

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

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Fall 2026

New Resources for Veterans Exposed to Herbicides in Okinawa

Veterans who served in Okinawa and believe they were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides may have important new information available to support their claims.

Journalist and author Jon Mitchell, who has investigated herbicide use in Okinawa for more than 15 years, recently reviewed Board of Veterans' Appeals decisions involving veterans claiming herbicide exposure while stationed in Okinawa. His investigation identified 70 cases in which veterans were awarded service connection for conditions related to herbicide exposure.

Mitchell's findings were recently published by the Okinawa Times in two English-language investigations examining successful veterans' claims and accounts of



Fighting for Veterans Benefits

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From the Chairman's Desk



Welcome to our Fall Newsletter from the Chairman's Desk!

As you'll see in this edition, we've been busy on Capitol Hill. We've grown our fundraising through a "Double-Down" donation matching program and our always-popular "Riff-Raff" Raffle, offering some great prizes. Our direct-mail campaign continues to fund MVA's trips to Capitol Hill, where we personally brief lawmakers on our Legislative Agenda and work with Congress to strengthen the many ongoing

efforts to care for veterans, servicemembers, and their spouses and families including those exposed to toxins, radiation, asbestos, burn pits, and combat, accident, or training-related injuries.

We're so thankful for your continued support of these programs for our veterans.

I'm particularly proud that MVA is expanding its outreach to similar and supporting organizations, as we build relationships with potential strategic partners and sponsors. By forming a coalition of partners engaged in similar work, we can share outreach and media resources, amplifying each other's message and reaching far more supporters than any of us could reach alone.

I'd like to ask each of you to look for opportunities for MVA to partner with other organizations, and especially to let us know of any individuals or organizations who might be able to sponsor MVA or its programs with financial gifts. No donation is too small — any gift might be the one that saves a life or eases a difficult situation for a veteran or family in need. Anything you can do is greatly appreciated!

Jim Kuiken, Sergeant Major, USMC (ret.)

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herbicide exposure throughout Okinawa.

Of particular value to veterans and their advocates, Mitchell has also created a public archive containing all 70 successful BVA decisions, organized by location, exposure pathway and illness. The archive provides veterans with an opportunity to review the types of evidence and documentation that have helped other Okinawa veterans successfully establish service connections.

The resources include:

“Surge in US veterans winning Agent Orange compensation for Okinawa service – women now among successful claims”
Okinawa Times

“From Naha to the Yanbaru: Veterans’ testimonies detail environmental impact of Agent Orange use in Okinawa”
Okinawa Times

Public Archive of BVA Service-Connection Awards for Okinawa Agent Orange Exposures

The archive includes 70 successful claims categorized to make the decisions easier for veterans and advocates to research.

Military-Veterans Advocacy has long advocated for veterans exposed to toxic

Win Big!

1 FOR \$20
5 FOR \$80
6 FOR \$100

DRAWING 11/1/2026

FIRST PLACE PRIZE
LIMITED EDITION HENRY REPEATING RIFLE .22 LR GOLDEN BOY WITH 250TH ANNIVERSARY DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ENGRAVED RIFLE

SECOND PLACE PRIZE
SMITH AND WESSON MODEL 66 .357 COMBAT MAGNUM

THIRD PLACE PRIZE: \$250

TO PURCHASE, VISIT WWW.MILITARYVETERANSADVOCACY.ORG

GAMING LIC #G4201 • NOT REQUIRED TO BE PRESENT TO WIN. WINNERS MUST COMPLY WITH ALL FEDERAL AND STATE FIREARM LAWS.

substances during their military service and continues its efforts on behalf of veterans who served in Okinawa.

Veterans who served in Okinawa and are pursuing an herbicide-related VA claim are encouraged to review these resources and share them with other veterans who may benefit.



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John Wells Addresses National Association of Atomic Veterans Convention

MVA's longstanding partnership with NAAV continues the fight for recognition and benefits for radiation-exposed veterans

Military-Veterans Advocacy Executive Director John B. Wells recently addressed members of the National Association of Atomic Veterans during the organization's 2026 Annual Convention in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Held August 20–22, the convention brought together Atomic Veterans, their families and advocates committed to securing recognition, benefits and support for those exposed to ionizing radiation during military service. Wells spoke during the convention's Saturday evening banquet.

His appearance continued MVA's longstanding relationship with NAAV and its members. The two organizations have worked together to advocate for veterans exposed to radiation during military cleanup and response missions, including those who served at Enewetak Atoll, Palomares, Spain, and Thule Air Force Base in Greenland.

Many of these veterans ultimately gained expanded recognition under the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics

(PACT) Act of 2022. The Department of Veterans Affairs now presumes radiation exposure for qualifying veterans who participated in those missions.

Before the PACT Act became law, MVA supported efforts such as the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act, which



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sought to extend radiation-exposed veteran status and presumptive benefits to veterans involved in nuclear cleanup operations.

"NAAV has never stopped fighting for veterans whose radiation exposure was overlooked for far too long," Wells said. "MVA is proud of the work we have done alongside NAAV to help secure recognition and benefits for veterans who served at Enewetak, Palomares and Thule. Those victories matter, but our work is not finished."

The convention also provided an important opportunity to recognize veterans whose exposure occurred decades ago but whose fight for acknowledgment and benefits has continued throughout much of their lives.

MVA remains committed to working alongside NAAV and other veterans organizations to address the barriers veterans face when seeking their earned benefits.



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Join Military Veterans Advocacy for an upcoming Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program designed to provide a practical, high-level overview of Veterans Benefits Law.

Veterans Law CLE Seminar

December 7, 2026

Sedra's

348 Robert Blvd | Slidell, Louisiana

Navigating the Minefield of Veterans Law

7 Hours CLE Credit Requested
Including 1 Hour Ethics

Registration starts at 7:30 AM

Class: 8 PM - 5 PM

Lunch will be provided, email Jessica at
985-641-1855 with your preferences



**RESERVE YOUR
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For More Information
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Advocacy in Action



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WELCOME TO THE TEAM



DEVLAN MELANCON SR., ESQ.

Devlan Melancon is New Orleans native and proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps. During his five years of service, he completed two tours in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and was honorably discharged at the rank of Sergeant.

Following his military service, he spent eight years as a law enforcement officer while completing both his undergraduate and law degrees through evening programs. Mr. Melancon earned a Bachelor of Science in Business and Marketing Management and a Juris Doctor from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.

His professional experience includes veterans law, criminal law, and civil litigation. Devlan is married and the proud parent of two teenagers. Their family also includes Spark, Devlan's service dog.

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Last chance

With Gratitude for
Their Service

DOUBLE DOWN FOR VETERANS

Memorial Day, May 25 - Labor Day, Sept. 7, 2026

**Your
donations
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Every dollar helps
thousands of veterans
gain benefits they
earned & deserved.

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THANK YOU MIKE YATES

SEPTEMBER IS
**SUICIDE PREVENTION
AWARENESS MONTH**

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face their pain alone, and every life matters.

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support, proven
healing processes,
and a community
that understands.
- WE EMPOWER**
Equipping veterans,
first responders, and
their families with
tools to overcome
trauma and thrive.
- WE SAVE LIVES**
By raising awareness,
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and walking
together toward
a brighter future.

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YOUR STORY ISN'T OVER.**
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There is hope. Let's find it together.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE



BRIAN LEWIS
VICE CHAIRMAN &
DIRECTOR OF LITIGATION



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