

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VII, NO 2

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 OCTOBER 2011

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

‘TIS THE SEASON TO BE VERY, VERY CAREFUL

In this newsletter we talk a lot about the VA, Congress, Administrations past and present, and the Department of Defense, all in the context of how serving military, veterans, and their families are faring in their current service and in receiving the benefits that they have earned, all relative to existing law.

We also talk a bit about those who do not contribute: the general public that ignores the plight of current and past military members and their families. The corporations that refuse to hire veterans, reservist and guardsmen and women because of their ongoing military obligations or because of some fear that they will “go postal” (sorry USPS) in the workplace.

We probably do not talk enough about the few among the public and the few corporations that step up every day and do their duty by our brothers and sisters, and there are a number of them.

Now we have the onset of the “giving season”—the time between now and the first of the year—when all of us receive a snowstorm of mail requests for contributions. We have our phones rung incessantly by calls for contributions from, according to our caller IDs, “Out of Area”, unidentified 800 numbers, “PPP”, and blanks. Our mailboxes are filled with such requests, often contained in elaborate mailings with gifts, “please-don’t-cash-this-one” checks, mailing labels, etc.

It is time to talk about another group.

Let’s talk about the myriad charities and non-profits who distribute their largesse to military, veterans and their families—

Or so they say.

There are many charities and non-profits out there who do wonderful work for veterans, and they deserve our support. There are others who do some good work but don’t manage our contributions wisely. There are some who do minimal good work—just enough to qualify themselves as veterans charities—and then use our funds, at least in part, to enrich themselves.

And there are those who neither serve us, give to us, nor even ignore us, rather they attempt to steal from us, or at best, get our money and use it for purposes other than that which was stated.

We all want to help. Veterans give more than any other group to veterans’ charities. We don’t want to turn down those who really help our brothers and sisters and who do really good works.

The question is, how can we know? We want to trust these people, and of course that is what the scammers are counting on—trust. But as Reagan said, “...trust, but verify”. How does one verify?

I was inspired to write about this problem by several recent stories involving charities that were out and out scams. The most notorious recent example of one of these frauds is “The US Navy Veterans Association” and its CEO, or thief-in-charge, Bobby Thompson, who used millions donated for the use of Navy Veterans to enrich himself and a few accomplices, and who contributed some of those contributions to his favorite politicians and PACs. Bobby is on the run, and Bobby’s accomplice, Bianca Contreras, is serving 7 years on multiple counts.

I was also inspired by receiving the first of the season’s solicitations from an organization that says that it helps vets. This organization, (which I was not going to name but it is all in the public record) **Help**

Hospitalized Veterans, says that it helps vets under medical care by giving them useful recreational activities to pursue. I was not convinced, but I was curious and was willing to consider them.

My questions about these charities are always:

1. What does it do with its money? Does it really do what it says?
2. How well does it handle my contribution? What percentage gets to the vets?
3. Is what the vets get useful? Do they get any lasting benefit from it?
4. How much does the charity pay its principals? Its fundraisers? Its board?
5. Who is on the board, either as members or advisors? Do I know anything about them? Are they active or figureheads? Are they relatives of the principals?
6. So as not to be biased, the last question is: What do others say about this charity? Are there complaints? Are the complaints valid? *I use the charity's name and the words "scam" and/or "fraud" for a Google search.*

I need to assess not only how good this particular charity is that is asking for my money, but also to evaluate it against comparable charities. If I only have so much to give, to whom should I give it to get the best return for veterans?

Fortunately there are places to get fairly good answers to these questions. Let me share with you what I do with every one of these. It takes a little work, but you can determine which of the charities begging for your support is worthy of that support. If you only have so much to give, and I suspect that is the general case, how can you make your gift count the most?

First and foremost, take a deep breath and wait. Don't immediately write a check and don't round file the request. You have time, and so do they. Despite the fact that the message may request "Urgent help!", and imply that more veterans will be sleeping under a bridge this very night, or going to their maker far too soon if you don't "SEND THAT CHECK NOW".

Don't send it now.

I make a stack of all the requests for about a month, then I set aside a few hours and go through them, and I read every one thoroughly, including all of the fine print on all of the enclosures in the mailing. These requests are initially going one of three places—the "maybe" pile, the "check further" pile, or the round file.

The one's I have donated to before automatically go into the "maybe" pile. They are candidates but I want to make sure the rationale I used for giving before is still a sound one. There is no "yes" pile yet.

The ones who sent me a flag, a blanket, or any other bulky gift go into the round file. If they can spend my donated money for that junk then I don't want to feed that horse. (By the way charities, I don't use handwritten mail much anymore so please stop sending mailing labels).

That leaves those whom I have never heard from before.

Now I go to those organizations that can help me the most in analyzing each charity and its request, which are: Charity Navigator, Guidestar, The Economic Research Institute, and The American Institute of Philanthropy.

Let's use a couple to help us:

CharityNavigator: This is the first one I go to <http://www.charitynavigator.org>. Enter your charity in the Search area; you may get more than one organization in response. Click on the name of your charity. (note the "star ratings" at the right hand side - 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 out of 4).

You will be presented with outstanding summary data. of particular interest are:

Some **overall ratings** which in the case of my mailing were 1 star overall, and 0 stars for financial—huge red flags.

"Leadership" which shows names, titles and compensation (base only) both in dollars and as a percentage of total Expenses.

"Charities Performing Similar Types of Work" which gives you some good alternatives to compare this charity to, along with their overall "star rating".

The site tells you at the bottom how they calculate the scores. Also, you can place a check mark by charities of interest and compare them side by side. You can even capture these charities in a personal "My Charities" file so that they are easy to get to when you come back for future checks.

Not all charities are included on every analysis website so if I still need information or just want more I go to:

Guidestar: Go to <http://www2.guidestar.org/> and register—it's free. Type the name of the charity into the "Search" box. You may get the offer of several

different charities with similar names, Find yours and when your charity's info page comes up, it will contain a number of tools for you to judge about this charity. Read it thoroughly; note the reviews and "star ratings".

The greatest source of information is the charity's IRS Form 990. These are useful if you cannot make up your mind from the summary information. You can acquire them at the Guidestar site by clicking on the "Forms 990 and Docs" tab and you will see a listing of the charity's 2010, 2009, 2008 IRS submissions. Download their latest, and if you wish, the others; now you have a goldmine in your hands.

When the Form 990 downloads the first place I go is to Schedule J "Compensation Information" and find out how much they pay their principals, not just their base but everything. In the case of my mailing, the Director gets over \$250K a year; last year received \$388K. Three others got a base pay of nearly \$200K.

If this charity were in New York City or Washington DC that might be reasonable depending on a lot of other info including comparable salaries with other national charities, but this one is in a small town in California and this becomes a red flag.

Because I downloaded the two previous years also I found that the previous year they paid both the old and the new Executive Director over \$250K each, and paid the retiring Executive Director in addition just under \$2M (that's right "M") in "deferred compensation" as part of a new retirement scheme apparently cooked up 6 weeks before his retirement.

I'm out of here! Anyone who is supposedly helping veterans and not himself doesn't take that kind of compensation, and he has been taking it for over 30 years! So by using just these two sites I have made my decision—round file!

How did my research answer my six questions?

1. It does give some of its money to veterans, and it does give in line with its mission statement.
2. Too low a percentage goes to veterans. They say 64% but it is not clear what goes into those costs.
3. I question the usefulness of its donations, since the craft kits it provides seem trivial compared to the needs of those vets.

4. It pays its principals a bundle, and some of its board members get paid as well. It pays its fundraisers a lot of money to produce the mailings and the donations, and I cannot determine the relationship of the principals in those firms to the principals in the charity.
5. I don't know the board members and cannot find out much about them. They don't seem active.
6. After answering those five I found:
 - a. A 2008 New York Times article mentioned my charity and its sister charity, both run by the same Director, "An Intolerable Fraud".
 - b. Congress cited them as examples of frauds on veterans and their supporters. (Had I done this search first it would have saved time, but I try to avoid being biased by others' opinions.)

Economic Research Institute: If you want quick info on charity directors' salaries and regional comparisons go to <http://www.eri-nonprofit-salaries.com/index.cfm> .

The **American Institute of Philanthropy** <http://www.charitywatch.org/> is another good watchdog site, although I have not used them as much.

Had I sent that check it I would have been helping to perpetuate the fraud. Be careful out there. There are charities that deserve your help. Use CharityNavigator to find some good veterans' charities that are worthy of your support and be very cautious with the mailings.

Full disclosure: lately I have been limiting my own giving to Fisher House (4-stars), National Military Family Association (4-stars), National Veterans Foundation (3-stars), Army Emergency Relief (3-stars), Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (4-stars), and, of course, Veterans United For Truth (listed but not long enough to earn any stars). I don't give to all of them all of the time (except VUFT), but I am quite comfortable with giving to this list as often as I can.

"Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it. Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true."

Buddha – 624-543 BC [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

STILL NO CHANGE—DID SOMEONE FROM THE VA COACH THE COURT ON THE "DELAY UNTIL THEY DIE" PROCEDURE? We believe that the Ninth Circuit panel correctly resolved all of the issues, even those on which they sided with the defendant, and that a rehearing is not necessary.

We reported the VA's claim that we have no constitutional right to our benefits. I am no lawyer nor am I a Constitutional scholar, but it just makes sense to me as a citizen that all citizens have a constitutional right to the protections and the benefits of all US laws. How can veterans be singled out as being different? Tell me, am I being naïve? Does one have to have a law degree to understand his or her status as a citizen? Should we have to have such training? Is that what we have come to, government by hidden meanings and complex understandings of occult doctrines?

The VA also claims "sovereign immunity", a concept that most executive branches enlist from time to time to avoid responding to the legal challenges from us as citizens. I thought that we got rid of the "sovereign" and his right never to be challenged by "ordinary persons" in that war we had from 1775 to 1781. In fact, we got rid of the concept of "ordinary persons" and "extraordinary persons". How does "sovereign immunity" jibe with the "right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances"? Again, am I being naïve when I question this? Would someone please tell me where I am wrong? [Ed.]

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

10/20/11 Still 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]

A LETTER FROM A MEMBER (AND THE AUTHOR OF ONE OF OUR RECOMMENDED BOOKS) AND MY RESPONSE

Subject: VUFT Newsletter Volume VII, Issue 1 (9/30/11)

Sandy, I enjoyed your editorial. Listen, I try forwarding your newsletter to other veterans but frequently get the complaint that it's too left-wing liberal, and too damn depressing. I think it would maybe help if you more liberally spattered your newsletter with some of the good news associated with life in the military, maybe add some stories about heroism, etc. It's just a thought, but I have to admit it's hard to read your newsletter without coming away either angry or depressed or both. I think it would still be within the mission of VUFT to increase the reporting of good stuff too. Anyway, keep up the fight, Terry P. Rizzuti 10/3/11

Terry, I hear your message about reporting more of the good news, but the purpose of the organization is to wrestle with the VA and the rest of the government over military and veterans' issues. Our job is to fight for serving military, veterans and their families. We have been in the federal courts for more than four years doing just that, and against incredible opposition from the VA, the Department of Justice, and from within the courts themselves.

I, too, am inspired by stories of heroism and the good side of life in the military but so many other publications and websites cover those issues almost exclusively. What they don't often cover is what is going wrong. I subscribe to a number of newsletters and websites that cover the subjects you mention. After much deliberation we have decided that we don't need to repeat what they already do quite well.

Our membership--conservatives and liberals alike--asks us to report on those stories that get buried by the mainstream press, and sadly often by the publications of the national veterans' organizations. They too get angry and depressed sometimes when reading what we report, but they say that that incites them to action, whereas most of the other stuff merely lulls them into complacency. That fits our purpose exactly.

If we can inspire someone to reach out to a veteran or to a military family and to lend a helping hand, then that is our mission. If we can inspire someone to get angry and to contact their legislator at the state or federal level and demand action, then that is our mission. If we can inspire someone to oppose those in their home town who want homeless veterans run out of town instead of helping them find jobs and shelter, then that is our mission.

I am particularly incensed by the major organizations like the Legion and the VFW who echo administration (Republican and Democrat) feel-good stories about the military and veterans and almost never mention the pain that so many serving military, veterans, and their families are suffering at the hands of the bureaucracy, and sadly often at the hands of their fellow citizens.

My reporting makes me sad and angry too. In addition to what we in VUFT are doing as an organization, the editorials are the one small way that I can help make the issues known to 10,000 or so subscribers and other recipients.

The fact that you pass these on is really important, and the feedback is welcome.

I am personally a liberal but I try to cover all aspects of our mission problems, regardless of the source. I quote liberally (no pun intended) from the mainstream press including Fox News and the Washington Times. The mainstream press is, despite protestations to the contrary, largely conservative, and seems to support the government in all matters military, as do the major veterans' organizations. I am not sure why but I suspect it is, in part, so that they do not jeopardize their access to Congress and the White House. (Oddly the only time the major vets' organizations got cut off was during the latter part of the Bush II presidency). We have to learn that we can support the military without supporting a militaristic foreign policy and still be fully red-blooded patriots.

My approach to discussing and reporting on these problems, which I hope is reflected in the editorials, is really a conservative one, which is that we have made a commitment so let's keep it. It should please conservatives that we are fighting just the kind of governmental bureaucratic inertia that they rightly bemoan every day.

I would welcome input from any conservative who wishes to present another point of view from the one that I present each month. These subjects are important and are getting short shrift with the public. Liberals and conservatives ought to be able to have an adult conversation on these subjects and ought to be able to put pressure, somehow, on the people who are neglecting those whom we liberal and conservative veterans support every day.

Making people angry, I guess, is our mission in addition to fighting those who are the cause of their anger. I'll leave making people feel good to someone else. At my age I don't have time to do both, and I think you can tell which I think is more important.

Please feel free to share my sentiments with any of your friends who might be interested in the reasons behind what we do. I hope it will help them to understand that the time for fighting is now, and that fighting of any kind is seldom uplifting or cheerful. Sandy (10/3/2011)

AN IDEA REVIVED ~ AGAIN: CONSIDERING THE SUCCESS OF THE "TEA PARTY" AND THE "OCCUPY WALL STREET" EFFORTS, MAYBE IT'S TIME TO RETHINK THIS.

Subject: March on Washington

Sir, my name is Joseph Davis, I am a severely disabled Vietnam veteran. I just joined your group and I have an idea. Over the last month or so, I have been "roaming" different veterans websites. What I am reading is anger frustration, despair and hopelessness over the treatment of us by the VA. In Feb of 07 the Washington Post ran a series of articles on conditions at Walter Reed. One of the reporters on the story said it all started because a few wounded soldiers and their wives stood up and spoke out, in the beginning risking much, as active military personnel. On 11-11-11 they are dedicating the D/V's memorial. I would love, alongside fellow veterans, to have my picture on the front pages of major newspapers being beaten in our wheelchairs by riot police! I live in the D.C. metro area, and quite a few of my neighbors work on capitol hill. They have told me on numerous occasions that the backlash from the American public had never happened like that before, concerning veterans issues. Please tell me what you think! Thanks for all you do for us!!! Joe D (9/25/11)

P.S. If Jon Stewart can round up 200,000 people in 3wks for a comedy routine we can do better!

I GET SO MANY LIKE THIS ONE

Subject: Lawsuit

Fight Them! I hate to say it but parts of the VA are outright criminal. I was talking to my attorney last week they have kept me running in circles for over ten years on my claims, almost died after botched surgeries they did. My file is at the Manhattan VA office, he told me that office was DESTROYING peoples medical records, they had to replace the entire staff there. He told me that is what I'm dealing with in that office. Kevin Canada (10/10/11)

I FIXED THIS ONE ON OUR WEBSITE: FAMILY AND FRIENDS, COME ON DOWN!

Dear Sir: I am the widow of an Army vet, and I just donated to the Veterans United. I did not find any mention of, or category listed, for a widow/widower to join the group. I appreciate the work your organization has performed on behalf of veterans, as I have been fighting with the VA for DIC benefits because of my husband's death from bone marrow disease. He was in Vietnam in 1969-1970 and was exposed to Agent Orange. They keep denying my claim as the bone marrow diseases are not on the presumptive lists. You might consider adding family members to your application process if you are willing to work with us too. Thank you, Lillian Mooradian, widow of COL. Moorad Mooradian, Army. (10/9/11)

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

AFTER 10 YEARS SOMEONE FINALLY ASKS "WHA'SUP?"

LAWMAKERS VISIT AFGHANISTAN TO UNDERSTAND VETERANS' NEEDS

Michael Doyle - McClatchy Newspapers - October 13, 2011

WASHINGTON — Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan showed freshman Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Atwater, Calif., a hint of what's to come in a war whose costs will keep accumulating for decades. Accompanied by four House colleagues, three of them doctors, Denham spent last weekend touring Bagram and other Afghanistan bases. Although brief, the trip put the lawmakers face-to-face with the war's extended health-care price tag. "It's obviously going to be a huge expense," Denham said Thursday. "It's undefined, but the one thing that is defined is that we have to take care of the veteran."

The bills already are piling up. More than 513,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars had filed for disability benefits as of last year. Some of these war-disabled are obvious, such as the approximately 1,600 who have had one or more limbs amputated. Some wounds are hidden, such as those diagnosed with post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury. Nearly one in five of the more than 2 million veterans who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan suffer from mental health conditions, according to a study released earlier this month by an advocacy group called Veterans for Common Sense.

<More at: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/10/13/127167/lawmakers-visit-afghanistan-to.html>>

WEAK CONGRESSIONAL STAND AGAINST VETS BUDGET CUTS

WASHINGTON – PRNewswire/USNewswire - Oct. 18, 2011

The American Legion is disappointed with the “tepid” stand taken by House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee leaders against federal budget cuts that would compromise the welfare of military veterans. On Oct. 18, a letter to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (the “supercommittee”) signed by the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate panels was released that has disturbed leaders of the nation’s largest veterans service organization. While the letter opens with the statement, “Never before in times of fiscal crisis have we balanced the budget on the backs of America’s veterans, and we should not do so now,” attachments to the letter propose a number of budget cuts directed at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), some of which, according the Legion, contradict that statement. The cuts proposed in the joint letter include elimination or reduction to a number of benefits, including pension, disability compensation and education payments.

<More at: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-american-legion-concerned-by-weak-congressional-stand-against-vets-budget-cuts-132077198.html>>

VFW URGES 2 MILLION TO FIGHT BENEFITS CHANGES

Donna Cassata - Associated Press - October 19, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The Veterans of Foreign Wars on Tuesday urged its 2 million members to plead with Congress to spare military and veterans' benefits as a special deficit-cutting panel looks to slash \$1.2 trillion from the federal budget. In a "call to action," the VFW said it opposes any changes to the programs and decried any congressional attempt to balance the budget on the backs of military retirees and disabled veterans. The organization implored members, their families and friends to contact lawmakers immediately. <More at: <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2011/oct/18/us-defense-cuts-military-benefits/>>

CONGRESSMAN GARAMENDI RELEASES A COMPREHENSIVE BREAKDOWN OF DEFENSE SAVINGS SUPPORTED BY BIPARTISAN DEFENSE EXPERTS

WASHINGTON, DC – At Thursday’s House Armed Services Committee hearing on “The Future of National Defense and the U.S. Military Ten Years After 9/11,” Committee Member Congressman John Garamendi (D-Fairfield, CA) mentioned a matrix his office compiled of proposed Defense savings offered by experts across the political spectrum. Today Congressman Garamendi released the list to the public at the request of both Republican and Democratic Members of Congress and staff.

“Congress will have some tough choices to make in the weeks ahead, and clearly Defense spending is on the table. This matrix of possible Defense Department savings is compiled from proposals made by Think Tanks ranging from the far right to the center and the far left. It can help us find responsible defense savings to reduce the deficit while ensuring America’s national security,” Congressman Garamendi said.

Garamendi added, “Safeguarding the sustainability of our nation’s prosperity and security, while remaining true to the values that characterize us as Americans, calls for a focused, disciplined, and agile military. It also requires a strong and unshakeable economy and a well-informed and supportive citizenry.” “We in Congress have a responsibility to be good stewards of the public trust, treasury, and national defense,” Garamendi continued. “I am not suggesting I support all these proposals. I do, however, want to make sure we use the best available information to make strategic budget choices that will strengthen our nation’s prosperity and security.”

The matrix is available at <http://garamendi.house.gov/ComparingDefenseSavingsPlans.pdf> . Recommendations analyzed include reports from the Sustainable Defense Task Force, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK)’s Back in Black Plan, the Center for American Progress, the CATO Institute’s A Strategy of Restraint, the Simpson-Bowles Deficit Reduction Commission, and The Center for a New American Security.

WHITE HOUSE CUTS \$25 BILLION MORE FROM DEFENSE TO FUND VA

Tony Capaccio - Bloomberg - September 30, 2011

The White House has directed the Pentagon to reduce its 10-year spending plan by another \$25 billion, on top of the roughly \$450 billion it’s already planning to cut, according to three government officials.

The Office of Management and Budget directed the action because the White House decided to protect Veterans Administration medical funding from cuts, said one the officials. All three spoke on condition of anonymity because the change hasn’t been announced. <More at: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-09-30/white-house-cuts-25-billion-more-from-defense-to-fund-va.html>>

MAYBE WE NEED FEWER TANKS; BUT WE REALLY NEED FEWER THINK TANKS

OBAMA’S FAVORITE THINK TANK: CUT THE ARMY, FORGET COUNTERINSURGENCY

Spencer Ackerman - October 4, 2011 |

The Obama administration’s favorite defense think tank was once a hothouse of counterinsurgency theory. But now that the government is trying to crawl out of its massive debt, the Center for a New American Security is less about big ground conflicts and more about how to shrink the defense budget. First on the chopping block, according to its forthcoming blueprint for defense cuts: counterinsurgency. Next: the Army and Marines who wage it.

“Extended counterinsurgency operations” are passé once the U.S. draws down in Afghanistan, says Nora Bensahel, a defense expert at CNAS, as the think tank is ubiquitously known in Washington. “We’re judging that a less-likely scenario.”

On Friday, CNAS will release a dour report called “Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in the Age of Austerity,” which looks at various scenarios for how to cut defense. Those scenarios range from a relatively easy \$350-400 billion over ten years, which the Pentagon has been prepping for all year, to the “high risk” option of cutting up to \$850 billion over a decade — which will happen automatically if Congress and the White House can’t agree to a comprehensive deficit fix by January 15. What they all have in common is that the Army and Marines are in for a world of hurt.

<More at: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/10/cnas-army-cuts/>>

WE SAY WE ARE NOT “OCCUPIERS” SO THIS MAKES SENSE IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

IRAQ MAY END LEGAL IMMUNITY FOR US TROOPS

Roy Gutman - Knight Ridder/Tribune - October 06, 2011

BAGHDAD -- The possibility that some U.S. troops would remain in Iraq past the current Dec. 31 withdrawal date appeared all but doomed Wednesday as Iraqi political leaders ruled out any special legal protections for military trainers who stay behind.

U.S. officials, who have been advocating a continued presence past the withdrawal date set in a 2008 agreement, held out hope that some sort of accommodation might still be reached.

But Iskander Witwit, the ranking member of the Iraqi parliament's defense and security committee, said negotiations are now over, and that U.S. trainers would be invited to remain only if U.S. officials drop their insistence that the Iraqi parliament grant them immunity from prosecution in Iraq - a standard feature of U.S. status-of-forces agreements around the world.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/iraq-may-end-legal-immunity-for-us-troops.html>>

CONGRESS, PAY ATTENTION! THEY CAN TELL YOU HOW MUCH YOU GAVE THEM (WHICH YOU ALREADY KNOW) BUT THEY DON’T HAVE THE FOGGIEST WHAT THEY DID WITH IT. MAY I DO MY INCOME TAXES THE SAME WAY?

PENTAGON DOESN’T KNOW WHERE THE MONEY IS GOING

Jim Miklaszewski – MSNBC 10/12/11

The Defense Department, which has promised to publish a reliable account of how it spends its money by 2017, has discovered that its financial ledgers are in worse shape than expected and that it will have to spend billions of dollars in the coming years to make its financial accounting credible, the Center for Public Integrity reported Thursday.

The U.S. military has spent more than \$6 billion to develop and deploy new financial systems, but the effort has been plagued by significant added overruns and delays, defense officials told the CPI, a nonprofit investigative news organization.

The Government Accountability Office said in a report last month that although the services can now fully track incoming appropriations, they still can’t demonstrate that their funds are being spent as they should be.

<More at: <http://openchannel.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/10/12/8294595-report-pentagon-doesnt-know-where-the-money-is-going>>

U.S. TO HAND OVER IRAQ BASES, EQUIPMENT WORTH BILLIONS

WASHINGTON -- With just over three months until the last U.S. troops are currently due to leave Iraq, the Department of Defense is engaged in a mad dash to give away things that cost U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars to buy and build.

The giveaways include enormous, elaborate military bases and vast amounts of military equipment that will be turned over to the Iraqis, mostly just to save the expense of bringing it home.

"It's all sunk costs," said retired Army Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton, who oversaw the training of Iraqi soldiers from 2003 to 2004. "It's money that we spent and we're not going to recoup."

There were 505 U.S. military bases and outposts in Iraq at the height of operations, said Col. Barry Johnson, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Iraq. Only 39 are still in U.S. hands -- but that includes each of the largest bases, meaning the most significant handovers are yet to come. <More at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/26/iraq-withdrawal-us-bases-equipment_n_975463.html>

MAYBE THE VA CAN USE THIS SYSTEM TO TRACK ALL OF THE RECORDS THEY SAY THEY HAVE LOST, OR EVEN TO TRACK THE HOMELESS AND SICK VETERANS WHOM THEY CAN'T FIND TODAY

VA AWARDS REAL TIME LOCATION SYSTEM DEAL

Bob Brewin - 09/27/11

HP Enterprise Services won a \$10.4 million contract from the Veterans Affairs Department Monday to provide a WiFi-based Real Time Location System to the Ann Arbor, Mich., VA hospital. WiFi tags can be used to track the location of all kinds of assets inside buildings, and since VA operates more than 150 hospitals, this could be the start of something big. Hopefully VA Chief Information Officer Roger Baker will explain the next stages in the Real Time Location System roll-out during his monthly press briefing Wednesday. http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/09/va_awards_real_time_location_system_deal.php?zone=NGwhatsbrewin

I'M SYMPATHETIC, BUT THIS WILL TAKE MONEY FROM NEEDED TRICARE PROGRAMS ~ USE THE VA SOLUTION, LET SAIC PAY THE BILL, AND THEN FIRE SAIC

CLASS ACTION SUIT SEEKS \$4.9 BILLION IN DAMAGES FROM TRICARE DATA THEFT

Bob Brewin - 10/13/2011

An Air Force veteran of the first Iraq war and a military spouse and her two children have hit the Defense Department with a class action lawsuit seeking \$4.9 billion in damages from the theft of a computer tape containing personal and sensitive health information from the car of an employee of Science Applications International Corp., a contractor with the TRICARE Health Management Activity. The company was not named as a defendant in the action.

The suit, filed Monday by the law firm Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy & Ecker of Potomac, Md., seeks \$1,000 in damages for all 4.9 million TRICARE beneficiaries whose records were on the computer tape stolen Sept. 13 from the SAIC employee's car in San Antonio. TRICARE and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta are named as defendants.

... When the Veterans Affairs Department discovers a loss, theft or exposure of this kind it routinely offers credit monitoring services and up to \$1 million annually in identity theft protection at a cost per veteran of \$29.95 a year. At that rate, it would cost TRICARE \$146.8 million to provide credit monitoring services to 4.9 million people.

<More at: http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/hq_20111013_6702.php>

WHACKING PEOPLE BECAUSE IT'S EASIER

Col. Steve Strobidge, USAF-Ret. – MOAA "As I See It" column - 2011/10/13

Conventional wisdom is that services push force reductions and benefit cuts during every budget crunch because that's the only quick way to cut the budget. Cutting weapons programs, the services say, saves money in the out-years, but cutting people and the programs that serve and compensate them saves a ton of money right now.

Remember a few years ago when Air Force leaders proposed cutting 40,000 airmen in an effort to boost procurement funding — and then ended up losing the people and not getting the funding? ... defense leaders misdirect attention from their contracting and oversight mismanagement by pushing people program cuts instead. ... Because it's easier than actually doing their jobs.<More at: http://www.moaa.org/action/lac_asiseeit/action_asiseeit_2011/action_asiseeit_111013.htm

REMEMBER YOUR \$1,000 REENLISTMENT BONUS OFFER? ~ THINGS HAVE CHANGED!

NAVY OFFERS SOME ENLISTED LEADERS IN NUCLEAR COMMUNITY \$100K BONUS

Stars and Stripes - October 19, 2011

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan – The Chief of Naval Personnel announced this week that changes made to an incentive pay program could give a new group of enlisted leaders in the nuclear community \$100,000 for re-enlisting.

<More at: <http://www.stripes.com/news/navy/navy-offers-some-enlisted-leaders-in-nuclear-community-100k-bonus-1.158116>>

ALL OF HIS REENLISTMENT BONUSES ADDED TOGETHER DON'T APPROACH \$100K

THE OLD SOLDIER WHO DIDN'T FADE AWAY

Michael M. Phillips - The Wall Street Journal – 10/1*/11

Staff Sgt. Don Nicholas disproves the old refrain: Old soldiers do not, in fact, fade away. They re-enlist. At 59, Sgt. Nicholas is the oldest of the 6,000 soldiers in the 25th Infantry Division in eastern Afghanistan, the Army says. And he is probably one of the very few Vietnam vets now back for more in Afghanistan. He's certainly the only one who saw first-hand the ugly end of that war from the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon.

<More at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203476804576614790512877256.html>>

TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
Every Sunday	1300-1600	Wilson & San Vicente Blvds. NE Corner, Los Angeles, CA	Save Our Veterans Land	Veterans Revolution	
10/20-10/22		Redding, CA	Stand Down	Jim Richards	530-356-0342
10/20-10/24		Coweta County Veterans Center Newnan, GA	The Wall That Heals	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
10/24		Longview, WA	Resource Fair	Sheri Stommel	360-636-4004
10/25		Centennial Olympic Park Atlanta, GA	The Wall That Heals	HISTORY®	
10/26		Arlington, VA	Homeless Veteran Job Fair	Harvetta Spann	
10/26		Kokomo, IN	Homeless Veteran Health Fair	Lisa Chiavolo	765-457-0571 x3019
10/28		St. Cloud, MN	Resource Fair	Michelle Lemke	320-310-2725
10/29		Pahrump, NV	Resource Fair	Gregory Abernathy	702-636-3000 x6054
10/29		Yakima, WA	Resource Fair	Brian McCloud	509-457-1822
11/3		Knoxville, TN	Resource Fair	Clyde Vincent	865-546-4813
11/3-11/5		Nashville, TN	Stand Down	Bill Burleigh	615-248-1981
11/3-11/6		The Fairgrounds Refugio, TX	The Wall That Heals	VFW Post 6290	
11/4		Kansas City, KS	Resource Fair	Jennifer Gould	816-519-8805
11/4		Anchorage, AK	Resource Fair	Michael Haller	907-334-5200
11/5		Prince George's County, MD	Resource Fair	Ginger Miller	301-283-5268
11/5		Lafayette, ION	Resource Fair	Martina Sternberg	765-496-3469
11/8		Mankato, MN	Resource Fair	Susan Worlds	507-345-8258
11/9		Flint, MI	Resource Fair	Loma Harris	810-336-8612
11/9		Las Vegas, NV	Resource Fair	Gregory Abernathy	702-636-3000 x6054
11/9	7PM	Cipriani 42nd St 110 E 42nd St, NY, NY	5th Annual Heroes Gala	IAVA	Expensive

11/10		Rockingham County, NC	Resource Fair		336-634-5600 x205
11/10-11/13		5151 N. Colony Blvd. The Colony, TX	The Wall That Heals	The City of The Colony	
11/11		Osceola County, FL	Resource Fair	Christie Bhageloe	407-742-7041
11/11-11/12		Hinesville, GA	Homeless Veterans Resource Fair	Daisy Jones	912-876-6573
11/11		Various locations around the world	PTSD and Trauma Awareness Day	20 in the US; 5 in the UK; 3 each in Canada & Australia; 1 each in India, Denmark, Mexico, and Argentina	
11/11		Applebee's around the country	Free meal for veterans0	Applebee's	Check your local Applebee's Restaurant
11/12		Memphis, TN	Resource Fair	William Jones	901-864-9516
11/12		Dublin, GA	Resource Fair	Elder Max M. Simmons	478-275-4899
11/17-11/20		Green Lawn Memorial Gardens Lafayette, LA	The Wall That Heals	Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapt. 504	

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

MILITARY RETIREES' COLA TO RISE BY 3.6 PERCENT

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Oct 19, 2011

After two years of having no annual adjustment, military retirees will receive a 3.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment effective Dec. 1.The money will first appear in January checks.

The same percentage increase will apply to Social Security, federal civilian retired pay and other government entitlements linked to the Consumer Price Index. The retiree increase is larger than the 1.6 percent pay raise expected on Jan. 1 for the military. The difference results from the fact retired pay is adjusted to keep pace with consumer prices while military basic pay rises to keep pace with private-sector wages. <More at: <http://militarytimes.com/news/2011/10/military-retirees-cola-to-rise-by-3.6-percent-101911/>>

VA TO COVER EXTRA COSTS AMID HOME LOAN CONFUSION

The Associated Press - October 1, 2011

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will cover extra costs for veterans who struck deals on home loans and faced the possibility of higher fees amid confusion over a federal law change, the agency said Saturday. The problem involves a Sept. 8 notice from the Department of Veterans Affairs loan operations that said certain fees would be lower beginning Saturday. But Congress delayed those lower fee rates from taking effect until November in legislation awaiting President Barack Obama's signature. <More at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=140977925>>

DIFFERENT ISSUE ~ SAME RESULT: VETERANS GET SCREWED, BANKS WIN

SUIT ALLEGES BANKS AND MORTGAGE COMPANIES CHEATED VETERANS AND U.S. TAXPAYERS

Steve Vogel - October 4, 2011

Some of the nation's biggest banks and mortgage companies have defrauded veterans and taxpayers out of hundreds of millions of dollars by disguising illegal fees in veterans' home refinancing loans, according to a whistleblower suit unsealed in federal court in Atlanta. The suit accuses the companies, including Wells Fargo, Bank of America, J.P. Morgan Chase and GMAC Mortgage, of engaging in "a brazen scheme to defraud both our nation's veterans and the United States treasury" of millions of dollars in connection with home loans guaranteed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"This is a massive fraud on the American taxpayers and American veterans," James E. Butler Jr., one of the lawyers bringing the suit, said Tuesday. <More at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/suit-alleges-banks-and-mortgage-companies-cheated-veterans-and-us-taxpayers/2011/10/04/gIQAtp4RLL_story.html>

YOU CAN BET THAT THIS ONE WILL GO TO THE SUPREMES ~ HOW DARE THEY MAKE AN INSURANCE COMPANY PAY THE BENEFITS IT PROMISED! THE GOVERNMENT TRIES HARD NOT TO, WHY SHOULD THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY HAVE TO?

COURT SAYS INSURER CAN'T CUT VETERAN'S DISABILITY

Margery A. Beck - Associated Press - 10.07.11

OMAHA, Neb. -- A federal appeals court ruled in favor of a Vietnam veteran Friday, saying his long-term disability insurance carrier can't reduce his monthly payment by the amount he gets from veterans' benefits.

James Riley, 56, of Bellevue, left his job when symptoms multiple sclerosis made it impossible for him to work. Sun Life and Health Insurance Co., which provided the long-term disability plan for Riley's employer, began paying Riley benefits in January 2005. But two years later, Sun Life learned Riley also received veterans' benefits for the disease that developed while he was serving in Vietnam War during the early 1970s. Sun Life reduced the amount it was paying Riley and claimed he owed nearly \$21,000 in overpayments. <More at: http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/10/07/general-ne-va-benefits-lawsuit_8723885.html>

DON'T LET VETS GET IN THE WAY OF DEFICIT REDUCTION ~ SLASH RESEARCH AND SLASH THOSE BENEFITS: EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING IT TOO!

VETS TOUCHED BY GULF WAR ILLNESS FRET OVER RESEARCH FUNDS

Kelly Kennedy - USA TODAY - 10/13/11

WASHINGTON – A congressional move to shift control of the flow of money to research a mysterious Gulf War illness has alarmed veterans of that conflict who fear the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments have little interest in uncovering the true causes of their ailments.

... In the past, Binns said, VA research focused on the mental health issues of veterans of the 1991 Gulf War, while the Defense Department stopped funding research on Gulf War illness several years ago. Now, the Defense Department's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) exists only because Congress designates money to the Defense Department budget each year to study Gulf War illness. But on Sept. 15, the Senate voted to exclude the program from next year's Defense Appropriations Act, while the House, after a last-ditch amendment from Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, voted to fund it with \$10 million. <More at: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2011-10-12/gulf-war-illness-funding/50745258/1>>

AN INTERESTING SEGMENT OF A VERY GOOD SERIES

REBUILDING SOLDIERS TRANSFORMED BY WAR INJURIES

October 13, 2011

Improvements in medical care and equipment mean fewer troops are dying on the battlefield. But more troops are returning home severely wounded, with injuries that require lifelong care and cost millions of dollars in medical bills. On Thursday's *Fresh Air*, veteran combat reporter David Wood talks about some of the challenges that severely wounded soldiers face when they return from Afghanistan and Iraq. Wood is the author of a [new 10-part series](#) for The Huffington Post called "Beyond the Battlefield" that examines some of those challenges and setbacks.

"One of the things that we as a country are learning is that people who are wounded in war are wounded forever".David Wood

Wood tells *Fresh Air's* Terry Gross that fewer U.S. troops die outright on the battlefield — because of protective equipment and better medical care. But more Americans are being wounded, and their injuries are more "severe and complex." The number of American soldiers who lost at least one limb doubled from 2009 to 2010, and the number of triple amputees has nearly doubled, he says. Almost all of the severely injured troops return to the U.S. with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). <More at: <http://www.npr.org/2011/10/13/141266015/rebuilding-wounded-soldiers-when-they-return>

U.S. ARMY TO RECONSIDER DENIED PURPLE HEARTS

Duncan McGhee - Texas Veterans Commission, Austin - October 3, 2011

The U.S. Army is encouraging those individuals denied Purple Heart awards for concussive or mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to resubmit documentation for reconsideration of the medal. It is important to note the injury must have occurred on or after Sept. 11, 2001. <More at: <http://texas-veterans.com/latest-news/entry/u.s.-army-to-reconsider-denied-purple-hearts>>

WAR VETERANS PROUD BUT STRUGGLING AS CIVILIANS

Gregg Zoroya - USA Today - Oct 5, 2011

Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq are having greater difficulty returning to civilian life than veterans from previous eras but remain proud of their service, according to the results of a Pew Research survey released Wednesday.

The rare survey of former service members <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2111/veterans-post-911-wars-iraq-afghanistan-civilian-military-veterans> says veterans have found the cost of combat to be high in personal and family anguish, and less than a majority of those surveyed, 34 percent, say both conflicts have been worth the fight. Fifty percent say Afghanistan was worth it; 44 percent say the same of Iraq.

"So we have this experience of stress [under fire] that can cause growth or injury," said Ward Casscells, the chief medical officer at the Pentagon from 2007-09. "Our task now is to find better ways of screening out those who have a high chance of injury and learn to catch them as they fall."

Forty-four percent of those surveyed say their adjustment to civilian life has been difficult, compared with the 25 percent of veterans surveyed from previous eras. Half of those who served in combat report signs of post-traumatic stress, and 75 percent report living with nightmares and flashbacks from their combat experience.

<More at: <http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/10/gannett-veterans-proud-struggling-civilians-100511/>>

LEGACY OF DECADE AT WAR: 1 MILLION JOBLESS VETS

Rob Hotakainen - McClatchy Newspapers - October 7, 2011

WASHINGTON — Democrats and Republicans rarely agree on anything in Washington, but there's a growing bipartisan sense that the private sector will have to do much more to help ease chronically high unemployment among veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. In August, President Obama called on businesses to hire or train 100,000 unemployed veterans by the end of 2013. Microsoft answered that challenge with a pledge to train 10,000 of them. Now, as part of his \$447 billion jobs package, Obama wants Congress to approve a plan that would provide businesses with a tax credit of \$2,400 to \$9,600 for each veteran they hire, the amount depending on whether they're disabled and how long they've been unemployed. A million veterans already are unemployed, and more than a million are expected to leave the military by 2016.

<More at: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2016440031_joblessvets08.html>

COALITION OF COMPANIES VOWS TO HIRE 25,000 VETERANS, SPOUSES

Leo Shane III - Stars and Stripes - October 19, 2011

WASHINGTON — A coalition of packaged goods companies has pledged to hire 25,000 veterans and military spouses over the next two years as part of White House initiatives to aid military families. If completed, the massive hiring effort would supply one-fourth of the goal of 100,000 new veteran and military spouse jobs by 2014 set by President Barack Obama in August. It could also provide a major improvement in unemployment numbers among young veterans, a population that has had prolonged difficulties finding post-military careers.

Obama and first lady Michelle Obama made the formal announcement of the jobs pledge Wednesday at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia, as part of the White House's bus tour promoting a package of job-creation initiatives. The companies making the pledge are members of the American Logistics Association, which includes 270 manufacturers such as Tyson Foods, Coca-Cola, Unilever and ConAgra.

<More at: <http://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/coalition-of-companies-vows-to-hire-25-000-veterans-spouses-1.158141>>

LAW STUDENTS AID VETERAN'S APPEAL

Gavan Gideon, Daniel Sisgoreo - Staff Reporters - October 14, 2011

On Thursday morning, Connecticut Navy veteran Carmen Cardona filed an appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims asserting she was wrongly denied spousal disability benefits because of her same-sex marriage. The appeal was filed by Cardona with the help of a team from the Yale Law School Veterans Legal Services Clinic, a faculty-led group of Yale law students that assists veterans with legal issues related to their military service. Cardona, who served in the military for 18 years before completing her reserve time in 2006, married her spouse in May 2010 and submitted a request for spousal benefits that summer. Her request was denied by the Department of Veterans Affairs in November on the grounds that her partner was not of the opposite sex. <More at: <http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2011/oct/14/law-students-aid-veterans-appeal/>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2011

OP'N IRAQI FREEDOM/**NEW DAWN** (2,721/414 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,408/71
WOUNDED US [10/3/11]	31,921/268
OTHER US CASUALTIES [10/3/11]	40,374/2,228
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [10/3/11]	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 [10/19/11]	≥ 112,571–1,455,590
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 (3,665 DAYS)

KILLED US	1,812
WOUNDED US [10/3/11]	14,342
OTHER CASUALTIES US [10/3/11]	14,740
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [10/3/11]	68
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	956
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	\$799,755,536,410
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$466,077,015,862

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 OCTOBER 11, 2011

This week the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 613 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 69,463; Navy Reserve, 4,629; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 10,807; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,644, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 768. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 91,311, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found on line at

<http://www.defense.gov/news/d20111011ngr.pdf>

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

WHETHER YOU AGREE WITH THE "OCCUPY WALL STREET" CROWD OR NOT, WE ALL HAVE TO BE PROUD OF THIS MARINE WHO TELLS THE NYPD THAT "THERE IS NO HONOR IN BEATING UP UNARMED CIVILIANS"

United States Marine Corps. Sgt. Shamar Thomas from Roosevelt, NY went toe to toe with the New York Police Department. An activist in the Occupy Wall Street movement, Thomas voiced his opinions of the NYPD police brutality that had and has been plaguing the OWS movement.

Thomas is a 24-year-old Marine Veteran (2 tours in Iraq), he currently plays amateur football and is in college.

Thomas comes from a long line of people who sacrifice for their country: Mother, Army Veteran (Iraq), Step father, Army, active duty (Afghanistan), Grand father, Air Force veteran (Vietnam), Great Grand Father Navy veteran (World War II). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmEHcOc0Sys&feature=player_embedded

NEW BILL TO PAIR DOGS WITH VETERANS

Michael Markarian - Humane Society Legislative Fund, October 15, 2011

Much of the attention in Congress is focused on deficit reduction and partisan gridlock, but some bipartisan bills are still making progress. Yesterday the House unanimously passed a package of veterans' health care legislation (H.R.

2074), and included in the final bill was the Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act (H.R. 198), introduced by Rep. Michael Grimm, R-N.Y., which will help pair vets with pets and is good for both soldier and canine.

The legislation would create a pilot program for training dogs as a form of therapy to help treat veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other post-deployment mental health conditions. The dogs could come from shelters, and after training, they would become service dogs to assist veterans with disabilities.

<More at: <http://www.globalanimal.org/2011/10/15/new-bill-to-pair-dogs-with-veterans/55092/>>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE TRAUMATIC INJURY PROTECTION PROGRAM (TSGLI)

Every member who has SGLI also has TSGLI effective December 1, 2005. This coverage applies to active duty members, reservists, National Guard members, funeral honors duty and one-day muster duty.

This benefit is also provided retroactively for members who incurred severe losses as a result of traumatic injuries incurred between October 7, 2001 and November 30, 2005, if the injury was incurred in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), regardless of whether they had SGLI coverage at the time of their injury.

Effective October 1, 2011, TSGLI will be payable for all qualifying injuries incurred during the period October 7, 2001 to November 30, 2005, regardless of where they occurred, and regardless of whether the member had SGLI coverage at the time of the injury. The Veterans' Benefit Improvement Act of 2010 removes the requirement that injuries during this period be incurred in Operations Enduring or Iraqi Freedom.

Find out if you may be eligible for a TSGLI payment on October 1, 2011 <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sqliSite/TSGLI/Retro.htm>



“American soldiers in battle don’t fight for what some president says on TV, they don’t fight for mom, apple pie, the American flag ... they fight for each other.”

Hal Moore, CMDR 1/7 Cav,
Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam November 1965

LET'S KEEP ON FIGHTING FOR EACH OTHER, AND STOP FIGHTING WITH EACH OTHER

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.