



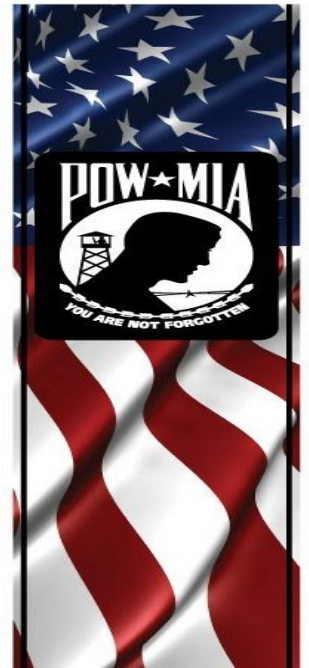
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE **FOR VETERANS.**

1 March 2026/ Volume 8, Issue 3

## VFW Post 8555 Newsletter/Calendar

### VFW Commander-in-Chief - Carol Whitmore Fights for Veterans at the Joint House and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs



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<https://vfwpost8555.com>

# Kosovo Campaign Commemoration

## March 24, 2026 – 27th Anniversary of Operation Allied Force Honoring the Veterans of VFW Post 8555, Wilson County Memorial Post, Poth, Texas

On March 24, 1999, NATO launched Operation Allied Force, initiating the Kosovo Campaign and marking the alliance's first major combat operation in its history. This 78-day air campaign was undertaken to stop the ethnic cleansing and widespread atrocities committed by Yugoslav forces under President Slobodan Milošević against ethnic Albanian civilians in Kosovo. The intervention underscored NATO's post-Cold War resolve to address humanitarian crises decisively, even absent explicit UN Security Council approval, and highlighted America's leadership in coalition warfare.



The United States, joined by 18 other NATO allies, executed a precision air campaign without committing ground combat troops. Allied forces flew over 38,000 sorties from bases in Italy, carriers in the Adriatic, and airfields across Europe. Using advanced precision-guided weapons, they systematically degraded Yugoslav air defenses, command structures, military infrastructure, and ground forces. Operating in poor weather, over challenging terrain, and against a capable integrated air-defense network, the campaign succeeded with no U.S. aircrew combat losses—a testament to superior training, technology, and professionalism.



By June 10, 1999, Milošević capitulated, withdrawing Yugoslav troops and enabling the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced Kosovars. This paved the way for the ongoing NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) peacekeeping mission. Eligible veterans who served in the theater from March 24 to June 10, 1999 (with extensions for certain units) received the Kosovo Campaign Medal.

The Kosovo Campaign proved the strategic power of air operations in halting genocide and stabilizing regions, setting precedents for future interventions. It remains a source of pride for the men and women—primarily from the Air Force and Navy, along with vital support roles—who answered the call far from home.

Here at **VFW Post 8555** in Poth, Texas—located at 715 Houston Street and known as the Wilson County Memorial Post—we proudly commemorate these Kosovo veterans through our annual Veteran Participation Reports (VPRs). As a close-knit community post serving veterans and families across Wilson County, we gather to honor their courage, skill, and contributions to lasting peace in Kosovo. Whether through our monthly meetings on the second Monday at 7:30 PM or community events, we ensure their service is remembered and celebrated. On this 27th anniversary, Post 8555 salutes every Kosovo Campaign veteran: your resolve, partnered with allies, protected the vulnerable and advanced freedom in a volatile world.



# Somalia Campaign Commemoration

## March 31, 2026 – 31st Anniversary of the End of Operation Restore Hope Honoring the Veterans of VFW Post 8555, Wilson County Memorial Post, Poth, Texas

On March 31, 1995, the last U.S. troops withdrew from Somalia, closing the chapter on the Somalia Campaign—a demanding operation that began as humanitarian relief and became one of the most intense U.S. military engagements of the decade.



Triggered by civil war, government collapse, and devastating famine claiming hundreds of thousands of lives, President George H.W. Bush launched Operation Restore Hope in December 1992. On December 9, U.S. Marines made an amphibious landing in Mogadishu under global media scrutiny to secure ports, airfields, and supply routes, enabling massive delivery of food, water, and medical aid to starving Somalis.

Peaking at over 30,000 American personnel—Marines, Army soldiers, Navy, and Air Force—alongside coalition partners, the effort initially stabilized humanitarian corridors and saved countless lives. The mission later shifted to United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), involving disarmament of militias and support for stability efforts in a chaotic environment.

The campaign's most harrowing episode came during the Battle of Mogadishu on October 3–4, 1993. Task Force Ranger, including Army Rangers and Delta Force, endured a brutal 17-hour urban battle after two Black Hawk helicopters were downed, resulting in 18 Americans killed and 73 wounded. Their valor prevented catastrophe amid intense firefights. This event is well documented in the Movie Titled “Black Hawk Down”.



American troops showed remarkable compassion amid danger, directly aiding civilians and earning appreciation from many Somalis. The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal recognized service from December 5, 1992, to March 31, 1995.

The Somalia Campaign illustrated the complexities of humanitarian missions in failed states, the perils of evolving objectives, and the need for clear goals. It also showcased the dedication of U.S. service members who risked everything to alleviate suffering.



At **VFW Post 8555** in Poth, Texas—the Wilson County Memorial Post at 715 Houston Street—we honor these Somalia veterans each March via our Veteran Participation Reports. As a community hub for veterans in the Poth and Wilson County area, we reflect on their selfless service through meetings, events, and fellowship. On this 31st anniversary, Post 8555 salutes every Marine, soldier, sailor, and airman who served in Somalia: your courage, resilience, and commitment to helping those in need embody the finest traditions of American service.

# VA Rescinds Controversial Disability Ratings Rule: A Win for Veterans Thanks to Strong Advocacy

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has officially rescinded a highly controversial interim final rule that would have changed how disability compensation ratings are calculated for millions of veterans. The rescission, published today in the Federal Register as “Rescission of Interim Final Rule, Evaluative Rating: Impact of Medication,” is effective immediately and restores the prior regulatory text. This rapid reversal comes after intense backlash from veterans, service organizations, lawmakers, and the public—demonstrating the power of unified veteran voices.

**What Was the Controversial Rule?** The interim final rule was published on February 17, 2026, without prior public input. It would have required VA medical examiners to consider the positive effects of medication and treatment when assigning disability ratings for conditions such as mental health disorders and musculoskeletal injuries. In practice, this meant ratings could be lowered if symptoms were well-managed by medication—essentially penalizing veterans for following their doctors’ orders and staying healthy.

The VA said the rule was intended to clarify long-standing policy (dating back to 1958) and respond to court rulings, including the 2025 *Ingram v. Collins* decision. However, veterans and advocates viewed it as a direct counter to multiple court rulings that prohibited the VA from reducing ratings based on medication effectiveness. The change risked affecting hundreds of thousands of pending claims and could have cost veterans billions in benefits over time.

**Why the Strong Opposition?** Within days of publication, more than 19,000–20,000 public comments flooded in via the Federal Register and regulations.gov. Veterans and advocates argued the rule created an impossible choice: take medication to manage service-connected conditions (and risk lower ratings) or skip treatment to preserve benefits (and harm your health).

Major veterans’ organizations—including the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans, and American Legion—spoke out strongly. VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore and National Service Director Michael Figlioli called the proposal rushed and harmful, urging the VA to listen to the community. Lawmakers, including Rep. Mark Takano and Sen. Richard Blumenthal, sent letters condemning the rule as a “political maneuver” aimed at cutting costs. At least one federal lawsuit was filed by veterans’ law firms.

VA Secretary Doug Collins quickly halted enforcement just 48 hours after the rule’s publication, acknowledging the widespread concerns.

**What the Rescission Means for Veterans—Good news:** The VA has fully restored the previous standard. Disability ratings will continue to be based on the severity of your service-connected condition as evaluated during your Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam—without automatically discounting for the benefits of medication.

This protects:

- Veterans whose mental health or physical conditions are managed by daily medication
- Ongoing and future claims (including the more than 350,000 pending claims potentially affected)
- The trust veterans place in the VA benefits system

The VA’s official notice states: “VA always takes veterans’ concerns seriously and recognizes that many commenters construed the interim final rule as something that could result in adverse consequences... the department hereby advises that the interim final rule is rescinded effective immediately.”

# The VFW Joint House and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Hold Hearing

The **Joint House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs** held a significant hearing on March 3, 2026, focusing on legislative presentations from the **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)** and several other veterans service organizations (VSOs). This annual event, part of the VFW's 2026 Washington Conference (held March 1–5 in Washington, D.C.), provided a platform for VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore to deliver the organization's top legislative priorities directly to lawmakers.

The hearing took place at 10:00 AM EST in Room SD-G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, drawing a standing-room-only crowd. It featured testimony from the VFW alongside multi-VSO partners, including Student Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans, Blinded Veterans Association, Fleet Reserve Association, Minority Veterans of America, National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO), and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). The session was livestreamed and is available for viewing on platforms such as the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee website and YouTube channels covering congressional proceedings.

In a historic moment, Commander Whitmore—**the first woman to lead the VFW**—testified forcefully on behalf of the organization's more than 1.3 million members and Auxiliary. Introduced by fellow Iowan and VFW member U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, Whitmore thanked the committees for the opportunity to advocate. Her testimony emphasized the theme "**Honor the Contract**", urging Congress to fulfill promises made to veterans through sustained investment in benefits, health care, and support systems.

Key priorities highlighted by Whitmore and the VFW included:

- Strengthening the all-volunteer force with better pay, housing, family, and transition support.
- Advancing VA community care through bills like the Veterans' ACCESS Act of 2025 and the Foreign Medical Program Modernization Act of 2025.
- Addressing toxic exposure issues, such as missile specialists and submariners.
- Combating predatory claims consultants by requiring VA accreditation.
- Reforming military justice to better address sexual assault and emerging harms.
- Protecting earned benefits amid ongoing debates over VA policy changes.

A major focus was the **Major Richard Star Act (S. 1032 in the Senate)**, which aims to eliminate the unfair offset that reduces retirement pay for medically retired combat veterans receiving VA disability compensation. The bill would allow over 50,000 affected veterans to receive both full benefits without reduction. During opening remarks, Ranking Member Blumenthal announced his intent to seek unanimous consent on the Senate floor at 12:00 PM EST for passage or a vote on the measure, drawing applause from attendees. **However, the effort was blocked for the second time**—first by **Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)** in a prior attempt and now by **Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.)**. Commander Whitmore expressed deep disappointment, stating she was "appalled by the resistance by certain members of Congress to care for veterans who have sacrificed so much."

The hearing underscored bipartisan support for veterans' issues, with lawmakers like Sen. Jerry Moran reaffirming commitments to advance the Major Richard Star Act through appropriate channels, including the Senate Armed Services Committee. Discussions also touched on VA direct care quality when properly resourced, recruitment/retention challenges, and the need for transparency in areas like housing allowances and sexual assault prevention.

This joint session highlighted the VFW's influential role in shaping veterans' policy. As America's largest war veterans' organization, the VFW continues to mobilize members to lobby Congress during the Washington Conference and beyond. For those interested in the full testimony or related documents, recordings and statements are accessible via the VFW website ([vfw.org](http://vfw.org)), congressional committee pages, and official livestream archives.

The event reinforces the ongoing commitment to veterans' earned benefits and the critical need for legislative action on long-standing priorities in 2026.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 08:00 - 10:00 Food Distribution	5	6	7 08:00 - 12:00 Wilson County Household Hazardous Waste Collection
8 19:00 - 21:00 Monthly Post Meeting	9	10	11	12	13	14 09:00 - 10:00 District 20 Meeting
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 12:00 - 15:00 Loteria (Joint)
22	23	24 Kosovo Campaign	25	26 End of Battle of Iwo Jima (World War II, 1945)	27	28
29	30 18:00 - 19:30 Delegates & Conventions	31 Somalia	1 Start of Battle of Okinawa (World War II, 1945) 08:00 - 10:00 Food Distribution	2 19:00 - 20:00 Chaplain Training - Chaplain Jim Russell	3	4 10:00 - 11:00 District 20 Family Appreciation Picnic

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5	6	7	8	9	10 Strawberry Festival	11
12 Strawberry Festival	13 Battle of Fort Sumter (American Civil War, 1861) 19:00 - 21:00 Monthly Post Meeting	14	15	16	17	18
19 Battles of Lexington and Concord (Revolutionary War, 1775)	20	21	22	23	24	25 10:00 - 16:00 Veteran Skeet Shoot Therapy
26	27	28	29	30 ROTC Competition 09:00 - 00:00 District 20 Convention	1 Loyalty Day <a href="#">more</a>	2 00:00 - 17:00 District 20 Convention