

SOUND OFF!



VOL. IV, NO 2

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 SEPTEMBER 2008

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

I/YOU CAN'T HEAR YOU/ME!

There are 24 million veterans, some of whom belong to one or more of several thousand veterans' organizations. Each one of those organizations has an agenda, and each one of those veterans has a worldview. We are largely ineffective because we can't get past the sheer numbers of worldviews and because we hang up on the inconsistent agendas of our organizations.

Much of the problem stems from the fact that we often shout our differing and inconsistent worldviews at each other, drowning out our generally consistent point of view on almost all veterans' issues.

Some of us believe, in our worldview, that it is America's role to set the world on the path to democracy, no matter what that takes, including war. Some of us believe, in our differing worldview, that it is America's role to set the example for others so that they can find their own way to democracy. And, some of us believe, in yet another worldview, that we ought to keep our noses out of other people's business. These worldviews are not easy to reconcile.

Some of our organizations believe that their role is to support the American government regardless. Some of our organizations believe that their role is to only support the veteran or the retiree in his or her everyday travails. Yet other organizations believe that it is their role to question our government when it seems to falter. Others believe that their role is to be seen publicly to represent the veteran before Congress or before executive agencies regardless of the outcome. A very few believe that their sole rule is to provide a venue for war stories accompanied by a decent drink.

Despite all these differences, with a little work it would not be hard to find a common purpose and a

common point of view. We need to do two things. First, we have to remember that we are all patriots, and that we never have to prove that again, especially to each other. Second, we need to ignore our differences and concentrate on the common problem we all see.

The common problem is neither hard to find nor to describe. Simply, it is that while the Congress has made some fairly good laws, successive administrations have not "faithfully upheld" those laws. The associated problem is that Congress, once it passes those laws, doesn't follow up -- doesn't supervise -- maybe doesn't even care very much. The final piece of the problem is that the smaller the percentage of the public that is producing veterans -- the fewer families actually sending their sons and daughters to serve -- less than one half of one percent -- the less the public is interested in the plight of veterans.

If all of us, despite our worldview or our point of view or the agenda of our organizations, just concentrated on this real problem we might be able to have a real effect. After all, 24 million veterans are potentially 24 million votes: add a minimum of one family member or friend and you are talking about nearly 50 million votes, or about one third of all eligible voters. So, even though only one half of one percent of American families currently have members serving in the military, all veterans together with their families and friends could swing elections. Working together, we might even get Congress members' attention.

Unfortunately, because we concentrate most on our differences instead of focusing on our common problem, we seldom have the effect we desire. I shout at you, you shout at me, and neither one of us listens to

the other. We revel in our differences with accusations like:

- "My war was a real war, not like yours."
- "My way is patriotic -- yours isn't."
- "You weren't a real soldier; you weren't in combat."
- "We won our war: you lost yours."
- "I was on the ground; you were (in the air/on the ocean/in the rear)."
- "You may have served, but you never went to war."
- "We support the flag-burning amendment; you don't, therefore you're not a good American."
- "You question whether we are winning in Iraq -- that's un-American."
- "You say bring the troops home -- that means you don't support the troops."
- "You say "we must win" and I haven't heard anyone describe what "winning" means in Iraq."

All of the shouting obscures the real problems. Instead of fighting each other, we should be fighting for our brothers and sisters. Specifically we should be fighting for:

- truth in recruiting
 - adequate training, with extensive area training
 - full-up equipment and armor
 - never sending our children to war unless there is clear and present danger, and then only if all other options have failed
 - clear missions including defining success
 - reasonable rotation of tours
 - total support for families during deployments
 - an end to stop-loss
 - seamless transition from service to the DVA
 - full and timely medical benefits
 - guaranteed returned to civilian jobs for Reserve and National Guard
 - lifetime recognition of delayed stress
- and most of all,**
- when war comes, **universal sacrifice**

I will listen to you if you will listen to me. I swear to you that I will not to bring up that which divides us. Together we can do this. [Ed.]

REVELLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims "Public List of Practitioners" are members of the court's bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

Membership is open, free, and very worthwhile! Get your fellow veterans, and veterans' family members to join VUFT! We are beginning to be heard, and we need you to help us get the message out. If each of us would bring in one new member every month, what an impact we could have!

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE: HOW VA ABANDONS OUR VETERANS

Joshua Kors - The Nation - September 15, 2008 edition

Injured veterans continue their battles at home while fighting for the healthcare treatment they deserve

Army Sergeant Juan Jimenez had one of the most dangerous jobs in Iraq, ushering top Administration officials through the war-torn streets of Baghdad. He returned home with two Purple Hearts and shrapnel lodged in his right arm. Today he is gravely ill. What Jimenez didn't realize is that before he could receive benefits for his wounds, he'd have to prove that those wounds came from war. Three and a half years later, the sergeant is still making his case. The Department of Veterans Affairs isn't convinced. And it won't give him his benefits until it is. <More at: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080915/kors>>

Class Action Suit: Our advocates are currently working on the appeal to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

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
10/11/2008 Brief to be filed

Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit.

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [our website](#) 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.

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. 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. If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at rhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org

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

THE ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GIVE VA PROPERTY TO DEVELOPERS

In case you haven't heard, the administration has been trying to sell off DVA land in West Los Angeles that was deeded for the use of veterans "in perpetuity". They were almost stopped in the '07 Defense Authorization Act, but that defense was struck from the bill. <More at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/may/29/local/me-va29>>. Ed.

The Veterans Revolution ~ Old Soldiers Who Refuse to Fade Away

For over a century, every generation protected and preserved the 388 acres of land in West Los Angeles that were deeded to be permanently maintained as a National Home for Veterans healing from war.

Unfortunately, attitudes and responsibility have changed over the years as this hallowed land has been prostituted away to commercial and special interest deals, sometimes rent-free.

Heretofore, Veterans protested against this invasion and occupation of their sovereign land, but to no avail. Now, no-nonsense Veterans have organized a "Veterans Revolution" to take back this historic land and restore its legacy. Armed with nothing more than their unabashed loyalty, a 15-foot banner declaring "Save Our Veterans Land," and a Document titled the "Declaration of Enforcement" to uphold the promise and principles of the Deed of 1888, they gather every Sunday to defend their National Home.

Once laughed at and ridiculed as "a small minority" and "a handful of dissidents," these modern-day Revolutionaries have the support of the California American Legion's 150,000 members, the 5,500 members of the American G.I. Forum of California, and the 3,500 members of the National Veterans Coalition's.

Leading the Revolution are dedicated World War II and Korean War Veterans who are in their 70s and 80s, while the younger Revolutionaries in their 50s and 60s served during the Vietnam War. These Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard warriors of yore will never surrender as they keep on fighting. And like their soldiering days of old, these old soldiers keep on winning! ~ Robert L. Rosebrock, is co-director of **We the Veterans**. DutysCalling@aol.com

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

NO MEETINGS ~ NO PROGRESS, BUT ALSO NO MISCHIEF

RETREAT - NEWS

PENTAGON CONSIDERS INDEPENDENT OPS

August 23, 2008 - Agence France-Presse

Senior Pentagon officials are debating whether the US military should undertake independent operations against Islamic militants operating in Pakistan's northwestern tribal areas, The Los Angeles Times reported Saturday.

The newspaper said these internal debates followed US intelligence warnings that Al-Qaeda and other militant groups are consolidating their hold on northwestern Pakistan. <More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/pentagon-considers-independent-ops.html>>

A NEW ARMS RACE?

U.S. LOOKS TO REBUILDING GEORGIA'S MILITARY

Susan Cornwell – Reuters – 9/9/08

The United States said on Tuesday it would examine how to help rebuild Georgia's military after Tbilisi's devastating war with Russia, risking renewed Russian wrath over military aid to the small U.S. ally.

"The Department of Defense is sending an assessment team to Tbilisi later this week to help us begin to consider carefully Georgia's legitimate needs and our response," Eric Edelman, the Pentagon's undersecretary for policy, told lawmakers.

"After assessment of these needs, we will review how the United States will be able to support the reconstruction of Georgia's economy, infrastructure and armed forces," he told the U.S. Senate's Armed Services Committee.

<More at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUKN0929071320080909>>

RUSSIA MAY BUILD BASES IN BREAKAWAY GEORGIAN REGIONS

Sebastian Alison and Helena Bedwell - Sept. 9 - Bloomberg

Russia will consider establishing military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and deploying nearly 8,000 soldiers there as it formalizes ties with the separatist Georgian regions it recognized last month.

"We have to determine how to arrange for the presence of Russian armed forces and how to place our military bases there as requested by the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia," Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said in Moscow today.

<More at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601085&sid=aBOMKE8oCEHM>>

WAR STORIES' HAVE SOME FACING PRISON

The Oklahoman - August 18, 2008

John Smith said he was a Navy SEAL who was imprisoned in Vietnam after his helicopter was shot down.

Troy Brodrick spoke in schools about his 30-year military career in which he earned three Purple Hearts and flew President Eisenhower as an Air Force One pilot.

William Whitely, a former University of Oklahoma professor, told stories of his career as a Navy SEAL while he served as a mentor to Naval ROTC students who wanted to follow in his footsteps. Trouble is, they were lying.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/war-stories-have-some-facing-prison.html>>

AGREEMENT ON U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ SAID TO BE IN PERIL AS MALIKI OUSTS NEGOTIATORS

Ned Parker - Los Angeles Times Staff Writer - August 31, 2008

The Times is told that the prime minister has replaced the team with loyalists at the 'make-or-break' stage of talks. The two sides reportedly remain deadlocked on key issues.

BAGHDAD — At the "make-or-break" stage of talks with the U.S. on the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, Prime Minister Nouri Maliki has swept aside his negotiating team and replaced it with three of his closest aides, a reshuffle that some Iraqi officials warn risks sabotaging the agreement.

The decision on the team negotiating the pact, which the Americans have described as the basis of a long-term strategic alliance between the United States and Iraq, remains so sensitive that it has not been announced. In disclosing the switch to the Los Angeles Times this weekend, a senior Iraqi official close to Maliki also suggested that the two sides remained deadlocked on key issues. <More at: http://www.latimes.com/news/la-fg-iraq31-2008aug31_0_239997.story>

MILITARY OFFICIALS: NO TROOP CUTS THIS YEAR

Jamie McIntyre and Barbara Starr – CNN Pentagon correspondents

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Senior U.S. military leaders say it would be "impractical" to reduce U.S. troop levels in Iraq further before the end of the year because of the logistics required in the redeployments, two military officials told CNN Thursday.

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/08/world/asia/08afghan.html>>

FIVE MEN FACE ARRAIGNMENT IN VETERAN DONOR SCAM

Associated Press - September 3, 2008

BOSTON - Five men who allegedly used more than \$100,000 they claimed they were raising for police and veterans charities for personal expenses are scheduled for arraignment this morning.

The Middlesex District Attorney says the men used fraudulent telemarketing practices between August 2006 and January 2008 to deceive more than 1,000 donors into thinking they were donating money to the Veteran's Charitable Foundation of Boynton Beach, Fla., and a retired police officers organization. <More at: <http://www.wftv.com/news/17378299/detail.html>>

PENTAGON URGES EXTENDED PAUSE IN IRAQ DRAWDOWN

Karen DeYoung and Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writers - September 5, 2008; A01

Pentagon leaders have recommended to President Bush that the United States make no further troop reductions in Iraq this year, administration officials said yesterday.

The plan, delivered this week, calls for extending a pause in drawdowns until late January or early February -- after the Bush administration has left office. At that point, up to 7,500 of the approximately 146,000 troops in Iraq could be withdrawn, depending on conditions on the ground there. The reduction would coincide with new deployments to Afghanistan, officials said.

Defense officials described the recommendation as a compromise between those who believed that security gains in Iraq remained too tenuous to contemplate further withdrawals now, and those who proposed continuing the reductions that began this spring. <More at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/04/AR2008090402820.html>>

PLAN WOULD SHIFT FORCES FROM IRAQ TO AFGHANISTAN

Michael R. Gordon and Thom Shanker - September 5, 2008

WASHINGTON — The United States would carry out a modest shift of American forces from Iraq to Afghanistan by early next year under a confidential recommendation to President Bush by the Pentagon's top civilian and military leaders, according to Bush administration officials.

The number of American combat brigades in Iraq would shrink to 14 in February from 15, according to the recommendation. All told, the number of American forces in Iraq, currently about 146,000, would drop by nearly 8,000 by March.

The reduction is smaller than some officials had earlier suggested might be possible before President Bush leaves office in January, given the significant decline in violence in Iraq. But it reflects the caution of Gen. David H. Petraeus, who is leaving his post as the senior American commander in Iraq this month, about the still-unsettled situation in Iraq.

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/05/world/middleeast/05military.html>>

EVIDENCE POINTS TO CIVILIAN TOLL IN AFGHAN RAID

Carlotta Gall – NY Times - September 8, 2008

AZIZABAD, Afghanistan — To the villagers here, there is no doubt what happened in an American airstrike on Aug. 22: more than 90 civilians, the majority of them women and children, were killed.

The Afghan government, human rights and intelligence officials, independent witnesses and a United Nations investigation back up their account, pointing to dozens of freshly dug graves, lists of the dead, and cell phone videos and other images showing bodies of women and children laid out in the village mosque.

... For two weeks, the United States military has insisted that only 5 to 7 civilians, and 30 to 35 militants, were killed in what it says was a successful operation against the Taliban: a Special Operations ground mission backed up by American air support. But on Sunday, Gen. David D. McKiernan, the senior American commander in Afghanistan, requested that a general be sent from Central Command to review the American military investigation in light of "emerging evidence."

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/08/world/asia/08afghan.html>>

GUESS WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES SUING

CALIFORNIA CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATION ENDORSES MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOUNDATION

California Council of Churches IMPACT (CCCI) intends to file a "friend of the court" legal brief in support of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation's (MRFF) Federal lawsuit (Case No. 08-CV-2098-JWL-DJW) against the Defense Department, filed in the Federal District Court for the District of Kansas City, Kansas.

CCCI's endorsement of MRFF's lawsuit is significant in that it marks the very first time that a major Christian organization has agreed to lend its support to the military watchdog's efforts to keep the Pentagon from unlawfully force-feeding fundamentalist evangelical Christianity upon active duty members of the military. <More at: http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/urgent_issues.html

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
9/10	1100 - 1400	Fort Bragg Officer's Club Armistead St & Totten St, Ft Bragg, NC	Fort Bragg Military Career Fair		910-907-2582
9/11 - 9/14		4001 Fort Casper Road Casper, Wyoming	Wall That Heals	Casper Memorial VFW Post 9439	
9/11		Indianapolis IN	Resource Fair	Dr. Charles Haenlein	317-951-0688
9/11	1000 - 1800	Holiday Inn Houston – Airport, 15222 John F. Kennedy Blvd, Houston TX	Southwest Regional Career Event		Register
9/12		Asheville NC	Resource Fair	Allison Haberfield	828-298-7911
9/12		Fresno CA	Stand Down	Pam Beebe	559-287-3456
9/15-16		DVA Main HQ, 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC	Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illness	DSNurse@aol.com	
9/16		Akron, OH	Resource Fair	Laura Williams Dunlop	330-753-2129
9/18		Cedar Rapids, IA		Don Tyne	319-892-5160
9/19		Roseburg, OR	Stand Down	Rick Freund	541-643-0254
9/19		Cumberland, RI	Stand Down	Al Signorelli	401-383-4730
9/19	0800 - 1300	Cafeteria, American River College 4700 College Oak Drive, Sacramento, CA.	2nd Annual Road Home: From Combat to College	RSVP Cheryl Burkhart	
9/20		Milwaukee, WI	Resource Fair	Greg Jacobs	414-902-5729
9/20		Rutland, VT	Resource Fair	Lorraine "Rani" Gile	802-223-3141
9/21		Colville, WA	Resource Fair	Tonya Stinson	509-684-6311
9/22		Ramada Woodlawn – Conf. Center 212 W. Woodlawn Road, Charlotte, NC	Charlotte Military Career Fair		704.525.8350
9/25		Rock Island, IL	Stand Down	Sarah E. Oliver	563-370-1779
9/25-28		Cypress Park Marked Tree, AR	Wall that Heals	Ted Tally Football Scholarship	
9/25	1000-1600	Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore Hotel 20 West Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD	Mid-Atlantic Regional Career Event		
9/26		Wichita, KS	Resource Fair	Judith Epperson/David Desmond	316-651-3684
9/26		Greensboro, NC	Resource Fair	Archie Barrow	336-334-5777
9/27		Orlando, FL	Resource Fair	Heather S. Gallagher	321-397-6614
9/27		Clearwater, FL	Resource Fair	Catherine Alexander- Ponder	727-398-6661 x- 4711
9/27		Memphis, TN	Resource Fair	Ovul Ince	901-523-8990 x- 7085

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

ARMY: SOLDIER SUICIDE RATE MAY SET RECORD AGAIN

Pauline Jelinek – AP – 5 September

WASHINGTON -Soldier suicides this year could surpass the record rate of last year, Army officials said Thursday, urging military leaders at all levels to redouble prevention efforts for a force strained by two wars.

As of the end of August, there were 62 confirmed suicides among active duty soldiers and Guard and Reserve troops called to active duty, officials said. Another 31 deaths appear to be suicides but are still being investigated.

If all are confirmed, that means that the number for 2008 could eclipse the 115 of last year — and the rate per 100,000 could surpass that of the civilian population, Col. Eddie Stephens, deputy director of human resources policy, said at a Pentagon news conference. <More at: <http://news.aol.com/article/army-soldier-suicide-rate-may-set-record/161234?cid=12>>

WAGING INTERNAL WAR

David Olinger and Erin Emery - The Denver Post - 08/27/2008

Chad Barrett's war on terror started in the hours after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, when he was called to help dig bodies out of a smoking Pentagon. It ended Feb. 2, 2008, in Mosul, Iraq, when his roommate awoke to find him gasping and gurgling, with foam coming from his mouth.

Barrett had been cleared for a third combat tour in Iraq despite a recent suicide attempt, crushing headaches and a mental illness treated with medication for anxiety and depression. Two months after he arrived, he killed himself by swallowing an unknown number of pills.

He was the sixth soldier from Fort Carson to commit suicide in Iraq. At least 10 others have killed themselves in the U.S., nine after returning from the war.

"There is no way in hell he should have been deployed. The Army saw him as just another set of boots on the ground," said Barrett's widow, Shelby. "From the second tour on, he changed 180 degrees. Three deployments is two too many. The Army took my husband from me. The Army destroyed my husband." <More at: http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_10310152>

TWO MOVING AND IMPORTANT ARTICLES ON WAR AND FAMILIES

HELPING WAR WIDOWS ON ROAD AHEAD

Tim Arango New York Times - August 25, 2008

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/25/arts/25widows.html>>

ON A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BEACH, YOUNG WAR WIDOWS COME TOGETHER TO GRIEVE

Paloma Esquivel - Los Angeles Times Staff Writer - September 8, 2008

Feeling alone after their husbands' deaths, they find one another through the Internet and meet to share their stories.

<More at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-widow8-2008sep08.0.6138767.story>>

BRAIN INJURIES IN U.S. COMBAT VETERANS LARGELY UNDIAGNOSED

Lizette Alvarez - August 26, 2008

Kevin Owsley, a former staff sergeant, is not quite sure what rattled his brain in 2004: the roadside bomb that exploded about a meter from his Humvee or the rocket-propelled grenade that flung him across a road as he walked to a portable toilet on base six weeks later.

After each attack, he did what so many soldiers do in Iraq. He shrugged off his ailments - headaches, dizzy spells, persistent ringing in his ears and numbness in his right arm - chalking them up to fatigue or dehydration. Given that he never lost consciousness, he figured the discomfort would work itself out and kept it to himself.

"You keep doing your job with your injuries," said Owsley, 47, an Indiana reservist who served as a gunner for a year outside Baghdad beginning in March 2004. "You don't think about it."

But more than three years after coming home, Owsley's days have been irrevocably changed by the explosions. He struggles to unscramble his memory and thoughts. He often gets lost on the road, even with directions. He writes all his appointments down but still forgets a few. He wears a hearing aid, cannot bear sunlight on his eyes, still succumbs to nightmares and considers four hours of sleep a night a gift.

... To this day, some veterans - it is impossible to know how many - remain unscreened, their symptoms undiagnosed. Mild brain injury was widely overlooked by the military and the veterans health system until recently.

Even now, with traumatic brain injury being called the signature injury of the Iraq war, some soldiers and their advocates say that complications from mild concussions often are not recognized.

Owsley's request for a Purple Heart, given to troops wounded or killed in action, was denied by the military, a devastating blow.

Others say that their mild brain injury entitled them only to low disability payments, or, if the diagnosis was inconclusive, to none at all. <More at: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/08/26/america/injury.php>>

GROUPS DECRY DOD 'BETRAYAL' OF VETS

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Aug 29, 2008

In a letter going out to members of Congress next week, the directors of two major veterans' groups say the Pentagon's personnel chief has intentionally withheld benefits from wounded service members.

"We need your immediate assistance to help end the Defense Department's deliberate, systemic betrayal of every brave American who [dons] the uniform and stands in harm's way," states the letter, signed by David Gorman, executive director of Disabled American Veterans, and Paul Rieckhoff, executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

"Sadly, the 2007 Walter Reed scandal, which resulted mostly from poor oversight and inadequate leadership, pales in comparison to what we view as the deliberate manipulation of the law" by David S.C. Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, and his deputies, the letter states.

<More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/08/military_veteransletter_defensedepartment_082908w/

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT FAILING TO EFFECTIVELY MONITOR HEALTH OF RETURNING TROOPS, NEW GAO REPORT SHOWS

Risks for troops and families too serious to ignore reassessments, Akaka says

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) commented today on a new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, the latest in a number of reports on the Department of Defense's failure to adequately assess the post-deployment health of returning servicemembers. Akaka, Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, stressed the need for the Department of Defense to aggressively address deployment-related health issues.

"The Department of Defense owes it to servicemembers to ensure adequate assessment and reassessment of their health after they return from deployment," said Akaka. "They have committed to defend our freedom, and in return, we have committed to protect their health and wellbeing. Our troops and their families are too important to let any potential mental health issues slip through the cracks."

The report issued September 4, 2008 by the Government Accountability Office, found several problems with DOD oversight of the post-deployment health reassessment (PDHRA). While DOD has developed requirements for administering the PDHRA, the Department is unable to determine whether servicemembers are completing their reassessments. This report follows a June 2007 GAO finding that DOD does not collect or provide Congress with the information necessary for the Congress to evaluate the military's compliance with post-deployment health assessment regulations. GAO noted that while DOD agreed to the recommendations in the June 2007 report, the Department failed to incorporate those recommendations into DOD's oversight practices. <More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/scva08/scva090908-2.htm>

RANKS OF HOMELESS VETERANS GROWING

Jennifer Grogan 8/24/2008

Genavese Spader depended on a paycheck from her job as an accounts payable analyst and child support from her ex-husband to care for her three children.

In June, her contract position with Fidelity Investments ended and, a week later, her ex-husband was laid off from work.

"We went from two incomes to no income," said Spader, 31.

Born in New London and a Fitch High School graduate, she moved to New Hampshire in January to work for Fidelity.

She served in the Connecticut Army National Guard from 1995 to 2001, where she fixed communications systems in the aircraft at the 1109th Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot in Groton.

Without a job, she left her apartment in New Hampshire and moved back to Connecticut, to be near family. But there was not enough room at relatives' homes for her and her three children so she turned to the Covenant Shelter of New London.

"If the economy wasn't this way, I would've gotten a job in a short period of time and it would've stopped the progression of everything else that happened," said Spader, who has lived in the shelter since late July with her three children, ages 10, 4 and 2. <More at: <http://www.theday.com/re.aspx?re=d80f4073-0d4a-4db0-bfd5-7b92f9f56afd>>

INVESTIGATION WIDENS IN ELECTROCUTIONS AT MILITARY SITES

Brian Bowling - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review - September 09, 2008

A Department of Defense investigation into the electrocution of a Shaler, Pa., Soldier serving in Iraq will review eight similar deaths on military facilities, and investigators have subpoenaed more information from the contractor maintaining those facilities.

Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Scranton announced the expanded investigation Monday after a briefing by the Defense Department's Inspector General's Office. Investigators said they've discovered at least 18 Soldiers and civilian workers have been electrocuted in Iraq, two more than previously reported.

<More at: http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/cityregion/s_587190.html>

VA NOW ALLOWS VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES, BUT WILL ITS NEW POLICY HELP VETS IN 2008?

Steven Rosenfeld - AlterNet - September 9, 2008

For the fourth time in six months, the Department of Veterans Affairs has revised its policy on allowing voter registration drives at hundreds of VA facilities serving injured and homeless veterans. Monday's announcement, on the eve of Senate hearings, said the agency would allow voter registration drives if certain conditions were met.

"The Department will welcome state and local election officials and non-partisan groups to its hospitals and outpatient clinics to assist VA officials in registering voters," the VA said in a Sept. 8 news release. " <More at: <http://www.alternet.org/democracy/98099/>>

MISSED THIS ONE WHILE I WAS ON VACATION

NEXT STEP IN PRIVATIZING THE VA --

Secretary Peake: "...The decision has been made to seek private-sector support to implement this new program...We intend to move quickly to select a contractor..." Letter is at <http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/nf08/nfAUG08/AUGFILES/chapter-33-letter.jpg>

When Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA) was pushing legislation for his New G.I. Bill, the VA worked diligently to defeat the measure.

"The anticipated high benefit cost ... and the anticipated administrative burden associated with this bill are all problematic," said Keith M. Wilson, director of the education service for the VA. Full story here...

<http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/nf08/nfMAR08/nf033008-3.htm>

Daniel Cooper, the VA's undersecretary for benefits, in Congressional testimony, said *"The complexity of eligibility rules, anticipated cost, and administrative burden associated with this bill are all problematic."* Cooper also spoke of *"significant administrative costs."* Full story here...<http://www.vawatchdog.org/07/nf07/nfJUN07/nf061807-2.htm>

You get the idea. The VA did not want this bill to pass and if it did (and it did), they did not want to administer the program ... even though that is what the VA does .. administer veterans' benefits programs. Now, we have learned that the VA is going to outsource the administration of this program. This is just the next step in privatizing the VA.

<More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/nf08/nfAUG08/nf081808-1.htm>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

REST EASY, BROTHER ED

You're an 18 or 19 year old kid. You're critically wounded, and dying in the jungle in the Ia Drang Valley, 11-14-1965. LZ Xray, Vietnam. Your Infantry Unit is outnumbered 8:1, and the enemy fire is so intense, from 100 or 200 yards away, that your own Infantry Commander has ordered the Medevac helicopters to stop coming in. You're lying there, listening to the enemy machine guns, and you know you're not getting out. Your family is half way around the world, 12,000 miles away, and you'll never see them again. As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day.

Then, over the machine gun noise, you faintly hear that sound of a helicopter, and you look up to see a Huey, but it doesn't seem real, because no Medevac markings are on it. Ed Freeman is coming for you. He's not Medevac, so it's not his job, but he's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire, after the Medevacs were ordered not to come. He's coming anyway.

And he drops it in, and sits there in the machine gun fire, as they load 2 or 3 of you on board. Then he flies you up and out through the gunfire, to the Doctors and Nurses. And, he kept coming back..... 13 more times..... and took about 30 of you and your buddies out, who would never have gotten out.

Medal of Honor Recipient Ed Freeman died last Wednesday at the age of 80, in Boise, ID



NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2008

This week the Army announced an increase, while the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced a decrease. The net collective result is 115 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 84,820; Navy Reserve, 5,743; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 11,254; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,043; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 738. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 110,598, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2008/d20080903nqr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2008

NOTE: STATISTICS FOR WOUNDED ARE GETTING SHAKIER - DOD REVISES NUMBERS – DROPS NON-HOSTILE “OTHER”

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (1,878 DAYS)		OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,407 DAYS)	
KILLED US	4,155	KILLED US	584
WOUNDED US [8/2/08]	30,490	OTHER CASUALTIES US [10/2007]	1,994
OTHER US CASUALTIES [4/5/08]	≥38,631	KILLED COALITION	376
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [3/1/08]	145	WOUNDED US [8/2/08]	2,309
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
KILLED UK	176	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED OTHER COALITION	138	KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819	WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [6/30/07]	1,001	AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555		
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 94,560		
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400K – 1.246M		
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M	COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$552,673,492,218

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. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to

<http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

I GUESS THE BRITS DO NO BETTER THAN WE DO – PERHAPS WORSE, BUT LOOK AT THE OWNERSHIP OF THE HOTEL!

SOLDIER FORCED TO SLEEP IN CAR AFTER HOTEL REFUSES HIM A ROOM

Hannah Fletcher - September 5, 2008

A hotel that refused a wounded soldier a room, forcing him to spend the night in his car, was backed into a “grovelling” apology yesterday after receiving a barrage of abusive phone calls.

Metro Hotel, in Woking, Surrey, (owned by a company called **American Amusements**) had to call in the police as their lines were flooded with angry, abusive and threatening calls from members of the public.

The attack on the switchboards came after it emerged that Corporal Tomos Stringer, 24, had been told by hotel staff that it was company policy not to accept members of the Armed Forces as guests.

A soldier since the age of 16 and veteran of multiple tours in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan, Cpl Stringer had travelled to Surrey to help with funeral preparations for a friend killed in action.

Cpl Stringer, who was not in uniform, presented his army warrant card when asked by the hotel for proof of identity. After the receptionist refused him a room, he was left with no choice but to bed down in his tiny, two-door car, his wrist, broken during a convoy ambush, cased in plaster. <More at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article4674411.ece>>

DISCOVER WHAT THE CANDIDATES SAY ABOUT VETERANS

Senator John McCain's official veteran web page: <http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/9cb5d2aa-f237-464e-9cdf-a5ad32771b9f.htm>

Senator Barack Obama's official veteran web page: <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/veterans/>

MANY OF US WOULD NOT TRY TO STOP SOMEONE FROM ENLISTING, BUT ALL OF US WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THEM MAKE AT LEAST AN INFORMED CHOICE.

Top 10 Lies (Some) Recruiters Tell Applicants

1. *Your chances of being sent to a combat zone are slim.*
2. *You are much more likely to get murdered in your home town than you are to get killed or wounded in combat.*
3. *You are absolutely guaranteed to get the job listed on your enlistment contract.*
4. *If you don't like the military, you can simply quit.*
5. *If you refuse to ship out to basic training you will go to jail.*
6. *Once you complete your enlistment you can get out and won't be called back again.*
7. *You have a great chance of getting the assignment (location) you want.*
8. *If you spend 20 years in the military you can retire and receive one-half of your pay for the rest of your life.*
9. *They don't yell in Basic Training anymore.*
10. *This is the modern military. We don't cut off all of your hair during Basic anymore.*

<More at: <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/recruiterlies.htm>>

FINALLY, SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"A great nation is like a great man: When he makes a mistake, he realizes it. Having realized it, he admits it. Having admitted it, he corrects it. He considers those who point out his faults as his most benevolent teachers. He thinks of his enemy as the shadow that he himself casts. If a nation is centred in the Tao, if it nourishes its own people and doesn't meddle in the affairs of others, it will be a light to all nations in the world: "

Lao Tzu - Source: Tao Te Ching, Chapter 61

"It is the utmost folly -- it is just short of suicide -- to take the position that citizens of any country should hold their tongues for fear of causing distress to the immediate and sometimes tortuous policies of their leaders."

Wendell Lewis Willkie
Republican Presidential Nominee - 1940

"Those great and good men foresaw that troublous times would arise, when rulers and people would become restive under restraint, and seek by sharp and decisive measures to accomplish ends deemed just and proper; and that the principles of constitutional liberty would be in peril, unless established by irrevocable law. The history of the world had taught them that what was done in the past might be attempted in the future. The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all time, and under all circumstances."

Justice David Davis ~ in *Ex Parte Milligan*; 1866

Milligan, a civilian terrorist who acted for the Confederacy, but never wore a uniform, was tried by a Union military court and sentenced to hang. The Supreme Court in Ex Parte Milligan ruled unanimously that he had the right to habeas corpus, and that he must be tried in a civilian court.

A SIDEWAYS GLANCE AT CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Every once in awhile it pays to question "conventional wisdom." It seems that almost every time someone complains about the DVA in the press, the complaint is always followed by, "But they have the best medical practices and treatment in the world." I started Googling around to see if that last piece of "wisdom" was true. Following are some discoveries, with my comments in **bold italics**.

I found a series of articles by Jane Mundy at www.lawyersandsettlements.com which present a frightening picture.

VA MEDICAL MALPRACTICE: PREVENTABLE MISTAKES?

June 15, 2008. By Jane Mundy

Largo, FL: Several years ago, a survey from the Institute of Medicine titled "To Err is Human" reported that 48,000 to 98,000 Americans die each year from preventable mistakes, mainly from drug mix-ups and inattentive treatment. And more *medical errors* occurred in the hospitals run by the *Veterans Health Administration*. Fast forward to 2008 and given the amount of complaints and lawsuits filed against VA hospitals, not much has changed since 1999.

... Why is the rate of human error so high, particularly in VA hospitals? One reason could be that VA doctors don't need to purchase *malpractice insurance* because the government compensates patients harmed by a physician's negligence. <More at: <http://www.lawyersandsettlements.com/articles/10772/veteran-med-mal-mistakes.html>>

VETERAN MEDICAL MALPRACTICE: UNSANITARY VA HOSPITAL

July 16, 2008. By Jane Mundy

Augusta, GA: Last December June was admitted to the Augusta VA medical hospital (she was in the military for 10 years) with abdominal pain and a high fever: she had [Crohn's] disease and it was getting worse. But June checked herself out due to the poor hygiene conditions, so bad that she believes the hospital warrants a *Veteran medical malpractice* lawsuit.

"My private physician first diagnosed me with [Crohn's] disease in 2004, but the treatment and tests got so expensive and I was getting so sick I had to take time off work," says June. She could no longer afford private care so she had no choice; in May, her boyfriend drove June--several hours away--to the Gastrointestinal Clinic at the VA hospital where she was admitted.

She had problems right from the start. "First off, they left me in the hallway for hours and when I was finally admitted, the room was filthy," June says. "There wasn't even a clean towel—I had to use paper towels. I have an immune deficiency and the last thing I need is to get a bacterial infection.

"It took forever to see a doctor and I didn't get any medication until 9.30 that night. My boyfriend visited the next day and he had to empty the trash can, he was about as mad as me. It was not until the second day that I was given washcloths and towels. My bedding was never changed. A different nurse came by with different meds and asked what was wrong with me!

It was an experience. After three days I wasn't getting any better. In fact I felt worse, possibly because I was so stressed and worried about getting an infection. I called my boyfriend to come and get me and discharged myself.

<More at: <http://www.lawyersandsettlements.com/articles/10899/veteran-hospital-medical-malpractice.html>>

VA MEDICAL MALPRACTICE: INFECTION IGNORED

August 14, 2008. By Jane Mundy

... In November 2004 Elizabeth had a hernia surgery at the Veterans Medical Center, West Palm Beach, Florida. Since having the common and supposedly simple procedure, she cannot lift, pull, push or do anything the least bit strenuous. "I cannot live like this, not being able to do anything, all because of negligent doctors and hospital administrators," says Elizabeth. She is now in the process of filing a *VA Medical Malpractice lawsuit* against the hospital and VA doctors.

... During recovery, Elizabeth says her dressing was never changed; nobody came by to check or redress the wound. She was discharged and returned a week later to have the staples removed. "The wound had opened by this time and there was some green "goo" coming from it," says Elizabeth. "When the nurse removed the staples, she just

put some little strips--like band-aids—on this gaping sore." Elizabeth asked to see a doctor but she was simply sent home. The infection got worse but it took a few weeks before Elizabeth could get an appointment.

There was still some infection inside my closed wounds and I was told that there was a small mass--they assumed it was scar tissue but lo and behold it was still an infection that was not removed from the wound years ago.

I asked for my medical records. Nothing is mentioned of an infection a few weeks after my surgery; there is no record of me seeing the doctor's assistant and nothing is mentioned of the second time the doctor had to clean the wound from the "tunneling". If it wasn't for the nurse doing that culture, I don't think they would have acknowledged that I even had an infection until I went into sepsis." ***This one's a horror story***

<More at: <http://www.lawyersandsettlements.com/articles/11063/veteran-hospital-medical-malpractice-2.html>>

I thought that it would be good just to refer you to these stories, then this morning I read in the LA Times the following:

FANNIE MAE AND FREDDIE MAC CEOS TO GET GOLDEN PARACHUTES

William Heisel, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer - September 8, 2008

Daniel Mudd and Richard Syron, who are stepping down, have already made millions at the troubled mortgage giants and are expected to take away millions more.

Heisel made \$11.6m last year and Syron made \$18.3m. The government has hired them back to advise them on the turnover of the two companies they destroyed.

"By conservative estimates, Mudd, 49, and Syron, 64, will leave with an additional \$7.3 million and \$6.3 million, respectively, as part of a severance package, according to an analysis by Paul Hodgson at the Corporate Library.

"Had they left at the end of December, they both would have walked away with more than \$20 million, but the drop in the stock price has had a dramatic impact," said Hodgson, a senior research associate. "It's still a substantial payoff for an executive who has managed a company so badly that the federal government has had to step in and save it."

So then I decided to find out if real failures could make that much, how much were successful soldiers and veterans getting in suing the DVA's "best medicine system in the world". Here are some examples:

Average malpractice claim settlements at VA hospitals - \$83,000. <http://www.slate.com/id/2145400/>

Analysis of tort claims for negligence impacting patient safety against the Veterans Health Administration for the twelve years between 10/88 and 9/00: 11,066 claims; 53% denied, 23% settled, 24% to court. Of the 24% that went to court: 20% dismissed, 61% settled, 19% (@490) to trial.

Average claim settled without trial - \$175,544

Average claim settled with trial - \$399,696

<http://www.allbusiness.com/legal/3586824-1.html>

And this:

A January, 1989 NY Times article reported that the average Agent Orange claim would be settled for \$5,700.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE1D6103BF930A35752C0A96F948260>

So once again, in the land of justice, fairness and equality. Failure, incompetence and greed is rewarded, while patriotism, service and devotion is disdained.

What the hell have we become?

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 scCook@vuft; 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