Long-awaited AMVETS post is established at Ohio State

By Tim Doulin
Dispatch Higher Education Reporter

The cold war between The Ohio State University and military veterans may be coming to a close.

During a ceremony in the OSU administration building yesterday, central Ohio veterans chartered the first AMVETS post based on an Ohio university campus and one of the first on the campus of a major research university.

The post is to serve as an advocacy group for area veterans and to deal with veterans issues both on and off campus.

"This has been a somewhat long and difficult road in establishing this," OSU President Gordon Gee said. "But it is here today, and I am proud it has occurred during my tenure."

OSU has drawn criticism for the way it treated veterans on campus.

A university task force reported that OSU is not in compliance with a federal law that extends employment protection to Vietnam-era veterans. That prompted the U.S. Department of Labor to audit OSU's hiring practices. The findings are to be released soon.

The task force report also led OSU to approve establishing the Office of Veterans Affairs, an office similar to those already in place for women and minority students, faculty and staff.

Gov. George V. Voinovich and state legislators have ordered OSU and all public universities to fall in line when it comes to treatment of veterans.

"In the past, we have had difficulties," said David Aldstadt, director of the Governor's Office of Veterans Affairs.

"But now, after having had some time to work with President Gee and Ohio State, they deserve some credit for showing that the veterans of this community will be treated with the respect they deserve."

Ronald W. Trewyn, a Vietnam combat veteran and an ardent critic of the university's treatment of veterans, is encouraged by the steps the university is taking.

"With President Gee and other university officials in attendance, I believe they are showing their support for our efforts on campus," said Trewyn, a physiological chemistry professor at OSU.

"I think this marks the beginning of a new era. I think it will be completed when the office is finished, and we have an official voice on campus."

AMVETS is a national service organization formed for U.S. military veterans of World War II. It is now open to anyone who has served in the U.S. military since 1940.

The AMVETS post on campus is named after Air Force Col. David H. Zook, an OSU graduate killed in the Vietnam War. Zook was one of the first history professors at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., in 1959.
Student honored for flag's return

By Kevin Corvo and Stacey Silver
Lantern staff writer

An OSU student was honored by the AMVETS post at Ohio State for replacing the American flag that was burned in front of Bricker Hall on May 1.

Jordana Shakor, a senior majoring in psychology, received the Colonel David H. Zook Jr. Memorial Award and was presented with a certificate of appreciation and an American flag.

The Bricker Hall flag was destroyed during a demonstration protesting the acquittal of the Los Angeles police officers charged in the beating of motorist Rodney King.

Shakor said her father served 26 years in the army, retiring as a sergeant. She said he received a military funeral and since then she has had a closer relationship to the flag.

"There was a flag shrouding the casket at his funeral, it (the flag) has been precious to me after that," Shakor said.

Shakor organized a peaceful rally at Bricker Hall to replace the flag that was burned.

"It was a privilege to recognize her for her effort to save the flag which we so proudly serve," said Ron W. Trewyn, OSU AMVETS post commander.

Trewyn read a letter acknowledging Shakor for her efforts and accomplishments.

The letter read in part; "as military veterans, we most certainly defend, and have defended, all people's rights to freedom of speech and expression. Your quick action in response to that crime; replacement of the flag that had been destroyed; may well have prevented an escalation of such destructive activities on campus."

The letter concluded; "Your actions reflect great credit upon yourself and the university community, and for those actions we salute you."

Linda Tom, vice-president of human relations and human resources, was a scheduled guest speaker for the ceremony, but was unable to attend.

"I think it would have been appropriate to have more warning, she said she had a budget meeting," Trewyn said.

Michelle Gay, a sophomore from Columbus, thinks Tom's absence depicts the lack of support that AMVETS receives at Ohio State.

There are 1,400 veterans at Ohio State, Gay said, but no one knows about them. Gay said she thinks the OSU community is ignoring the veterans on campus.

"There is no student group on Ohio State to help me even with simple problems. We don't even have a central office," Gay said.

"I don't really consider myself a minority but on this level, I do," Gay said.

Gay said AMVETS can only help so much and she hopes more support will come in the future.

AMVETS is an organization of OSU students, staff and faculty members who served in World War II, Korea and the Vietnam Wars. There are about 50 members of the OSU AMVETS post.