What am I doing here? What's it all about? No. I'm home. I'm home." And I remember saying it, y'know, I was walking

down the street talking to myself out loud. But no, "I'm home. I'm home."

And I went into a bar, y'know, and had a couple of drinks and there were other people there. And I tried to talk a little bit, y'know, "Hey, I just got back!" And, "Fuck you! Who cares?!"

Y'know, and I just didn't know what to do with it.

That night, I would've probably given anything to be back in Vietnam. Because I knew what was happening in Vietnam. I knew what to expect. I really feel where the US government failed every one of us who came back from Vietnam was there was no re-indoctrination. There was no three days of just being on a base, being somewhere and talking about, "Hey, you are home. It's over." And maybe helping some of us who had some serious problems.

I started using drugs the night I got back. Y'know, like I said earlier, while I was over there, I never did any drugs. I never touched a drop of heroin, opium. I never even smoked a joint in the whole time I was over there. And I can count on both hands how many times I drank and got drunk.

But when I came back, y'know, it just became an automatic coping mechanism for me, to use drugs.

I guess it was about one o'clock that night, I scored some opium. I went back to my sister's house and I did the opium. And I just really remember this incredible sense of laying y'know on the living room floor and y'know, watching these things leave me. Y'know? And it was OK. I was all right. It was gonna be OK.

And then my wife came down the next, no, not the next day, the following day. And there was another child. So now I had two kids and a wife; two boys and a wife. And there's this incredible sense of pressure, y'know. I gotta find a place to live. I've gotta get this stuff moved. I couldn't cope. I couldn't cope with it.

So I went out and scored some more opium and I scored some smack and uh, y'know, I had quite a bit of money. And I started doing opium, probably two or three times a week, just to keep some sense about me. Y'know, it was my own way of maintaining some sense of reality. Because my wife was saying, "But we gotta do this. We gotta do that. We gotta do this."

Y'know, wait a minute, I'm still somewhere between Vietnam and here, but not sure where.

I couldn't go to her and tell her, "I really feel upset today. I need a hug. I need somebody just to hug me. I need somebody to hold me." Because I was a hero. I mean, I was home, I was home from the war. And I never saw John Wayne walk up to no woman and say, "Hey, baby, I need a hug." Y'know what I mean? I couldn't do that, OK? I never saw my own father do that. I never saw anybody do that.

So, consequently, what I'd do was I'd drink. OK? And then I didn't care where I went. I didn't care where I wound up. As long as...I remember being in San Diego and being in a gay place. I don't remember what the name

of it was or anything. But there were all these gay guys walking around. OK? And I knew damn well where I was. But I couldn't leave.

And then they had this like mini-gym, right? So I took my shirt off -- and at the time, I was in excellent physical condition -- and I started beating on the punching bag, just flexin' 'em out, right? And I remember winding up with this guy. And I remember saying over and over, "Just hold me. Just hold me." Y'know, I don't remember leaving that place. OK?

So now I had the guilt of what I did in Vietnam, OK? I was carrying this guilt. It was bothering me. I had the guilt of not knowing how to deal with a wife and two kids, and not knowing, "What are my responsibilities to her and to those kids?" But, not only that, but now I'd had a homosexual relationship, and what was I? What was I? Am I one of those fags? Y'know, how can I go home now and make love to this woman that I'm supposed to be married to? And there was that on top of me.

What did I do to cope with all this? I drank some more.

And I wound up in other places. And that initial time, I can't tell you whether I, honestly...whether I had a homosexual relationship or not, but I know, after that, I did. And I didn't like it. But I found myself there. Because I didn't care who held me.

I remember...I remember paying a hooker in San Diego \$50, OK?...and there was never any sex. I paid her \$50 just to hold me. To lay down in the bed with me, y'know. How long did it last? 20 minutes, maybe a half hour. Y'know? But the woman I was married to, I couldn't ask for that. And don't ask me why. I really don't know.

Maybe it was that shame. Maybe I couldn't fulfill that image somewhere inside of me that said, "Well, you don't ask that of your wife." And I couldn't talk to her about the real things that bothered me about Vietnam. About the mutilation. About the insanity and how I felt about being insane over there.

July 1971

Decorations awarded in San Diego: Navy Commendation Medal
Navy and Marine Corps Medal
Purple Heart with gold star

August 1971

Reenlisted for 6 years

I felt good about the awards...OK?...and I felt good about being a hero. I mean that was definitely coming on. But I couldn't deal with anxiety, and I couldn't deal with stress. I couldn't handle my wife telling me, "The trash needs to be taken out." I couldn't handle this new chief telling me that I had to get this job done by this date. Y'know, he was putting pressure on me and he was a Phillipino and I wanted to shoot him.

I wanted to kill him. And I didn't hate him. But he was yellow. And he didn't talk like I talked.

Bizarre things were happening. I wound up in jail because...for fighting in a bar. And I wound up in jail for speeding. I just began to lose control. I began to realize that something was wrong. I didn't know what it was, but I could feel it, that something wasn't right.

And I thought it was the ship and thought it was the Navy. I didn't identify it as being something inside of me.

Things got real bizarre at home. I started spanking the kids more, pushing the old lady around, drinking a lot more.

One of the final blows was: I went out with some friends on a Thursday night, got bombed on a Thursday night, went to the ship on Friday morning, left the ship at noon, got bombed Friday, got home about 2 or 3 o'clock Saturday morning, got up maybe 8 or 9 o'clock Saturday morning, and started all over again. Saturday night, I completely flipped, completely lost it. And I remember coming home and telling my wife, "Get out. Get out." "What d'ya mean?" "Just get out. Get the kids and get the fuck out of here. Before I kill all of ya. I don't know what's gonna happen."

And I remember, I really felt that way. I didn't know what was gonna happen. I had no idea. I knew I wanted to hurt somebody. But I didn't know who.

February 1972

Hospitalized for psychiatric treatment: Treatment for alcoholism recommended

I started going to AA meetings, and I hated them. I thought they were all fuckin' assholes. A bunch of turds. That's what I called 'em, "turds". I hated 'em. Because they were all basically happy. They smiled a lot. And I didn't understand it. I did not understand it. These people were happy and they weren't drinking. What kind of fun can you have in life and not drink? I mean, everything in my whole life was related to alcohol or drugs. And here I was, y'know? But these people kept telling me, "Hey, it doesn't make any difference. Just keep coming back."

I remember being at a friend's house. And they had cooked, she had cooked bacon and eggs. It was about 2:30, 3 o'clock in the morning. And when I drink, I don't like to use utensils. Y'know, God gave me hands to eat with and that's what I ate with. And I remember stuffing these eggs in my face, yolk running down my face, running through my fingers. I went in to bed and I crashed. I woke up the next morning. My fingers were stuck together with egg yolk. When I tried to yawn, my face really hurt, like, there was egg yolk stuck all over my face.

And I went in and I looked at myself in the mirror and I said, "This is really neat. What do you want? Is this what you want? Or do you wanna

be like what you've been like the last six months?" And I've never had a drink since.

November 1976

Separated from wife

I did not feel that she understood what I was all about and what I was doing.

I was beginning to know myself. I was gaining self confidence. I was changing. And she was kinda stuck. I really believed that she liked me better drinking than she ever did when I was sober. She used to tell me that I was more affectionate, I was more loving when I was drunk, when I was drinking. I just couldn't take it anymore. I just couldn't take it anymore.

May 1975

Enrolled in Navy training program in alcohol counseling

August 1975 - January 1977

Assigned to US Naval Hospital as alcohol counselor

Then, I was due to get out of the Navy. I was scared about getting out of the service. I still equated myself as needing the uniform, as needing the structure. So I told myself, if I could stay in the alcohol field in the Navy, then I'd stay in the Navy. OK? So I started making phone calls and I got people to write letters, that I would be of great value to the Navy and my country if I stayed in the alcohol field. But the Navy felt very differently. They felt that I should be a gas turbine technician and that I should go back to sea duty and perform my normal duties, which was an engineersman.

So I got out of the Navy. I made the decision. And I got out.

Well, before I got out -- I got out in August -- the February before I got out, I was on my way to work one day. And I got on the elevator at work, and the elevator doors came together. OK? And as the doors came together, my oldest boy's face appeared, OK? And there was blood running down the door. I mean, there was no body, there was just this face. And he was looking me right in the eye and saying, "Why? Why?" And I just, ah...I remember backing up in the elevator, and backing up to the back of the elevator and I got on my knees, and there was like a bright light coming at me because I had my hands up and saying, y'know...and starting to holler, "No! No! What is it? What's happening?"

I don't remember too much after that for a couple of days. But I know I was on thorazine and I was really...I had a lot of anxiety. And at this

point, I started having a lot of nightmares about Vietnam.

February 1977

Received psychiatric treatment at US Naval Medical Center

I got treated and I got back on my feet, but I was still really kind of in limbo. I was afraid to talk to people about the nightmares because I was concerned about war crimes, and I was still in the service. And I didn't know who I could talk to. I mean, do I talk to a military shrink about war crimes?

August 1 1977

Discharged from Navy

August 5 1977

Arrived Boston

And, I got a job with CETA and I worked at a halfway house for a month and the place closed.

Then I got a job with Mt. Auburn Hospital. In the meantime here, I had met somebody else and we started living together. And, I don't know, just a lot of things in my life really started coming together. I really didn't think I could make it working outside the Navy system, and I mean, here I am, working in an alcohol clinic.

July 4 1978

A year ago last 4th of July, I was at the Taj Mahal concert at Government Center and there was a lot of fireworks. And people were throwing the fireworks in the crowd. Now this isn't the first time this has happened, OK, but I reacted to these fireworks. I was down on the ground and I was looking around at people and I couldn't do anything. I couldn't do anything. And I just completely lost control. Y'know? I remember crying and being really ridden with anxiety about these noises. Because they were like, some of them sounded like machine gun fire. Some of 'em sounded like B-40's.

I was lost. I didn't know what to do. Y'know? My insides felt like they were comin' out my mouth. And I just couldn't do anything. I never reacted like that in Vietnam. 'Cuz I always had a gun in my hand. I always had something to react to. I could jump behind a tree, y'know. And play the game. But when you're in a crowd of people, when you're walking down the street and somebody throws a firecracker, what do you react to? I mean, you get down on the ground.

Y'know, I mean, it's happened to me before when I'm walking down the street and a truck has backfired, and I've gone down on the ground. Y'know, and people walk by you and they look at you and, "Oh, my God, what are you?" And I have to say, yeah, it must look awfully funny, but how do I feel? Y'know, I get tore up inside. Because here again, I can't see that they're looking at my reaction to something. They're looking at ME. And they're laughing at me. Do you see what I mean? Y'know, they don't know where it's coming from or what it's about. Most people don't. Most people don't. They don't wanna know about this.

August 1978

At that point, at that point...like the nightmares were really getting intense. I was probably having two or three a week. And I think it was in September or October that they became color. They'd gone from black and white to live, living color. And I have these nightmares that get intense and like, I'm doing it all over again, but with this other knowledge that I now have about, y'know, am I guilty? Am I not guilty? And just redoing it, I mean, and redoing it and redoing it.

Just the intensity of stabbing somebody over and over and over...and I guess I really feel guilty about it. It's really...y'know, I don't wanna see it anymore. I don't wanna live it anymore. Y'know, maybe you want the elephant to step on you some more. Maybe that's your nightmare or whatever. But I don't want it anymore. Do you know what I mean? I mean, it's like, um, the shadow that never leaves, that's always there. Somewhere behind me, this is always there. And every once in awhile, I walk under the sun and it gets in front of me. Y'know...I guess the intensity comes from reliving something that I don't know whether it was right or wrong. I mean that I'm confused about, even today, ten years later. I'm confused about it. Y'know?

And now it's horror. It's not the same as it was when I was doing it. I mean it wasn't horror when I was doing it. I mean, I wasn't horrified when I was stabbing the shit out of these people and pulling their guts out and throwing it all over the place. I wasn't horrified. Y'know? I mean, I was taking their money and taking their jewelry or whatever they had, y'know, and I mean, people were looking up to me. They were giving me medals for this shit. OK? That ain't horror. Today it's horror. Today, I don't wanna see it anymore. Today, it's, "Why did I do that?" Y'know, "Why me? Why did I do that? Where's that part of me? Could that part of me...could I fall into one of these nightmares and stay there?"

Let's go to about 3 months ago when I had a really, really intense nightmare. And I got up and I had to get out of the house because the walls were closing in and I just, y'know, I could really feel, y'know, something coming on. And I didn't trust myself, but I couldn't stay in the house. Because Meredith was there. And she was asleep. And how easy it would be to go in and fucking kill her. And I knew that this would be gone. If I did this, this incredible anxiety would be gone. So I left the house

and went up on the roof. And I thought about jumping off the roof. But then I thought, what's that gonna answer? What good will that do me? That's not gonna do any good. I better get off the roof.

I was a wreck, like this (shaking) for two or three days after that happened. And I went to the Disabled American Veterans and I said, "Y'know, what are my rights? I'm a Vietnam Veteran. What are my rights? I'm scared. I don't know what's wrong. I feel like I'm flipping out. I feel like I'm losing it, like I'm losing control. I feel like I'm gonna kill somebody. Because when I felt like this in Vietnam, I could go out on patrol and I could kill somebody. And I could feel that sense of power and I could feel better about myself.

I went back to the VA this time, and here again, I got referred to somebody and they offered me a group and I said, "No, I'd rather do individual." And here again, I went about five or six times. And each time, I talked about a nightmare or I talked about the specifics of the nightmare. I really felt that this person was horrified by what I was saying. OK? And the only way I can equate this is, if you're working with an active alcoholic, and you look at him and think, "What a pitiful sight,"... OK? You don't say those words, but you're thinking 'em up here, he's got radar to that. He's so sensitive to that. OK? And I really believe that a lot of us veterans, that if I start talking to you about a nightmare or about some bizarre incident that happened over there and you're sitting there in judgement or condemnation, y'know, or whatever...I'm gonna pick that up right away. Just like that. And I felt it.

My feeling is that we need, what we need is, we need for people to talk like I'm talking right now. To be honest about what happened over there so that these guys who are walking the streets and holding this stuff inside can feel the freedom to talk about it somewhere. And not be judged for it.

*Several months after the taping of this program,
Frank again sought psychiatric treatment,
and was voluntarily hospitalized.
He was released after 30 days.*

*As of March, 1981, Frank is living in Boston
and is employed as a social worker.*

Memo
from the desk of

PHELPS JONES

10/8

Dear Morton:

I think
Mark Andrews is
now on our
AINACs team.

His LA, Ed
Dougherty, thinks

So. Best,
Phelp,



Telephone
202-543-2239

NEWS Release

Washington Memorial Building
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

file VFW

IMMEDIATELY
(7 OCTOBER 1981)

VFW TERMS AWACs SALE A "POLICY IMPERATIVE"

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- "Following the shocking, brutal assassination of President Sadat, it should be as clear to the 97th U. S. Congress, as it is to us, that a body of 535 individuals is spectacularly ill-equipped to 'fine-tune' American foreign policy initiatives in a turbulent and unpredictable world.

"I now describe the AWACs sale, which I earlier supported on a narrower basis, as a policy imperative and I urge the Congress to approve it promptly and by a generous margin."

Arthur Fellwock, VFW National Commander, continued by citing the following factors as adding up to a policy imperative on AWACs:

"(a) the clear need to extend clear support to a moderate Arab regime--Saudi Arabia--in the wake of the loss of Anwar el-Sadat, our best Arab friend;

"(b) the ungrudging support for the AWACs sale by all three living ex-Presidents, all six living ex-Secretaries of Defense, all five living ex-Presidential National Security advisors, two former Secretaries of State, and all three living former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shows the wide, bi-partisan support for this national security initiative; and, finally

"(c) a short two days before his death, President Sadat warned of a Libyan plan to invade the Sudan as part of a larger Soviet scheme to control the oil-rich Middle East. President Sadat termed the 36,500 Communist Bloc troops in Libya and Ethiopia

(MORE)

PAGE 2

a Soviet 'Rapid Deployment Force' in place for use in the Persian Gulf, North Africa or the Horn of Africa.

"Surely," Mr. Fellwock concluded, "this is no time for America to wobble or falter as we seek to build an area-wide strategic consensus to halt further Soviet encroachment.

"The AWACs sale was important before President Sadat's passing; it is an inescapable strategic necessity today."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON OFFICE

STATEMENT OF
COOPER T. HOLT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WASHINGTON OFFICE
OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

WITH RESPECT TO THE NOMINATION OF ROBERT POWERS NIMMO
TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, D. C.

JULY 9, 1981

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before this Committee to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States regarding the nomination of Robert Powers Nimmo as the Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

My name is Cooper T. Holt and it is my privilege to serve the more than 1.9 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as Executive Director of our Washington Office.

As the record reflects, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nimmo, a member of the VFW, was born in Balboa, California on February 25, 1922 and attended California State Polytechnic College from 1941 to 1943 entering the Army Air Corps prior to graduation to become a B-24 bomber pilot with the 8th Air Force during World



War II. Remaining active in the National Guard he was recalled to active duty during the Korean conflict subsequently graduating from both the Army Supply Management School and United States Army Command and General Staff College. He retired as a Colonel in 1972 and that same year was elected to the California State Assembly and overwhelmingly reelected in 1974. Following a hard fought campaign in 1976, Mr. Nimmo was elected to the California State Senate and by 1979 was appointed to the powerful Senate Rules Committee as well as having served on the Senate Finance Committee. Mr. Nimmo is married to the former Pat Stone and they have three grown daughters.

Mr. Chairman, on more than one occasion I have met face to face with Mr. Nimmo and he has promised an open door policy at the Veterans Administration and indicated he would appreciate regular meetings with the leadership of veterans' organizations for the purpose of discussing problems of mutual interest. It is my opinion that Mr. Nimmo will display great compassion for our veterans of all wars.

Mr. Chairman, we of the VFW have been deeply disturbed with the politicizing of the position of Administrator of Veterans Affairs in recent years and the willingness of the incumbent to wholly acquiesce to the dictates of the Office of Management and Budget.

Another VFW member, the first Administrator, Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, held just such misgivings. According to House Committee Print No. 4, First Session of the 90th Congress, General Hines had not been anxious to accept the position of Director of the Veterans Bureau which was offered by President Harding three times before he agreed. He said to the President, "I don't like politics and I don't know anything about politics." President Harding suggested that the General leave the politics to him and run the Veterans Bureau as a business. On that basis General Hines consented, and his tenure with the Veterans

Bureau and later as Administrator of Veterans Affairs spanned twenty-two years.

This is just exactly what we trust Mr. Nimmo will do - shun politics and operate the Veterans Administration for the benefit of veterans. Obviously Mr. Nimmo has close ties with President Reagan since he has been a member and Treasurer of the San Luis Obispo County Republican Central Committee, the State Republican Central Committee, Honorary Chairman of the Reagan for President Committee and a Reagan delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1980.

We trust Mr. Nimmo will always have entree to the White House and the President if need be so that he may properly represent our nation's 30 million veterans, their dependents and survivors. We look to Mr. Nimmo to truly be the veterans advocate and fight for realistic and adequate budgets to properly maintain the integrity of the VA hospital and medical care system and the benefit programs administered by the Department of Veterans Benefits. This is our philosophy of what an Administrator should be. When we find one who is not, as we have in the past, we do not hesitate to step right in and call a spade a spade.

While speaking of the position of Administrator, Mr. Chairman, the VFW has long held that the incumbent should be elevated to Cabinet level to give him authority and stature commensurate with the responsibility of directing the third largest agency of the federal government. The VFW recommends the introduction and passage of legislation to accomplish this.

Given the foregoing, Mr. Chairman, the Veterans of Foreign Wars endorses the nomination of Robert Powers Nimmo to be the Administrator of Veterans Affairs. We wish Mr. Nimmo well and look forward to a working relationship beneficial to the veterans of all wars who have rendered a very special service, their dependents and survivors.

Thank you.

~~ENCLOSURE~~

file V.F.W.

37
M. Blockmull

October 1, 1982

Mr. President,

We, the Veteran's Monument Committee of the V. F. W. Post 2318 in Shamokin, Pa. were elated at your response to our invitation to attend our Veteran's Monument Dedication Services.

Although you will not be able to honor us with your presence you will be in our hearts and the hearts of the citizens of our community.

We would greatly appreciate a Presidential Wreath to place at the base of our Veteran's Monument to commemorate the living and the dead of our community who fought for their country to protect the freedom we Americans so greatly cherish.

Very Respectfully Yours,
Dorlyn Nowcenskie
Secretary, Veteran's Monument Comm

Charles Bressi: Commander
Robert Paplasko: Jr. Vice Commander Donald Williams
John Schroyer: Jr. Vice Commander Member
John Wheary: Quartermaster
Andrew Kozlaski: Adjutant

V.F.W. MONUMENT FUND

This is to certify that

President Ronald Reagan

is a member of the fund and is entitled to all the honors thereof. Your name will be deposited in the base of the Veteran's Monument in Shamokin, Pa. which was erected under the auspices of the Blyler-Quinn Post 2318 and unveiled on November 11, 1982.

VETERAN'S MONUMENT COMMITTEE

Charles Bressi, Robert Poploskie, John Wheary,
Andrew Kozloskie, Ronald Williams,
John Schroyer, Roslyn Novicenskie

V.F.W. MONUMENT FUND

This is to certify that

First Lady Nancy Reagan

is a member of the fund and is entitled to all the honors thereof. Your name will be deposited in the base of the Veteran's Monument in Shamokin, Pa. which was erected under the auspices of the Blyler - Quinn Post 2318 and unveiled on November 11, 1982.

VETERAN'S MOUNMENT COMMITTEE

Charles Bressi, Robert Poploskie, John Wheary,
Andrew Kozloskie, Ronald Williams,
John Schroyer, Roslyn Novicenskie