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This was a short trip to Washington, DC, flying in on Monday and back home on Thursday. As short as it was, it was productive.

The high point of a very good trip was the meeting with VA Secretary Robert L. Wilkie Thursday morning. Although we were told that there would be a number of staff personnel there it was a one on one meeting. Just the two of us in a very relaxed setting. The Secretary was very cordial. He promised that the VA would move forward with implementing *Procopio* and he also agreed that they will use the baseline as the start of the territorial sea. The limit will be 12 miles out from the baseline. We provided him pertinent excerpts from the 1958 Convention on the Territorial Sea and the UNCLOS. Our materials were delivered to him the previous day and he had obviously read through everything we had given him. Additionally, they will allow cases to be reopened based on *Procopio* without providing new and material evidence.

Oh by the way, there will not be an appeal or petition for certiorari.

We recommended that he work with the Secretary of the Navy to provide annual training opportunities for Quartermasters and other rates experienced in plotting. We also offered to bring Ed Ball to Washington to train any group he assigned to the task. He was receptive to that idea and had already told SECNAV that he would need some assistance.

I would anticipate that the VA will move towards harbors first. It is the easiest since the deck logs always note when a ship enters or leaves a harbor. We suggested that they look for entries indicate the ship left or entered the territorial sea. We also pointed to the fact that if radar ranges to land were less than 24,300 yards, or the ship was participating in Operation Market Time they were within the territorial sea. Finally we pointed out that the maximum effective range of guns on Destroyers, Destroyer Escorts and Light Cruisers conducting naval gunfire support was *prima facie* evidence that a ship was within the territorial sea. The Secretary was receptive to all of this.

I also discussed the Guam bill, HR 1713 with him and reminded him of our rulemaking request. He was aware of it. He is going to visit Guam at the end of May and dioxin exposure is high on his list of discussion points. We have passed that information on to Congressman San Nicholas so that he can be present during the visit.

The Secretary and I discussed other MVA initiatives including burn pits, general toxic exposures and funding issues. He had previously told me that neither he nor the President wanted to take money away from one veteran to pay another. I reminded him that we agreed with that position, but that it was contrary to PAYGO. He shared some funding ideas that are not ready for public discussion. We raised the idea of a PAYGO exemption for veterans benefits, He was amenable to that idea and I think he will support that if we can get Congress to go along.

As I mentioned earlier in the week, the Veterans Leadership Summit went very well. There were 40 organization represented, both big and small, and we each had 5 minutes to discuss our

organization and what we do. I learned a lot about other small groups and many were interested in our approach of Litigation, Legislation and Education. We need to do a follow up meeting, hopefully within the next few months, to keep the momentum going.

The Senate bill on Blue Water Navy, S 1195, was dropped by Senator Gillibrand along with 31 co-sponsors Thursday. Two more Senators, McSally and Rubio, have signed on but won't be reflected on Congress.gov until after the Easter recess. The House is still playing with the language on HR 299. I need to better organize my thoughts on the legislative issues before I discuss them so I will do a supplemental report to discuss legislation. The thing to remember is that we do not really need the bill at this point, but it would be nice to have. But what we do not want to do is pass language that will limit the effect of *Prtocopio*. The Senate bill is exactly what we want. Not so confident in the House. So please be patient so that I can provide you a well reasoned analysis and review of potential pitfalls. Meanwhile let's concentrate on HR 1713, the Kilpatrick Central Pacific Island Relief Act.. We are up to 24 co-sponsors. That is a good start, But more to do.

Our web site is www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org I appreciate all of your past support and please continue to help us help you with prayers and other support.