

# Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano

38th District

## Veterans Report

November 2005

### Napolitano Awards Military Medals to Veteran in His Final Hours

Thomas Pico flew 47 combat missions in World War II. He did his duty, served his country with bravery and returned to Pico Rivera after the war with little fanfare.

In August, his wife Elaine, his children and grandchildren gathered around his bedside a few hours before he died to watch the veteran receive his long overdue military medals from a grateful nation. It was a final tribute to Pico for a job well-done as a young airman 60 years ago.

Rep. Grace Napolitano was honored to present six military medals to the 82-year old veteran in his final hours. Pico received the Air Medal, the

Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal, among others.



Napolitano Awards Medals to WWII Vet Thomas Pico

“Airman Pico served his country honorably. His sacrifices and sense of duty deserve to be recognized by all of us,” said Napolitano.

During the war, Pico’s plane was hit by ground artillery fire or fire from Japanese fighter planes 17 times. Bullets struck his helmet once, injuring his head. His planes caught fire three times and ran out of fuel twice. For a moment, his

eyes opened to glimpse his medals and his family and friends one final time.

### Job Support for National Guard

Returning National Guard and Reserve forces experiencing problems with their civilian employers can find help through the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves (ESGR), a Department of Defense organization.

Former Adjutant Gen. Paul Monroe heads California’s ESGR. The organization promotes cooperation and understanding between Reservists and their employers. ESGR volunteers help educate employers about the law which ensures that Guard and Reserve members are not discriminated against by their employers because of their military duty. Employers and members of the National Guard and Reserve can contact an ESGR Ombudsmen at: [ESGRMailbox@navy.mil](mailto:ESGRMailbox@navy.mil) or by phone at 1-800-336-4590.

### Vets Medal Ceremony

On October 14, Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano honored veterans with a military medals presentation ceremony at the La Puente Senior Center.

William Ferguson of La Puente received the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, United National Service Medal, and the Navy/USCG Unit Commendation Ribbon for valiant service in the Korean War.

Arthur Lozano of Pico Rivera received the Bronze Star, Good Conduct Medal, American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with Bronze Star Attach, WWI Victory Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Philippine Liberation Ribbon with Bronze Star Attach and Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII.



World War II Veteran Arthur Lozano with family receives awards from Congresswoman Napolitano

Charlie Morgan of La Puente received the Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with Bronze Star Attach, WWII Victory Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon with Bronze Star Attach, Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII, Sharpshooter Badge and Carbine Bar.



### 2005 Iraq War Casualties from the 38th District

Petty Officer 2nd Class Cesar O. Baez, 37, of Pomona, Calif., died June 15, in al-Anbar province, Iraq. P.O. Baez was a Navy Hospital corpsman assigned as a medic to 2nd Marine Div., II Marine Expeditionary Force.

Sgt. Arthur A. Mora, Jr., 23, of Montebello, died Oct. 19 in Balad, Iraq. Sgt. Mora was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Inf.Div., Ft. Stewart, GA.

Sgt. Shakere T. Guy, 23, of Pomona, CA, died Oct. 29 in Baghdad, Iraq. Sgt. Guy was assigned to the Army National Guard’s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 184th Inf. Reg., Modesto, CA.

### What You Need to Know About PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following an experience or witnessing life-threatening events like military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape.

Operation Iraqi Freedom has doubled and tripled tours of duty for American troops, increasing the chance of mental health problems such as PTSD. Families/friends of returning troops can help if they know what to look for. **WARNING SIGNS:**

- Recurring thoughts/nightmares about the event
- Trouble sleeping/changes in appetite
- Anxiety and fear when exposed to events or situations reminiscent of the trauma
- On edge, easily startled or overly alert
- Depressed, sad, low energy level
- Memory problems including difficulty in remembering the trauma
- Unable to focus on work or daily activities
- Difficulty making decisions
- Irritable, easily agitated, or angry and resentful
- Emotionally “numb,” withdrawn, disconnected or different from others
- Spontaneously crying, a sense of despair and hopelessness.
- Extremely protective of, or fearful for the safety of loved ones.
- Unable to face certain aspects of the trauma/avoiding activities, places and people that remind you of the event.

PTSD often occurs with depression and substance abuse. It can also impair a person’s ability to function in social or family life, including occupational instability, marital problems and divorces, family discord, and difficulties in parenting.

**CONTACT:** VA Readjustment Counseling Services: 1-800-905-4675 or [www.va.gov/rcs/](http://www.va.gov/rcs/)

## Job Training for Vets

**Helmets to Hardhats** and the Laborers' Training Center in Azusa are offering a helping hand to returning Iraqi War veterans to assist them in getting back into the civilian workforce.

Former troops are training at the union-sponsored center to become journeymen so they can eventually find work as electricians, carpenters, concrete cutters and many more skilled jobs. Fees are waived for veterans, and they receive wages while training. For more information, go to: [www.helmetstohardhats.org](http://www.helmetstohardhats.org)

**Veterans in Community Service (VICS)** is also offering on-the-job vocational training for veterans at the Santa Fe Springs facility. For more information, contact Executive Director Tony Gallegos at (562) 204-0529.



### Key Legislation for Veterans

**H.R. 2131 – GI Bill of Rights.** Rep. Napolitano co-sponsored this bill that provides accessible/affordable healthcare for veterans plus bonus combat pay. It reduces waiting time on disability claims, improves pay for senior enlisted personnel, warrant officers, enhances job training/education opportunities. **Status:** *In the House Military Personnel Subcom.*

**H.R. 2361 – Dept. of Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Act.** Due to the FY2005 Republican budget shortfall for VA medical services, H.R. 2362 provides \$1.5 billion in supplemental appropriations for VA medical services for FY2005. **Status:** *Signed into law*

**H.R.4025 – Disabled Veterans Fairness Act.** Provides an increase in travel reimbursement rate for disabled veterans. **Status:** *In the House Veterans' Affairs Comm.*

For more information and status on the bills, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov>

### SFS - Vet Caseworker Examples

**Case #1:** It didn't occur to a WWII vet named Tony to request the medals he earned during the war but never received until he realized that he would like to leave them for his grandchildren. After receiving a call from Tony, staffer Jesse Saucedo from the Santa Fe Springs office went to work contacting the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. Depending on information in the veterans' records at the Center, it can take anywhere from 3 to 18 months to process. Jesse worked on this case for about 3 months. Tony received his medals this year.

**Case#2:** Ralph contacted the Santa Fe Springs office for assistance for a reassessment of his current 50% disability rating. Ralph is a Vietnam Veteran who suffers from PTSD (service-connected) and believed he should receive up to a 100% disability rating after being diagnosed as permanently unemployable by various doctors. Jesse wrote a letter of inquiry to the Congressional Liaison at the VA. After several follow-up conversations and more instructions for Ralph, his disability rating was increased to 70% with retroactive pay. This case took 5 months to complete.

**Contact:** Jesse Saucedo, Veteran Liaison, at (562) 801-2134



Napolitano Discusses job training with Iraq War Veteran Carlos Perez

### Military Academy Appointees

In the past seven years, the Congresswoman has nominated 63 exceptional men and women to all five U.S. Military Academies.

Chin "Junior" Lin, a 2005 graduate of Los Altos High School in Hacienda Heights, is one of the many proud military academy nominees.

Lin was nominated for appointment to West Point because of his leadership skills, academic success and community service.

### Update on previous West Point appointee:

Brandon Archuleta of Montebello is currently serving as President of the 2006 class at West Point. We salute him!



Archuleta is President of West Point's Class of 2006

### Help for Latino Veterans

The Washington Center for Minority Veterans provides help with benefits and services:

**Contact:** (202) 273-6708 or go to: [www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/](http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/)

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