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SPECIAL CONVENTION ISSUE 1991

THE DISPATCH

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Legion delegates open ranks to Persian Gulf-era veterans

The American Legion now is poised to welcome into its ranks veterans who served during the Persian Gulf War.

Delegates at Wednesday's session of the 73rd National Convention adopted Res. 1 to amend the Legion's constitution and extend membership eligibility to Persian Gulf veterans. Those who served at least one day of active duty between Aug. 2, 1990 — the day Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait — until a date of cessation of hostilities determined by the U.S. government would be eligible to join the Legion.

"The Legion is proud to welcome America's newest generation of wartime veterans, a force that answered the call to duty in a faraway land," said National Commander Robert S. Turner,. "We commend their heroic actions and dedication of those who risked their lives in the name of liberty."

There was no opposition to the measure. It was the second time in less than a year the Legion extended its eligibility dates.

At the 1990 convention in Indianapolis, delegates voted to open membership to those who served during actions in Lebanon, Grenada and Panama. Dates for that service are Aug. 24, 1982 to July 31, 1984, and Dec. 20, 1989 to Jan. 31, 1990.

The eligibility measure now will be sent to Congress for approval and then is forwarded to the White House for the president's signature.

ENLISTED -- *Commander Turner welcomes Lt. Michael Coubrough, a veteran of the Persian Gulf War and Panama, as a new Legion member.*

"I never thought of myself as a veteran, but after meeting many of you, I suppose I am part of that great fraternity," said Air Force Lt. Michael Coubrough, a Desert Storm veteran who recently was signed up by Turner. Coubrough was assigned to Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf's command staff in Saudi Arabia, and was eligible because of his service during the Panama campaign in early 1990, He made remarks before a forum of Legionnaires last weekend.

About 2.4 million active-duty veterans and reserve forces were mobilized for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm .

In other convention business Wednesday, delegates heard from Arizona Rep. John J. Rhodes III, R-Ariz., who spoke about the POW-MIA issue. Rhodes said that Vietnamese government overtures to help resolve the issue should be considered.

"There have been statements from high-level officials that they would welcome personal visits by private American citizens, including the families of POWs and MIAs," Rhodes

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Support urged for memorial projects

A decision by the National Arts Council later this month will determine if ground breaking for the Korean War Memorial will take place on Veterans Day 1991, said Past National Commander John P. "Jake" Comer.

Comer, who is a member of the Korean War Memorial Advisory Committee, said the arts council will review the memorial design Sept. 19, and its decision could possibly further delay the project.

"The red tape goes on and on," Comer told convention delegates Wednesday. "I'm not speaking for the other members of the committee, but it's my own opinion that we tell the arts council, 'Let's build the memorial in Washington and let's get on with the job.' "

In a compromise measure to speed up the project , the 38 GI statues in the original design have been reduced to 15. He encouraged Legionnaires to donate to the project.

"When it comes to fund raising, The American Legion is second to none, and I know you'll do what it takes to reach our goal," said the Massachusetts PNC.

Legionnaires also heard updates on two other memorial projects the Legion supports.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught asked Legionnaires to help in her quest to build the Women in Military Service Memorial, which she said will cost about $15 million. The memorial will be located at the main gate at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

The memorial honors all women who have served their nation throughout America's history. There are about 1.2 million living women veterans, and 400,000 are now on active duty, Vaught said.

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project Inc., also had a representative on hand. Diane Carlson Evans, who served as an Army nurse in Vietnam, unveiled the selected design model sculpted by Santa Fe, N.M. artist Glenna Goodacre.

The "sculpture in the round" will be located 300 feet east of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The sculpture depicts a combat nurse cradling the head of a wounded soldier while two other nurses stand by. The Legion has supported the Vietnam project since 1985.

Bonds helped save U.S. war effort

A U.S. Treasury official Wednesday marked the 50th anniversary of U.S. Savings Bonds by thanking Legionnaires for their allegiance in building a strong America in peace and in war.

"America is a country founded on hard work and dedication, and all of you with The American Legion continue that tradition," said Sally Spencer, an official with the savings bond division of the U.S. Treasury.

Spencer presented Commander Turner with an award of appreciation to mark the golden anniversary of U.S. Savings Bonds. The inscribed award included reproductions of the Treasury Department building and the U.S. Capitol.

Spencer outlined the historic role savings bonds played in bolstering the nation's finances to meet wartime financial needs, and the vital role they continue to play in spurring savings and investment.

Series A bonds, first issued in 1935, were followed by Series B,C and D, popularly known as "baby bonds." Bonds were issued in denominations from $25 to $1,000 and sold for 75 percent of the face value.

But the foreign political turmoil of the late 1930s proved the greatest incentive Americans had to buy bonds as the nation geared for war. The Series E bond was issued May 1, 1941. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, everyday Americans were made shareholders in the greatest wartime financial effort in history.

Through payroll savings plans bonds fueled the war effort, and when the war was won, bonds helped families save for a home, or pay for their children's college education.

"Savings bonds can and should be an avenue to thrift and savings for all Americans today, as they have been in the past," Spencer told Legionnaires.

"They are easy to deal with, understandable, and, best of all, a familiar part of the economic scene for half a century. Savings bonds are family, in a very real sense," she said.

Legion honors TV news pioneer

The late newsman Douglas Edwards believed in America with the same fervor he practiced fairness and objectivity as TV's first network anchorman.

Those qualities earned him the respect of veterans and one of the highest honors The American Legion can bestow: the Distinguished Service Award.

Mrs. May Edwards Wednesday accepted her husband's award from National Commander Robert S. Turner. Douglas Edwards died of cancer in Sarasota, Fla. in October 1990 at the age of 73.

Edwards was the 1988 recipient of the award, but was unable to attend a Legion function to accept the honor due to failing health.

"Doug presented to the world a picture of amiability and, indeed, he was very amiable. But behind that picture were incredibly strong beliefs and standards, which he shared with The American Legion," Mrs. Edwards told the convention audience.

May Edwards said her husband was a man who loved his country and valued fairness and justice as his professional maxims.

She said during the tumultuous 1960s, Edwards, a noted public speaker, delivered speeches on the theme, "What's Right About America."

"I am as grateful for this Distinguished Service Award as Doug would have been, and more certain than he was that he deserved it," she said.

Membership opens

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said. "We should put them to the test and continually push them to see that they do what they say they will do."

In related convention business about the POW-MIA issue, delegates approved Res. 291, which, in part, urges the secretary of defense to set up an office for the recovery of POWs and MIAs; calls for legislation to release information related to live sightings and other related information about POWs and MIAs; and empowers the National Commander to appoint a special POW-MIA committee to review all information pertaining to the issue.

Another issue that has triggered a great deal of controversy recently has been the passage of the "Brady" handgun bill, which will require a waiting period before a permit is issued.

"Our own justice department has said the Brady bill is useless and doesn't accomplish anything. We agree," said Robert K. Corbin of the National Rifle Association of America.

Corbin took several shots at the media in what he described as its bias against gun-owners. "What if a newspaper had to wait five days before it could run an article? Is that fair?" he asked delegates, referring to the waiting period prescribed by the Brady bill.

Delegates also took time to recognize employers who go the extra mile in hiring veterans. Turner presented Employer of the Year awards to Jody G. Holbrook, president of Cornish Containers, Maumee, Ohio, and David Thaxton, president of UNC Support Services, Milton, Fla.

Other awards and presentations made at Tuesday's and Wednesday's proceedings: Frank N. Belgrano Jr. Trophy, Department of Minnesota; Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy, Department of Florida; William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy, Department of New York; Recruiter of the Year, Donald A. Summers, Post 273, Mediera Beach, Fla.; William F. Lenker National Service Trophy (VA&R) , Department of Maine.

At convention today, Legionnaires will hear from Navy Adm. David E. Jeremiah, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

At noon, National Commander Robert S. Turner's watch as the chief of the nation's largest organization of veterans will come to a close, and he will call for the election of a new National Commander and National Vice Commanders.

"This has been a fascinating year," Turner said in a recent interview.

"Legionnaires have achieved many successes and have faced numerous challenges. But whatever the task, we've truly had America on our minds."

Convention business gets under way at 9 a.m.

Moore takes top-flight test ride

LUKE AFB, Ariz. — William O. Moore Jr. took a ride on the wild side and got a bird's eye view of the Arizona terrain on the eve of the 1991 National Convention in Phoenix.

Moore, chairman of the National Security Commission, suited up with pilot Capt. Randy "O.C." O'Connor of the 314th TAC Fighter Squadron for an orientation flight that took Moore over the Grand Canyon.

"It was one of the most thrilling experiences in my life," said Moore, a Marine Corps veteran.

The flight was part of a pre-convention tour of U.S. defense sites, which has become a staple of national conventions. About 140 members of the commission and guests toured the Phoenix-area base and nearby William AFB. Commission members also were given demonstrations of flight simulators and pressure chambers.

A side trip to a McDonnell-Douglas plant also was made, and commission members observed the operation of an Apache attack helicopter, which was used principally as a "tank killer" in the Persian Gulf War.

"Such demonstrations clearly show not only our military's technological superiority, but the superior people who defend us," Moore said.

Blood drive sets first-day high

Legionnaires attending the 73rd National Convention demonstrated they're a generous bunch when it comes to giving the gift of life.

Despite the toasty weather, Debbie Hester of United Blood Services said Legionnaires set a first-day record for donating blood, 80 units.

"We had 134 donors Tuesday and we're hoping for 140 today," Hester said late Wednesday. "The guys are wonderful, and the ladies are, too," she said.

"At a function like this, you have predominantly men. Normally, most of our donors are women," Hester added.

Donors have the satisfaction of knowing their donations help more than one person, since various elements are extracted from a unit of blood and can be used to treat several patients.

"I think everybody should give," said Legionnaire William Metz Jr. of Post 64, Westenport, Md. "It's easy and it doesn't hurt," Metz said. Over the years, he has donated four gallons of blood.

Another blood donor Wednesday was Dave Rehbein of Post 37, Ames, Iowa, winner of last weekend's drawing at "Freedom Fest 1941-91" for a seven-day Caribbean cruise.

TODAY AT CONVENTION

- **Call to order, third session,** 9 a.m., Hall B, Plaza North, convention center.
- **Adm. David E. Jeremiah, USN,** 9:05 a.m., Hall B.
- **The American Legion Fourth Estate Award,** 10:10 a.m., Hall B.
- **Election of 1991-92 National Commander,** noon, Hall B.

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