



Veterans Affairs

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Director

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Former Prisoners-of-War

It is estimated that more than one-half million Americans were captured and interned as Prisoners of War since the American Revolution. The largest number of captivities occurred during the Civil War when an estimated 220,000 Confederate soldiers were captured by the North and nearly 127,000 Union soldiers, were interned by the South.

Since World War I, more than 142,000 Americans - including 83 women - have been captured and interned as POWs. More than 90% of our living POWs were captured and interned during World War II. The numbers of POWs returned to

US custody is as follows:

- World War II – 108,000* (93,000* in the European Theater; 15,000* in the Pacific)
- Korea – 4500*
- Vietnam – 700*
- Desert Storm – 23
- OIF/OEF - 7

* - Approximately



Former Prisoners-of-War Benefit Act

In 1981, Congress passed Public Law 97-37 entitled, "Former Prisoners of War Benefit Act." This law accomplished several things. It established an Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War and mandated medical and dental care. It also identified certain diagnoses as presumptive service-connected conditions for former POWs. Other public laws passed since then, and a policy decision by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in 1993, have added additional diagnoses to the list of presumptive conditions.

Presumption of Service-Connection for Certain Diseases

Today, former POWs who were interned or detained for at least 30 days are generally entitled to a presumption of service-connection for certain diseases if manifested to a degree of 10 percent or more after discharge or release from active military, naval or air service. These diseases are:

- Avitaminosis
- Beriberi, including Beriberi Heart Disease*
- Chronic Dysentery
- Dysthymic Disorder, or Depressive Neurosis
- Helminthiasis
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Malnutrition, including associated Optic Atrophy
- Organic Residuals of Frostbite
- Pellagra and any other nutritional deficiency
- Peptic Ulcer Disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy, except where directly related to infectious causes
- Post-Traumatic Osteoarthritis
- Psychosis
- Any of the Anxiety States

* Beriberi Heart disease includes Ischemic Heart Disease, (coronary artery disease), for former POWs who suffered during captivity from edema (swelling of the legs or feet), also known as "wet" beriberi.

Medical Care

Former POWs are not subject to VA's eligibility assessment and will be provided hospital care. VA may provide outpatient care without limitation to former POWs. POWs held for more than 90 days are eligible for any needed dental treatment. Those held for less than 90 days are eligible for dental treatment for service-connected, noncompensable dental conditions.

Veterans Affairs Office Locations:

- 222 W. Hospitality Lane, Third Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0470 (909) 382-3290
- 15900 Smoke Tree Street, Hesperia, CA 92345 (760) 995-8010
- 8575 Haven Ave., Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730 (909-948-6470
- **Or call Toll Free from anywhere in San Bernardino County : 1-866-4SBVets (1-866-472-8387)**