VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

PREDICATION

This Inspection was initiated and authorized by State Commander Ingeborg Conley on April 12, 2019 under Special Order #26.

SUBJECTS

Steve J. Mueller, Life Member Number 10425259
Stephanie D. Pino, Continuous member Number 10359731

INVESTIGATOR

Andrew Camplen

DATE

April 15, 2019

DISPOSITION

Disciplinary Action Needed
Criminal Charges Filed

SIGNATURE

FOR TEXAS and NATIONAL VFW OFFICIAL USE ONLY

FW DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS

503 North Interstate Highway 35 Office 512.834.8535 vfw@texasvfw.org
ustin, Texas 78753 Fax 512.834.9232 www.texasvfw.org

SYNOPSIS

The results of this investigation show that Steve J. Mueller Commander of VFW Post 12162 and Stephanie D. Pino Post Quartermaster of Post 12162 in Pleasanton, Texas disbursed funds of the Post for personal use or gain without Post authorization or approval. They engaged in conduct prejudicial to the good order and discipline and conduct unbecoming a member in their relations to the Veterans of Foreign of the United States or other members.

In reviewing the Post minutes and Post Bank Account records from the period of July 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018 Mueller and Pino individually or separately (as both had unfettered access and control of the Post financial accounts and each had a Debit card for the Post Checking Account) did disburse Post funds multiple times for personal use or gain for products and services ranging from food at restaurants to cash withdrawals from ATM machines. No receipt of purchases to explain what Post money was being spent on or an itemized report to the Post members on each transaction and the purpose of the transaction.

In reviewing sworn and signed notarized statements from various members of the VFW and members of the United States Armed Forces, emails, and newspaper articles, Steve L. Mueller and Stephanie Pino engaged in conduct unbecoming members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

ALLEGED OFFENSES

Mueller and Pino on multiple occasions violated Section 902, paragraph 2 of the National VFW By-Laws by failing to fulfill obligations taken at time of application or admission or obligations taken upon installation of any office and that they failed to surrender all records, monies, or other properties of VFW Post 12162 and VFW Post 4843 after their departure from each Post.

Mueller and Pino on multiple occasions violated Section 902, paragraph 4 of the National VFW By-Laws by failing to follow direct orders of State Commander Inge Conley and District 20 Commander Shipley.

Mueller and Pino on multiple occasions violated Section 902, paragraph 6 of the National VFW By-Laws by engaging in conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline or conduct unbecoming a member in their relations to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States or other members.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Mueller and Pino on multiple occasions violated Section 902, paragraph 7 of the National VFW By-Laws by Divulging any of the private business of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States with the intent or effect of embarrassing the Veterans of Foreign Wars or members thereof.

Mueller and Pino on multiple occasions violated Section 902, paragraph 8 of the National VFW By-Laws by preparing or signing any false record, return, regulation, order or other official document of or concerning the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States knowing it to be false, or make any other false statements with intent to deceive in that submitted and allowed to be submitted community service reports that did not accurately reflect community service from members of the Post.

Mueller and Pino on multiple occasions violated Section 902, paragraph 9 of the National VFW By-Laws by disbursing funds for personal use or gain without Post membership approval or authorization.
Additionally, Mueller as Post Commander authorized and allowed multiple special meetings of the membership to be conducted without due and proper notice as required by Section 203 of the National VFW By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

Evidence/Fact Reviewed

- Mueller is listed as the Post Commander for Post 12162 for the 2018-2019 year.
- Pino is listed as the Adjutant and Quartermaster for Post 12162 for the 2018-2019 year.
- Mueller is the only person listed on the Post Checking and Savings Account.
- Pino is not listed on the Post Checking and Savings Accounts despite being the elected Quartermaster.
- Post Minutes do not reflect Post authorization on expenditure of all transactions.
- Post funds on multiple occasions where disbursed from the Post main checking account without Post approval or authorization.
- Mueller and Pino both had debit cards for the Post Checking and Savings accounts.
- Pino failed to turn over her Post debit card to the approved authority as directed by proper authority on multiple occasions.

- Post Checking Account Number is [redacted]071 from Security Service Federal Credit Union is identified as the main checking account of the Post.
- Post Savings Account Number is [redacted]000 from Security Service Federal Credit Union is identified as the main savings account of the Post and had a zero balance since inception.
- Post Checking Account Number is [redacted]072 from Security Service Federal Credit Union is a secondary checking account of the Post that was opened and then closed with no funds shown as having been deposited.
- Special meetings were held on October 30, 2018 and December 3, 2018 without due and proper notice to all members of the Post.
- No member applications were available for review.
- Proof of eligibility for all elected and appointed Post officers were not available for review.
- No Post checking account general register was available for review.
- Pino as Post Adjutant and Mueller as Post Commander failed to follow the proper and lawful order of the State Commander in turning over Post Minutes.
- Mueller as Post Commander threatened legal action against the VFW and that the State Commander should just drop the issue.
- Pino as Post Quartermaster failed to inform Post members of each transaction and purpose of the transaction during her term as Post Quartermaster only reporting total amount collected and expended.
- Mueller as Post Commander failed to ensure that Pino as Post Quartermaster informed the Post members of each transaction and the purpose for each transaction.
- Sworn statements were obtained from the following witnesses; Rankin, Jeff; Hewitt, Patricia; Edwards, Douglas.
- Reviewed emails written and sent by Stephanie Pino.
- Reviewed emails from members of the 10th GRP Special Forces, US Army.
- Reviewed End of Year Performance Report issued by Steve L. Mueller.
- Reviewed emails from District 20 Commander and Investigative Committee leader John Shipley.
- Reviewed prior Investigative Reports on complaints.
- Reviewed newspaper article written by Stephanie Pino and published in the Pleasanton Newspaper.
- Reviewed all other miscellaneous documents.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

FINDINGS

After a thorough review of all documents contained in this file I have determined that all previous findings are accurate and warranted. All previous recommended actions are valid and necessary. I have further reviewed the Charges and Specifications contained in forms DA-2 for both Mueller and Pino and found them to be an accurate representation of violations of the National By Laws committed by both Mueller and Pino.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information provided, I recommend closure of the investigation with a recommendation to the State Commander that disciplinary action be initiated per Section 9 of the National By Laws using this Investigative Report, all evidence and other documents contained in this file as the basis for the Disciplinary action against both Mueller and Pino.

Criminal charges have been filed against both Mueller and Pino for **Texas Penal Code 32.45 Misapplication of Fiduciary Property $2500-$20,000** of which the total amount of unauthorized funds constitute a **Felony** Criminal Offense.

Andrew Camplen
State Assistant Adjutant
Department of Texas
Veterans of Foreign Wars

FW DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS

503 North Interstate Highway 35 Office 512.834.8535 vfw@texasvfw.org
ustin, Texas 78753 Fax 512.834.9232 www.texasvfw.org