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Subject: Legion Commander: 'Learn from the Minneapolis death'
Date: Friday, January 17, 2020 2:49:19 PM

Bcc: All Legion Leadership

Legion Commander: 'Learn from the Minneapolis death'

INDIANAPOLIS, (January 18, 2020) — The leader of the nation's largest veterans organization has called on health care administrators to study the findings of a recent VA inspector general's report to ensure that circumstances that contributed to a veteran's 2018 suicide do not re-occur.

"One veteran suicide is one too many," said American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford. "But what happened in Minneapolis should have been prevented. A patient committed suicide in a VA parking lot just hours after a nurse overheard the veteran giving away property and mentioning impending death in a telephone conversation. We do not know the name and the gender of the patient profiled in the report but that isn't what's important. What is important is for people to learn from it. The IG found deficiencies in care coordination, internal review effectiveness and sufficiency and Patient Safety Committee and Quality Management Council."

Oxford pointed out that the Minneapolis patient had a history of substance abuse and tried to decrease their use of opioids. "Medications alone will not solve this crisis among veterans. In many cases, they contribute to the problem," Oxford said. "The American Legion has been on the record for many years supporting the use of alternative and nontraditional therapies to help veterans recover from depression, PTSD and other issues with which they may be struggling. An estimated 20 veterans a day take their own lives. Every one of these instances are tragic. More veterans die from their own hands than are killed by our nation's enemies. We must do a better job of embracing and listening to these men and women."

Veterans who are in crisis or have had thoughts of suicide should call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-8000-273-8255. They can also chat online at veteranscrisisline.net/chat or text 838255.

With a current membership of nearly two million veterans, The American Legion, www.legion.org, was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of strong national security, veterans affairs, patriotic youth programs and Americanism. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 12,000 posts worldwide. From the drafting of the original GI Bill to the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, The American Legion is the most influential voice for America's veterans.

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