

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VII, NO 1

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

30 SEPTEMBER 2011

So much occurred during our absence that a few extra pages are necessary to cover it all. That's what happens when you take a break. The 20 October issue will be back to normal

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

VETERANS ~ A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY

In the lead up to the 2004 Presidential election Howard Dean began his stump speeches with a very powerful and effective opening. He would start his speech by saying repeatedly—“What I want to know is ...”, going on to list the issues on which both parties were failing. I hope that Governor Dean will forgive me for using his construct in this editorial.

Of course our asking, “What I want to know is ...”, has nothing to do with political parties; it has much to do with the Congress, the Courts, the Administration, the Executive Branch in general, and the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs in particular. Here are some of the things that “I want to know”.

What I want to know is why the Administration, and all administrations going back to Truman's, feel that when it is necessary to make a foreign policy point we must lead with our military? If this is our policy, why do we bother paying for a State Department?

Truman sent us into Korea and Eisenhower pulled us out—not a direct defeat, but no victory, merely a return to status quo with 36,516 US and estimated 3,000,000 Koreans from both sides dead plus at least 400,00 Chinese.

Johnson sent several million into an unnecessary war in an unknown area of the world, resulting in 58,212 US deaths, 6,000+ allied deaths 1,100,00 Vietnamese military and 2,000,000+ Vietnamese civilians (both sides)—and a defeat.

Reagan seemed to send troops into any tiny trouble area of his choosing whenever he needed a poll boost—no defeats, but no real victories.

Bush I sent Marines into Beirut for some obscure foreign policy reason and then Clinton withdrew them after one bombing, logging another defeat.

Bush I sent troops into Panama to capture and depose our client Manuel Noriega—more dead and another self-claimed “victory”.

Bush I sent troops into Somalia and then Clinton pulled them out after the Mogadishu incident to chalk up yet another defeat—and more dead.

Bush II decided that as long as we had a military we might as well use them to strengthen the office of the President (and to make him look like a warrior) so he started two wars with marginal reasons for the first and lies for the second.

Bush II and Obama have presided over these two open wars (and who knows how many clandestine wars) by using and re-using the military to exhaustion. The results, 10 years on, have been stalemate and, if not a complete defeat, no victory by any recognizable criteria. Of course it has also meant 7,521 US and allied dead, and an estimated 900,000+ Iraqi and Afghani military and civilians dead. In the US alone, as a result of this folly, we have 103,000 wounded and injured, and at least 300,000 more “walking wounded” with PTSD and TBI, perhaps more.

What I want to know is why, when we need to save money, active military and veterans are the immediate and most convenient target?

Please don't misunderstand. The administration and Congress do not attack any of that unnecessary military spending, those failed and failing defense projects, or any defense program that will adversely affect some voting bloc or Congressional district. They attack serving military, their dependents, and veterans with impunity, however.

Eisenhower sent married troops to overseas assignments and then denied their dependents travel to join them—saved a ton of money. He even added a year to the tours of many who were over there already.

Nixon promised recomputation of benefits to retirees in return for their vote and then reneged on the promise—twice—too expensive.

Carter froze pay raises for the military in a time of hyperinflation. He even outlawed the wearing of the uniform in the DC area and charged serving military to park their cars on military installations.

Reagan resumed pay raises but discounted retirement raises.

Bush I began reducing the military force and now we have serious under manning vis-à-vis the mission.

Clinton continued the reduction of the force and began the contributions for medical care with the conversion of CHAMPUS into the various levels of TRICARE with its deductibles and “cost-sharing”.

Bush II saved money initially by treating Reservists and Guardsmen and their dependents as second-class recipients of pay, benefits, medical treatment, and rehabilitation.

Obama proposes to raise fees for medical treatment and pharmaceuticals to all military and retirees.

What I want to know is why Congress doesn't stand up for the military and veterans on all of these issues except in their annual Veterans Day and Memorial Day speeches?

Yes, Congress has enacted various forms of the GI Bill, but when times got tough those benefits have been cut back over and over again. Right now they are not bad, but the execution of the program suffers—just ask a veteran student today.

Yes Congress enacted TRICARE for Life which benefits all retirees (full disclosure—I am one of those). But each time the budget brouhaha starts the question is raised whether or not this is “too much”, and can we still “afford it”.

What I want to know is why, when members of Congress claim that austerity is required and that trillions of dollars must be saved, is one of the first targets military retirement?

What I want to know is why Congress always asks if we can afford benefits for soldiers and retirees, yet never seems to ask if we can afford pointless wars?

What I want to know is why Congress insists that the pharmaceutical companies not be required to negotiate their outrageous drug prices with the American people, yet they freely and quickly jump on the bandwagon to charge veterans more for their drugs? They take a few million from veterans' pockets and hand that money plus billions more to the drug companies, who sequester the profits offshore and don't pay taxes on it.

What I want to know is why Congress apparently has made the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the only dictator in the Executive Branch, to wit:

38 USC 511 ~ DECISIONS MADE BY THE SECRETARY

(a) The Secretary shall decide all questions of law and fact necessary to a decision by the Secretary under a law that affects the provision of benefits by the Secretary to veterans or the dependents or survivors of veterans. ... the decision of the Secretary as to any such question shall be final and conclusive and may not be reviewed by any other official or by any court, whether by an action in the nature of mandamus or otherwise.

What I want to know is why are Representatives and Senator's promises to lobbyists more important to them and more binding on their actions than their promises to all of us, their constituents. They have even told us that their promises to lobbyists are more important and binding than their oath to protect and defend the Constitution!

What I want to know is why the Executive Branch does not demand excellent performance from its various departments, particularly the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and why is no one ever fired for incompetence?

What I want to know is why DoD and the VA are allowed, year after year, to pursue (and most often overrun) programs of questionable value, and to pay for them by cutting services to the people for whom their benefit programs are designed?

What I want to know is why the VA is allowed to continually restrict the locations where services are provided to veterans, and to constrain the services

provided at the remaining locations, yet they are never required to ameliorate the effect of their management decisions on the individual veteran?

What I want to know is why it can take an operation like the West LA Veterans Center 13 years to develop a “Master Plan”, when they are never required to meet the goals of any plan, “Master” or otherwise, current or previous? During this entire time that same operation freely gave away rights of use of various parts of the facility to commercial and civilian community enterprises and activities, while allowing the remaining physical plant that is supposed to serve veterans to deteriorate. They even let the dogs of their wealthy civilian neighbors use the grounds, but deny entry to veterans.

What I want to know is why is the Veterans Benefits Administration allowed to continually perform so abominably in the claims process—performance at a level that would cause most of their managers and personnel to be fired in industry—and there is no reaction from the White House, the VA itself or Congress?

What I want to know is why the VA believes—and has presented to the courts—that veterans have no constitutional right to their benefits?

What I want to know is why certain sitting federal judges agree that veterans do not have a constitutional right to their benefits, yet they believe in the constitutional right of corporations to have benefits and rights that logic and our basic high school civics course taught us only apply to living human beings?

What I want to know is why the Courts, in many states and municipalities oppose the establishment of veterans’ courts, even when they have been shown in places like Buffalo, New York to benefit not only the

veteran, but also the community at large? (The Governor of my own state, apparently at the prodding of the judicial establishment, just vetoed a law, passed without opposition in the legislature, authorizing the establishment of such courts throughout the state).

All of these questions and many more are legitimate questions not only by veterans, but also by all citizens in a republic.

So finally—

What I want to know is why should I even have to ask these questions?

What I want to know is will anyone ever answer the questions?

President Obama?

Speaker Boehner?

Chief Justice Roberts?

Secretary Pinetta?

Leader Reid?

Secretary Shinseki?

Someone?

Anyone?

“Is anybody there? Does anybody care?”

*G. Washington to Congress
from the musical “1776”*

The following applies to all matters of government, but lately it seems to particularly apply, by virtue of its absence, to actions with and against the VA:

“The government being the people's business, it necessarily follows that its operations should be at all times open to the public view. Publicity is therefore as essential to honest administration as freedom of speech is to representative government. "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none" is the maxim which should control in all departments of government.”

William Jennings Bryan

[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two organizations: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.net/; National Organization of Veterans’ Advocates (NOVA) www.vetadvocates.com .

Also, United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar <http://www.uscourts.cavc.gov/practitioners/>

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

STATUS OF OUR CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT

The following is the current status of our lawsuit as provided by Ryan Hassanein of Morrison & Foerster.

[The VA has petitioned for a re-hearing before the 9th Circuit]

On August 9, Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans United for Truth filed their response to VA's petition for rehearing.

As explained in the response, VA's petition raised four legal arguments as to why the case should be reheard, but VA did not even raise three of those arguments in the original appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This is particularly interesting because in raising the arguments, VA's petition described these issues as "questions of exceptional importance." Yet, they were not so important that VA felt it necessary to raise these issues in the original appeal.

The three new issues are:

- 1) VA now claims that veteran applicants do not have a constitutionally protected property interest in mental health care or disability compensation.
- 2) VA now claims that it enjoys sovereign immunity, and therefore courts cannot review its unconstitutional actions.
- 3) VA now claims that VCS and VUFT do not have standing to pursue their constitutional claims.

In addition to these new issues, VA also claims that the Veterans Judicial Review Act strips the court of any jurisdiction to hear these constitutional claims.

VA's position - if correct - would have far-reaching implications for veterans. It would mean that veterans have fewer constitutional rights than any other applicants for benefits. And it would mean that veterans have no recourse in Article III federal courts to challenge unconstitutional actions of VA.

In response, VCS and VUFT noted:

- 1) That the federal courts - under the Administrative Procedure Act and otherwise - are open to provide remedies for constitutional violations by federal agencies and federal officials;
- 2) That the Veterans Judicial Review Act does not prevent the district court from hearing these constitutional challenges;
- 3) That VCS and VUFT have standing to bring these claims on behalf of themselves (as organizations) AND on behalf of their members; and
- 4) That veterans have a constitutionally protected property interest in timely medical care and timely resolution of their appeals from service-connected death and disability compensation decisions, and that the Ninth Circuit panel was correct in holding that the egregious delays violated veterans' constitutional right to due process.

We believe that the Ninth Circuit panel correctly resolved all of these issues, and that rehearing is not necessary.

VUFT AND VCS MAKE THE NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL PAGE!

MORE EXCUSES AND DELAYS FROM THE V.A.

New York Times Editorial Board – 21 August 2011

It has been more than three months since a panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit accused the Department of Veterans Affairs of "unchecked incompetence" and unconscionable delays in caring for veterans with mental health problems. Instead of working with the plaintiffs to address the court's concerns, the V.A. is appealing the ruling.

The 2-to-1 decision in a lawsuit brought by two nonprofit groups, Veterans United for Truth and Veterans for Common Sense, found that the V.A. bureaucracy was so extremely slow and unresponsive that veterans were being denied their constitutional right to mental health care and to the timely adjudication of disability claims. It cited as evidence the high veteran suicide rate — an estimated 18 a day among the nation's 25 million veterans, and four to five a day among those being served by the V.A.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/2011/08/22/opinion/more-excuses-and-delays-from-the-va.html>

IF YOU BELIEVE THAT ALL OF THIS IS A NEW PROBLEM TIED TO THE CURRENT WARS, READ THIS 33-YEAR OLD ARTICLE

SOLDIERS OF MISFORTUNE

A report on the veterans of Vietnam—and on the often disgraceful treatment they have received from their countrymen. *Tracy Kidder March 1978*: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/1978/03/soldiers-of-misfortune/5723/>

.Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

8/12/09 Oral arguments

9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]

9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9th Circuit accepts the case.

05/20/11 The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in part in our favor, specifically on the Constitutional issues in our claim.

27 May Case Management Conference before the original trial judge, Judge Conti, in Federal District Court in San Francisco.

6/20/11 Waiting for Judge Conti to call out the next step

7/20/11 Still waiting. The VA has requested a hearing by the full court.

8/0/11 VA appeals to undo everything that has transpired over the last three years.

9/30/11 Still waiting

WE WILL KEEP YOU POSTED

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to www.vuft.org/membership.html and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures. Please encourage your friends who either are veterans, are related to veterans, or who support veterans' causes to join VUFT, Inc. at www.vuft.org/membership.html

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Donate" page at www.vuft.org/donate.html. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

The case is moving on and we must support our legal team. Please dig down and help us if you can. Any amount helps.

P L E A S E D O N A T E!

www.vuft.org/donate.html

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

The Veterans Groups listed below are the only groups we know of that are actively exposing the ongoing intentional THEFT of Veterans Benefits, from America's Disabled Veterans, by the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and/or upper-level management of the Department of Veterans Affairs. ... [Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans United for Truth] were only involved in the abuses in the Department of Veterans Affairs, but they have achieved more with a lawsuit in the 9th Circuit than the established Veterans Groups have in their entire existence. Their lawsuit gave Veterans Due Process Rights. We take our hat off to Veterans for Common Sense, and Veterans United for truth. Veterans are strongly urged to support those two outstanding Veterans Rights Groups, and the other Veterans Groups listed. /signed/ Veterans for Justice

[Veterans for Common Sense](#)

[Veterans United for Truth](#)

[Veterans for Due Process](#)

www.VetsForJustice.com

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RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

LAWMAKERS WANT MORE FOR STRUGGLING MILITARY HOMEOWNERS

Margaret Chadbourn - Reuters – 9/27/11

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A dozen Democratic lawmakers in the House of Representatives are urging regulators to give members of the military full access to federal programs for troubled homeowners and to look for other measures to help service members hit by the weak real estate market. The lawmakers specifically asked the Treasury Department and federal regulators to review the challenges of military members forced to relocate for work and risk losing their homes.

<More at: www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/27/us-usa-housing-military-idUSTRE78Q2HZ20110927>

SENATOR MURRAY CHAIRS HEARING TO EXAMINE THE HUMAN AND FINANCIAL COSTS OF WAR

PoliticalNews.me - Jul 29,2011

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Senator Patty Murray, Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, held a hearing to examine the real human and financial costs of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and how as a nation we need to plan to keep our promise to these veterans for the rest of their lives. "As we all know, when our nation goes to war, it's not just the costs of fighting that war that must be accounted for. We must also include the cost of caring for our veterans and families long after the fighting is over," said Senator Murray. "No matter what fiscal crisis we face, no matter how divided we may be over approaches to cutting our debt and deficit, and no matter how heated the rhetoric here in Washington D.C. gets - we must remember that we can't balance our budget at the expense of the health care and benefits our veterans have earned. The commitment we have to them is non-negotiable."

<More at: <http://politicalnews.me/?id=8479&pg=1&keys=>>

COBURN GIVES VETS A "TWO-FER"

SEN. COBURN TO VIETNAM VETERANS: NO MORE AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS

Vietnam Veterans of America - July 20, 2011

WASHINGTON, /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- "Sooner or later, some senator or congressman was going to target benefits earned by veterans," said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). "It seems that Senator Tom Coburn (R-Oklahoma) is the one who has taken aim and fired." Senator Coburn, a medical doctor with a well-earned reputation as a fiscal conservative, has offered an amendment to H.R. 2055, the *Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs and related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012*. His amendment would require proof of a "causal relationship" rather than a "positive association" of certain illnesses to Agent Orange exposure.

<More at: www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/sen-coburn-to-vietnam-veterans-no-more-agent-orange-claims-125915393.html>

TOM COBURN'S CUTS: MILITARY'S TRICARE PRIME HEALTH CARE PROGRAM TARGETED

Walter Pincus – July 24, 2011

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) wants to cut taxpayer funding for non-military elements of the Defense Department, starting with making retired, uninjured service members pay more for what he described as "extremely low-cost health care for life" for themselves, their spouses and dependents under the Tricare Prime system.

For military retirees eligible for Medicare, he also wants to raise the co-payments that they are charged to be in Tricare for life, the second payer for health care after Medicare. In addition, he wants to increase low fees that Tricare beneficiaries pay for pharmaceuticals purchased at their local drugstores.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/tom-coburns-cuts-militarys-tricare-prime-health-care-program-targeted/2011/07/20/gIQAIZI6WI_story.html>

POLITICIANS MAKE IT LOOK AS IF THEY ARE DOING SOMETHING FOR ONE GROUP OF VETS BY CUTTING BENEFITS TO OTHER VETS. WHAT A SURPRISE!

HOUSE COMMITTEE PASSES JOBS BILL FOR VETERANS

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Sep 8, 2011

A key House committee approved a \$1.5 billion veterans' employment bill Thursday that promises a new job retraining program for veterans aged 35 and older who have been out of work for at least 26 weeks as well as improvements in transition assistance, job placement and professional licensing initiatives for all veterans. The House Veterans' Affairs Committee passed the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act, HR 2433, on a 17-5 vote, with opposition coming from some Democrats opposed to how the employment programs would be funded. The bill would reduce pensions for some low-income veterans in nursing homes and delays previously planned reductions in fees on veterans' home loans.

Rep. Bob Filner of California, the committee's ranking Democrat, said using home loan fees to pay for employment aid is "strange, hypocritical and even tragic." He also said the programs in the bill would not provide any immediate jobs. "Retraining is great, but if there are no jobs what good does it do?"

<More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2011/09/military-house-committee-passes-jobs-bill-for-veterans-090811/>

SUBCOMMITTEE GRILLS VA ON VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

Hannah G. Vickers - Medill News Service - July 28, 2011

The Veterans Affairs Department was in the hot seat Thursday after an audit found it had awarded at least 1,400 contracts intended for veteran-owned companies to ineligible businesses. The contracts were specifically set aside for veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, but because companies can self-identify, many falsely identified themselves as veteran-owned.

"Seventy-six percent of the businesses we reviewed were ineligible for either the program and/or the specific [veteran-owned small businesses] or [service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses] contract award, potentially resulting in \$2.5 billion awarded to ineligible businesses over the next five years," said Belinda Finn, assistant inspector general for audits and evaluations at VA, testifying before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's oversight panel.

<More at: www.federaltimes.com/article/20110728/DEPARTMENTS04/107280307/>

EFFORTS TO PROTECT MILITARY PAY STALLED

September 23, 2011 • Terry Howell ~ *Congressman Fights His Party to Protect Military Pay*

With the threat of another government shutdown looming, the topic of military pay is once again making the news. Thankfully, the last two times the issue came up, a shutdown was avoided and military servicemember's pay was unaffected. However, the real issue is the threat continues to cause undue stress on military servicemembers and their families.

Earlier this year Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Texas) introduced the "Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011" to make sure that pay for military members is never used as a bargaining chip. His bill currently has 203 co-sponsors representing members from both parties. However, his bill has been languishing in the Armed Services Committee and Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "The military ought to be off the table. They should not be one of the poker chips to try to vote for a bill they otherwise wouldn't vote for," Gohmert said.

<More at: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/09/efforts-to-protect-military-pay-stalled/#ixzz1ZHM8Gdon>>

RETREAT – NEWS

APPARENTLY SPENDING MORE THAN ALL OTHER NATIONS COMBINED EQUATES TO "CUT TO THE BONE". IT WOULD BE A SHAME IF DEFENSE MONEY AND DEFENSE WORKERS STARTED BUILDING HIGHWAYS AND SCHOOLS, WOULDN'T IT?

DEFENSE CONTRACTORS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO END MILITARY SPENDING CUTS

September 14, 2011

Seeking to whip up public support for what's expected to be a hard-fought budget battle in Congress, a group of defense contractors launched a lobbying campaign urging an end to cuts in military spending. The campaign, named Second to None, was introduced by the Aerospace Industries Assn. trade group Wednesday at the National Press Club in Washington. The

group, which represents manufacturers and suppliers of aircraft, space systems and engines, warned of potential job losses and national security risks. ... In the face of staggering federal deficits, Congress is in the process of examining deep cuts in the Pentagon budget on top of more than \$350 billion in cuts slated over the next decade.

"Our position is: no more," Blakey said. "Defense has been cut to the bone."

<More at: http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/money_co/2011/09/aerospace-industry-launches-campaign-against-budget-cuts.html>

THAT'S JUST WHAT WE NEED! A FEW MORE WARS!

U.S. ESTABLISHES NEW DRONE BASES FOR AFRICAN SHADOW WARS

David Axe - September 21, 2011 |

Washington is quietly setting up at least two new East African drone bases, plus one on the Arabian Peninsula, to support the expanding U.S. shadow war against Islamic militants in Somalia and Yemen. An apparently new facility has been built in Ethiopia. In the island nation of Seychelles, a defunct airfield is being reactivated. A third base is being set up in or near Yemen. <More at: www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/09/new-drone-bases/>

MORE U.S. MILITARY ACTION IN PAKISTAN POSSIBLE: GRAHAM

Missy Ryan and Susan Cornwell - Reuters - 9/28/11

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Support is growing in the U.S. Congress for expanding American military action in Pakistan beyond drone strikes already used to target militants in Pakistani territory, a senior Republican U.S. senator says. The comments by Senator Lindsey Graham, an influential Republican voice on foreign policy and military affairs, follow remarks by the top U.S. military officer, Admiral Mike Mullen, accusing Pakistan last week of supporting the militant Haqqani network's September 13 attack on the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

<More at: www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/29/us-pakistan-usa-graham-idUSTRE78S0CZ20110929>

MORE VETERANS ARE USING PTSD AS DEFENSE IN CRIMINAL CASES

David Zucchino - Los Angeles Times - Sep. 19, 2011

RALEIGH, N.C. -- He killed her, Joshua Stepp admitted. He slammed the face of his 10-month-old stepdaughter into a carpeted floor, roughed her up as he changed her diaper, stuffed wet toilet paper down her throat, and soon she was dead. But Stepp, a 28-year-old former Army infantryman who saw combat in Iraq, insists that he is not guilty of first-degree murder. His post-traumatic stress disorder left him incapable of premeditating the killing of tiny Cheyenne Yarley in November 2009, he and his lawyers say.

... After a decade of combat overseas, growing numbers of veterans are relying on PTSD as a central element of their defenses in criminal cases. Stepp's trial is being closely watched as one measure of just how far defense lawyers are able to push in arguing that the disorder influences veterans' criminal behavior.

<More at: www.sacbee.com/2011/09/19/3921221/more-veterans-are-using-ptsd-as.html>

ARMY STUDY HIGHLIGHTS FEARS AND STRESS OF I.E.D.S AND AMPUTATION

James Dao - September 22, 2011

Are some service members on the front lines so concerned about the trauma of losing limbs from improvised explosives devices that they are asking "battle buddies" in their units to not give them proper emergency care if they are gravely wounded in combat? That possibility is raised in a new report from a task force appointed by the Army surgeon general to study the complex injuries to ground forces from mines or I.E.D.'s.

<More at: <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/22/army-study-highlights-fears-and-stress-of-i-e-d-s-and-amputation/>>

ARMY RESERVIST TOLD HE'S BARRED FROM RE-ENLISTMENT FOR SPEAKING TO TRUTHOUT ABOUT GUANTANAMO

Jason Leopold = Truthout - 25 August 2011

The US Army has told a reservist who has spent half his life in the military that he is barred from re-enlisting, asserting he "leaked" classified information to this reporter during an interview in which he spoke candidly about his experiences working as a guard at Guantanamo Bay eight years ago.

<More at: www.truth-out.org/army-accuses-reservist-classified-information-truthout-guantanamo/1314206461>

DON'T WORRY! THIS IS EASY COMPARED TO WHAT YOU WILL FACE WITH THE VA INJURED TROOPS FACE BUREAUCRACY TO LEAVE MILITARY

Kimberly Hefling - Associated Press - August 18, 2011

Staff Sgt. Nicholas Lanier has entered what he calls the "vast unknown." A combat veteran and father to four daughters, he can't remain in the military because of a serious back injury earned in Iraq. But he can't yet accept a civilian job because he doesn't know when the military will discharge him. He has no clue how much the government will pay him in disability compensation related to his injury, so he can't make a future budget. He just waits.

"I don't have any idea what the end state is going to be on the other side. When you have a family and you are trying to plan for the future, that's going to affect a lot of things," said Lanier, a 37-year-old soldier stationed at Fort Stewart, Ga., who walks with a limp because of related nerve damage. "The only known is that it takes time."

Thousands of troops are like Lanier: not fully fit to serve but in limbo for about two years waiting to get discharged under a new system that was supposed to be more efficient than its predecessor. And the delays are not only affecting service members, but the military's readiness as well. New troops can't enlist until others are discharged.

<More at: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/08/18/national/w000333D62.DTL&type=politics>>

NO MORE RETIRING AT 20 YEARS?

Stars and Stripes - July 26, 2011

A sweeping new plan to overhaul the Pentagon's retirement system would give some benefits to all troops and phase out the 20-year cliff vesting system that has defined military careers for generations, the Military Times newspapers reported.

The plan calls for a corporate-style benefits program that would contribute money to troops' retirement savings account rather than the promise of a future monthly pension, according to a new proposal from an influential Pentagon advisory board.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/no-more-retiring-at-20-years.html>

WESTSIDE VA HOSPITAL BOOTS THREE COMMERCIAL TENANTS

August 30, 2011 - 8:14 am

The Veterans Affairs hospital on the Westside is evicting a bus company, a car rental firm and a commercial laundry from its site to try to counter criticism that it puts commercial interests ahead of veterans. The three longtime tenants are among about two dozen private entities holding land-use agreements with the agency.

<More at: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2011/08/va-hospital.html>>

LOOKS AS IF WESTSIDE VA IS "BOOTING" JUST ABOUT EVERYONE

LOS ANGELES SAYS VA 'DUMPED' PATIENT AT SHELTER

Alexandra Zavis and Richard Winton - Times Staff Writers - August 14, 2011

The graying veteran in a wheelchair was found in the parking lot of a Westside cold weather shelter wearing hospital pants, carrying a urine bottle and screaming for help. Senior officials at the Los Angeles city attorney's office say they believe James Boykin was "dumped" Dec. 1 at the shelter after his toe was removed at the nearby Department of Veterans Affairs medical center because of a bone infection. Moreover, according to city prosecutors, VA officials blocked an investigation that could have shed light on whether there were other similar incidents.

"This was an unprecedented interference with an investigation," said Jeffrey B. Isaacs, who heads the office's criminal and special litigation branch. VA officials strongly dispute the allegations involving Boykin, adding that the city does not have authority to conduct a criminal investigation on federal property. Three internal inquiries and an investigation by the VA's Office of Inspector General found no evidence that Boykin was sent to the shelter against his will or without the means and ability to care for himself.

<More at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/aug/14/local/la-me-patient-dumping-20110814>>

IT'S NOT JUST WEST LA VA THAT'S GIVING VET LAND AWAY TO DEVELOPERS

BILL COMBATS SHRINKING OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Chris Mckenna - Times Herald-Record - 08/06/11

BUCHANAN NY— Veterans gathered Friday to support a bill by Rep. Nan Hayworth to stop the government from leasing land and empty buildings to private developers at one of two medical campuses serving vets in the Hudson Valley.

They're fighting plans by the Department of Veterans Affairs to consolidate services at the 184-acre Montrose complex in northern Westchester County onto 12 acres and invite developers to lease 160 of the remaining acres, including 780,000 square feet of building space. <More at: www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110806/NEWS/108060327/-1/SITEMAP>

IT MUST BE OK TO CHEAT VETERANS! EVERYONE IS DOING IT!

WOUNDED IRAQI VETERANS FACE A NEW BATTLE

Tim Arango and Yasir Ghazi - September 3, 2011

BAGHDAD — It is hard to say which is a worse indignity to the thousands of Iraqi soldiers and police officers who have suffered crippling injuries fighting alongside the Americans in a war that continues today: receiving subpar medical care from the government they fought to preserve, or a new law that could slash their already paltry benefits.

"We are defending the Iraqi people," said Ali Mohammad Heaal, who was a police trainee when he lost his left arm in a car bomb attack in 2005 and now works at a nongovernmental organization that advocates on behalf of wounded members of Iraq's security forces. "Right now, we feel humiliated." <More at: www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/world/middleeast/04iraq.html>

WHEELCHAIR-BOUND VIETNAM VET UNCOVERS MULTIMILLION DOLLAR MEDICAID FRAUD

NewsCore - September 14, 2011

TUCKERTON, N.J. – A wheelchair-bound Vietnam veteran with muscular dystrophy, from New Jersey, was enjoying his \$15 million whistleblower reward Wednesday, after he uncovered a multimillion dollar medical aid fraud.

Richard West, 63, of Tuckerton, first found his Medicaid benefits were wrongly maxed out in 2004 during a visit to the dentist and spent the past seven years investigating the scam, the New York Post reported.

Following the dentist visit, West returned home and examined his own records, when he found Maxim Healthcare -- the agency that provides his health aides -- had billed the government for care he never got, including visits from nurses he never met.

After spending months trying to get government officials to investigate the scam, he hired a lawyer and filed a federal lawsuit. His efforts resulted in the largest financial settlement in home healthcare fraud history.

<More at: www.foxnews.com/us/2011/09/14/wheelchair-bound-vietnam-vet-uncovers-multimillion-dollar-medical-aid-fraud/#ixzz1YzS3yZ8G>

FIRED ARMY WHISTLEBLOWER RECEIVES \$970K FOR EXPOSING HALLIBURTON NO-BID CONTRACT IN IRAQ

7/26

Bunnatine "Bunny" Greenhouse, the former chief oversight official of contracts at the Army Corps of Engineers, has reached a \$970,000 settlement six years after she was demoted for publicly criticizing a multi-billion-dollar, no-bid contract to Halliburton—the company formerly headed by then-Vice President Dick Cheney. Greenhouse had accused the Pentagon of unfairly awarding the contract to Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root. Testifying before Congress in June 2005, she called the contract the worst case of government abuse she had ever witnessed in her 20-year career. Just two months after that testimony, Greenhouse was demoted at the Pentagon, ostensibly for "poor performance."

<More at: www.democracynow.org/2011/7/26/exclusive_fired_army_whistleblower_receives_970k>

'TORTURED' VETERAN TO SUE RUMSFELD

August 5, 2011

A US former military contractor who claims he was jailed and tortured by the US army in Iraq has been allowed by a judge to sue the former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld personally for damages.

<More at: www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/world/2011/0805/1224301873082.html>

DATA BREACH EXPOSES 4.9 MILLION TRICARE PATIENTS

Sig Christenson – Express-News - September 29, 2011

One of the Pentagon's largest contractors said late Wednesday it had discovered a data breach affecting as many as 4.9 million patients who have received care from military facilities in San Antonio since 1992. Science Applications International Corp. said the breach involved backup computer tapes from an electronic health care record. Some of the information included Social Security numbers, addresses, phone numbers and private health information for patients in 10 states.

A statement posted on the Defense Department's Tricare health system website said no credit card or bank account information was on the backup tapes.

<More at: www.mysanantonio.com/news/military/article/Tricare-patient-data-exposed-2194067.php#ixzz1ZMWZKhTF>

TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Every Sunday	1300-1600	Wilson & San Vicente Blvds. NE Corner, Los Angeles, CA	Save Our Veterans Land	Veterans Revolution	
9/29-10/2		Miller - Boles Funeral Home Sanford, NC	The Wall That Heals	Boles Funeral Homes	
10/1-10/2		Libby, MT	Resource Fair	Allen Erickson, Sr	406-756-7304
10/6-10/7		Las Vegas, NV	Resource Fair	Gregory Abernathy	702-636-3000 x6054
10/6-10/9		Everhart Museum of Natural History Scranton, PA		Everhart Museum of Natural History	
10/7-10/8	8 AM-	Doubletree Hotel Ontario Airport 222 North Vineyard Ave. Ontario, CA	CalVet Women Veterans Conference	CalVet	
10/11		Nevada County Fairgrounds, CA	Resource Fair	Chaplain Dennis Fruzza	530-273-3000
10/11		Charlotte, NC	Resource Fair	Joe Rapley	704-900-9337
10/11-10/13		Dixon, CA	Stand Down	Patrick Stasio	707-344-3743
10/11		Times Square / Military Island New York City, NY		HISTORY®	
10/12-10/13		Detroit, MI	Resource Fair	Normal Wilcox	248-808-0929
10/13		Bakersfield, CA	Resource Fair	Deborah Johnson	661-695-3626
10/13		Mobile, AL	Resource Fair	Dan Williams	251-450-3345
10/13		Bloomington, IN	Resource Fair	Maryjane McNabb	317-496-9193
10/13		Independence National Historical Park Philadelphia, PA		HISTORY®	
10/14-10/17		La Salle College High School Wyndmoor, PA		La Salle College High School	
10/15		Peoria, IL	Resource Fair	Vicki Hightower	309-369-8878
10/15		Troutdale, OR	Resource Fair	Jerry Criswell	503-669-7112
10/20-10/22		Redding, CA	Stand Down	Jim Richards	530-356-0342
10/20-10/24		Coweta County Veterans Center Newnan, GA		Coweta County Veterans Association	
10/21		Fr. Walton Beach, FL	Resource Fair	Cathy Magnuson	850-862-9215
10/21-10/22		Huntsville, AL	Resource Fair	Sandra Childress	256-715-0556
11/9	7PM	Cipriani 42 nd St 110 E 42 nd St, NY, NY	5 th Annual Heroes Gala	IAVA	Expensive

We are a non-partisan organization. We will advertise all legitimate veterans' events, regardless of purpose or affiliation.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

FIGURES LIE AND LIARS FIGURE ~ THIS NUMBER DOESN'T JIBE WITH EVERY OTHER ESTIMATE, INCLUDING THE US CENSUS BUREAU. I WOULD BET THAT IT COMES FROM THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, NOT FROM THE BEAN COUNTERS.

HOMELESS VETERAN NUMBERS DROP BY 55,000: VA

Molly O'Toole - Jul 15 2011

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The number of homeless veterans on any given night has dropped by over 55,000, the Department of Veterans Affairs said on Friday, due in part to programs like the \$46.2 million announced Thursday to provide permanent housing for 6,790 homeless veterans.

Despite a still-stagnant economy and increased troop drawdowns leading to potentially higher numbers of homeless veterans, VA Deputy Press Secretary Drew Brookie said the number of veterans that are homeless each night has dropped from an estimated 131,000 in 2009 to 75,700 as of June this year.

MAYBE THEY DIDN'T BOTHER TO COUNT MARIEL AND HER CHILDREN

INVISIBLE WOMEN: THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS FEMALE VETERANS OUTPACES HELP

Drew Brooks - Staff writer - Aug 14, 2011

For a week in July, Mariel Marrero and her two children visited the Cumberland County Headquarters Library every day. Between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Marrero, 30, and her children - ages 10 and 12 - sought out the library not for its books, but for its air conditioning. Their only alternative, Marrero said, was to stay in parks in nearly 100-degree heat. At night, Marrero and her children slept at the Salvation Army shelter on Alexander Street.

"You always hear about the men," Marrero said of homeless veterans. "But we're out there, too. People just don't see us."

Marrero is one of about 90 female veterans who are homeless in the Fayetteville area, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. She's also part of a growing trend. <More at: www.fayobserver.com/articles/2011/08/14/1111718>

VETERANS COURTS EASE THE WAY

Greg Barnes - Staff writer - Sep 26, 2011

His third drunken driving charge be damned, Vietnam veteran Bob Andries stood before a judge and demanded respect. Andries had spent two years in Vietnam as a machine gunner aboard a helicopter. The recipient of a Purple Heart, he returned stateside in 1970 as an angry, broken man who drank heavily to numb the symptoms of post-traumatic stress and other mental health problems.

Forty years later, he appeared in District Court in Ionia, Mich., and seethed after learning that a drunken driving conviction from 1972 was being held against him. "He was a time bomb," said the judge, Raymond Voet, who hasn't forgotten the glare Andries gave him that day. "We didn't know what he was going to do."

Voet threw Andries in jail, realizing in that instant what the court needed to do to help him. Voet and other judicial officials had been scheduled to meet later that day to discuss forming a court tailored to rehabilitating veterans with mental illnesses or drug and alcohol problems directly related to their time in service. Voet and the others decided Andries could not wait. On that day - Oct. 9, 2009 - the first veterans court in Michigan, and one of the first in the nation, was born.

Today, at least 77 veterans courts operate in 28 states. The first one started in Buffalo, N.Y., in 2008. Although there is no way to gauge the success of veterans courts - analysts say it is too early to tell - judges who run them universally say they are making a big difference in veterans' lives. Successful completion of a veterans court typically means charges are reduced or dropped.

"It's the least we can do for them, to get them back in the community and be productive in the community." said David L. Jordon, a District Court judge who leads a veterans court in East Lansing, Mich.

<More at: www.fayobserver.com/articles/2011/09/26/1122288>

VETS WITH PTSD, GOVERNMENT REACH SETTLEMENT

Kimberly Hefling - Associated Press - July 29, 2011

WASHINGTON - More than a thousand Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder would be given lifetime disability retirement benefits such as military health insurance under the terms of a settlement reached between the government and the veterans.

... The settlement stems from a 2008 class action lawsuit filed in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in Washington by veterans unable to serve, at least in part, because of the anxiety disorder who said they were illegally denied benefits.

The law requires the military to give a disability rating of at least 50 percent to troops discharged for PTSD, but each of the plaintiffs received a disability less than that, said Bart Stichman, co-executive director of the National Veterans Legal Services Program, a nonprofit organization that represented the veterans.

As part of the lawsuit, the military in January 2010 said it would expeditiously review the cases. But attorneys for the veterans grew concerned about the pace in which the cases have been reviewed by military boards. One of the boards reviewing the cases was moving so slow, it was going to take seven years for all the cases to be reviewed, Stichman said.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/vets-with-ptsd-government-reach-settlement.html>

AFTER 8 DEPLOYMENTS, ARMY RANGER TAKES OWN LIFE

8/24/11

Wash. – A soldier's widow says his fellow Army Rangers wouldn't do anything to help him before he took his own life – after eight deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The Army found Staff Sgt. Jared Hagemann's body at a training area of Joint Base Lewis McChord a few weeks ago. A spokesman for the base tells KOMO News that the nature of the death is still undetermined. But Staff Sgt. Hagemann's widow says her husband took his own life – and it didn't need to happen.

"It was just horrible. And he would just cry," says Ashley Hagemann.

Ashley says her husband Jared tried to come to grips with what he'd seen and done on his eight deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. "And there's no way that any God would forgive him – that he was going to hell," says Ashley. "He couldn't live with that anymore."

Ashley says her Army Ranger husband wanted out of the military. "He just wanted to know what it felt like to be normal again," she says.

Staff Sgt. Hagemann had orders to return to Afghanistan this month for a ninth tour of duty.

<More at: <http://coalitionforveterans.org/2011/08/widow-after-8-deployments-army-ranger-takes-own-life/>>

ARMY BASE ON THE BRINK

Winston Ross - September 9, 2011

At an Army base near Seattle, soldiers are committing suicide, murdering their families—and in one case, waterboarding their own kids. Winston Ross reports from a base on the brink.

<More at: <http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/43-43/7386-army-base-on-the-brink>>

ARMY SUICIDES HIT RECORD IN JULY

Greg Jaffe

The U.S. Army suffered a record 32 suicides in July, the most since it began releasing monthly figures in 2009.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington/post/army-suicides-hit-record-in-july/2011/08/12/gIAPWaQBJ_blog.html>

PANETTA: ANY RETIREMENT CHANGES WON'T AFFECT SERVING MILITARY

Jim Garamone - American Forces Press Service - Aug. 19, 2011

In his clearest statement on the subject to date, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said today that if the military retirement system changes, it will not affect serving service members.

"I will not break faith," the secretary said during a roundtable meeting with military media representatives in the Pentagon.

<More at: www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=65089>

G.I. BILL CUTS: VETERANS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE FACE UNCERTAIN FUTURES

Amanda M Fairbanks - 8/24/11

MADISON, Wis. -- Nearly two years ago, Stephen Lee uprooted his wife and two children from their home in Clarksville, Tenn., to study political science here at the University of Wisconsin. As a 31-year-old Army veteran, Lee took advantage of one of the most successful tuition assistance programs in the nation's history -- the G.I. Bill. In exchange for his nine years of military service, the federal government agreed to pay for Lee's college education.

But on a brittle February night, the rules suddenly changed. At a Vets for Vets meeting on campus, Lee listened in disbelief as a university official told his classmates that the government had reneged on its original promise. In December, Congress voted to cut their G.I. Bill benefits.

Lee closed his eyes and bowed his head. The official said that, beginning in August, out-of-state residents at the university would face caps on their tuition assistance pegged at whatever in-state students had to pay. Lee, who became a Tennessee resident while stationed at Fort Campbell, now owed an extra \$8,000 per semester. Beginning next fall, he and 56 other out-of-state residents attending the university on the G.I. Bill needed to come up with \$16,000 in order to finish out the year -- an increase in cost none of them could afford without going into debt.

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/24/gi-bill-veterans-college_n_883152.html>

WAR VETS STRUGGLE TO FIT BACK INTO SOCIETY

John Ramsey - Fayetteville (N.C. Observer - September 26, 2011

Homeless and feeling helpless, Joshua Crowell called the Department of Veterans Affairs to say he felt like killing himself.

Three months earlier, a friend had driven the 23-year-old Army veteran to the gates of Fort Bragg and dropped him off. Crowell had been booted out of the Army on an other-than-honorable discharge for misconduct.

"That meant I lost my college, I lost my unemployment, I lost everything I'd worked for," Crowell said.

On July 29, when police responded to his threat of suicide at a park in downtown Fayetteville, Crowell told them he wanted to jump off a bridge or into traffic.

Police took Crowell to the psychiatric ward at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, where he was diagnosed with depression.

Five days later, Crowell was back on the streets, still homeless, broke and alone.

<More at: www.stripes.com/scratch/4/collateral-damage-war-veterans-struggle-to-fit-back-into-society-1.156109>

VETS' HEALTH RECORDS DESTROYED

WTVD Raleigh NC - August 03, 2011

RALEIGH (WTVD) -- Since local veterans brought to ABC11's attention the roadblocks they're facing because they have few medical records from the time they served our county, an investigation has now revealed what happened to those records.

In May, 82nd Airborne veteran Sgt. Gerry Propst said he was being denied military benefits for service-related injuries because he didn't have most of the medical records from his five years of Army service during Operation Desert Storm. The Army now admits they ordered troops in the first Gulf War to destroy their critical wartime records.

<More at: <http://abclocal.go.com/wtvd/story?section=news/troubleshooter&id=8286665>>

AFTER 10 YEARS ARE THE DOCS FINALLY FIGURING THINGS OUT? SEE THE NEXT 6.

MILITARY MEMBERS FACE RAISED RISK OF OSTEOARTHRITIS: STUDY

HealthDay News - July 1, 2011

U.S. military personnel are at significantly increased risk of developing osteoarthritis compared to civilians, a new study has found. The physical demands of military service may play a role in the increased prevalence of the painful joint disease, the researchers suggested in the report.

<More at: <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/pain/articles/2011/07/01/military-members-face-raised-risk-of-osteoarthritis-study>>

RIGORS OF WAR LEAVE YOUNG TROOPS BATTLING ARTHRITIS

Seth Robbins - Stars and Stripes - September 26, 2011

BAUMHOLDER, Germany -- Staff Sgt. Thomas Wenzke would sit for hours, hunched over the five-ton truck's window, scanning for hints of bombs along Iraq's garbage-lined roadways. The truck -- reinforced with heavy armored plates that had ruined its suspension -- motored over crater-sized potholes, and Wenzke's spine would feel every jolt. His body armor, weighing 50 to 60 pounds, added to the strain.

Convoy forays like this lasted from three to 30 hours, he said, depending on the number of breakdowns and firefights. "By the time we got back," he said, "I'd be bent over and hobbled like I was an old man of 50 or 60."

<More at: www.stripes.com/news/rigors-of-war-leave-troops-battling-arthritis-at-a-young-age-1.156110>

IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN WAR LUNG INJURY IS COMMON

September 6, 2011

A new report reveals that respiratory illness is common among soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The study was reported in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine that respiratory symptoms of returning soldiers are high necessitating testing. <More at: <http://networkedblogs.com/mFqI6>>

SCIENTISTS SAY PENTAGON MISLEADS ON DUST STUDY

Kelly Kennedy - USA TODAY - 7/5/2011

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is falsely claiming its research shows that airborne dust in Iraq and Afghanistan poses no health risk to U.S. troops, say three scientists whose review of that research found it riddled with mistakes.

Military officials then falsely said the review of their research backed their conclusion that the dust in the two war zones is no different from that in California, scientists Philip Hopke, Mark Utell and Anthony Wexler say.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-07-06-dust-risk-troops-Pentagon_n.htm>

AMPUTATIONS UP SHARPLY FOR TROOPS IN AFGHAN WAR

Pauline Jelinek - Associated Press - September 21, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The counterinsurgency tactic that is sending U.S. troops out on foot patrols among the Afghan people, rather than riding in armored vehicles, has contributed to a dramatic increase in arm and leg amputations, genital injuries and the loss of multiple limbs following blast injuries.

These devastating injuries affect unit morale. They also give rise to talk on the battlefield that some troops had made secret pacts not to help each other survive if they were so severely injured, a new report said Tuesday.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/amputations-up-sharply-for-troops-in-afghan-war.html>

SEIZURE DISORDER DIAGNOSED LATER IN VETERANS THAN CIVILIANS: STUDY

HealthDay News - Sept. 6

Vets with psychogenic non-epileptic seizures may go 5 years without diagnosis, researchers say

Veterans who suffer emotion-related seizures that are not caused by epilepsy can go undiagnosed for much longer than civilians with the condition, according to a new study. <More at: <http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=656523>>

BUT THEY APPARENTLY CAN'T FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM STILL A CLUNKER

Bob Brewin - 07/29/11

The joint Defense/VA Integrated Disability Evaluation System, under development since 2007, is supposed to expedite the process to determine whether troops remain on active duty or, if they are discharged, what their benefits will be. But this supposedly new and improved system cannot speedily handle the most obvious of cases, as Crystal Nicely, whose Marine husband Todd lost both arms and legs in Afghanistan in 2010 told a hearing of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee this Tuesday.

Nicely said that while IDES "is supposed to be a faster, more efficient way to complete the evaluations and transition service members, that has not been our experience." For example, Nicely said, "a very simple narrative summary of how my husband was injured sat on someone's desk for almost 70 days waiting for a very simple approval." She said the system started to work only after the intervention of Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. Since 43,000 troops have been wounded over the past decade in Afghanistan and Iraq, Murray will be mighty busy if she has to intervene in the thousands of cases still stuck in IDES.

<More at: http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/07/integrated_disability_evaluation_system_still_a_clunker.php>

MILITARY CONTINUES OFF-LABEL DRUG USE, DESPITE CONCERNS

Bob Brewin - 09/28/2011

The U.S Central Command continues to back the use of Seroquel, a powerful antipsychotic, to treat insomnia in troops deployed to combat zones despite an expert panel's recommendation six months ago to cease the practice. The drug, known generically as quetiapine, has been linked to adverse effects, including heart failure.

<More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20110928_6486.php>

VA SPENT \$717 MILLION ON A DRUG DEEMED AS EFFECTIVE AS A PLACEBO

Bob Brewin - 08/22/2011

Over the past decade, the Veterans Affairs Department spent \$717 million for an anti-psychotic drug to treat post-traumatic stress disorder that a recent study shows is no more effective than a placebo. Data provided by the department in response to a Nextgov query showed that VA doctors wrote more than 5 million prescriptions for risperidone from October 2000, the beginning of fiscal 2001, through June 2010.

... But a paper by VA researchers published Aug. 2 in the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded, "treatment with risperidone compared with placebo did not reduce PTSD symptoms." <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20110822_6423.php>

300 MONTANA VETERANS WAIT FOR ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY AS VA TRIES TO RECRUIT SURGEON

Cindy Uken - The Gazette Staff - August 6, 2011

At least 300 Montana veterans who need orthopedic surgery are on a waiting list while the Department of Veterans Affairs Montana Health Care System works to recruit a full-time surgeon to help ease the growing backlog of disabled — and often disgruntled — veterans.

To receive surgery, Montana veterans without private insurance must travel out of state for care or pay for it out of their pockets. To compound this problem, Montana veterans are being told that the VA facilities in Denver and Salt Lake City are too busy to accept Montana patients. Subsequently, they are being placed on a waiting list that is approaching two years.

<More at: http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/article_6a3b2018-8ecd-58e8-8b12-ac4d9d65d348.html#ixzz1ZIC6QaHl>

EVEN AFTER THE JUDGE RULED IN HER FAVOR IT TOOK TWO MORE YEARS

WIDOW OF VETERAN GRANTED BENEFITS AFTER ELEVEN YEARS

Penelope Gronbeck - South Portland, ME (PRWEB) –p June 30, 2011

In 2000, Ethel Brown, the widow of Vietnam Veteran Thomas T. Brown, made a claim for benefits based on her belief that her husband had contracted stomach cancer and subsequently died because of Agent Orange exposure during his service in Vietnam. Mr. Brown had done two tours of duty in Vietnam and Mrs. Brown contended that she should be granted DIC (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation) benefits. In 2008 Mrs. Brown hired the law firm of Jackson & MacNichol to represent her when her claim had reached the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in Washington, DC. (Docket No. 07-2220). The firm persuasively briefed the case and on July 1, 2009 Judge Davis wrote a single judge opinion reversing the unfavorable decision by the Board of Veterans Appeals and remanding the case for a new hearing by the Board.

... Mrs. Brown will now get her monthly benefits retroactive to the filing of her claim back in 2000.

<More at: www.prweb.com/releases/2011/6/prweb8606589.htm>

IT'S NOT JUST THE VA~ STATES ARE DOING IT TOO!

UNION SAYS VETERANS HOME RESIDENTS MAY SUFFER UNDER PRIVATIZATION PLAN

Paul Egan/ Detroit News Lansing Bureau – 9/25/11

Lansing— Union officials expressed concern Tuesday about the quality of care at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans as a state official confirmed plans to lay off all 170 resident care aides effective Oct. 1.

The state is turning the work over to a private contractor as part of a plan to save about \$4.2 million, said Jason Allen, senior deputy director for veterans affairs in the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

<More at: www.detnews.com/article/20110920/POLITICS02/109200396/1361/Union-says-veterans-home-residents-may-suffer-under-privatization-plan>

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF HOW YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS ARE SUPPORTING YOU POLL: RESPONDENTS DIVIDED OVER WHITE HOUSE PLAN TO INCREASE HIRING OF VETERANS

Vicki Needham - 08/09/11

Half of those asked in a recent poll support President Obama's proposal to provide tax incentives for businesses that hire military veterans to combat the high level of unemployment. In a Rasmussen poll released Tuesday, 50 percent favor such a program aimed at hiring veterans, **while 32 percent oppose the plan and 18 percent are undecided.**

<More at: <http://thehill.com/blogs/on-the-money/801-economy/176123-poll-half-supportive-of-white-house-plan-to-increase-hiring-of-veterans>>

U.S. NAVY VETERANS CHARITY SCAM SENDS FLORIDA WOMAN TO PRISON FOR 5 YEARS

James F. McCarty - The Plain Dealer - August 10, 2011

Blanca Contreras, 39, of Tampa, pleaded guilty in June to engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, aggravated theft, money laundering and tampering with records. Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Judge Kathleen Sutula imposed the sentence at a hearing Wednesday morning. **Contreras represented herself at times as the acting treasurer, acting secretary and chief fiscal officer of the Ohio chapter, and other state chapters, of the U.S. Navy Veterans Association, a fictitious charity that claimed to aid Navy veterans.**

The agency collected an estimated \$100 million nationally from 2002 to 2010, including more than \$2 million from Ohio donors, according to Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, whose office worked the case with the state Bureau of Investigation and Identification. <More at: <http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/print.html>>

OPPOSITION TO VETERANS HOUSING FACILITY

Chris Curry - June 28th, 2011

Over the last several days, the Alachua County [FL] Commission's email has been inundated with **messages voicing opposition to the transitional housing facility for veterans** planned at the Gainesville Hotel & Conference Center, 7417 Newberry Road. That hotel off Newberry and Tower roads is in the midst of foreclosure proceedings.

<More at: <http://citylimits.blogs.gainesville.com/14830/opposition-to-veterans-housing-facility/>>

JUDGE TOSSES USS COLE FAMILIES' SUIT

Tim McGlone - Virginian-Pilot - September 21, 2011

NORFOLK -- Families of the 17 Sailors killed in the October 2000 attack on the destroyer Cole were denied another attempt to recover millions of dollars more from Sudan. **A federal judge here on Monday threw out their lawsuit, saying they filed too late. He also said Congress overstepped its authority in passing a law intended to help the families.**

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/judge-tosses-uss-cole-families-suit.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

RETIRED ARMY GEN. JOHN SHALIKASHVILI DIES

July 23, 2011 5:15:01 PM

Retired Army Gen. John Shalikashvili, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the 1990s, has died at 75, The Washington Post has confirmed. He succeeded Colin Powell as chairman under President Bill Clinton, serving from 1993 to 1997.

NGUYEN CAO KY, WHO RULED SOUTH VIETNAM FOR 2 YEARS DURING VIETNAM WAR, DIES AT 80

Associated Press - Published: July 22

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Nguyen Cao Ky, the flamboyant former air force general who ruled South Vietnam with an iron fist for two years during the Vietnam War, died Saturday. He was 80. Ky died at a hospital in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he was being treated for a respiratory complication, his nephew in Southern California told The Associated Press. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/nguyen-cao-ky-who-ruled-south-vietnam-for-2-years-during-vietnam-war-dies-at-80/2011/07/22/qQA1hnMUI_story.html

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2011

OP'N IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,721/395 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,408/69
WOUNDED US [9/6/11]	31,921/268
OTHER US CASUALTIES [9/6/11]	40,374/2,013
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [9/6/11]	223/8
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [9/26/11]	≥ 112,253–1,455,590
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OP'N ENDURING FREEDOM (3,646 DAYS)

KILLED US	1,791
WOUNDED US [9/6/11]	13,700
OTHER CASUALTIES US [9/6/11]	14,487
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [7/5/11]	67
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	954
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$797,251,598,284
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$459,634,472,686

NOTE: SOME NUMBERS DO NOT CHANGE BETWEEN ISSUES BECAUSE UPDATED FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. ** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

This week the Army and Marine Corps announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 1,137 fewer reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 70,251; Navy Reserve, 4,719; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 11,145; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,681, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 674. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 92,470, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated is on line at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20110927nqr.pdf>

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

ARMY TO RECOGNIZE CIVIL AFFAIRS BRIGADE

FORT HOOD, Texas -- The U.S. Army will officially recognize a new brigade here during an activation ceremony scheduled Friday, Sept. 30 at 9 a.m. at III Corps Headquarters, Fort Hood, Texas. The 85th Civil Affairs Brigade will become the first active duty civil affairs brigade for Forces Command (FORSCOM). The brigade, made up of five regionally aligned battalions, will bear the responsibility of supporting conventional forces in garrison and deployed.

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

VETERAN CAREGIVERS ELIGIBLE FOR PAYMENTS, FIRST STIPENDS HAVE BEEN AWARDED

Cindy Uken - The Gazette Staff - August 20, 2011

Veterans may review the criteria for eligibility and download the Family Caregiver program application (VA CG 10-10) at www.caregiver.va.gov. The application enables the veteran to designate a primary family caregiver and secondary family caregivers if needed.

NEW PRESCRIPTION COPAYS EFFECTIVE OCT. 1, 2011

The new prescription copayments below will take effect on Oct. 1, 2011. Copayments for active duty service members will remain \$0.

	30 Day Supply Retail Pharmacy	90 Day Supply Home Delivery
Formulary Generic	\$5	\$0
Formulary Brand	\$12	\$9
Non-Formulary	\$25	\$25

<http://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/news/newCopays.shtml>

GULF WAR CLAIMS DEADLINE

Week of September 19, 2011

For Gulf War Veterans with certain ailments like: Chronic fatigue syndrome; Fibromyalgia; Functional gastrointestinal disorders; and other undiagnosed illnesses the current deadline for when the condition must have "appeared" is on or before December 31, 2011. If you have any conditions that are "undiagnosed" and you did a tour in the Middle East, this could apply to you. The VA is working to extend the deadline to December 31, 2018. If this occurs, it will be great news for veterans and military members who develop symptoms after the 2011 cut-off. However, since there is no guarantee that the deadline will be extended, veterans suffering from undiagnosed conditions are encouraged to talk with their Veteran Service Officer about filing a disability claim for these conditions. Check out the [Military Advantage Blog](http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/09/new-disability-filing-deadline/) <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/09/new-disability-filing-deadline/> to get more information.

VA POSTS ONLINE LIST OF SHIPS ASSOCIATED WITH PRESUMPTIVE AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE

WASHINGTON, Sep 02, 2011 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- Veterans who served aboard U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.

An updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships confirmed to have operated on Vietnam's inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crewmembers sent ashore, has been posted at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/ to assist Vietnam Veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits.

NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at scook@vuft.org; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. Sandy Cook, Editor mailto:scook@vuft.org

If you need to call us, our number is 1.805.530.6417.

The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.