

## **Resolution No. 401**

### **PRESERVE THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE**

WHEREAS, despite 20-plus years war, the United States has maintained an All-Volunteer Force for more than 50 years. America's All-Volunteer Force persists despite repeated combat tours, recruiting and retention challenges, and continues operations in an extremely dangerous and unpredictable world; and

WHEREAS, troops are worried that their concerns fall on deaf ears. They are concerned that elected and appointed officials cannot comprehend what it's like to serve in an All-Volunteer Force that has been overtasked for decades. They are concerned about rising costs of living, reductions in quality-of-life programs, and lack of access to mental health care. Moreover, military leaders are very concerned about burnout in a military that is continually tasked to do more with less human and financial resources; and

WHEREAS, worldwide commitments and challenges have increased with continuous military operations against radical forces aligned with terrorist organizations, heightened engagements in Africa, domestic activations to protect the border and assist with natural disasters, troop buildup in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area to counter Chinese expansion, increasing rotations to Eastern Europe to support NATO's deterrence of Russian hostilities in Ukraine, and maintaining a continuous presence of service members fighting terrorist organizations across Southwest Asia; and

WHEREAS, recently Congress has not provided sufficient oversight and scrutiny to the use of military force and military decision-making both for domestic and foreign missions and has also demonstrated the inability to provide a stable, consistent defense budget without constant threats of arbitrary cuts. Instead, some in Congress have promoted misleading narratives about today's service members, while projecting partisan politics onto our fighting force, disrupting an institution whose sole purpose is to protect our nation and jeopardizing the nonpartisan nature of our military; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative impact of lower pay, quality of life shortcomings, partisan politics and a higher operations tempo have had a direct impact on morale, which in combination with a more predictable and safer civilian economy, has resulted in a dire recruiting and retention problem, thereby threatening the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will redouble our efforts to work with Congress and the Administration to preserve the All-Volunteer Force by calling for proper oversight and scrutiny to both the domestic and foreign military mission and decision-making, investment in military quality-of-life programs, and an end of arbitrary budget caps, offering solidarity to those who volunteer to serve in a military that must protect American interests in a very dangerous and unpredictable world.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief

To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## **Resolution No. 402**

### **ELIMINATE SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT IN THE MILITARY**

WHEREAS, sexual assault and harassment within the military and at the Military Service Academies are urgent, detrimental, and prevalent issues that impact individual well-being and morale, unit cohesion, recruiting, and retention and require aggressive action and accountability to eliminate; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military and Academic Program Year 2022-2023 Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies show that reports of sexual assault and harassment still continue to rise; and

WHEREAS, military sexual assault and harassment affect both men and women, occur on a “continuum of harm,” are enabled by entrenched culture, and are not always stereotypical in nature with women being disproportionately victimized; and

WHEREAS, it is widely held that a far greater number of sexual assault and harassment survivors do not come forward due to embarrassment, lack of trust in command support and accountability, and/or fear of personal and/or professional reprisal, to include real or perceived “red flags” in their military personnel folders; and

WHEREAS, DOD has implemented new and reformed programs, policies, and processes as a result of the 2021 Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military but is not estimated to be complete until FY 2030; and

WHEREAS, Congress has passed Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) reforms that will ensure investigation and prosecution of military sexual assault and harassment cases are independent of military chains of command; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly demand DOD become more aggressive in its efforts to reduce sexual assault and harassment, to provide victims with proper and necessary medical and mental health care, as well as assistance with disability claims as may be required, to aggressively and diligently investigate every reported incident and punish attackers, as well as individuals involved in acts of retribution and retaliation, and that Congress perform rigorous oversight of IRC recommendations and the recently passed UCMJ reforms to ensure timely and proper implementation, and identify areas for improvement.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## **Resolution No. 403**

### **ENSURE DOD COMPLIANCE WITH TAP LAW**

WHEREAS, transition from military service is a very stressful and time-consuming period for service members and their families, and often presents psychological, financial, and professional challenges in addition to the need to find new housing, healthcare, resources, and programs to support the unique needs of each member and family; and

WHEREAS, Congress has mandated Transition Assistance Program (TAP) pre-separation counseling for all service members to ease the difficult transition from service into civilian life by offering job-search assistance, guidance on education and healthcare programs, and information on other benefits and post-service needs; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) is required to abide by TAP reforms that were included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 and directed, among other requirements, that all service members attend TAP at least 365 days prior to separation, complete a two-day career track if they are minimally prepared for transition, and be connected to resources in communities in which they plan to reside after service; and

WHEREAS, a December 2022 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report revealed that 70 percent of service members did not attend TAP on time and almost 25 percent of service members who needed to complete a two-day career track did not; and

WHEREAS, VFW surveys of transitioning service members (TSM) indicate findings that align with the GAO's report and show that nearly 34 percent of TSMs either were not or did not know if they were connected to community resources, while our accredited Benefits Delivery at Discharge program representatives hear that TSMs are not consistently getting connected to community resources; and

WHEREAS, new reforms to TAP require DOD and VA to grant accredited Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) access to and provide briefings on pre-discharge services like disability claims assistance to TSMs; and

WHEREAS, establishing a leadership position within DOD is needed to drive the necessary cultural change to prioritize transition services and provide Congress with a single point of accountability; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to pass the TAP Promotion Act, to ensure every TSM is allowed to attend TAP classes with sufficient time to participate in the Benefits Delivery at Discharge program and require DOD and its partner agencies to continuously improve TAP and maximize access to materials and resources for TSMs, veterans, and their families.

Resolution 403 Continued

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to require the Department of Defense to establish an Under Secretary of Defense for Transition Assistance to oversee, coordinate, and modernize all transition programs to ensure service members receive timely, effective, and standardized transition assistance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon DOD to enforce existing TAP requirements, ensure full access to VSOs providing critical transition services, and implement policies that prioritize the long-term success of transitioning service members and their families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VFW calls on DOD to provide transparent, standardized reporting to Congress on TAP participation and outcomes, and ensure such data is publicly available so that implementation of congressionally mandated transition requirements can be effectively overseen and verified.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 404

### KEEP DEFENSE BUDGET RELEVANT

WHEREAS, America's top priority is to defend itself, its citizens, and its interests, and Congress must provide the Defense Department with sufficient funding to properly train, equip and field a military that can defeat all enemies, as well as protect vital U.S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the claim the U.S. spends more on defense than the next 8 or 10 countries combined is a false narrative. Except for China and Russia, all the other countries are focused on homeland and/or shared theater defense alliances, whereas the U.S. has a worldwide commitment to project power, reliability, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, defense spending accounts for nearly half of all discretionary spending, which makes DOD a consistent target for lawmakers trying to reduce overall federal spending, which puts America's national security at the risk; and

WHEREAS, Russia's attack on Ukraine's sovereignty, the continuing threats by North Korea and Iran, and China's military expansion, make the world more dangerous and therefore increases the world's reliance on the United States to lead militarily against those threats; and

WHEREAS, state sponsored terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis continue to attack civilian populations, infrastructure, and threatening to further destabilize their regions; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial that any proposed reduction in funding not jeopardize America's security or break faith with those who serve or have served our nation in uniform. A nation that cherishes its freedom and supports the troops can afford to do both; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Congress to provide the necessary funding for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 405

### LINK MILITARY PAY INCREASES TO PRIVATE-SECTOR INCREASES

WHEREAS, military pay raises are linked by law to the increase in private-sector wages, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). The Administration's military pay raise request, however, can be more or less than the ECI, with Congress having the final approval; and

WHEREAS, the 4.6 percent military pay raise for FY 2023 was the largest increase in 20 years but was below the ECI, but the Department of Defense — in its continuing campaign to slow the growth of military compensation due to budget constraints — recommended that future pay increases be limited; and

WHEREAS, the raise in FY 2023 and proposed raise in FY 2024 would be the largest pay raise in over 40 years, but still does not raise pay and benefits such as Basic Allowance for Housing to be competitive with civilian markets; and

WHEREAS, changes to military pay and benefits is the top concern of military service members and their families. Continued efforts to slow the growth of military compensation, combined with a better civilian job market, and a sustained intense operational tempo have already impacted recruiting and retention, which jeopardizes the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense is already facing a shortage in key fields, such as pilots and maintenance personnel, and must develop competitive pay and benefit scales to recruit talent in critical high-tech fields, such as cyber and space; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to maintain military base pay comparability with private-sector wages by ensuring annual military pay raise percentages match or exceed annual ECI increases.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Resolution No. 406**

**PROVIDE FULL CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIREMENT  
PAY AND VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION**

WHEREAS, military retirement pay and VA disability compensation are fundamentally different benefits earned for two very different reasons; and

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries; and

WHEREAS, the 10-year phase-in period ended in 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and 50 percent or higher VA disability ratings no longer have their military retirement pay offset by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the law, however, did not provide the same equity to service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or to Chapter 61 retirees who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; and

WHEREAS, more than 50,000 Chapter 61 retirees receive Combat Related Special Compensation from the Department of Defense, many of whom are Purple Heart recipients; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation that allows for the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of disability rating percentage.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 407

### **PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF THE TRICARE BENEFIT**

WHEREAS, changes to Tricare this past year increased costs of both the Select and the Prime plans. Changes included a complete change in the cost-share methodology for the new Tricare Select plan, which changed the beneficiary costs from a percentage of individual-services-used to an averaged, flat-rate co-payment and increased Tricare Prime fees; and

WHEREAS, Congress added additional costs by raising mail order and retail pharmacy fees for all Tricare beneficiaries, including Tricare for Life members. The additional costs included raising the costs of a 90-day mail order supply of generic medications from a \$0 co-pay to a \$12 per prescription co-pay, adding significant out of pocket costs to beneficiaries on maintenance medications for chronic conditions; and

WHEREAS, military health coverage is expensive, yet so is the personal investment someone makes to voluntarily commit to a military career. Any real or perceived erosion of benefits for career-minded personnel will undermine long-term retention, as well as recruiting of new service members; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose all Tricare fee increases as well as any additional fee increases or attempts to erode the earned benefit of military healthcare; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge DOD to reform its healthcare programs by eliminating institutional inefficiencies before considering fee increases; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress and DOD to ensure timely and equal access across the force, regardless of geographic location, to holistic healthcare services including medical and non-medical mental health counseling, reproductive health services, specialty care, and pharmacies.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 408

### AWARDING THE ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL FOR EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) was established by Executive Order 10977, dated December 4, 1961 (DA Bulletin. 1, 1962) and Executive Order 11231, July 8, 1965; and

WHEREAS, the medal is authorized for (1) U.S. military operations, (2) U.S. operations in direct support of the United Nations, or (3) U.S. operations of assistance for friendly foreign nations; and

WHEREAS, the AFEM is awarded for services after July 1, 1958, meeting the following qualifications that military personnel must be a bona fide member of a unit and engaged in the operation, have served not less than 30 consecutive days in the area of operations, and be engaged in actual combat, or duty which is equally as hazardous as combat, during the operation with armed opposition, regardless of time in the area; and

WHEREAS, DOD has established precedent in awarding the AFEM for kinetic military operations supporting allied nations when individuals campaign medals have not yet been established; and

WHEREAS, United States military personnel have been assigned to eastern Europe under the operational banners of Operations Atlantic Resolve since February 24, 2022 to support NATO's deterrence and defense posture on its eastern flank; and

WHEREAS, since February 24, 2022, the United States has deployed units to the USEUCOM theater and has U.S. forces positioned in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. These are qualifying NATO countries with contiguous borders with Ukraine and are in direct support of NATO and friendly nations; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, supports and encourages Congress and the Secretary of Defense to designate Operations Atlantic Resolve since February 24, 2022 in support of NATO's deterrence and defense posture on its eastern flank as U.S. military operations that are eligible for the award of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## **Resolution No. 409**

### **PROTECT POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING**

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of nearly 82,000 missing Americans that include approximately 72,000 from World War II, 7,544 from the Korean War, 1,584 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 8 post-Vietnam that include Operations Eldorado Canyon (1), Desert Storm (2), Iraqi Freedom (3), Operation Prosperity Guardian (2); and

WHEREAS, public-private partnerships are increasing the ability to be at more sites and DPAA has strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, which has in the past provided additional funding required to support pending recovery operations in North Korea, which have been interrupted since 2005 due to U.S. safety and security concerns; and

WHEREAS, Congress has in recent years acknowledged the importance of the Fullest Possible Accounting mission by increasing DPAA funding above requested amounts; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that DPAA remain adequately funded. Recovering fallen Americans from long-ago battlefields is demanding and often dangerous work for investigation and recovery teams, but it is the most sacred of missions. It is our government's fulfillment of a soldier's pledge to never leave a fallen comrade on the battlefield, which is a promise that spans all generations; and

WHEREAS, additional money enables DPAA to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish its worldwide mission to recover, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from our nation's previous conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Congress has adopted nine continuing resolutions in the last ten-years and caused three shutdowns since 2013, which hinder operational planning and slow recoveries; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to continue to increase funding levels for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and all supporting organizations involved in the Fullest possible Accounting Mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress must pass advanced appropriations to prevent a slowdown in recoveries and allow for budget carry-over allowing DPAA to plan multi-year operations.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 410

### CALL FOR MORE UNILATERAL POW/MIA ACTIONS BY VIETNAM

WHEREAS, 2,646 Americans were listed as missing and unaccounted-for at the end of the Vietnam War. As of March 2022, the number of missing is now 1,584 due to a combination of increased U.S. Government emphasis, better research and identification technology, stronger diplomatic ties with host governments, and access to aircraft crash and ground battlefield sites; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam had a comprehensive wartime and post-war process to collect and retain information and remains, and, according to the National League of POW/MIA Families, this unilateral effort enabled the Vietnamese to locate, and return remains to U.S. custody; and

WHEREAS, joint U.S. – Vietnam field operations, first conducted 37-years ago, continue to provide answers to families of unaccounted for American servicemen; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam granted access to their National Archives I and II and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) Library; and

WHEREAS, many of the grieving families may never live to see the return of their missing loved one; and

WHEREAS, Vietnamese museums contain many personal items which belonged to missing U.S. servicemen; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Vietnam to grant U.S. government analysts access to the PAVN archives where potentially valuable documents which could lead to case resolution may be located; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in this cooperative effort, that we encourage the Vietnamese government to turn over any items of a personal nature from missing American servicemen that are currently in the custody of Vietnamese museums or other locations under their control so they may be returned to their grieving families.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 411

### RECOGNITION FOR AFGHAN AND IRAQI COMBAT SUPPORT ROLES

WHEREAS, Afghan and Iraqi wartime allies were bridges to the Afghan and Iraqi people during U.S. operations against terrorism in those countries and mission success was directly dependent on close working relations between local nationals and U.S. agents; and

WHEREAS, our wartime allies often served consecutive tours with several different units to provide continuity and their lives and the lives of their family members were threatened for working with the Americans; and

WHEREAS, our wartime allies saved countless American lives and directly contributed to every level of tactical, operational, and strategic success during the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Special Immigrant Visa recipients and Priority 2 Refugee Admissions Program recipients go through the strictest vetting and approval process of any category of person coming to the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, this initiative is supported by all post 9/11 former secretaries of defense as well as key national security leaders in the military, Department of State, and the intelligence community; and

WHEREAS, the former chairmen of the 9/11 Commission have stated, “As former chairman and vice chairman of the 9/11 Commission, we encourage Congress to do everything in its power to keep the nation’s promise to Afghan and Iraqi combat translators and to ensure these intrepid partners can achieve the American Dream. Special Immigrant Visas recipients from Afghanistan and Iraq loyally protected our men and women in uniform. Many directly saved American lives. Their future success will help to prevent the continued growth of Islamist terrorism – the third goal identified by the 9/11 Commission. A great nation keeps its promises”; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to recognize the contributions of Afghan and Iraqi Combat Interpreter Immigrants who stood shoulder to shoulder with, assisted and protected U.S. military service members, U.S. diplomats and government agents, non-governmental organizations, and media organizations during U.S. involvement in those countries.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 412

### SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and key link in the Western Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) codifies the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character to bolster peace and stability in the cross-strait environment; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1979, then-President Carter terminated diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Taiwan, and instead established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China to help maintain peace, security, and stability in the Western Pacific. This loss of diplomatic status prevents the President of Taiwan from receiving the same respect and courtesies afforded other Heads of State who visit the U.S.; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by continuing to approve the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons, and technology to maintain an adequate defense capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations, and to provide the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 413

### SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, the Republic of Korea is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and a key link in the Northeast Asia defense chain. Numerous treaties are in force with the Republic of Korea concerning economic and technical cooperation, education, maritime matters, trade and commerce, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, that was enacted on November 17, 1954; and

WHEREAS, South Korea's immediate neighbor, however, continues to maintain an extremely large and forward-deployed military force capable of launching no-notice offensive operations against South Korea; and

WHEREAS, North Korea maintains the ability to launch nuclear-capable missiles, including a missile capable of reaching the United States, and has conducted six underground nuclear explosions since 2006, and is a known exporter of ballistic missiles and its technology to countries adversarial to the United States, most notably Iran; and

WHEREAS, the continued unpredictability of North Korea makes the presence of U.S. ground and air forces inside South Korea even more critical as a deterrent to aggression; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Government to maintain a substantial military presence in the Republic of Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance through modern weaponry and technology to help promote peace and stability in the region.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## **Resolution No. 414**

### **SUPPORT THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

WHEREAS, the State of Israel is a historic, democratic ally of the United States of America, and has continued to be a partner withing the ongoing fight against terrorist groups in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, since its establishment in 1948 Israel has been under constant threat of attacks from terrorist groups sponsored by nations that share Israels borders culminating with the Hamas attacking Israel on October 7, 2024, resulting in the death of over a thousand civilians, the imprisonment of 250 hostages committing rape and torture and violating humanitarian law by using the Palestinian people as human shields; and

WHEREAS, reestablishing peace between Israelis and Palestinians remains of strategic interest to the United States and other partners within the region; and

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the United States Government to continue to support the State of Israel both diplomatically and militarily and continue to work with them to ensure the safety of their borders and to emphasize regional stability in the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 415

### SUPPORT OF NATO DETERRENCE AND SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

WHEREAS, throughout a 45-year Cold War, United States military personnel, who would later become members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), were instrumental in leading North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) efforts to deter Soviet aggression in Europe, bring about the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and the disintegration of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and

WHEREAS, in the ensuing thirty-odd years, many former Warsaw Pact countries embraced democracy and flourished under a participatory form of government, becoming suppliers of commodities and technology across the globe, and have become productive members of the European Union (EU), NATO, and numerous additional international organizations aimed at ensuring world and regional peace and economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, for the past two years Ukrainians have been fighting heroically to repel Russia's war of occupation, annexation, and indiscriminate targeting of Ukrainian civilians, the likes of which have not been seen since Adolf Hitler embarked on such power-grabs in the 1930s; and

WHEREAS, the United States and European allies have been providing Western military equipment to replace Soviet era weaponry, increasing Ukraine's reliance on US manufacturers to maintain and replace weapons, munitions, and logistical equipment; and

WHEREAS, the 90% of funds provided from the United States to support Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression are paid to United States' military industries, helping to bolster the US economy; and

WHEREAS, Russia's invasion of Ukraine serves as a precursor for Russia to occupy, annex, and subjugate other free European countries that border Russia, such as Moldova, Lithuania and stated expansionist plans bear a direct threat to the freedom of the whole of Europe, NATO, the free world economy, and, thereby, the United States; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the people and free government of Ukraine in their fight against Russian aggression; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the President and Congress to decidedly exercise our position as leader of the free world to decidedly support Ukrainian people and armed forces with necessary humanitarian and military aid and encourage all of our allies to follow suit.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 416

### DEPORTED VETERANS

WHEREAS, non-citizen United States Service members have been, and are currently being deported from the United States after serving in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, current United States Code provides that the term "national of the United States" means a citizen of the United States, or a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Federal law requires everyone who enlists or re-enlists in the Armed Forces of the United States to take the Oath of Enlistment to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and to bear true faith and allegiance to the same, are oaths that are performed in front of the United States Flag and other flags, such as the state flag, military branch flag and is similar to the Oath of Citizenship and of the states; and

WHEREAS, Veterans have served our nation in every war from WWII, Vietnam, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. We strongly believe their oath of enlistment is a permanent oath of allegiance to the United States of America. While mere subjective emotional allegiance to the United States and length of residence in the United States is insufficient to make an individual a national, we believe that raising your right hand, swearing this oath, putting on the uniform in times of both peace and war are in fact a permanent allegiance to the United States and, that the United States owes a permanent allegiance to all Veterans be they U.S. Citizens or Foreign Nationals; and

WHEREAS, when these veterans returned to civilian life without appropriate support for reintegration, psychologically, and economically, some veterans that fell into addictions and criminal activities, were arrested and, due to their legal permanent residence status, were deported regardless of their honorable service; and

WHEREAS, these exiled veterans face inherent barriers to accessing Veteran Affairs (VA) healthcare system as they earned during military service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge Congress to amend the United States Code to clearly state "The following shall be nationals\*, but not citizens of the United States: A person who, by Conscription or enlistment, entered any branch of the United States armed forces and served honorably, and, this shall be retroactive to service members/veterans previously removed from the United States.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 417

### **EXPAND THE DATES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL**

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense recognized service of the United States Armed Forces personnel in the Republic of Vietnam from 1 July 1958 to 3 July 1965, by awarding personnel the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 11231 establishes the Vietnam Service Medal as recognition of service in the Republic or contiguous waters from 3 July 1965 to 28 March 1973; and

WHEREAS, service in the Republic of Vietnam during Operation Frequent Wind during 29 to 30 April 1975, was recognized by awarding eligible personnel the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and

WHEREAS, Armed Forces personnel originally receiving the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service in the Republic of Vietnam during either from 1 July 1958 to 3 July 1965 or 29 to 30 April 1975, are now qualified to receive the Vietnam Service Medal in lieu of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and

WHEREAS, after the Paris Peace Accords were signed 27 January 1973 and the last combat troops were withdrawn from the Republic of Vietnam on 29 March 1973 there were many members of the United States Armed Forces remaining in Thailand and on ships in the Vietnam coastal waters in support of the South Vietnamese Army from 29 March 1973 until Operation Frequent Wind thus placing United States personnel in harm's way, but not recognized by a campaign or service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to direct the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for those that served in Thailand and on the ships in the coastal waters of Vietnam from 29 March 1973 to 30 April 1975 in Support of the Vietnamese Army.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 418

### ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL FOR SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) is a military award of the United States Armed Forces, awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who participate in U.S. military operations, U.S. operations in direct support of the United Nations, or U.S. operations of assistance for friendly foreign nations; and

WHEREAS, the United States has been actively supporting Ukraine with arms, training, increased forward presence, and intelligence since the March 2014 annexation of the Crimea, but especially since the February 2022 full-scale Russian invasion; and

WHEREAS, since commencement of Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE – a continuation of the 2014 U. S.-led enhanced deterrence of Russian aggression - the U.S. has deployed an Armored Brigade Combat Team on six to nine-month rotations in Poland as a deterrent to potential further Russian aggression in eastern Europe and the Black Sea region; and

WHEREAS, as part of deployment of forces to the Baltic States, U. S. and NATO ally aircraft provide enhanced forward presence by policing the skies over NATO states in and around Ukraine; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. has deployed, and continues to further deploy, anti-air and anti-missile defense systems, such as AEGIS Ashore, to other bordering states, most recently Romania and Poland; and

WHEREAS, these batteries have already played an active role in intercepting and defeating ballistic missile launches; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) believes that the criteria for the AFEM have clearly been met; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the Secretary of Defense to authorize the award of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to United States military personnel, including naval forces in the Black Sea, Baltic Sea, and elsewhere as appropriate, serving in direct support of expanded U. S. or NATO presence and operations supporting the defense of Ukraine and deterrence of further Russian aggression in eastern Europe, with an award start date of 18 March 2014 and an ending date to be determined.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 419

### PROTECT POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of nearly 82,000 missing Americans that include approximately 72,000 from World War II, 7,544 from the Korean War, 1,584 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 8 post-Vietnam that include Operations Eldorado Canyon (1), Desert Storm (2), Iraqi Freedom (3), Operation Prosperity Guardian (2); and

WHEREAS, Congress has in recent years acknowledged the importance of the Fullest Possible Accounting mission by increasing DPAA funding above requested amounts; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that DPAA remain adequately funded. Recovering fallen Americans from long-ago battlefields is demanding and often dangerous work for investigation and recovery teams, but it is the most sacred of missions. It is our government's fulfillment of a soldier's pledge to never leave a fallen comrade on the battlefield, which is a promise that spans all generations; and

WHEREAS, additional money enables DPAA to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish its worldwide mission to recover, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from our nation's previous conflicts; and

WHEREAS, aid provided to host nations to mitigate the legacies of war have strengthened diplomatic relationships necessary to authorize DPAA's recovery efforts in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, Congress has adopted nine continuing resolutions in the last ten-years and caused three shutdowns since 2013, which hinder operational planning and slow recoveries; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to continue to increase funding levels for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and all supporting organizations involved in the Fullest possible Accounting Mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress must pass advanced appropriations to prevent a slowdown in recoveries and allow for budget carry-over allowing DPAA to plan multi-year operations.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 420

### ENSURE DOD COMPLIANCE WITH TAP LAW

WHEREAS, transition from military service is a very stressful and time-consuming period for service members and their families, and often presents psychological, financial, and professional challenges in addition to the need to find new housing, healthcare, resources, and programs to support the unique needs of each member and family; and

WHEREAS, Congress has mandated Transition Assistance Program (TAP) pre-separation counseling for all service members to ease the difficult transition from service into civilian life by offering job-search assistance, guidance on education and healthcare programs, and information on other benefits and post-service needs; and

WHEREAS, the DOD is required to abide by TAP reforms that were included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 and directed, among other requirements, that all service members attend TAP at least 365 days prior to separation, complete a two-day career track if they are minimally prepared for transition, and be connected to resources in communities in which they plan to reside after service; and

WHEREAS, a December 2022 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report revealed that 70 percent of service members did not attend TAP on time and almost 25 percent of service members who needed to complete a two-day career track did not; and

WHEREAS, VFW surveys of transitioning service members (TSM) indicate findings that align with the GAO's report and show that nearly 34 percent of TSMs either were not or did not know if they were connected to community resources, while our accredited Benefits Delivery at Discharge program representatives hear that TSMs are not consistently getting connected to community resources; and

WHEREAS, new reforms to TAP require DOD and VA to grant accredited Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) access to and provide briefings on pre-discharge services like disability claims assistance to TSMs; and

WHEREAS, establishing a leadership position within DOD is needed to drive the necessary cultural change to prioritize transition services and provide Congress with a single point of accountability; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to pass the TAP Promotion Act, to ensure every TSM is allowed to attend TAP classes with sufficient time to participate in the Benefits Delivery at Discharge program and require DOD and its partner agencies to continuously improve TAP and maximize access to materials and resources for TSMs, veterans, and their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to require the Department of Defense to establish an Under Secretary of Defense for Transition Assistance to oversee,

Resolution No. 420 – continued

coordinate, and modernize all transition programs to ensure service members receive timely, effective, and standardized transition assistance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon DOD to enforce existing TAP requirements, ensure full access to VSOs providing critical transition services, and implement policies that prioritize the long-term success of transitioning service members and their families.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 421

### RESEARCH BLAST OVERPRESSURE

WHEREAS, exposure to blast overpressure from explosions, heavy weapons fire, and other military operations has been linked to long-term neurological and physiological effects in service members; and

WHEREAS, emerging research indicates that repeated exposure to blast overpressure may contribute to cognitive impairment, psychological disorders, and neurodegenerative conditions such as chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE); and

WHEREAS, service members operating in close proximity to explosive weaponry, including, but not limited to, breachers, artillery personnel, and special operations forces, are at heightened risk for blast overpressure injuries; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has yet to fully acknowledge the cumulative effects of blast overpressure exposure and implement comprehensive protective measures for at-risk personnel; and

WHEREAS, there is a critical need for increased research, improved monitoring, and enhanced safety protocols to prevent, identify, and mitigate the impact of blast overpressure on service members' long-term health; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to direct the Department of Defense to continue to conduct comprehensive research on the long-term health effects of blast overpressure exposure and to implement policies ensuring proper documentation, monitoring, and prevention of such injuries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Department of Defense to acknowledge the risks associated with blast overpressure exposure, develop enhanced protective equipment and training protocols, and ensure service members receive appropriate medical care, screening, and long-term support for conditions related to blast overpressure injuries.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 422

### REPATRIATE AMERICA'S FIRST FOREIGN WAR CASUALTIES

WHEREAS, the United States fought its first major foreign war against the Barbary States of North Africa to reign in piracy and secure trade routes during the First Barbary War in the early 1800s; and

WHEREAS, on July 14, 1804, during a daring mission in the Second Battle of Tripoli Harbor, 13 brave American sailors and Marines lost their lives seeking to cripple the enemy's fleet aboard the captured Tripolitan vessel renamed the USS Intrepid; and

WHEREAS, reports indicate that these 13 American service members have been interred in a small Protestant cemetery in Tripoli that has not only fallen into disrepair but is often defaced and vandalized; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Navy has readily acknowledged the significance of this battle and the heroics of the men who perished aboard the USS Intrepid, but have not sought to repatriate their remains from a territory that remains unfriendly to Americans; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is a federally chartered organization of service members who have served in this nation's wars, campaigns, and expeditions on foreign soil and in hostile waters, making our organization uniquely postured to see the return of the first brave Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in foreign service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State to seek the disinterment and repatriation of the 13 brave American Sailors and Marines who perished aboard the USS Intrepid during the First Barbary War in 1804 and who are currently interred in Libya; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge our grateful nation to welcome these Americans home, ensuring their interment in a place of honor at Arlington National Cemetery so that future generations of Americans may properly honor their unique sacrifice in our nation's first major foreign war.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Resolution No. 423

### SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FORMS SSA-7161 AND SSA-7162

WHEREAS, the Social Security Administration (SSA) sends out approximately 15,000 SSA-7162 forms each year. As part of the Foreign Enforcement Program, which verifies the existence and identity of beneficiaries with a foreign address to ensure the SSA has accurate information about the beneficiary's address, contact number and any circumstances that may affect their benefits; and

WHEREAS, these forms can at the present time only be submitted exclusively via local international postal services to Wilkes-Barre, PA; and

WHEREAS, failure to return the form within 60 days can lead to suspension of benefits; and

WHEREAS, far too often these crucial documents are lost and never received and/or delivered resulting in discontinuation of essential entitlements; and

WHEREAS, to reinstate said entitlements the beneficiary must contact their respective Social Security Administration Office which are only located in some Federal Benefits Units (FBU) which may be located in another country (Example: The FBU for Thailand and Cambodia is located in the Philippines); and

WHEREAS, the consequences of this action often result in weeks or months without essential benefits depriving the recipient of sufficient funds to obtain medication, food and medical care; and

WHEREAS, there are currently digital technologies already in place that would allow for a secure and reliable means to submit these forms to the Social Security Administration and eliminating the need to submit them via an unreliable international postal system; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to enact legislation which would enable the Social Security Administration to initiate immediate reform to end the current unreliable method being used to submit these annual reports and allow for the use of a secure online reporting system; and further

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that part of this legislation include procedures that would allow authorized beneficiaries to submit said forms to any U.S. embassy or U.S. Consulate worldwide.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## **Resolution No. 424**

### **SUPPORTING THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA**

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to supporting veterans, promoting patriotism, and ensuring the national security of the United States; and, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to supporting veterans, promoting patriotism, and ensuring the national security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the VFW recognizes the importance of international law and the peaceful resolution of disputes in maintaining global stability and security; and, the VFW recognizes the importance of international law and the peaceful resolution of disputes in maintaining global stability and security; and

WHEREAS, the Republic of the Philippines is a long-standing ally and strategic partner of the United States, with a shared history of military cooperation and a commitment to democratic values in the Indo-Pacific region; and, the Republic of the Philippines is a long-standing ally and strategic partner of the United States, with a shared history of military cooperation and a commitment to democratic values in the Indo-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, the West Philippine Sea (also known as the South China Sea) is of vital strategic and economic importance to the Philippines, the United States, and the international community, serving as a crucial waterway for global trade and commerce; and, the West Philippine Sea (also known as the South China Sea) is of vital strategic and economic importance to the Philippines, the United States, and the international community, serving as a crucial waterway for global trade and commerce; and

WHEREAS, the Republic of the Philippines, as a sovereign nation, possesses legitimate and internationally recognized rights to its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf in the West Philippine Sea, as defined by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); and, the Republic of the Philippines, as a sovereign nation, possesses legitimate and internationally recognized rights to its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf in the West Philippine Sea, as defined by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); and

WHEREAS, an Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of UNCLOS, in a landmark ruling on July 12, 2016, unanimously affirmed the Philippines' sovereign rights within its EEZ and continental shelf in the West Philippine Sea, and declared that certain actions by the People's Republic of China (PRC) are in violation of UNCLOS; and, an Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of UNCLOS, in a landmark ruling on July 12, 2016, unanimously affirmed the Philippines' sovereign rights within its EEZ and continental shelf in the West Philippine Sea, and declared that certain actions by the People's Republic of China (PRC) are in violation of UNCLOS; and

WHEREAS, the VFW is deeply concerned by the increasing tensions and militarization in the West Philippine Sea, including actions that impede freedom of navigation, disrupt lawful economic activities, and undermine regional stability; and, the VFW is deeply concerned by the increasing tensions and militarization in the West Philippine Sea, including actions that impede freedom of navigation, disrupt lawful economic activities, and undermine regional stability; and

WHEREAS, the VFW believes that upholding international law, protecting the rights of allies, and promoting a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region are essential to the national security interests of the United States; and, the VFW believes that upholding international law, protecting the rights of allies, and promoting a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region are essential to the national security interests of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the PRC continues to disregard the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and continues its unlawful activities within the West Philippine Sea; and, the PRC continues to disregard the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and continues its unlawful activities within the West Philippine Sea; and

WHEREAS, the PRC's actions continue to undermine the security and stability of the region; now, therefore, the PRC's actions continue to undermine the security and stability of the region; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly support the sovereign rights of the Republic of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea, as recognized under international law and affirmed by the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling; and by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly support the sovereign rights of the Republic of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea, as recognized under international law and affirmed by the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the United States Government to Reaffirm its commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines and work closely with the Philippine government to ensure its security and territorial integrity; continue to conduct freedom of navigation operations in the West Philippine Sea to uphold international law and ensure the right of all nations to navigate these waters freely; increase diplomatic and economic support to the Philippines to help it protect its sovereign rights and promote its economic development; work with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region to promote a rules-based order, deter aggression, and maintain peace and stability in the West Philippine Sea; publicly condemn the unlawful actions of the PRC within the West Philippine Sea; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the United States Government to continue to conduct freedom of navigation operations in the West Philippine Sea to uphold international law and ensure the right of all nations to navigate these waters freely; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the United States Government to increase diplomatic and economic support to the Philippines to help it protect its sovereign rights and promote its economic development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the United States Government to work with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region to promote a rules-based order, deter aggression, and maintain peace and stability in the West Philippine Sea; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the United States Government to publicly condemn the unlawful actions of the PRC within the West Philippine Sea; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW will communicate this resolution to the President of the United States, Members of Congress, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in Washington, D.C.

## Resolution No. 425

### **ADDING A 'RECOVERED AWAITING DNA CONFIRMATION' CATEGORY TO THE DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY (DPAA) AND IMPLEMENTING DNA MATCH NOTIFICATIONS THROUGH ANCESTRY WEBSITES**

WHEREAS, the United States is committed to the fullest possible accounting for its missing service members from past conflicts; and

WHEREAS, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is responsible for recovering and identifying missing personnel but currently lacks a formal category for remains that have been recovered and are awaiting DNA confirmation; and

WHEREAS, the creation of a 'Recovered Awaiting DNA Confirmation' category within the DPAA would provide greater transparency to families of missing personnel and allow for better tracking of ongoing identification efforts; and

WHEREAS, many American families have submitted DNA samples to commercial ancestry and genealogy websites, which have databases that could assist in identifying remains of missing service members; and

WHEREAS, implementing a system that allows these ancestry services to provide notifications to individuals if their DNA appears to be a potential match for an unidentified service member, with proper consent and privacy safeguards, could significantly aid in expediting identifications and providing closure to families; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States petitions Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to establish a 'Recovered Awaiting DNA Confirmation' category and to explore partnerships with ancestry and genealogy databases to facilitate responsible DNA matching for the identification of missing service members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW supports the continued improvement of identification efforts for missing service members and the use of modern DNA technology to bring closure to their families.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief  
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## **Resolution No. 426**

### **ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL ELIGIBILITY FOR UNRECOGNIZED MILITARY ACTIONS AND CONFLICTS**

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) is a military award of the United States Armed Forces, granted to service members who participate in U.S. military operations, operations in direct support of the United Nations, or operations of assistance to friendly foreign nations; and

WHEREAS, since the end of World War II, the United States has engaged in a number of military operations that involved active-duty U.S. military personnel in combat, combat support, or advisory roles that were publicly denied or unacknowledged at the time of their occurrence; and

WHEREAS, these unrecognized have included missions later revealed or declassified through official reports, media investigations, or veterans' testimonies, yet many remain undocumented in service records, preventing the affected personnel from receiving proper recognition and creating barriers to accessing earned benefits; and

WHEREAS, recognition of these operations has practical, ethical, and historical implications, as troops involved in covert or undeclared operations often faced the same or greater levels of danger and risk as in formally recognized conflicts, yet have been denied due honors; and

WHEREAS, lack of official documentation of such service has led to longstanding disadvantages for affected veterans, including denial of service-connected compensation, healthcare, and medals, all of which rely on accurate and complete service records; and

WHEREAS, formal acknowledgment by the U.S. government and appropriate award of the AFEM would honor and validate the sacrifices of these individuals, restore morale, and fulfill our national obligation to account for and support all who have served; and

WHEREAS, historical precedent exists for the retroactive recognition of previously unacknowledged or denied operations, as seen in the eventual acknowledgment of U.S. operations in Laos, Korea, and other regions; and

WHEREAS, specific conflicts have now been sufficiently documented to warrant consideration for AFEM eligibility, including but not limited to:

- Laos and Cambodia (1960s–1973) – MACV-SOG special operations,
- El Salvador (1980s) – U.S. Special Forces in combat zones,
- Honduras (1980s) – U.S. deployments near conflict zones,
- Bosnia (pre-1995) – covert Special Forces operations,
- Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines (2002–2015) – U.S. combat and support missions,
- Yemen and Somalia (2000s–Present) – ongoing special operations with direct combat exposure,
- Niger and West Africa (2010s–Present) – confirmed combat fatalities and operations,
- and others, as identified by competent authorities;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) urges the Secretary of Defense and the Congress of the United States to formally recognize previously unacknowledged U.S. military operations involving direct or near-direct combat roles, herein referred to as the “Forgotten Conflicts”; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW calls upon the Secretary of Defense to authorize the award of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to eligible U.S. military personnel who participated in these designated operations where the criteria of exposure to hostile action, combat conditions, or operational deployment were met, with retroactive effective dates to be determined per operation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW supports legislative or executive action to declassify records, issue service documentation, and enable access to earned veteran benefits for those who served honorably and at risk in these unacknowledged operations.

## Resolution No. 427

### RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING MORAL INJURY AMONG SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

WHEREAS, military service often places individuals in complex and high-stress environments where they may experience or witness events that conflict with deeply held moral or ethical beliefs; and

WHEREAS, such experiences can contribute to what researchers and clinicians increasingly recognize as moral injury, a form of psychological, social, and spiritual distress resulting from actions, inactions, or witnessing events that violate one's moral framework; and

WHEREAS, moral injury may manifest through guilt, shame, loss of trust, spiritual crisis, social withdrawal, and difficulty reintegrating into civilian life; and

WHEREAS, moral injury may occur in conjunction with other conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, but is distinct in its origins and often requires different approaches to healing and recovery; and

WHEREAS, modern warfare increasingly involves remote and technologically mediated operations, including remotely piloted aircraft, cyber operations, and intelligence surveillance missions, where service members may participate in or witness lethal actions while physically removed from the battlefield; and

WHEREAS, these remote operators may experience unique forms of stress and moral conflict, particularly when they must rapidly transition between combat operations and civilian environments without the traditional decompression or unit cohesion experienced by deployed forces; and

WHEREAS, research and reports from the Department of Defense and academic institutions have highlighted significant burnout, operational stress, and mental health challenges among remotely piloted aircraft crews and other remote operators; and

WHEREAS, unresolved moral distress and psychological strain can contribute to long-term mental health challenges and may intersect with risk factors associated with military and veteran suicide; and

WHEREAS, acknowledging moral injury as a legitimate challenge faced by some service members and veterans can help reduce stigma, encourage earlier intervention, and support the development of effective programs to promote healing and resilience; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the VFW supports increased research into moral injury among service members and veterans, including those serving in remote or technologically mediated operational roles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs to incorporate education and training on moral injury into programs supporting service member resilience, military-to-civilian transition, and veteran health care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW supports the development and expansion of programs addressing moral injury through interdisciplinary approaches, including mental health care, peer support, spiritual care, and community reintegration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW encourages collaboration among federal agencies, veteran service organizations, academic institutions, and community partners to advance understanding of moral injury and its potential relationship to suicide risk among service members and veterans.