

Two War Veterans

Today's column deals with two Veterans but also highlights a situation in the country regarding Veterans. The first Veteran was accepted for officer training in the United States Marine Corps in 1968, attending training at Parris Island, Officer Candidate School, Army Ranger School, and Army jump school.

In July 1968, he was sent to South Vietnam where he served as a rifle platoon leader with Second Platoon, H Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Division. In December 1968, he earned the Bronze Star with 'V' distinction for combat valor for rescuing a wounded Marine under enemy fire during an ambush that saw half of his platoon become casualties. He eventually became aide-de-camp to 3rd Marine Division's commanding general, General William K. Jones. In April 1969, he received an enemy gunshot wound in the thigh, recovered, and returned to lead his platoon until June 1969. For his service in and during the Vietnam War, his military decorations and awards include: the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", Purple Heart Medal, two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals with Combat "V", Combat Action Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and Parachutist Badge. After his discharge he has spent his life in law enforcement.

The second Veteran grew up in Chicago, played soccer as a kid, graduated from high school, attended college and was just shy of an associate's degree when he enlisted in the Army in 2001. He served in Afghanistan from October 2002 until October 2003 and was discharged in 2004. About his tour in Afghanistan he said. "They are things that happened to me personally, that happened to others, and to Afghans themselves -- 12-, 11-year-old kids split in half by 50-caliber bullets at our hands." As we saw in some of our Vietnam Veterans he tried alcohol and later drugs to help forget. Returning to Chicago, he was diagnosed with PTSD at a VA hospital. In 2010, he was convicted on cocaine possession charges and sent to prison, where he finally got treatment for his PTSD. He also finished his associate degree. While in prison, deportation proceedings started because his father brought the family here illegally when he was eight years old. He will probably be deported to Mexico.

He will not be the first Veteran to be deported. In Juarez, Mexico, there is a Deported Veterans Support House for Veterans who have also been deported. These Veterans still have VA benefits but have to appear in person for meetings and hearings in the US, however, they are not allowed into the country. Service in the military does not guarantee citizenship, but applications from Veterans are normally put on a fast track. I don't know the answer, but this just doesn't seem right.

The second Veteran is Miguel Perez, Jr. The first Veteran is Robert Mueller, Special Counsel in charge of the Russian meddling in our elections investigation.