

**From:** Raughter, John B.  
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## **Report of deaths while waiting for VA Care ‘mind-boggling’ says American Legion National Commander**

WASHINGTON (July 14, 2015) – Calling an internal Veterans Affairs report that states that 238,647 veterans died while waiting for VA health care “extremely disturbing,” the leader of the nation’s largest veterans organization said Congress and the White House need to decrease wait times and improve record keeping.

“I don’t know how accurate that number is,” American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm said of the report, which was first obtained by the Huffington Post. “I do know that if it’s even close to that, it is mind-boggling. Of course, dying while on a waiting list doesn’t mean the same as dying *because* of a waiting list. We do know that by virtue of their service to this country, veterans deserve high quality medical care in a timely manner. The American Legion had members of our national staff meet with VA’s Health Eligibility Center in Atlanta last year to investigate this very issue. We need to see the official report from the Inspector General and, more importantly, we want to see VA’s plan to speed up the process and ensure that patients are not dying because of needless delays. As we have said all along, this isn’t about any single VA facility. It is a systemic problem.”

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 14,000 posts across the nation.