



**The Richard H. Stewart, Jr.
American Legion Post # 543
St. James, NC 28461**

PRESS RELEASE

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**John Muuss
Historian/Public Relations**

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American Legion Post 543 Receives Commander and Adjutant of the Year Awards

On October 22, 2016, at the Department of North Carolina American Legion Convention, Rick Sessa was selected as the Post Commander of the Year and Gary Crowden was selected as Adjutant of the Year. This honor encompasses the entire state of North Carolina consisting of over 300 American Legion Posts.

From July 2014 through June 2016, Rick Sessa served as the Commander of American Legion Post 543. Previously, he held the position of Adjutant and was a charter member of Post 543 which was established in January 2012. Commander Sessa started his affiliation with the American Legion almost 40 years ago when his father, a decorated World War II veteran and Commander of Amity Post 791, signed him up after he enlisted in the service on July 24, 1969.

Gary Crowden has been a member of the American Legion for over 14 years, serving as the Adjutant for Post 543 and is currently serving as its Commander. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Crowden attended Purdue University where he was commissioned as an Infantry Officer in June 1969. Over a span of 21 years of active service, LTC Crowden held a variety

of command and staff positions. During his first assignment in Europe, he represented the United States in Central Treaty Organization rifle matches. He commanded three companies and served as Battalion Executive Officer in the 82nd Airborne Division. While in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division, he served as an Infantry Platoon Leader, Cavalry Troop Executive Officer, and an Air Cavalry Squadron Adjutant. LTC Crowden also commanded the Tacoma Area Army Recruiting Command inducting over 800 young men and women into the Army over a two-year period. As a member of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) during the Lebanese Civil War, he assisted in the United Nations' efforts to establish a military presence in the UN Controlled Buffer Zone between Israel and opposing forces in Southern Lebanon. As the Operations Officer for Observer Group Sinai, LTC Crowden assisted the UN with the planning and withdrawal of UN forces in the Sinai and its return to Egyptian control. As a result of his efforts in these peace-keeping endeavors, he and 297 other officers from 17 countries were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1988.