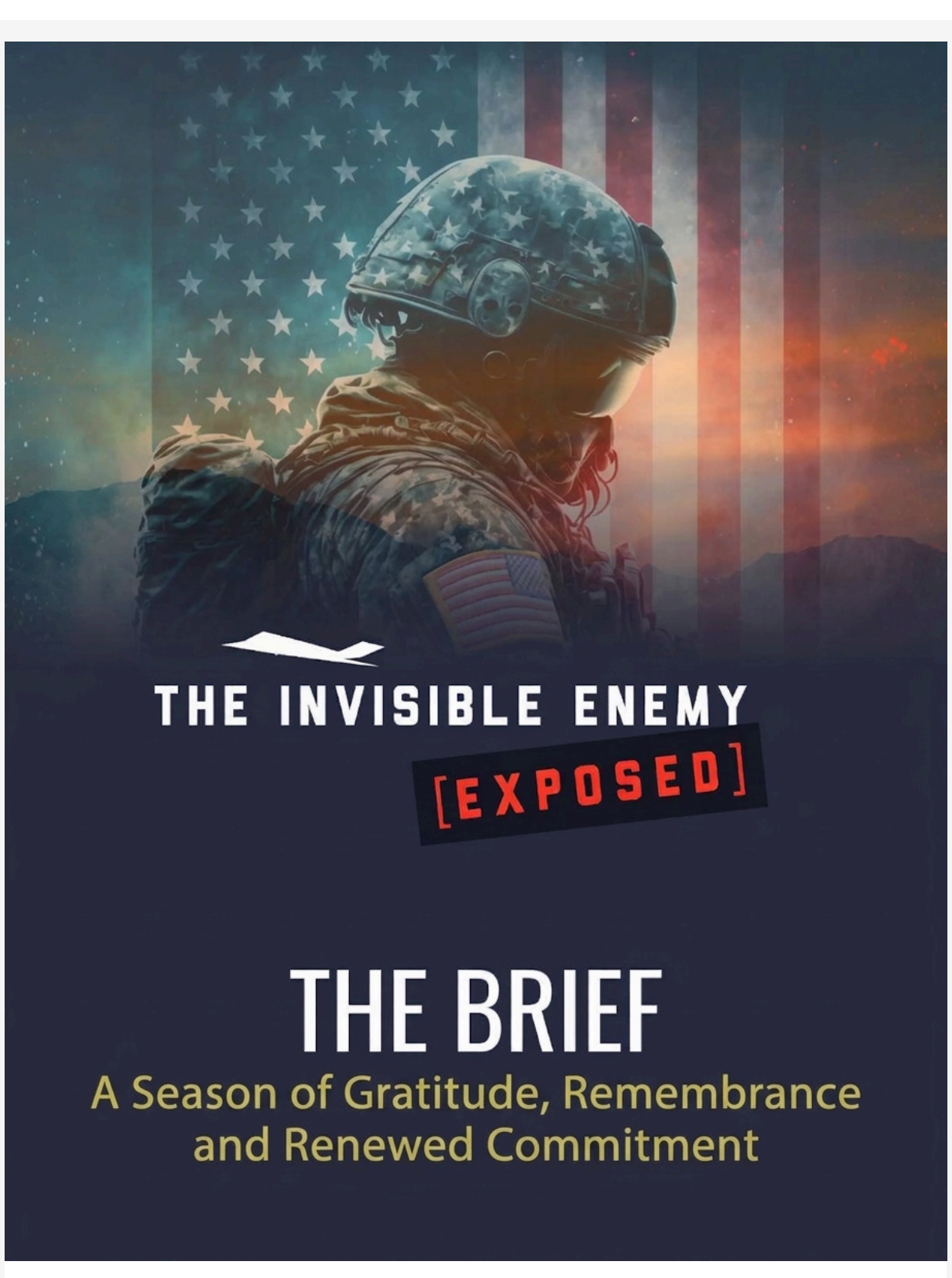


THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

# THE BRIEF

## A Season of Gratitude, Remembrance and Renewed Commitment

## CHAIRMAN MESSAGE

The past couple of months have been among the most important since the founding of The Invisible Enemy. We have experienced significant developments, both organizationally and legislatively, that are helping position TIE for an even greater impact in the years ahead.

I want to share a few highlights of what has been happening behind the scenes.

**1. Welcoming Our New CEO**
We recently welcomed Laurie Tanakaya as our new Chief Executive Officer, and I could not be more pleased with the experience and qualifications she brings to TIE.

Laurie has an extensive background in corporate leadership, including executive positions with companies of significant size. For the four years immediately preceding her joining TIE, she served as CEO of another nonprofit organization, where she oversaw substantial growth.

As TIE continues to expand its reach, influence, and responsibilities, having someone with Laurie's experience leading our daily operations is an important step forward.

**2. Building an Organization for the Future**
With Laurie managing our day-to-day operations, we are becoming far more organized, structured, and systematic in how we conduct our business.

We are currently developing our 2027 budget and calendar of events, while also establishing longer-term strategic plans that will allow us to better manage our remarkable growth.

When we started TIE just over three years ago, we were a small group of people determined to make a difference. Today, we are becoming a nationally recognized voice advocating for veterans and others who have suffered from toxic exposures.

That growth brings tremendous opportunities, but it also brings responsibilities. We must build an organization capable of sustaining our progress and continuing this mission well into the future.

**3. Significant Progress in Washington, D.C.**
I recently participated in a Senate Veterans' Affairs roundtable alongside representatives from several other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), senior leadership from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and both the majority and minority staffs of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Joining me were two members of our Akin Gump team, the Legislative Director for Congresswoman Susie Lee, and three members of Senator Jacky Rosen's staff.

Following the roundtable, we had a brief discussion with senior committee staff, which led to an agreement to meet again the following morning in Senator Rosen's conference room.

That meeting turned into an extraordinary opportunity.

For approximately an hour, our team sat down with the two senior leaders of the committee staff to discuss legislative strategies, ways to accelerate our progress, and potential approaches to overcoming some of the obstacles that legislation routinely encounters in both the House and Senate.

I cannot overstate the significance of this meeting. Having an hour of dedicated time with the senior leadership of a Senate committee's staff is an exceptionally rare opportunity, particularly for an organization as young as ours.

More importantly, these were not simply introductory conversations. They were substantive discussions about how we can move our legislative priorities forward more effectively and, hopefully, shorten the timeline for achieving meaningful results for those we represent.

It was an extremely productive series of discussions and another indication of how far TIE has come in establishing credibility and relationships on Capitol Hill.

**4. Additional Meetings with Senate Offices**
During our time in Washington, we also met with several Senate offices whose members serve on the Senate Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services Committees.

These meetings were equally encouraging and provided additional opportunities to strengthen relationships, explain our mission, and build support for our legislative efforts.

Each of these conversations helps move us closer to our ultimate goal: ensuring that those who served on the Nevada Test and Training Range receive the recognition, care, and benefits they have earned.

**Looking Ahead**
I hope these updates provide a better understanding of what is happening at TIE, much of which takes place outside the public eye.

We have come an extraordinary distance in a relatively short period of time. We still have significant challenges ahead, and there is much work left to do. But I believe we are better positioned today to accomplish our mission than at any point since our founding.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated Board of Directors, volunteers, supporters, partners, and, most importantly, the veterans and families who have placed their trust in us.

**On a Personal Note**
Just a few days ago, Aylin and I were blessed with the arrival of our sixth granddaughter! She is absolutely beautiful, and I am happy to report that both mom and baby are doing very well.
As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to wish each of you and your families a wonderful holiday.

As crazy as things may seem in our country and around the world sometimes, I believe we remain extraordinarily blessed to live in the greatest country in the world. We have much to be thankful for, including the freedoms we enjoy and the men and women who have sacrificed so much to protect them.

May we never take those blessings for granted. Happy Thanksgiving and thank you for continuing to stand with The Invisible Enemy.

Dave Crete

**Dave Crete**
Chairman of The Board

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## THE MISSION REPORT

### NOVEMBER MISSION BRIEF

**The Invisible Enemy**

Over the past couple of months, we have continued conversations with the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and participated in an important Senate Veterans' Affairs Roundtable in Washington, D.C.

Mandy Feindt
Red Hill CRI
Dave Crete
Invisible Enemy
Candace Wheeler
TAPS
Marquis Barefield
Disabled American Veterans

**Department of the Air Force**
Our conversations with the DAF have been interesting, although I do not believe we are ready to report any major breakthroughs.

During recent discussions, we have heard statements suggesting there simply isn't enough contamination at the Tonopah Test Range (TTR) to have caused the illnesses we are seeing. Interestingly, they are not denying the presence of radiation or other toxic substances. Their position appears to be that the levels were insufficient to cause illness.

I will continue to challenge that position. They say they have science. We have sick brothers and sisters, families who have suffered, and a Memorial List that continues to grow, often from illnesses associated with the types of toxic exposures known to have occurred on the range. Those experiences deserve serious consideration, and we will continue pressing for answers and accountability.

**Senate Veterans' Affairs Roundtable**
The Senate Roundtable was extremely productive. I had the privilege of representing TIE alongside approximately 20 of the nation's leading veterans' organizations addressing toxic exposure. Also attending were senior VA officials, representatives from the medical and scientific communities, and leadership from the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, including majority and minority staff directors Asher and Carlos, both of whom have been helping TIE for nearly two years.

Joining me were Ed Pagano and Zach Deatherage from our Akin team, members of Senator Rosen's staff, and the legislative director from Congresswoman Susie Lee's office. We were very well represented!

Following the Roundtable, we arranged a meeting the next morning in Senator Rosen's conference room to discuss moving TIE's legislation forward and overcoming the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scoring obstacle.

CBO scoring estimates the financial impact of legislation. What makes our situation frustrating is that the veterans' benefits we are fighting for already exist under laws such as the PACT Act. We are not asking Congress to create a new benefits program. The issue centers on the costs associated with identifying those who served on NTTR and formally recognizing the range as an area of toxic exposure, as the Department of Energy has already done.

We remain encouraged by the commitment of our congressional partners to finding a path forward.

### The Election and What Comes Next

Unless you live under a rock that happens to be under an even bigger rock, you probably noticed we recently had an election! A few television commercials, billboards, and mountains of political junk mail might have given it away.

Regardless of your personal views about who won or lost, I believe it was a good election for TIE. The simple answer is this: TIE will have good friends in important places in the next Congress.

Our mission has never been about Republicans or Democrats. It is about ensuring that those who served our country and their families receive the recognition and benefits they deserve. The bipartisan relationships we have built will continue to be essential to our success.

**Looking Ahead**
When we started TIE, we were a small group of people trying to get someone, anyone, to listen. Today, we have a seat at the table. We still have a great deal of work ahead but make no mistake: we are making progress.

We will continue fighting for our military veterans, DoW contractors, and their families, honoring those we have lost, and working to ensure future generations never have to fight the same battles we are fighting today.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## JOIN THE MISSION

### NTTR VETERANS

WE NEED EVERY VETERAN WHO SERVED ON THE NEVADA TEST AND TRAINING RANGE (NTTR) TO TAKE ACTION.

Send the prepared letters by email and USPS mail to your U.S. Representative and at least one U.S. Senator—preferably a Senator serving on Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, or Appropriations.
Send it to their local district office, not Washington, D.C.

One week after mailing, call the office to confirm receipt and request a response.

Our goal is to generate Congressional inquiries into toxic exposure records and encourage members of Congress to cosponsor the Sgt. Dave Crete Forgotten Veterans Act.
Every letter matters. Every inquiry increases pressure for answers and accountability.

IF WE ALL PARTICIPATE, OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE. JOIN THE MISSION.

TAKE ACTION TODAY.

IF EVERYONE DOES THIS, IT WILL BE POWERFUL.

HERE WE GO! THESE ARE THE LETTERS EVERY VETERAN WHO SERVED ON THE NEVADA TEST AND TRAINING RANGE (NTTR) SHOULD SEND TO YOUR U.S. REPRESENTATIVE AND AT LEAST ONE OF YOUR U.S. SENATORS.

## VETERAN OF THE MONTH: MARK PENIKAS

### FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER & VICE CHAIRMAN, THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

At 19 years old, Mark Penikas was eager to serve his country. After graduating in the top 5% of his class at the Air Force Police Academy, he was handpicked for a highly classified military police assignment on the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR). It was an opportunity few airmen would ever experience.

What Mark could not have imagined was that the assignment he was so proud to receive would be followed by decades of medical challenges, and eventually lead him to help establish The Invisible Enemy (TIE).

Mark joined the United States Air Force in 1982 and was selected for the NTTR assignment in 1983, serving there through 1987 before leaving the Air Force in 1988. Working alongside an elite military police unit, he helped secure classified facilities and conduct specialized operations. The work was demanding, the camaraderie extraordinary, and much of what they did remains classified today.

"I've always been proud of what I did," Mark recalled. Even after nearly four decades, he remembers his fellow airmen, their experiences and the bonds they formed.

But during his assignment, Mark began experiencing serious medical problems. After one operation, he developed a painful, persistent rash across his hands and forearms. He later collapsed on duty with severe chest pain and was evacuated for treatment of pericarditis, an inflammatory condition affecting the tissue surrounding the heart. Equipment and vehicle accidents resulted in back and neck injuries, followed by debilitating migraines. He has also struggled with recurring pneumonia and pancreatitis.
These conditions continue to affect his life today.

For years, Mark struggled to obtain medical records and establish connections between his health problems and military service. In 2023, he uncovered a decades-old medical letter recommending that his skin condition be recognized as a service-connected injury.

**"I'd never, ever seen that letter until 2023,"** he said.
The discovery raised painful questions about why critical information had not been shared with him decades earlier.

Years after leaving the Air Force, Mark reunited with several former teammates, including Dave Crete and Randy Groves.

What began as an opportunity to reconnect became something far more consequential. As the men compared medical histories, they discovered troubling similarities, including unusual tumors and other serious illnesses.

Those conversations helped ignite years of research into potential toxic exposures on the NTTR and eventually contributed to the founding of The Invisible Enemy.

Today, Mark serves as TIE's Vice Chairman, supporting the organization's efforts to secure federal recognition, healthcare and benefits for affected veterans and their families.

His commitment is deeply personal. Former teammates contact him seeking help, sometimes while battling advanced cancers and other debilitating conditions.

**"They're so desperate to find help," Mark explained. "And they don't know where to turn."**

He remembers the strong, capable young men he served alongside. Now, some are undergoing repeated surgeries, struggling to communicate or facing the final months of their lives.

For Mark, these are not statistics. They are friends, teammates and families whose lives have been profoundly changed.

**"Veterans and their families, they have value,"** he emphasized. **"We're just not a line item you can cross out for budgetary reasons."**

Mark is proud of the progress TIE has made in just over three years, particularly the bipartisan congressional effort to advance the Sergeant Dave Crete FORGOTTEN Veterans Act of 2026.

Yet he knows the work is far from finished. Legislative advocacy requires sustained commitment, resources and financial support.
**"We need corporate support because we need the support to be able to fund these efforts, to get these bills passed, to get our veterans and their families taken care of,"** he said. **"Without it, it won't happen."**
Despite everything he has endured, Mark's pride in his country and the people he served alongside remains unwavering. His disappointment lies not in his service, but in the continuing struggle for recognition and care. For Mark, the mission is ultimately about something greater than legislation.

**"This isn't a sob story,"** he said. **"This is about doing what's right."**

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## GOOD OF THE ORDER

MARIE GRIMMER

### Welcoming Marie Grimmer to TIE's Board of Directors

**Military Leadership, Defense Expertise, and a Commitment to Those Who Served**
The Invisible Enemy (TIE) is proud to welcome Marie Grimmer, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel and President and CEO of Grimmer Technology and Operations, Inc. (GTOi), to its Board of Directors. Marie brings more than 38 years of experience in military operations, defense technology, strategic planning, and business leadership, along with a deeply personal commitment to supporting America's veterans and their families.

During her distinguished 21-year military career, Marie served as a U.S. Army Signal Officer, including assignments at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Her experience spans critical defense and space-related programs, including work supporting the Missile Defense Agency and U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command.

Since 2009, Marie has led GTOi, a defense technology and information systems company supporting major U.S. Army communications, cybersecurity, and enterprise technology initiatives. Her leadership has included complex military IT modernization projects, global network operations, and large-scale technology infrastructure programs essential to military readiness.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Marie has remained actively engaged with the military community through organizations including the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) and the Association of the United States Army (AUSA).

As a veteran and defense industry leader, Marie understands the challenges of navigating military systems and importance of ensuring that service members and their families receive recognition, healthcare, and benefits they have earned.

Her decision to join TIE's Board reflects her belief that those who served our nation should never have to fight alone for the support they deserve.

**"I believe deeply in The Invisible Enemy's mission because no one who served our country should ever be forgotten or left behind. If I can help even one servicemember or family receive the benefits they have rightfully earned, I will consider that a meaningful accomplishment. I bring my military experience, my relationships, and my determination to this fight. I may be small, but I am mighty!" said Marie Grimmer, Board Member, TIE.**

Marie's military leadership, understanding of federal defense operations, and extensive professional relationships will strengthen TIE's ability to build partnerships, navigate institutional challenges, and advocate for veterans and families affected by toxic exposures.

We are honored to welcome Marie to the Board and grateful for her determination to ensure that those who served are never FORGOTTEN.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## GOOD OF THE ORDER

CARYN DYSON LESTER

### Welcoming Caryn Dyson Lester to TIE's Board of Directors

**Strengthening Our Voice in Washington, D.C.**
The Invisible Enemy (TIE) is proud to welcome Caryn Dyson Lester, Senior Political Affairs Advisor at Akin Gump, to its Board of Directors, bringing decades of political experience, congressional relationships, and a deeply personal commitment to advancing our mission.

For more than 20 years, Caryn has worked at the intersection of government relations, political strategy, and fundraising. At Akin Gump, she leads Democratic political outreach, helping clients navigate Congress and the Administration while developing strategies that connect policy priorities with meaningful action.

Her professional experience extends beyond Capitol Hill. Caryn also serves on the Board of the Prevent Cancer Foundation and has supported Sandy Hook Promise, demonstrating a longstanding commitment to causes that improve and protect lives.

For the past year and a half, Caryn has worked closely with TIE Chairman Dave Crete, helping advance the organization's federal legislative efforts through Akin Gump's pro bono representation.

During that time, she has become an important part of the team working to secure recognition, healthcare, and benefits for veterans exposed to radiation and toxic substances while serving our nation.

Her decision to join TIE's Board reflects a commitment that extends far beyond her professional responsibilities. After hearing Dave's story and witnessing his congressional testimony, Caryn recognized the urgency of the mission and the importance of bringing these veterans' experiences to the attention of federal decisionmakers.

**"From the moment I heard Dave's story, I knew this was a mission I wanted to be part of. These veterans served our country, and they deserve recognition, answers, and access to the benefits they have earned. I'm proud of what we've accomplished together, and joining the Board is my commitment to seeing this mission through," said Caryn Dyson, Board Member, The Invisible Enemy.**
Caryn's expertise, relationships, and dedication will be instrumental as TIE continues building congressional support, strengthening strategic partnerships, and advancing federal solutions for America's FORGOTTEN veterans.

We are honored to welcome Caryn to the Board and grateful for her continued commitment to ensuring that no veteran is left behind.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## THE FALLEN HEROES

### In Loving Memory of Russell William "Russ" Kirin

A Brilliant Creative Mind. A Gifted Storyteller. A Cherished Friend.
August 20, 1957 – October 22, 2026

Some people make their greatest contributions without ever stepping into the spotlight. They work quietly behind the scenes, using their extraordinary talents to give others a voice. Russ Kirin was one of those remarkable people.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Russ graduated from Montour High School and Duquesne University, where he was a member of the renowned Duquesne Tamburitzans. His lifelong passion for music included years performing with the Eastern European musical group Trubaduri and pursuing songwriting while living in Nashville.

Russ was a true Renaissance man. An award-winning creative executive, brand strategist, and storyteller, his distinguished career included work with some of the nation's most respected advertising and public relations agencies, including Burson-Marsteller, Ketchum Communications, and Bozell-Kamstra, as well as major corporations such as Westinghouse and ARCO Chemicals.

A recipient of the prestigious Clio Award, Russ was an early champion of integrated marketing communications, believing that powerful brands were built through the thoughtful alignment of strategy, creativity, and communication. His ability to see the big picture while mastering the smallest details was among his greatest professional gifts.

For nearly two decades, Russ was a cherished member of the BRAND Ltd. team, where his strategic thinking and writing talents helped shape brands, develop campaigns, and tell stories that made a difference.

When BRAND developed and launched The Invisible Enemy (TIE), Russ embraced the mission with tremendous pride. He helped establish the brand's voice and messaging, creating communications that brought national attention to veterans and families fighting for recognition, healthcare, and the benefits they so rightfully deserve.

He understood that behind every compelling brand was a meaningful story, and behind The Invisible Enemy were real men and women whose sacrifices deserved to be recognized.

But Russ was so much more than his remarkable professional accomplishments.

A proud Pittsburgh native, he was a devoted Steelers and Penguins fan. He loved Formula 1 racing and possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of its legendary drivers, extraordinary technology, and the precision engineering behind the world's fastest race cars. He appreciated a great cigar, a fine glass of Lagavulin Scotch, and the company of good friends.

Those fortunate enough to share BRAND's team happy hours will remember his colorful stories from life on the road as a touring musician. His humor, fascinating experiences, and natural gift for storytelling made those gatherings unforgettable.

Above all, Russ adored his beloved wife, Julie. Just days before his unexpected passing, they celebrated 45 years together, a beautiful testament to a lifetime of love, devotion, and companionship. Their three cherished cats were also an important part of the life they shared.

Russ passed away unexpectedly on October 22, 2026, at the age of 69. He leaves behind Julie, his brother Ron, a loving family, and countless friends and colleagues whose lives were enriched by knowing him.

For The Invisible Enemy, Russ's legacy lives on through the stories he helped tell, the awareness he helped create, and the voices he helped amplify for those who served our nation.

**Russ spent his life telling stories that mattered. We are honored that The Invisible Enemy became part of his story.**

We extend our deepest condolences to Julie and the entire Kirin family.

*Rest in peace, dear friend. Your words made a difference, your friendship was a gift, and you will never be FORGOTTEN.*

If you would like to report the passing of an NTTR veteran, civilian employee, or family member for inclusion in next briefing, please contact us at TIE.

Just click the envelope below.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## THEY GOT OUR SIX

PAUL CUPACH

One Veteran's Commitment. A Mission That Continues.

Honoring Paul Cupach and Everyone Who Answered the Call

When NTTR veteran Paul Cupach stepped forward with a $10,000 Veterans Day matching challenge, his goal was about more than raising funds. It was about standing alongside fellow veterans and ensuring their service, sacrifices and struggles would not be FORGOTTEN.

Paul knows firsthand why The Invisible Enemy's mission matters. Having served with the 417th Aircraft Maintenance Unit at a classified facility on the Nevada Test and Training Range, he understands the challenges veterans face in seeking recognition and medical care for illnesses associated with toxic and radioactive exposures.

His personal experience inspired him to take action.

**"Supporting TIE is one way I can help take care of the guys after me,"** Paul shared when launching the campaign.

From October 15 through Veterans Day, November 11, donors answered his call, contributing more than $5,000. The campaign also attracted new contributors and inspired previously inactive donors to renew their commitment to our mission.

**Together, Paul's generosity and the contributions of our donors raised more than $15,000 for The Invisible Enemy.**
Paul's decision reflects the very spirit of our organization. His commitment was never simply about matching dollars. It was about helping veterans and their families receive the recognition, healthcare and support they have earned through their service.

To Paul, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your generosity, leadership and unwavering commitment to your fellow veterans exemplify what it truly means to have someone's six.

And to everyone who answered the call, thank you. Your gifts strengthen our ability to raise awareness, identify affected veterans, advocate for federal solutions and continue building the services these veterans and their families deserve.
**One Mission. Twice the Impact. A Commitment That Goes Beyond This Campaign.**

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## THE CREED

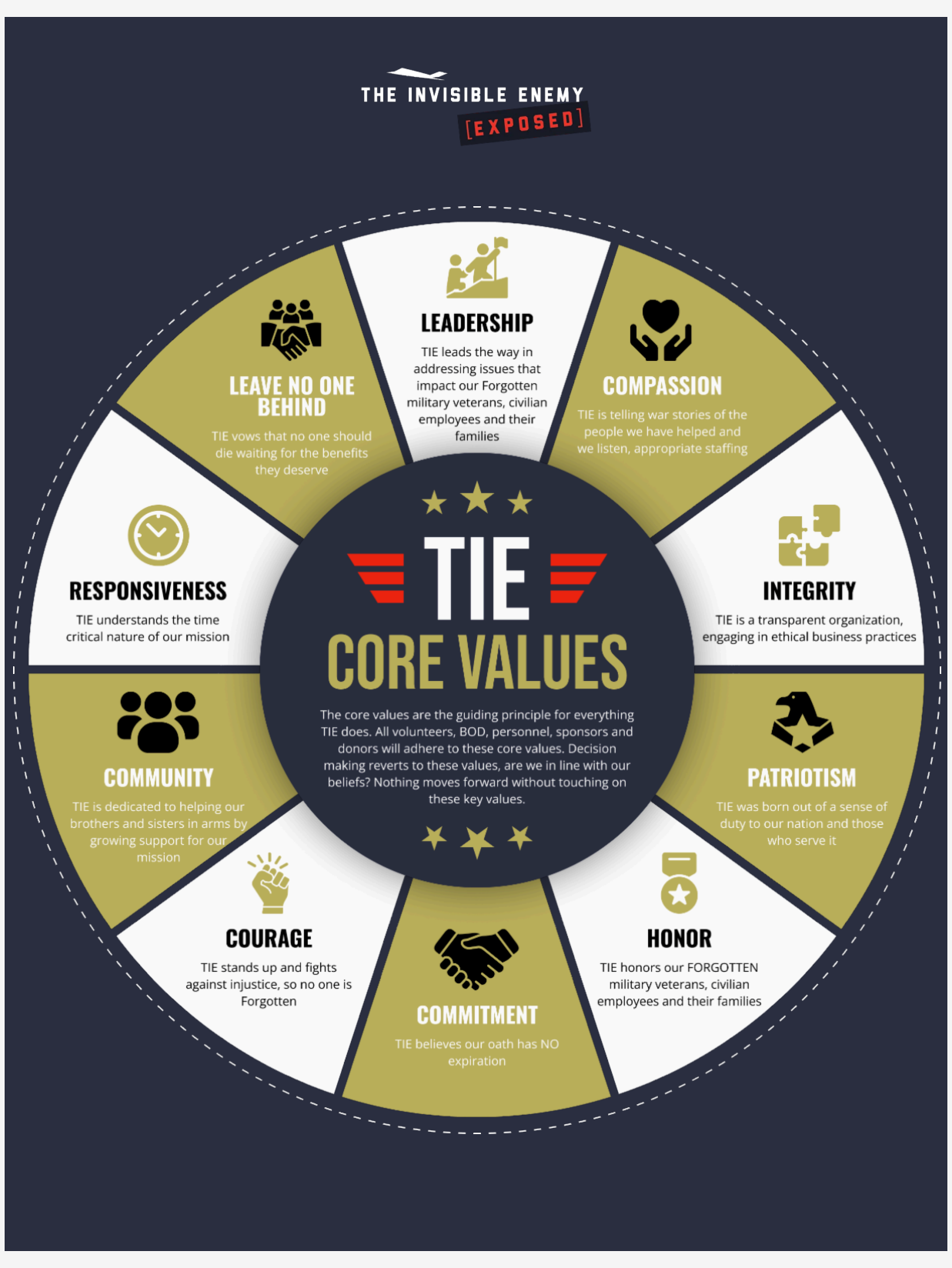
### VISION ASPIRATION

Every military veteran, civilian employee and family member exposed to radiation and other toxins receives the benefits they have earned and the compensation they deserve.

### MISSION STATEMENT

We are the voice of the FORGOTTEN military veterans, civilian employees and family members exposed to radiation and other toxins. We build awareness and support that secures the benefits they deserve.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]



**TIE CORE VALUES**

The core values are the guiding principle for everything TIE does. All volunteers, BOD, personnel, sponsors and donors will adhere to these core values. Decision making reverts to these values, are we in line with our beliefs? Nothing moves forward without touching on these key values.

**LEADERSHIP**
TIE leads the way in addressing issues that impact our Forgotten military veterans, civilian employees and their families

**COMPASSION**
TIE is telling war stories of the people we have helped and we listen, appropriate staffing

**INTEGRITY**
TIE is a transparent organization, engaging in ethical business practices

**PATRIOTISM**
TIE was born out of a sense of duty to our nation and those who serve it

**HONOR**
TIE honors our FORGOTTEN military veterans, civilian employees and their families

**COMMITMENT**
TIE believes our oath has NO expiration

**COURAGE**
TIE stands up and fights against injustice, so no one is Forgotten

**COMMUNITY**
TIE is dedicated to helping our brothers and sisters in arms by growing support for our mission

**RESPONSIVENESS**
TIE understands the time critical nature of our mission

**LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND**
TIE vows that no one should die waiting for the benefits they deserve

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY [EXPOSED]

## ANSWER THE CALL

### EVERY VICTORY BEGINS WITH PEOPLE WILLING TO TAKE ACTION.

The Invisible Enemy was built by veterans, families, advocates, and supporters who refused to let America's FORGOTTEN Veterans remain invisible. Whether you make a financial contribution, contact your elected officials, sponsor an event, or simply share our story, your support strengthens our fight for recognition, healthcare, and justice for those exposed to radiation and other toxic substances while serving our nation.

**There are many ways to answer the call. Every action matters. Every voice makes a difference.**

★ WAYS TO ANSWER THE CALL ★

Your tax-deductible contribution helps fund veteran outreach, public education, documentary awareness, and legislative initiatives.

### DONATE

The Invisible Enemy Foundation, a registered 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, EIN # 92-3486613, is actively raising funds to support our efforts to enact this legislation and help all veterans who have been injured by nuclear exposure in the line of duty.

DONATE

### Amazon Business Wish List

Support our daily operations by purchasing much-needed supplies directly from our Amazon Business Wish List.

AMAZON NEEDS LIST

### CONTACT TIE

Are you a veteran who served at the Nevada Test and Training Range, a family member or someone interested in supporting our mission? We want to hear from you. Scan the QR code to connect with our team and learn how you can get involved.

CONTACT US

### STAY CONNECTED

TheInvisibleEnemy.org
(855) 513-6369
info@theinvisibleenemy.org

**Together, we will ensure no veteran, civilian employee, or family member is FORGOTTEN. Thank you for answering the call.**

The Invisible Enemy | PO Box 33657 | Las Vegas, NV 89133 US

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