WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

NOTHING LESS THAN VICTORY

Resolution 169 again takes center stage at annual Washington Conference.

By Steve Brooks

America is fighting a war against terrorism throughout the world. Only a commitment to victory in that war will keep the battlefront from shifting to within the borders of the United States.

That is why support for U.S. servicemembers and their mission cannot cease at this critical juncture, The American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin told members attending the Washington Conference in March. Passed at the 2005 National Convention in Hawaii, The American Legion’s Resolution 169 calls for full support for the U.S. military, the commander in chief and the mission of the war against terror. That resolution was again at the forefront of Legionnaires’ thoughts during a Washington gathering that included appearances by President George W. Bush, VA Secretary Jim Nicholson and members of Congress.

“I’m here today to express to every one of you, on behalf of The American Legion, that America’s veterans and their families do not want our great nation to cut and run from this war against evil,” Morin said. “The enemy is expecting us to quit. They’re counting on dissent on the American homefront. They are confident they can beat us in a battle of wills. We must prove them wrong.”

Leaving Iraq before the mission is finished will cause a disastrous domino effect, Morin continued. “What will happen to those countries in the Middle East that have supported us? Do you think it will be forgive-and-forget time for Israel, Kuwait, Jordan and others? Do you think a couple of non-binding resolutions will save those nations from reprisals? Which nations will want to be our ally in the next war we declare on terrorism? And there will be another war. If we leave Iraq, the war on terror isn’t over – it merely shifts to a new battlefront, perhaps much closer to home.”

Morin said past mistakes by the American public remind us that only full support will do. “The American Legion’s members, most of whom served during the Vietnam War, fully understand that you cannot divide the troops, the leadership and the mission. If you support the troops, you support what they are fighting for.

“You cannot separate the war from the warrior. If you reject the mission and the leadership, you erode their morale and fuel the enemy’s confidence. It’s that simple, a lesson we learned from Vietnam.

“The political rhetoric of withdrawal usually begins with a non-binding resolution and ends with the troops coming home defeated, never having lost a single battle,” he said. “Some of us in this room remember Vietnam and that period of our history. We lived that history. Not one battle was lost. Yet in the 1970s, Congress began the process of passing ‘non-binding’ resolutions. Soon they became ‘binding’ resolutions. Then there were new ‘rules of engagement.’ Finally, in 1975, Congress cut off all defense funds to South Vietnam, and then we totally withdrew our troops. In the –

National Commander Paul A. Morin greets President George W. Bush prior to Bush’s speech at The American Legion’s legislative rally in Washington on March 6. Troop support remained a major theme throughout the annual Washington Conference.
COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Annual VA budget delays must end

The U.S. government’s 2007 fiscal year was already more than four months old when Congress finally passed a budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Meanwhile, VA plugged along at outdated spending levels while thousands of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, some with severe and complicated war wounds, poured into hospitals, clinics and domiciliaries across the country. VA was forced to care for those patients based on forecasts dating back two and three years while medical inflation continued its relentless upward trajectory, nursing home demand crept toward long-anticipated highs, mental-health services for veterans became overwhelmed, and hiring was in limbo. VA needed an early budget this year, not a late one. The practice of delaying the VA budget is getting to be so routine no one expects it on time anymore. The last time VA started a fiscal year with an approved budget in hand was 1996. Coincidentally common since then have been emergency spending measures to keep VA afloat. VA officials and lawmakers alike will argue that they could never have anticipated so many newly discharged Iraq and Afghanistan veterans – more than 240,000, or about one-third of the eligible population so far – would actually use their two years of free VA health-care service. But they have, thus skewing VA’s outdated projections for patient demand. Nearly a third of these veterans have come home with mental-health conditions from combat experiences, including a high volume of post-traumatic stress disorder. These veterans have coined the term “polytrauma,” where any one veteran might face a combination of multiple amputations, traumatic brain injury and/or other wounds. Their 100-percent service-connected disabilities will be with them for life. That’s the thing about war. It’s impossible to predict casualties from battles not yet fought, which is what VA actuaries were attempting to do when the 2007 budget was first penciled years ago. Too often, these veterans had to have led to care in facilities that are a half-century old, honey-combed with cavernous wings of many rooms, throwbacks to an era when appendicitis put you in the hospital for a week and high-tech imaging equipment was still unheard of.

VA needs to catch up fast. Even before the Senate passed a very late 2007 VA budget, President Bush submitted his request for 2008. The request was a good step, but by no means a leap, with $36 billion for medical care and money for new hospitals in sorely underserved areas, but once again seeking a near doubling of prescription co-payments and assessments of new annual enrollment fees of up to $750. The 2008 VA budget request is certain to face its share of debate, and The American Legion will again fight the higher co-payments and new fees. But the debate needs to conclude sooner rather than later. No VA administrator can develop plans to handle the myriad changes now upon the system, hamstrung by another late budget and outdated projections. The waiting lines are growing again. So too is the case for mandatory VA health-care funding, which would take the guesswork out of the budget process. Such a move would not only produce more predictable funding for VA facilities, it just might break the late-budget habit.
A partnership for youth

**Department of Nebraska, Army recruiters join forces for County Government Day.**

By Robert W. Spanogle

For 63 years, The American Legion Department of Nebraska has sponsored County Government Day across the state, helping high-school juniors observe firsthand the workings of their local governments. With about 5,000 students from more than 60 counties participating each year, the cost—which includes lunch for each student—has become too high for the department to handle. A partnership with U.S. Army recruiters in the state will help The American Legion continue to sponsor this valuable program.

During County Government Day, juniors are elected to various positions within their local municipal governments and spend the day learning how they function. Of 93 county seats in Nebraska, about 70 participate in the program.

As sponsors, American Legion posts provide a venue for a luncheon for the participants. Under the new partnership, the Army offers a speaker and foots the bill for the meal. It's a win-win situation, said Legislator Roy Vap, the department's liaison with Army Recruiting Command and Webster County commander.

"Army Recruiting Command is always looking to do something in the community," Torrey said. "I told (my father) we're always looking to help out with sponsorships, and that's when he mentioned County Government Day."

**CHILDREN & YOUTH Proclamation for Children & Youth Month**

April is The American Legion's Children & Youth Month. Below is a proclamation for the month than can be introduced at municipal government meetings.

**PROCLAMATION – THE AMERICAN LEGION CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH**

The City Clerk reads the following Proclamation into the record:

WHEREAS, The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary, ever since the founding of these two organizations, have devoted much of their talent, effort and finances to improve conditions for our nation's children and youth; and

WHEREAS, The Children & Youth Program of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary has the noble purpose of providing a setting which permits adequate opportunity to the child of every veteran to realize their full potential and to assure every American child a similar opportunity to achieve their full potential; and

WHEREAS, the Legislator and members of the Auxiliary of Post No. , City, State, have labored unselfishly to achieve this goal through their untiring effort, dedicated leadership and devotion to the principles of this benevolent program.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF , do hereby proclaim the month of April as THE AMERICAN LEGION CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH in the City of . I call the attention of all citizens the good works of the members of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary in their dedication to the principles of this outstanding program.

Torrey put Roy in contact with Army Recruiting Command officials in Nebraska, who agreed to provide speakers and rent space at the luncheon. The rental fee allows the Department of Nebraska to cover the cost of the luncheon for the students. Vap presented the plan to the Department Executive Committee, which gave him the green light.

During County Government Day luncheons, Army recruiters give a brief presentation about military careers and scholarship opportunities, followed by a question-and-answer session between students and the main speaker before they return to the county courthouse.

"It really became a deal breaker for us because of the lunches," said Vap, a member of Post 238 in Red Cloud, Neb. "We initially tried to find sponsors to help fund the lunches. You're talking a cost of around $7 per student."

As he looked for sponsors, Vap realized he had an "in" with the Army: his son, 1st Sgt. Torrey Vap, has served with Army Recruiting Command in the West Virginia-Pennsylvania area since 1997.

"Army Recruiting Command is always looking to do something in the community," Torrey said. "I told (my father) we're always looking to help out with sponsorships, and that's when he mentioned County Government Day."

"One of the biggest issues facing recruiters is just getting in front of kids," Roy said. "For The American Legion, one of our biggest issues is membership. I think we're helping each other. I've got to praise (U.S. Army) Maj. Scott Holden and Lt. Col. William Melendez for their part in this. Without their 100-percent support and leadership, this never would have happened."

"We like to be involved with veterans organizations, especially with programs like this," Torrey said. "I'm looking for the Roy Vaps out here."

Under a memorandum of understanding with Army Recruiting Command, The American Legion supports Army recruiting efforts. But the Department of Nebraska's partnership with Army Recruiting Command goes further, preserving a program vital to youth.

"Army recruiting efforts. But the Department of Nebraska's partnership with Army Recruiting Command goes further, preserving a program vital to youth. County Government Day is a perfect prelude to Boys State. If we want young Americans to develop interest in government, we need to reach them now. The partnership between the Department of Nebraska and Army Recruiting Command is doing just that."

**MILITARY BURIALS Order ammoninum in time for Memorial Day ceremonies**

American Legion posts that perform military funeral honors, appear in parades or conduct Memorial Day ceremonies using their government-issued weapons are reminded that now is the time to reorder blank ammunition.

Requests should be submitted by post commanders or post adjutants no later than the first week of April to ensure that requests can be processed and blank ammunition received before Memorial Day ceremonies commence.

There are two ways posts can submit orders.

- **Prepare a letter on post letterhead, if available, signed by the post commander and the recipient, and send it to The American Legion National Headquarters, Washington Office, 1606 K St. N.W., Washington, DC 20006.** In the letter, please provide the recipient's name, residential delivery address and phone number, and call to the attention of all post members that blank ammunition is preferred that blank ammunition be sent to a residence and not to the post. Also include the post number and city/state. This information is also published in the 2006 "Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies," pages 160-161.

- **Contact Dawn Folland at the U.S. Army Joint Munitions Command, Attn: AMSJMD-CD'S, 1 Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, IL 61299-6000.** Contact Folland by letter, calling (877) 233-2515, e-mailing follandd@afsc.army.mil or faxing (309) 782-7292. Requests must include the post number, city/state, name of the current post commander or adjutant, home mailing address and phone number. After verification by National Headquarters, those placing an order will receive an order form via U.S. Mail to complete, sign and return.

Once your order has been processed and a tentative ship date is known, the recipient will receive a letter with that information.

For more information, contact Dawn Folland at (877) 233-2515.
WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION 101

Forum briefs Legionnaires on specifics of one of the nation’s most pressing issues.

By Steve Brooks

Four of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 terrorist attacks were stopped for traffic violations by local law enforcement offers prior to their acts. Although all four were in the United States illegally, a lack of shared information between local and federal officials allowed the hijackers to escape jail and commit mass murder.

Mexico’s No. 1 source of foreign capital, some $24 billion a year, is money sent home from its citizens living in the United States – many illegally. That surpasses the country’s oil and tourism revenue.

The cost to U.S. taxpayers of the estimated 5 million illegal immigrants within U.S. borders who are high-school dropouts is approximately $500 billion over the course of their lifetimes.

The average wage for a meager packer was between $15 and $20 per hour. That’s less than $10 per hour.

Eye-opening facts like these – shared with a full auditorium of American Legion family members earlier this month – were expressed to deliver a message in the coming months to communities throughout the country regarding the impact of illegal immigration.

That was the purpose of The American Legion’s first Forum on Illegal Immigration, March 5 at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington. Two guest speakers and three panelists addressed a crowd of several hundred.

The American Legion has assembled a panel of experts that will present information you will need to fully understand the problems associated with illegal immigration in this country,” National Americanism Commission Chairman Joseph Caoette told the audience. “Please pay close attention to what they have to say, as this issue will be discussed in American Legion halls and other forums across the country for weeks and months to come.

University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law Professor Kris Kobach, NumbersUSA President Roy Beck and Dr. John Fonte, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, participated in the panel discussion, which was moderated by Center for Immigration Studies Executive Director Mark Krikorian.

Kobach, who served as counsel in former Attorney General John Ashcroft’s office at the time of the 9/11 attacks, spoke about the four hijackers’ traffic stops. After the attacks, Kobach headed up Justice Department efforts to tighten border security and return the rule of law to immigration. He led the team that designed and implemented the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, which registers and fingerprints high-risk visitors to the United States.

“Under current U.S. law… any of those law-enforcement officers, if he’d had that information at his fingertips, could have made an arrest,” Kobach said of the traffic stops. “Four of the 19 hijackers could have been arrested. If we had questioned them and started unraveling the plot details, who knows what would have happened? Thousands of lives could have been saved.

These were massive missed opportunities.”

Kobach said ideas of positive changes were implemented as a result of 9/11, but gaps remain.

The basic tourist visa that 18 of the 19 hijackers used to enter the United States without a visa. Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, entered the country through the program.

“The visa-waiver program is a wide-open door for terrorists because they can get those passports from those 27 countries quite easily,” Kobach said. “One way is to steal them. That’s why when our troops went into Afghanistan they found a cache of stolen Belgium passports. Why was there such a hot market for Belgium passports? Because Belgium is part of the visa-waiver program. If you hold a Belgium passport you don’t need a visa.

“You just get on a plane anywhere in the world and fly to America. We should be restricting the visa-waiver program. Instead, Sen. (George) Voinovich (of Ohio) proposed we expand it to more countries.”

Covert border crossings also threaten U.S. security, he said, citing examples of illegal aliens with ties to al-Qaeda crossing U.S. borders in the south and north. Border Patrol apprehended 3,722 people in 2005 who originated from either state-sponsored areas of terrorism or countries where al-Qaeda is active.

Most people don’t realize how much illegal immigrants end up costing U.S. taxpayers, Beck said.

“Everything that has to do with infrastructure in America – schools, parks, roads, everything that has to do with infrastructure tax support – is being driven by immigration,” Beck said.

“Were it not for immigration, all our tax money that is going for infrastructure would be going for repair and replacement. Are we keeping up? Hardly, mainly because illegal aliens – who are about one-third of the immigrant population – come in at very low skill levels or little education.

“What is it costing us? Six million legal immigrants in this country are high-school dropouts. Those 6 million legal high-school dropouts will cost American taxpayers a subsidy right at $500 billion over their lifetimes. There are 5 million illegal aliens who are high-school dropouts, and they will cost almost as much. That’s a trillion dollars we’ve saddled our children and grandchildren with.”

The United States should consider its own interests first when it comes to immigration, Fonte said.

“We keep hearing about willing workers and willing employers,” he said. “But the United States of America is not simply a market consisting of employers and workers. It’s a nation, consisting first and foremost of citizens. The levels of legal immigration should depend on how well we’re assimilating people. It should depend on the national security risk to the United States. It should not depend on a business that needs more workers. That’s a special interest of a particular business, not the interest of the United States.”

Prior to the panel discussion, Alfonso Aguilar – chief of citizenship for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the son of immigrants – said assimilation needs to be addressed.

“We need to start talking again about patriotism and civic values,” he said. “Hollywood doesn’t like that word. It’s been much maligned by some. But we need patriotism – a liberal democracy based on civic ideals, not on race, religion or ethnicity. (America) is based on our common language, English, common civic values and a shared sense of history. We need to strengthen our efforts to assimilate immigrants… to make sure that we stop before hiring workers. If the only value that we have as a country is diversity, then I submit to you that we have nothing in common. We’re all different. We need to strengthen those common values.

“We have taken steps to guarantee that naturalization ceremonies are meaningful. We are making sure that when immigrants arrive as permanent residents they receive material about life in America. We redesigned the naturalization exam to make sure we have an exam that encourages civic learning and encourages patriotism. A meaningful exam that doesn’t ask trivial questions about our country, but fundamental concepts. What are separation of powers? What are unalienable rights?”

Aguilar defended the federal guest-worker program proposed by the administration.

“We need a workforce to keep our economy growing,” he said. “We have a population issue. We have families (in the United States) who aren’t having kids. To think we can keep the economy going with a native workforce in unrealistic. But from a homeland-security perspective also, we need a guest-worker program. We need a workforce.”

Dealing with illegal immigration isn’t just the U.S. government’s responsibility, Aguilar said.

“[I] think our challenge isn’t only to develop good federal policy but also to revive the Americanization movement so we can publicly talk about patriotism, common civic values, and engage organizations such as yours to be part of this effort… to reach out to immigrants and say, ‘We welcome you legally, but we want you to learn English and learn our values.’”

See Immigration on Page 5
Illegal Immigration: Key Message Points

National Americanism Commission Chairman Joseph Cousette recently discussed several key message points regarding illegal immigration in the United States. Legionnaires are encouraged to use these message points when discussing the issue in their own communities.

Why is The American Legion involved with the illegal immigration issue?
Many of our members are concerned that our country is self-destructing because of the perceived ambivalence of our federal government on the issue. From an organization standpoint, The American Legion has called for quotas on legal immigration dating back to the very beginning of our organization. Obviously, with this mindset it makes no sense to limit legal immigration but leave the back door open for individuals to enter this country illegally.

But aren’t you a veterans organization? What’s that got to do with illegal immigration?
For more than 100 years, Legion members have served in the U.S. Armed Forces around the world so that Americans can feel safe at home. The sacrifices they have made give them a perspective on national security issues that many Americans do not have. They have seen Third World countries. They have seen poverty, political instability, disease and war. Now, they see these dangers on our back doorstep in our porous borders and our country’s lack of enforcement of immigration laws.

What’s wrong with accepting these people? Aren’t they only taking jobs that Americans wouldn’t do?
The United States is a country of laws that establish our standards ofbehavior. These individuals broke our immigration laws and are trespassing on our sovereign soil. They are mostly unskilled workers with little formal education. By taking low-paying jobs, they effectively hold down wages of low-skilled and middle-class Americans. If they were not here, our economy would adjust and more Americans would be working.

Why is The American Legion opposed to making the illegals legal? Won’t that solve the problem?
Rewarding criminal behavior is not in the best interest of this country. It is amnesty plain and simple, and The American Legion is adamantly opposed to blanket policies of forgiveness that would pardon millions who have entered the United States illegally. Granting amnesty to illegals will ultimately result in granting admittance into this country of the oppressed individual’s family members. Our country cannot absorb this number of low-skilled immigrants without feeling the effects in the drain on our public services, education, health care and personal security.

Why not grant a one-time amnesty to the illegal population currently in the United States?
History has proved that amnesty programs do not work. For more than 200 years, the United States only granted amnesty in individual cases and did not give a blanket amnesty to large numbers until 1986, when it passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act that legalized 2.8 million people. It was supposed to be a one-time-only amnesty. Six more followed. The cost of the 1986 IRCA amnesty was more than $78 billion in the 10 years following the amnesty. Amnesty programs promote more illegal immigration.

Does The American Legion have a position on the illegal-immigration issue?
Yes, but no effective immigration reform can occur without first securing our borders. Once that is done, the second step would be to eliminate the jobs magnet. Without going into specifics, The American Legion's plan calls for removing the incentives for the individual to remain in this country. That could include workplace verification of immigration status, cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement, increased screening of foreign visitors, non-criminal removals through increased interior enforcement, and by discouraging illegal settlement by adopting additional state and local legislation.

Is The American Legion in favor of building a fence along our southern border?
The American Legion has no specific position on building physical barriers. It does, however, urge Congress to "secure the borders against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally." American Legion positions also state that "all of the resources of the United States of America be utilized to enforce the security of our country’s borders." If it is determined by Congress that a fence is necessary, The American Legion will likely support its construction.

Should military resources be used to secure our borders?
The U.S. Border Patrol is tasked with that responsibility, but they are often understaffed and lack the firepower when confronted with the drug gangs and smugglers operating along our southern border. The American Legion has held the position for several years that where appropriate, military resources be employed to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into this country. Our troops are being called upon to guard the borders of other countries. It seems only appropriate that they be available for our own border's security.

Does The American Legion support citizen watch groups, such as the Minutemen?
As an organization, it does not. It is the responsibility of our government to protect us from invasion. If the government chooses to do that, then it must be held accountable. That can be done at the ballot box. Many of our members are sympathetic to groups like the Minutemen who have brought attention to the issue of illegal immigration. But it is not our policy, as an organization, to endorse such groups. Individual members may support these groups as they see fit.

Who should enforce our immigration laws - federal, state or local law enforcement?
The American Legion believes it should be all three. Our position is that the federal government has the responsibility for securing our borders. That can be done at the local, state and federal levels "be given the responsibility, but they are often overlooked, and the government has not done enough to deter illegal immigration.

What is your stance on the Minutemen?
The American Legion opposes any legislation or executive order that would allow illegal aliens and others who are in this country illegally to receive in-state tuition rates, government education grants and/or financial assistance to attend a college or university in the United States.

What should be done about those who give aid and sanctuary to individuals in this country illegally?
It is the responsibility of our government to protect us from invasion. If the government chooses to do that, then it must be held accountable. That can be done at the ballot box. Many of our members are sympathetic to groups like the Minutemen who have brought attention to the issue of illegal immigration. But it is not our policy, as an organization, to endorse such groups. Individual members may support these groups as they see fit.

How does The American Legion plan to change current policy concerning illegal immigration?
Last August, American Legion National Convention delegates voted to set up a system to request an accounting of our elected officials in implementing and enforcing federal and international laws and treaties to stop the flood of illegal aliens across our borders. The convention delegates also call on all candidates seeking public office and the two major political parties to express publicly to the American people their positions and solutions to the problems of illegal immigration.
We must prove them wrong

The following are remarks made by National Commander Paul A. Morin during the Legislative Rally at the Washington Conference. Legionnaires are encouraged to tailor these remarks to be given on the post, district and department level. Versions to print or download are available at www.legion.org.

"America lacks the stomach to fight a protracted war against terrorism."

That's what some of the world's most daring and dangerous fighters seek to do about the United States. They think the key to victory is being more determined to win than we are.

We tend to think of this global war on terrorism as having started on Sept. 11, 2001, but it actually started many years before that.

The Islamic extremist terror campaign against America can be traced back to the most recent Iranian revolutions seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

Moreover, terrorist bombings in Beirut in 1983 killed more than 300, including 241 U.S. Marines in their barracks.

A Marine officer was kidnapped and murdered by Hezbollah in 1988, the same year as the Al Qaeda's founding. In 1993, a truck bombing that killed six and injured more than 1,000.

In 2000, terrorists attacked the USS Cole in a Yemen port, killing 17 Americans.

There was only a matter of time before terrorism would strike America on its own soil.

The United States retaliated by unleashing its military on the Taliban and al-Qaeda, swiftly driving their terror network and their leader, Osama bin Laden, into the mountains and caves of Afghanistan.

The world soon knew of terrorism's other safe harbors - Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia. Saddam Hussein's ties with al-Qaeda were documented in an indictment brought by the Clinton administration.

Hussein provided medical treatment for al-Qaeda leaders in Iraq and, as U.S. forces closed in on Baghdad in 2003, he withdrew vast sums of money to fund the insurgent counterattack.

Saddam Hussein was a terrorist. Thanks to American intervention - something we as a nation can be very proud of - he was captured, tried by his fellow Iraqis, and found guilty of genocide, war crimes and human-rights violations.

On Dec. 30, 2006, those who had been oppressed under Saddam's iron fist tied a noose around his neck and hanged him.

Let's take a look at what has been accomplished by America and her allies thus far.

In less than five years, we have vanquished two murderous regimes: the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq.

In October 2005, Iraq adopted a constitution that protects its people from discrimination and persecution based on gender, ethnicity, religion or personal opinion.

Free elections were held.

Iraqi military and police authorities have been assembled and trained by U.S. forces to bring order to a land fractured on lines of division.

By the end of 2006, U.S. soldiers had built or renovated nearly 1,000 schools in Iraq.

Terrorists, and some Americans, want us to believe Iraq is engaged in a hopeless civil war between those who desire freedom and those who want a return to the old regime. "Hopeless" is the operative word here.

A similar argument was made about the communist conquest of Vietnam.

That comparison does not apply. The situation in Iraq is much more complicated. This is not a civil war, but a struggle for freedom, much like the one the United States faced when establishing its independence from Great Britain.

It's the struggle of change, a dawn of freedom after a long night of darkness.

Terrorists and rogue nations and even some of our fellow citizens here at home want nothing more than to convince the West that freedom and democracy cannot succeed in Iraq - to convince us that we are fighting for a hopeless cause.

Their primary tools are fear, murder and propaganda.

On Feb. 16, the House passed a non-binding resolution praising President Bush's decision to send 21,500 U.S. troops to augment 132,000 already deployed in Iraq.

The mission of the troops is to bring order, stability and peace to a nation now reentering between freedom and terrorism, between good and evil.

Our nation stands at a critical juncture. Our enemies are watching us very closely right now.

The terrorists have growing reason to believe that America is losing its stomach for war, and that their will is stronger than ours.

That's the message sent to our enemies when Congress denies military commanders and the president the troops and resources necessary to succeed in this war.

That's the message sent when protestors dance in the streets of American cities and chant anti-Bush and anti-war slogans.

If the message the terrorists have been waiting for.

In 2005, the wartime veterans who comprise The American Legion saw what was happening, what was anticipated, what was needed, and unanimously stated its position on the war and the warrior in what we call Resolution 169.

Resolution 169 is a clear and unqualified message of support for U.S. troops fighting in the war against terrorism, for our nation's wartime leaders, and for their mission to disarm in terrorism and replace it with freedom and stability.

The American Legion's members, most of whom served during the Vietnam War, fully understand that you cannot divide the troops, the leadership and the mission.

If you support the troops, you support what they are fighting for. You cannot separate the war from the warrior.

And the mission and the leadership, you erode their morale and fuel the enemy's confidence.

It's that simple, a lesson we learned from Vietnam.

A few short weeks after Congress overwhelmingly approved giving combat command of operations in Iraq to Gen. David Petraeus, Congress basically pulled the rug out from under him.

The essence of Resolution 169 can be expressed in the following statements:

• We have an obligation to do anything within our power to make victory possible for the men and women now
wake of that withdrawal, millions died in what have been called the ‘killing fields,’ and it all started with non-binding resolutions. Can we trust that today’s non-binding resolutions on the Iraq war will affect that nation’s 26 million citizens any differently once the terrorists seize control again?”

Bush was warmly received by attendees at the March 6 legislative rally but got no better response than the standing ovation he received when he addressed Congress’ resistance to follow the president’s strategy for Iraq.

“Members of Congress have every right to express their opinion,” Bush said. “They have every right. They also have a responsibility to fund our war fighters. Some in Congress have called for cutting off funds for our troops. Now others in Congress are planning to use an emergency war spending bill that will provide funds for the war on terror as an opportunity to add on billions of dollars for unrelated domestic programs. Tacking extra domestic spending to an emergency war spending bill only will complicate Congress’ ability to provide the support (the) troops urgently need. I ask the Congress to approve the funds we requested and our troops are counting on without strings and without delay.”

During his speech, Bush also addressed the conditions of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which came to light in recent media reports. “As we work to improve conditions at Walter Reed, we are also taking steps to find out whether similar problems exist at other military and veterans hospitals. The best way to do so in a constructive way, in a way that will bring forth the truth, is to create a bipartisan presidential commission. The commission will conduct a comprehensive review of the care America is providing our wounded service-men and women returning from the battlefield. This review will examine their treatment from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life as veterans, so we can ensure that we’re meeting the physical and mental health needs of all.

“We have a moral obligation to provide the best possible care and treatment to the men and women who have served our country. They deserve it, and they’re going to get it.”

Promise Kept. At the 2006 Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, The American Legion’s National Executive Committee pledged to support the Commission on the Future for America’s Veterans. At the Washington Conference, the organization made good on that pledge by presenting Harry Walters, head of the commission and a former VA administrator, with a check for $100,000 to support the group’s work.

“We are very grateful for The American Legion’s contribution,” Walters told the audience. “We know it comes from the grass roots. We know it comes from your heart. And we also know it comes with expectations. That’s our responsibility.”

The Commission on the Future for America’s Veterans is an independent, autonomous body tasked with charting a clear course to a new era of veterans programs and services. Its function is to analyze data and trends affecting the future for U.S. veterans.

The job of the commission is a complex one, Walters told Legionnaires. “We have been asked to envision what we’d like the VA health-care system to look like in 20 years,” Walters said. “Taking thatsnapshot, we then bring it back to today, and we look at that and say, ‘How can we get there?’”

Morin said The American Legion has worked with other advisory groups before but that this commission is unlike any other previously assembled.

“Very few of the recommendations for funding or benefits for veterans health care have seen the light of day,” Morin said. “Many times the reports of these commissions have been shelved by their sponsors, Congress, the White House or VA because they did not like the outcome. This commission is different. It’s independent.

“Its commissioners are all veterans who have demonstrated knowledge of the VA, DoD, state benefits and health-care delivery systems. The report of the commission will be the American people’s report for Congress, for VA and for the administration. The findings of this coalition will be heard.”


National Commander Paul A. Morin, left, presents Harry Walters with a check for $100,000 for the Commission on the Future for America’s Veterans. A former VA administrator, Walters serves as managing commissioner. Past National Commander Ronald R. Conley, right, is a member of the commission.

Victory from Page 1

serving in harm’s way.

- We are called upon to support the troops, the leadership and the mission in the global war on terrorism.
- We are called upon to unite the homefront.
- We are directed to use whatever means at our disposal to tell the truth about this war, our progress, and the importance of supporting the mission. Part of that truth is that our terrorist enemies will never sit down at a bargaining table and sign a peace accord with the West.
- Our enemy’s objective is not peace. It is the complete annihilation of freedom-loving nations around the world.
- I’m here today to express to every one of you, on behalf of The American Legion, that America’s veterans and their families do not want our great nation to “cut and run” from this war against evil.
- The enemy is expecting us to quit.
- They’re counting on dissent on the American homefront.
- They are confident they can beat us in a battle of wills.
- We must prove them wrong.

Only one nation has the power to stop terrorism. If we don’t have the will to use that power — and use it until we prevail — then terrorism will have made cowards of us all.

This should be our message to the world: no matter how long it takes, America vows to fight terrorism until it is wiped from the face of the earth. Period.
American Legion to provide transition staff at Walter Reed

The transition from active duty to civilian life doesn't begin when a wounded U.S. servicemember arrives home after leaving the military. It starts before the servicemember even checks out of the hospital, which is why The American Legion will now have an even greater presence at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

During the organization's Washington Legislative Conference in March, The American Legion signed a memorandum of understanding with Walter Reed Army Medical Center establishing an office at the facility with paid staff — provided by The American Legion — to assist in the transition of wounded servicemembers from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs. The agreement is a step toward civilian life doesn't begin when a wounded U.S. servicemember arrives.

"The American Legion's presence at Walter Reed will assist servicemembers in cutting through the red tape that now hinders a truly seamless transition between DoD and VA," National Commander Paul A. Morin said. "Our goal is to streamline the process to reduce or eliminate the need for housing recovering servicemembers in facilities not intended for long-term accommodation. We as a nation have an obligation to not only give our wounded warriors the finest health care, but to ensure their recovery takes place in the best accommodations we can give them."

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Legion honors ABC hit show at Washington Conference

American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin presented ABC's hit television series "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" with the National Commander's Public Relations Award during the Washington Conference in March. In recent years, the show’s cast and crew have built custom homes for U.S. servicemembers wounded in the Iraq war, specifically tailoring the homes to their needs.

"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" producer Conrad Ricketts and designer Tanya McQueen accepted the award, which recognized the show for promoting the honorable nature of military service and bringing the stories of young U.S. veterans into the homes of millions of viewers across the nation.

“Those programs, and the work done by the cast and crew, brings to the forefront the needs and struggles of severely injured servicemembers and their families that demonstrates the challenges faced by our military heroes transitioning back to hometown life,” Morin said. “By providing them new homes, ‘Extreme Makeover: Home Edition’ gives them hope for the future while enhancing the awareness of a thankful nation for their sacrifices and service.”

McQueen’s father spent 42 years in the military. Her brother is an Army major serving his second tour in Iraq. She told Washington Conference attendees about her experience when "Extreme Makeover" built a house for former U.S. Marine Jason Thomas, who helped save two New York City police officers buried in the rubble during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“When … Jason Thomas fell to his knees and saw his home and was leading his family up to the door, there were Marines lining the sidewalk,” McQueen said. “Here he is, standing before this beautiful home that he could have never dreamed of, never could have afforded, and what amazed him most was that his fellow Marines came out and spent a week with us and made this dream possible. That’s the reminder that we’re honored for this award and for you recognizing us, but the ‘thank you’ goes back to you tenfold.”

In another moving episode, the "Extreme Makeover" team built and furnished a home for the family of Army Pvt. Lori Piestewa, a soldier killed during the opening days of the Iraq war. Additionally, the program staff arranged the construction of a center for Native American veterans in Piestewa’s hometown of Tuba City, Ariz. The show’s crew — along with local builders, contractors and about 700 volunteers from Piestewa’s hometown — rebuilt the family house of Master Sgt. Luis Rodriguez, who lost his right leg above the knee and two fingertips on his left hand in Iraq in a roadside bomb explosion next to his Humvee. They completed the home while the family was away on vacation.

“The work being done by the cast, crew and sponsors of the show is truly making a difference for the better in America, and especially in the lives of these veterans and their families,” Morin said.

Ricketts said he hopes the program will continue to lead by example.

"It is my hope and my prayer that what we’re able to do has inspired you to go back to your own communities, to go back to your own neighborhoods, and make a difference,” Ricketts said. "Sometimes it’s not about knocking down a house. It’s about a handicap ramp or a leaky roof. Go back to your communities and organize your friends and your neighbors to make a difference.”

Past recipients of the National Commander’s Public Relations Award include "JAG," NASCAR, Wal-Mart, NBC’s Tom Brokaw and Ambassador Alan Keyes.

Following the presentation of the award, Morin received an "Extreme Makeover" hard hat, T-shirt and two signed photos. He auctioned all the items off, raising $1,725 for the American Legacy Scholarship Fund.
Colorado post sponsors disabled veteran

Eilane Bouwler, Public Affairs Specialist
VA Rocky Mountain/Western Regional Office of Public Affairs

Jeff Luginbuel — a member of Leyden-Chiles-Wickersham American Legion Post 1 in Denver and the Department of Colorado’s National Executive Committeeman — had a life-changing experience last April when he served on the public affairs team at the 20th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass Village, Colo.

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is a rehabilitation event open to U.S. military veterans with a wide range of disabilities, including amputations, spinal-cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries and other neurobiological impairments, visual impairments and other disabilities.

All clinic participants are introduced to adaptive skiing and are invited to participate in a variety of alternate activities, including scuba diving, sled hockey, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, rock climbing, trap shooting, fencing, golf and archery. Some also receive a genealogy lesson and a trip to hot springs, as well as educational and instructional workshops on self-defense and other topics.

At the 2006 clinic, Luginbuel met Carol Schultz, a disabled Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm Army combat veteran from Denver. Her military service took her across the globe, including duty in Germany, Saudi Arabia and Panama. Following a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, Schultz turned her attention to the medical field, pursuing training in physical therapy and alternative medicine.

Encouraged by staff at the Denver VA Medical Center, Schultz attended the Winter Sports Clinic for the first time last year. “I was somewhat nervous about learning to ski,” she told Luginbuel. “With the help of some wonderful volunteers, my fears quickly disappeared.”

As a participant, Schultz realized there are many ways to adapt, regardless of disability.

“This event opened up new doors for me,” she said.

“They thought of things that I hadn’t thought of,” said Schultz. “They were very creative. ’v

Legionnaires in Action

Florida post serves as distribution center following tornado

The tornado ripped through Lady Lake, Fla., early this year and cut a quarter-mile wide path of destruction. Homes were destroyed, lives were lost, and damage seemed overwhelming. Members of American Legion Post 347 stepped up.

“As soon as I woke up and heard about the tornado, my first thought was to use our post to provide shelter to displaced families since our hall is the largest in the area,” said Post 347 member Warren Post, a department vice commander. Those plans quickly changed, however, when Lady Lake’s chief of police asked that the post instead serve as a warehouse and distribution center. Word spread quickly through church groups and

The American Legion family that support was needed. By early afternoon that same day, tractor-trailers from Tennessee and Virginia arrived, loaded with ice, tarps and water. Volunteers from Post 347 immediately began delivering the much-needed items to stricken areas.

Donations and supplies continued to pour in. The National Guard established a traffic pattern in an effort to organize the continuous line of cars dropping off supplies. Efforts by service associations were coordinated.

The Salvation Army set up a food truck to feed the volunteers, while Auxiliary members sorted donated clothing, bottled water, food, diapers and baby food.

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist even made a visit to personally thank the post and congratulate members on their outstanding show of support for the community. There were many unsung heroes, he added. A mother who had lost everything, including her child’s shoes, came to the post for help. Without hesitation, a volunteer removed shoes from her own child’s feet and handed them to the mother, saying, “He has lots of shoes at home. You take these.”

Not even one week later, all needs in the area had been met. The post had more supplies than could be distributed and happily donated the excess to the Salvation Army, churches and a local food pantry.

Techology

Legionsites.com offers free software upgrade for current subscribers

Last year, two Legionnaires teamed up to create software that makes it easy and affordable for American Legion posts to start up and maintain their own Web sites. Now Tony Cammarato and Tom Peters — members of Post 504 in Batavia, Ill. — have agreed to input from Legionsites.com customers and are introducing new software based on their recommendations.

Legionsites.com is offering its “Phase 2” software, free of charge, to the American Legion subscriber posts, districts and departments using the approved and sanctioned Legionsites.com Web site.

“We have kept all feedback correspondence from our subscriber posts, including suggestions, requests, wish-list items and complaints,” Cammarato said. “For example, some Webmasters expressed a desire to create their own Web page menu buttons. Many requested a different color for the American Legion logo, and some wanted to be able to upload images, files and PDFs. Phase 2 software covers all the above and more, and is ready for installation.”

Phase 2 software allows the creation of unique, custom navigation buttons, and associated Web pages are created simultaneously. The new software also simplifies Web editing and adding additional pages for the same subject, if required, to avoid excessive scrolling by users.

Finally, the Phase 2 software allows users to upload or delete files to use in Web pages and to order or activate/deactivate navigation buttons, create their own navigation buttons, and much more. The upload feature currently supports graphic files, Flash files and Acrobat documents.

Other features of the new software include:

- A simplified calendar that allows users to add more dates for the same event.
- Event details can be deleted prior to a new current date entry.
- A photo gallery that allows users to create and edit photo categories and automatically resize images to fit the screen. The photo gallery also allows ordering and deletion of photos directly from the user’s computer.
- Separate pre-designed navigation menu buttons that have been created for posts, districts and departments, each applicable to that organization. Buttons include Boys State, American Legion Riders, Boy Scouts, youth programs, Oratorical, American Legion Baseball, facility rental, bingo, special events and many more. In addition, users can create their own unique custom navigation buttons.
- The means for each Webmaster to enter the post’s domain name, town, state and ZIP code, all of which will appear at the top of the Web site template.
- The software’s start-up cost is $299, which includes initial set up, license fees, the cost of registering the post domain name, the first year’s Web hosting and 10 e-mail addresses. Payments can be sent to The American Legion, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216-2063.

For a live demonstration of the Phase 2 software’s many enhanced, easy-to-use features, go to www.legionsites.com.
Congress scrutinizes fiscal 2007 supplemental funding request

By Jimmie Foster

On Feb. 5, President George W. Bush sent a supplemental funding request for fiscal 2007 to Congress. The request seeks $245 billion for various fiscal 2007 accounts, with $93.4 billion tied directly to Department of Defense accounts for ongoing operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and emboldening terrorists worldwide. The request includes $5.9 billion to train Afghan military personnel, $13.9 billion to replace aircraft in service and vehicles lost or worn down in combat, $6.6 billion to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps, $1.1 billion for military construction, $1.1 billion for military construction, and $1 billion to support training for other coalition nations.

As a result of the November elections, congressional leadership flipped hands. Consequently, the president’s DoD supplemental request will be scrutinized much more closely than in previous years.

There will be no more blank checks or rubber stamps,” said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va. Individual accounts for DoD spending in the fiscal 2007 supplemental request include:

- $93.4 billion to support military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq;
- $13.9 billion to replace aircraft and vehicles lost or worn down in combat;
- $6.6 billion to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps;
- $5.9 billion to train Afghan military personnel and police personnel;
- $5.6 billion for the 21,500 military personnel strength;
- $3.8 billion to train Iraqi security forces;
- $2.7 billion for military intelligence;
- $1.1 billion for military construction; and
- $1 billion to support training for other coalition nations.

The mood in Congress has changed dramatically since the global war on terrorism began on Sept. 11, 2001. The Feb. 16 passage of House Concurrent Resolution 63 – a non-binding resolution to disapprove of Bush’s proposed surge of personnel to Iraq – reveals this altered disposition. While many House and Senate members discuss ways to end the U.S. military presence in Iraq, no concrete plans have emerged in the month since passage of H. Con. Res. 63.

Some discussions have centered on defunding the Iraq mission, but those deliberations have borne bitter fruit. Also, various opinion polls show lessening support for Bush’s policies but strong support for our troops in the Middle East. So long as U.S. servicemembers are in harm’s way in the global war on terrorism, they can count on the support of the American people – and The American Legion.

On Jan. 11, citing Resolution 169, National Commander Paul A. Morin again voiced The American Legion’s strong support for President Bush’s new initiatives in Iraq, including a troop surge and implementing a well-defined mission. “We do owe our troops the opportunity to make sure the troops have what they need to get the job done once and for all, including funding this troop surge so these brave men and women can do their jobs and return home safely,” Morin said.

Acknowledging that the mission in Iraq is both dangerous and challenging, Morin firmly added that a greater responsibility should and will be placed on the Iraqi government and that the U.S. government is not open-ended. The American Legion’s full support for the global war on terrorism is expressed in Resolution 169, which was unanimously adopted at the past two national conventions. It also urges the sustained and unified support of the American people.

Morin said The American Legion remains unequivocally supportive of our men and women in uniform, as well as their families, and to ensuring that their medical needs are met when they return from combat. “We will not separate the war from the warrior,” Morin said. “Debating the new strategy is the American way, but let this be a warning that precipitous actions by the Congress could lower troop morale and hinder the mission.”

As important, it could send the absolutely wrong message to U.S. enemies in Iraq and embolden terrorists worldwide, Morin said. Thus, failure to act is not an option and The American Legion will continue to seek support for our troops from the American people.

Commission to examine returning U.S. troops’ medical care

On the same day he addressed The American Legion’s Washington Conference, President Bush announced the formation of the President’s Commission on Care for Returning Wounded Warriors. The panel will examine the care that wounded U.S. troops receive after they return from the battlefields of the global war on terrorism. He appointed two co-chairs to head the panel: Bob Dole, a former U.S. Senator, former presidential candidate and long-time Legionnaire, and Donna Shalala, former Secretary of Health and Human Services in the Clinton administration and current president of the University of Miami.

The commission’s creation follows media reports in mid-February of 2007 about the flaws in the Department of Veterans Affairs’ access to medical and mental health care for returning wounded U.S. troops, which was found to be a “troubling and unacceptable ... I’m concerned about the {legislative} process” in holding the secretary accountable for their actions.

Besides Dole and Shalala, the commission includes the secretaries of Veterans Affairs, DoD, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Education. It will also include the director of the Office of Management and Budget and the administrator of the Small Business Administration. Any of these can appoint a designee who is at least equivalent to an undersecretary. The commission must release a report on its findings by June 30 unless its deliberations are not finished, in which case it will have an additional month. The American Legion looks forward to meeting with the commission in order to offer input on this issue.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

VA hires 100 new patient advocates for severely injured veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced it will hire 100 new patient advocates to help severely injured veterans and their families navigate VA’s health care and financial benefits systems.

VA Secretary Jim Nicholson said the patient advocates will be veterans of the Iraq or Afghanistan combat theaters. They will be expected to ensure a smooth transition for wounded U.S. servicemembers to VA health-care facilities throughout the nation while simultaneously cutting through the system’s “red tape” to secure other benefits.

The department’s network of four “polytrauma centers” – in Tampa, Fla., Richmond, Va., Palo Alto, Calif., and Minneapolis – that care for the most seriously injured veterans has recently expanded with 17 additional facilities, designated as “polytrauma network sites,” providing care at locations closer to home for more veterans. Nicholson said that all VA health-care professionals are now receiving mandatory training in diagnosing “traumatic brain injury,” or TBI, which frequently involves brain injuries without apparent exterior wounds. VA also plans to screen all patients who are veterans of the global war on terrorism for TBI.

Walter Reed of his duties, as well as the resignation of the Army secretary. Both the House and Senate conducted hearings in early March to address this issue.

The bipartisan panel’s mission includes:

- Examining the effectiveness of returning wounded U.S. servicemembers’ transition from deployment in support of the global war on terrorism to their successful return to productive military service or civilian society, and recommending needed improvements in the system between when a soldier is on the battlefield, through the Defense Department, through the Veterans Administration, and finally to the community;
- Since the story broke, these reports have prompted DoD to relieve the commander of his duties and improve the quality of life of America’s servicemembers;
- Consulting with foundations, veterans service organizations, nonprofit groups, faith-based organizations, and others as appropriate in performing the commission’s functions.

MORIN PLEDGES SUPPORT TO DOLE, SHALALA

National Commander Paul A. Morin pledged his support to former Senate majority leader Bob Dole and Donna E. Shalala, former secretary of Health and Human Services, as they lead a bipartisan commission tasked by President George W. Bush to investigate problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and throughout the military’s health-care system.

“The American Legion stands ready to provide this committee any assistance we can,” Morin said. “Providing service to our wounded soldiers as they make the transition from military to veterans health care is something that we have been doing for 88 years.”

In March, The New York Daily News quoted Dole asking, “I wonder where all the service organizations were?”

In response, Morin sent a letter to Dole clarifying that The American Legion has not only been there for the nation’s soldiers and veterans since 1919, but remains at the forefront today with programs designed to assist and improve the quality of life of America’s servicemembers.

“I believe he asked that question without realizing the extent of the services being provided by VSOs across the nation,” Morin said. “The American Legion continues to visit all Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities to monitor the quality of health care, and American Legion posts across the country are working with our office at the Department of Defense Severely Injured Servicemembers Center to directly assist their transition back to civilian life at home.”
### 2006 NEF Challenge

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### 2006 CF Challenger

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MARCH 23, 2007 II Dispatch III
When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005, it left seven feet of water standing in and around Harry C. Kelly Post 160 in Pascagoula, Miss., devastating the building. Katrina also severely damaged the homes of most of Post 160's members, who turned to The American Legion's National Emergency Fund for assistance.

As they began to rebuild their lives, the post membership felt strongly about returning money to the NEF. Twice this winter they gave back, said Post 160 Commander Ken McGuire: $1,500 during the Department of Mississippi's Mid-Winter Conference, and $5,000 when National Commander Paul A. Morin visited the rebuilt Post 160 in March.

The NEF provided more than $2 million in Katrina relief throughout the hurricane-devastated region.

"We got a lot of help from the NEF, and we were very thankful for that," McGuire said. "Every member got at least some funding from the National Emergency Fund. It helped us a lot, and we want to get the fund back up to where it was before the hurricanes hit so the money can be there for someone else."

Post 160 began repairs on its facility in January 2006, finished most of the work by the end of May, and hosted an open house on July 4. But it wasn't a traditional Fourth of July party.

"We actually had a Christmas party," McGuire said. "We didn't get to have one on Christmas, so we said that when we opened back up we'd have one."

Before Hurricane Katrina, Post 160 had a membership of 600. It's back up to 570, and McGuire said the post is working to get back the remaining members — many of whom scattered after the hurricane hit. "Things have been going pretty well," he said. "We're working all of our programs. We're coming back."