

Sound Off!



Vol. II, No 4 The Newsletter of VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, Inc.

“Veterans standing up for each other”

10 October 2006

First Call - THEME OF THE ISSUE AND/OR CLIPS & QUOTES

Politicians and the military

What is it that gets politicians so worked up in public about the military? Is it patriotism? Is it national pride? Do they just like uniforms? Or is it personal, political opportunity?

Now these are the folks who, for the most part, didn't serve – had better things to do – had to get on with their lives. Yet, roll the drum or sound the trumpet, and they are right out there on the platform waving the flag and weeping tears of gratitude.

But when it gets to where the rubber hits the road – legislation that will actually support the troops, improve their lives when they serve and when they retire, help their families while they are deployed, these same politicians are hard to find. Maybe once again they have decided that they have better things to do.

Two things are sure. 1) They have learned that rhetorical support gets them votes. 2) Voters never bother to look up whether or not their Congressperson supported the troops when the time came to deliver.

By support I am not talking about speeches on the floor, or even legislation proposed. Those are the actions they cite to make you believe that they are “supporting the troops”. By support I mean getting effective legislation through committees, fighting to get them on the floor for a vote, defending them against adverse amendments, and lobbying the executive to sign and implement the bill. Once signed, it means following up with the fight for funding, and providing oversight to ensure that the funds are spent as the legislation directed. In other words, the hard part.

Hundreds of bills in support of the troops are languishing in federal and state legislative committees, never to see the light of day. The politician can say, “See, I wrote (or signed on to) this bill.” But did they fight for it? Did they ever get it out of committee? Did they see it through to the end? Did they ever do the hard work?

VUFT's proposed legislation to establish a commission to determine if California veterans and their families were getting the support that they were supposed to receive, was vetoed by the Governor. We had hoped that it would be a model for the nation. Yes the bill was written; not as we proposed, but close enough that we might have gotten some valid results. When it hit the legislature it was modified – and weakened – so that some bureaucratic stake holders wouldn't be offended, but it was still workable. It passed both houses unanimously. But no one would fight the Governor for it and he vetoed it saying that it would be redundant to his own Advisory Council which doesn't even look to find out if the troops are getting their support –

their job is to advise the Governor on policy. So real people who are hurting lose, while policy and bureaucracy win.

The real support that the troops need – that they begged us for two years ago – is no nearer for them now than it was then. All along politicians have been signing on and using this and other legislation as examples of their support – but no one speaks up when the Governor misses the point and vetoes the legislation.

The amazing thing is the number of bills with the words “Veteran” in the title that do get passed, Sadly, 85% or more of them are renaming a Post Office after a veteran, establishing a memorial for a specific veteran or for veterans, or funding repairs or upgrades to some “Veterans Field” or “Veterans Center”, most of which have nothing to do with providing real services to real live veterans.

Well folks – we don't need memorials; and we certainly don't need playing fields. What we need is for you to do two simple things. 1) Get legislation passed that will truly improve the lives of serving military, veterans and their families. 2) Do your oversight job to make sure that those same veterans are getting the benefits they deserve, in the amount they deserve, and when they need them. Then you can crow all you want and we'll be there to support you.

Military Commissions Act of 2006

Harking back to last issue's subject - Politicians of both parties will jump on bills that in the end make military service more dangerous, and will then use those to show how tough they are on defense. I guess we can't expect them to understand. I give you just two quotes from this bill which I hope will never be quoted to one of our soldiers being held captive by some enemy in the future as a rationale for the foul treatment that he or she will be receiving then:

“No court, justice, or judge shall have jurisdiction to hear or consider any claim or cause of action whatsoever, including any action pending on or filed after the date of the enactment of the Military Commissions Act of 2006, relating to the prosecution, trial, or judgment of a military commission under this chapter, including challenges to the lawfulness of procedures of military commissions under this chapter.”

“No person may invoke the Geneva Conventions or any protocols thereto in any habeas corpus or other civil action or proceeding to which the United States, or a current or former officer, employee, member of the Armed Forces, or other agent of the United States is a party as a source of rights in any court of the United States or its States or territories.” [Ed.]

Reveille - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

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!

check out the website!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT WWW.VUFT.ORG. CHECK OUT THE "CANDIDATES" PAGE, WHICH IS OUR EFFORT TO LIST ALL VETERANS RUNNING FOR STATE-WIDE AND FEDERAL OFFICE IN THE U.S.; IT IS BEING UPDATED DAILY. PLEASE HELP US MAKE THIS AS COMPLETE A LIST AS POSSIBLE BY SENDING CANDIDATE INFO TO SCOOK@VUFT.ORG.

Assembly - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

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 "Join" 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

This letter commented on a quote from a West Point cadet about the death in Iraq of 1LT Emily Perez, Class of '03 while serving with the 4th ID. The quote:

"The fact that she's died -- it makes what's going on in the Middle [East] . . . so much more real. I mean, here at West Point, it's kind of like Camelot, you know -- everything just seems to work ... What happened to her, being out there in Iraq, it's real. Her death really makes everything seem more like it's going to happen..." -West Point Cadet

"For me, yeah, like, it's just an eye-opener," [said another] senior

The letter:

Good God Almighty! If the Academy cadets are clueless about the situation in Iraq -- how do we expect the general population to know or care?

Beth

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

Congress passes veterans' cost-of-living adjustment legislation

October 3, 2006

Washington, D.C. – The House passed S. 2562, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2006.

Effective December 1, 2006, there will be a cost-of-living adjustment to the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation paid to certain spouses and dependent children of service-disabled veterans. S. 2562 passed the House, September 30, 2006.

"This is one of the more important pieces of legislation the Veterans' Affairs Committee brings to the floor each year," said Chairman Steve Buyer (R-Ind.). "Each year since 1976, Congress has provided a cost-of-living adjustment to the benefits provided to our nation's disabled veterans and their survivors. I am proud that we will be able to deliver this important increase to our veterans," said Subcommittee on Disability and Assistance Chairman Jeff Miller (R-Fla.).

www.vawatchdog.org/housecvanews/housecvanews10-03-06.htm

Lawmakers Blast DoD's Guard Budget

InsideDefense.com NewsStand | Fawzia Sheikh | October 04, 2006

The House and Senate are concerned that a "substantial shortfall" in equipment stocks will hurt the National Guard's ability to meet its dual missions of supplementing active-duty forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and responding to emergencies at home, according to the conference report on the fiscal year 2007 defense appropriations bill. Lawmakers asked the Defense Department to submit a report -- due no later than nine months following the legislation's enactment -- outlining how DOD has allotted funds and provided equipment for the National Guard in the next budget

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,115823,00.html>

Here's one budget item that didn't get scrubbed!

Congress Allots \$20M for Victory Parties

Associated Press | October 04, 2006

WASHINGTON - The military's top generals have warned Iraq is on the cusp of a civil war and that U.S. troops must remain in large numbers until at least next spring. But if the winds suddenly blow a different direction, Congress is ready to celebrate with a \$20 million victory party. Lawmakers included language in this year's defense spending bill, approved last week, allowing them to spend the money. The funds for "commemoration of success" in Iraq and Afghanistan were originally tucked into last year's defense measure, but went unspent amid an uptick in violence in both countries that forced the Pentagon to extend tours of duty for thousands of troops. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,115846,00.html>

At least One lawmaker is pulling his full load

Mo. lawmaker wounded on duty in Iraq

Fri Oct 6, 4:28 PM ET

A Missouri state lawmaker stationed in Iraq was shot in the lung by a sniper while on patrol, a family spokesman said Friday. Rep. Jason Brown, 36, was resting at an Iraqi hospital and waiting to be taken to a military facility for surgery, said George McClintock, a family spokesman and former Veterans of Foreign Wars post commander. He was wounded while serving near Baghdad, McClintock said.

Brown, a staff sergeant in the Army Reserve, was deployed in March for a one-year tour and has been serving as a civil affairs specialist, helping build roads, bridges, hospitals and schools. In 2000, he served in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Brown, a Platte City Republican, is up for re-election next month. He was first elected in 2002 to represent a state House district just north of Kansas City. http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20061006/ap_on_re_us/iraq_lawmaker_injured

RETREAT - NEWS

U.S. Will Keep 15 Brigades in Iraq Through March

American Forces Press Service | Jim Garamone | September 29, 2006

Washington D.C. - Adjustments to Iraq troop-rotation schedules announced yesterday will allow 15 U.S. combat brigades to be in Iraq through spring, DoD officials said today. The 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Armored Division, based in Friedberg, Germany, will stay in Iraq for another 46 days. The brigade was scheduled to redeploy in mid-January 2007. This will shift to late February. The 4th Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, based at Fort Hood, Texas, will deploy 30 days earlier than originally scheduled, beginning in late October.

"We are a nation at war, and you would expect the nation's military to be used to fight that war," Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said today **[talk about the obvious!]**. The adjustments will give U.S. Central Command commander Army Gen. John Abizaid and Army Gen. George Casey, the commander Multinational Force Iraq, the type of combat capabilities, troop levels and force constructs they need given the conditions in Iraq, he said.

A further effect of the adjustments will permit the 1st Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, based at Fort Stewart, Ga., to complete their full 12-month "dwell time" at their home station. Army officials said the time is needed so the brigade can finish re-equipping, retraining and resetting, Whitman said.

The adjustments give Casey 15 combat brigades through March 2007. At that time, Casey can determine whether to increase or decrease the size of the force. There are 142,000 U.S. military personnel in Iraq today.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,115267,00.html>

United States Army Military Readiness

Reps. Murtha (D-PA) and Obey (D-WI) - For Immediate Release - Sept. 13, 2006

Washington D.C. - The U.S. Army's preparedness for war has eroded to levels not witnessed by our country in decades. As deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan continue unabated, there is a very real prospect that Army readiness will continue to erode, undermining its ability to meet the theater commanders' needs and foreclosing any option for the U.S. to respond to conflicts elsewhere around the globe. The degradation of Army readiness is primarily a function of unanticipated high troop deployment levels to Iraq, chronic equipment and personnel shortages, funding constraints, and Pentagon civilian mismanagement. ... roughly one-half of the entire U.S. Army is reported to be at the lowest level of military readiness
<More at: www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2006_rpt/060913-murtha-obey_army-readiness.htm

Unit Makes Do as Army Strives to Plug Gaps

David S. Cloud September 25, 2006

FORT STEWART, Ga. — The pressures that the conflict in Iraq is putting on the Army are apparent amid the towering pine trees of southeast Georgia, where the Third Infantry Division is preparing for the likelihood that it will go back to Iraq for a third tour.

Col. Tom James, who commands the division's Second Brigade, acknowledged that his unit's equipment levels had fallen so low that it now had no tanks or other armored vehicles to use in training and that his soldiers were rated as largely untrained in attack and defense. The rest of the division, which helped lead the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and conducted the first probes into Baghdad, is moving back to full strength after many months of being a shell of its former self.

But at a time when Pentagon officials are saying the Army is stretched so thin that it may be forced to go back on its pledge to limit National Guard deployment overseas, the division's situation is symptomatic of how the shortages are playing out on the ground. The enormous strains on equipment and personnel, because of longer-than-expected deployments, have left active Army units with little combat power in reserve. The Second Brigade, for example, has only half of the roughly 3,500 soldiers it is supposed to have. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2006/09/25/us/25infantry.html>

And there is little relief in sight

Iraqi Troops Hinder U.S. Efforts

Associated Press | September 25, 2006

BAGHDAD, Iraq - The plan was simple: Iraqi troops would block escape routes while U.S. Soldiers searched for weapons house-by-house. But the Iraqi troops didn't show up on time. When they finally did appear, the Iraqis ignored U.S. orders and let dozens of cars pass through checkpoints in eastern Baghdad - including an ambulance full of armed militiamen, American Soldiers said in recent interviews. It wasn't an isolated incident, they added.

Senior U.S. commanders have hailed the performance of Iraqi troops in the crackdown on militias and insurgents in Baghdad. But some U.S. Soldiers say the Iraqis serving alongside them are among the worst they've ever seen - more loyal to militias than the government. That raises doubts whether the Iraqis can maintain order once the security operation is over and the Americans have left. It also raises broader questions about the training, reliability and loyalty of Iraqi troops - who must be competent, U.S. officials say, before America can begin pulling out of Iraq. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,114739,00.html>

Iraq entering 'decisive' six months: US General Casey

The US general in charge of the multinational coalition in Iraq, General George Casey, said that the next six months will be a decisive period that will determine Iraq's future.

"This is a decisive period for everyone and everyone knows it. The next six months will determine the future of Iraq," Casey said in a statement after attending two days of closed-door meetings in Warsaw to address "the challenges facing Iraq and the US-led coalition. The Iraqi Security Force (ISF) is reaching the time of key transition; improving the quality and loyalty will be the focus of next year," Casey said. <More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20061005/wl_mideast_afp/iraqusmilitary_061005174756>

But there are real adverse results

U.S. Casualties in Iraq Rise Sharply

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer - October 8, 2006; A01

Growing American Role in Staving Off Civil War Leads to Most Wounded Since 2004

The number of U.S. troops wounded in Iraq has surged to its highest monthly level in nearly two years as American GIs fight block-by-block in Baghdad to try to check a spiral of sectarian violence that U.S. commanders warn could lead to civil war.

Last month, 776 U.S. troops were wounded in action in Iraq, the highest number since the military assault to retake the insurgent-held city of Fallujah in November 2004, according to Defense Department data. It was the fourth-highest monthly total since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

The sharp increase in American wounded -- nearly 300 more in the first week of October -- is a grim measure of the degree to which the U.S. military has been thrust into the lead of the effort to stave off full-scale civil war in Iraq, military officials say. Marines battling Sunni insurgents in Iraq's Anbar province last month also suffered their highest number of wounded in action since late 2004. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/07/AR2006100700907.html>

Having thrown away the lessons we learned in Viet Nam, they found new wisdom on how to treat the civilian population

Military Hones a New Strategy on Insurgency

Michael R. Gordon - The New York Times - Oct 05, 2006

WASHINGTON, Oct. 4 — The United States Army and Marines are finishing work on a new counterinsurgency doctrine that draws on the hard-learned lessons from Iraq and makes the welfare and protection of civilians a bedrock element of military strategy. The doctrine warns against some of the practices used early in the war, when the military operated without an effective counterinsurgency playbook. It cautions against overly aggressive raids and mistreatment of detainees. Instead it emphasizes the importance of safeguarding civilians and restoring essential services, and the rapid development of local security forces. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2006/10/05/washington/05doctrine.html>

What else are we losing out on because of this cost?

Cost of Iraq war nearly \$2 billion a week

Bryan Bender - Boston Globe - Sep 28, 2006

WASHINGTON -- A new congressional analysis shows the Iraq war is now costing taxpayers almost \$2 billion a week -- nearly twice as much as in the first year of the conflict three years ago and 20 percent more than last year -- as the Pentagon spends more on establishing regional bases to support the extended deployment and scrambles to fix or replace equipment damaged in combat. The upsurge occurs as the total cost of military operations at home and abroad since 2001, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, will top half a trillion dollars, according to an internal assessment by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service completed last week. The spike in operating costs -- including a 20 percent increase over last year in Afghanistan, where the mission now costs about \$370 million a week -- comes even though troop levels in both countries have remained stable. The reports attribute the rising costs in part to a higher pace of fighting in both countries, where insurgents and terrorists have increased their attacks on US and coalition troops and civilians. Another major factor, however, is "the building of more extensive infrastructure to support troops and equipment in and around Iraq and Afghanistan," according to the report. Based on Defense Department data, the report suggests that the construction of so-called semi-permanent support bases has picked up in recent months, making it increasingly clear that the US military will have a presence in both countries for years to come. <More at: www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2006/09/28/cost_of_iraq_war_nearly_2b_a_week/>

To the Color - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
10/21	9-5:30	UCLA, Grand Ballroom, Ackerman Union	Medical Consequences of the War in Iraq	Physicians for Social Responsibility - LA	\$25 Fee UCLA Extension course # S3972U - Signup
10/19-21		Tucson, AZ	Stand Down	Juan Parraz	520-741-7188 x2451
10/19-21		Bakersfield, CA	Stand Down	Charles Bikakis	661-868-7303
10/20-21		Montpelier, VT	Resource Fair	Lorraine Gile	802-223-3141
10/21		Albuquerque, NM	Resource Fair	Catherine Brown	505-265-1711 x5921
10/25-26		Detroit, MI	Resource Fair	Michael Bethune	313-576-3345
10/27		Cedar Rapids	Resource Fair	Donald Tyne	319-892-5160
10/27-29		Cedar Rapids	Stand Down	Donald Tyne	319-892-5160
10/27		St. Cloud, MN	Resource Fair	Lori Helget	320-656-6101
10/28		Charlotte, NC	Resource Fair	Connie Thrasher	941-627-4313

Let us know about meetings and gatherings and we will advertise them

Note: We are a non-partisan organization that does not take a position, as an organization, on this war. We will advertise all veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

Recognizing trauma in our war veterans

Scottie Beath - Herald Today (Bradenton, Florida) - Oct 07, 2006

There are more than 26 million veterans of war living in the United States, according to the Department of Veteran Affairs. More than half of the veterans returning from combat will experience some mental health symptoms, according to psychologists. Of those individuals, the VA reports that up to 15 percent may go on to develop a full-blown anxiety disorder. One such disorder is post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is an anxiety disorder that may develop when a person experiences an emotional response of fear, helplessness, or horror to a traumatic event.

People with PTSD fall into one of three classes. The first, Lifetime PTSD, consists of individuals who receive treatment and may experience some improvement, but are never rid of their symptoms. Second, PTSD in Remission consists of people who developed PTSD, had their symptoms go into remission, and then experienced resurgence in symptoms due to some recent exposure similar to the original traumatic event. Third, Delayed Onset PTSD, consists of individuals who are exposed to a traumatic event but don't experience significant symptoms until months or years later.

The highest incidence of Delayed Onset PTSD occurs with war veterans, according to VA psychologists. This means that it may be many years before an individual begins to experience difficulties; sometimes they are not aware that it's due to the time they served in combat. <More at: www.bradenton.com/mld/bradenton/living/health/15688488.htm>

Tenfold Increase in OEF/OIF Reporting Stress, Mental Disorders

From the Associated Press: September 24, 2006

"More than one-third of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans seeking medical treatment from the Veterans Health Administration report symptoms of stress or other mental disorders -- a tenfold increase in the last 18 months, according to an agency study.

The dramatic jump in cases -- coming as more troops face multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan -- has triggered concern among some veterans groups that the agency may not be able to meet the demand. They say veterans have had to deal with long waits for doctor appointments, staffing shortages and lack of equipment at medical centers run by the Veterans Affairs Department." ...

"If the VA is going to see 30 percent of the 1.5 million U.S. service members who have deployed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the VA may expect a total of 450,000 veteran patients from these two wars," said the director of programs for the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. "This is a very ominous trend, indicating a tidal wave of new patients coming in, and the numbers could go up." <More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/politics/wire/sns-ap-veterans-stress,1,7403778.story>

Study: Vets' View on Combat Injury Effects PTSD

UPI - October 04, 2006

In the first study to focus on U.S. soldiers seriously injured in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan, Thomas Grieger and his colleagues at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Institute of Research found that soldiers' personal rating of their physical problems, in contrast to objective measures of injury severity by medical personnel, was more significantly associated with the development of PTSD over the next 12 months. ...

Of the 243 soldiers who completed assessments at one, four, and seven months after injury, 4 percent had PTSD and depression at one month, 12 percent at four months, and 19 percent at seven months. The soldiers who felt they were seriously injured one month after the injury occurred were far more likely to have PTSD seven months later than those who felt their wounds were less severe. The study appears in the October 2006 issue of the American Journal of Psychiatry.

<More at: <http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2006/10/study-vets-view-on-combat-injury.html>>

VA shortchanging mental health programs, report says

By David Goldstein - McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs failed to fully spend a promised \$300 million since 2005 to fill critical gaps in mental health services for returning troops and others, congressional investigators said.

The money was supposed to be used to improve awareness of the VA's mental health programs and provide better access to them for troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, women and other veterans suffering from serious mental illnesses. But a

Government Accountability Office report released Thursday found that the agency underspent the money and that not all of what it did spend went to those programs.

"Veterans expect that wounds suffered in service, be they to mind or body, will be cared for by the nation they served," Rep. Henry Brown Jr., R-S.C., said during a hearing he chaired Thursday on mental health issues. "We will exercise greater oversight on this issue now to determine what VA is spending and how it is being spent, to ensure that funds allocated by the American people are used as intended."

VA didn't respond to requests for comment. <More at: www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/politics/15632602.htm>

VA draws heat from Hill on PTSD

Rick Maze - September 28, 2006 - Staff writer

House lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle are upset because the Department of Veterans Affairs has not spent the entire \$300 million it vowed to devote to post-traumatic stress syndrome among combat troops.

But they're upset for different reasons.

Democrats are unhappy that the VA is not spending what was promised, and believe veterans are being hurt in the process.

Republicans also are not happy that PTSD funding isn't going where it was promised, but see this is an example of the VA's inability to spend all the money it is given — which they say supports their recent efforts to hold down the size of the VA budget <More at: www.marinecorpstimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-2138109.php>

Opposition to torture widespread in military

Fred Seamon: October 8, 2006

On Sept. 28, the House approved legislation giving President Bush broad authority to decide techniques U.S. interrogators can use while interrogating terrorist detainees. At his discretion, U.S. interrogators can continue to use techniques that violate the Geneva Conventions and are considered to be torture by its signatories. ... Torture is opposed almost uniformly by our military leaders, military and civilian intelligence personnel and military lawyers known as Judge Advocate Generals, or JAGs as well as the U.S. Supreme Court, which in June ruled that a provision of the Geneva Conventions concerning the humane treatment of prisoners applies to all aspects of the conflict with al-Qa'ida.

In 2003, the senior JAGs of all our uniformed services issued memos that opposed the use of torture, as defined by the Bush administration, because it violates the Geneva Conventions, the Uniform Code of Military Justice and domestic criminal law. In an August 2005 article, Karen J. Greenberg, executive director of the Center on Law and Security at the New York University School of Law, provided an additional reason. She observed that the JAG memos' criticism is not so much moral as strategic and that in 2003 they suggested that a policy of torture is sure to constitute a "fatal flaw in any war against jihadi terror."

<More at: <http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2006/October/08/edit/stories/04edit.htm>>

New misery coming

Soldiers Returning From Iraq May Be at Risk for Q Fever

Peggy Peck - MedPage Today - Sep 28, 2006

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla., Sept. 27 -- A few troops returning from Iraq are bringing home Q fever, a zoonotic disease caused by the rickettsial pathogen *Coxiella burnetii*, according to military physicians.

During the first Gulf War there only three cases of Q fever occurred among U.S. military forces, but there have been 10 cases among soldiers serving in the current war, the physicians reported in the Oct. 15 issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases*.

Eight of those cases occurred in patients first diagnosed with pneumonia, wrote Major Patrick J. Danaher, M.D., chief of infectious diseases at the medical center here, and Charmaine Leung-Shea, M.D., of David Grant U.S. Air Force Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base in California.

Q fever can range from a subclinical illness to an infection that becomes severe and chronic, or even fatal. It can appear as pneumonia or a cardiovascular or hepatic illness. It can lead to bone infections, or such neurological complications as encephalitis, aseptic meningitis, or dementia. The primary reservoir of Q fever is animals such as sheep, goats, and cattle.

<More at: www.medpagetoday.com/Pulmonary/Pneumonia/tb/4183>

Maybe these guys can pay for the treatment out of their profits

Predatory Lenders Admit Charging 390 Percent Interest on Loans to Troops

September 15, 2006

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Jim Talent (R-Mo.), today announced that during a Senate Banking Committee hearing this week leaders from the payday loan industry admitted to charging servicemembers triple-digit interest rates on short-term loans. When asked during the hearing what the average APR rate would be for a payday loan, Mr. Hilary Miller, President of the Payday Loan Bar Association, responded that the average APR is "390 percent."

"A president of a payday association admitted before a panel of Senators that they are charging astronomical interest rates on loans to servicemembers and their families and that is not acceptable," said Sen. Talent. "This testimony just reiterates the fact that we have to stop these predatory practices because the problem is impacting our operational readiness. We are very close to getting our anti-predatory lending provision through conference and I'm confident that soon these protections for our troops and their families will become law."

Sen. Talent cosponsored legislation with U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), which passed the Senate unanimously in June as an amendment to the Senate Defense Authorization bill. The measure calls for a 36 percent annual interest rate cap on loans to servicemembers and their families that is consistent with the recent recommendations by the Department of Defense.

<More at: <http://banking.senate.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Hearings.Detail&HearingID=237>.>

Taps - Passings and War Statistics

National Guard and Reserve Mobilized as of October 4, 2006

This week, the Air Force announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard had a decrease. The Navy number remained the same. The net collective result is 6,979 fewer reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 79,787; Navy Reserve, 6,100; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,359; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,300; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 265. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 100,811, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2006/d20061004ngr.pdf>.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,744
*WOUNDED US [EST. NO DoD UPDATE SINCE 9/10] ≥ 20,687	
KILLED UK	119
KILLED OTHER COALITION	118
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
KILLED CONTRACTORS	355
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 35,498
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 48,639
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 200,000+

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	341
WOUNDED/INJURED US	957
KILLED COALITION	199
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	597
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	32,034

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

* Because the US does not report injuries and sicknesses, the total of "injured all causes" is estimated to be >40,000.

To see the demographic data on the casualties go to www.militarycity.com/2000casualties

afterthoughts

Do Unto Your Enemy...

PAUL RIECKHOFF September 25, 2006

IN 2002, I attended the Infantry Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning, Ga. At “the Schoolhouse,” every new Army infantry officer spent six months studying the basics of his craft, including the rules of war.

I remember a seasoned senior officer explaining the importance of the Geneva Conventions. He said, “When an enemy fighter knows he’ll be treated well by United States forces if he is captured, he is more likely to give up.”

A year later on the streets of Baghdad, I saw countless insurgents surrender when faced with the prospect of a hot meal, a pack of cigarettes and air-conditioning. America’s moral integrity was the single most important weapon my platoon had on the streets of Iraq. It saved innumerable lives, encouraged cooperation with our allies and deterred Iraqis from joining the growing insurgency.

But those days are over. America’s moral standing has eroded, thanks to its flawed rationale for war and scandals like Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo and Haditha. The last thing we can afford now is to leave Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions open to reinterpretation, as President Bush proposed to do and can still do under the compromise bill that emerged last week.

Blurring the lines on the letter of Article 3 — it governs the treatment of prisoners of war, prohibiting “violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture” and “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment” — will only make our troops’ tough fight even tougher. It will undermine the power of all the Geneva Conventions, immediately endanger American troops captured by the enemy and create a powerful recruiting tool for Al Qaeda.

But the fight over Article 3 concerns not only Al Qaeda and the war in Iraq. It also affects future wars, because when we lower the bar for the treatment of our prisoners, other countries feel justified in doing the same. Four years ago in Liberia, in an attempt to preserve his corrupt authority, President Charles Taylor adopted the Bush administration’s phrase “unlawful combatants” to describe prisoners he wished to try outside of civilian courts. Today Mr. Taylor stands before The Hague accused of war crimes.

It is not hard to imagine that one of our Special Forces soldiers might one day be captured by Iranian forces while investigating a potential nuclear weapons program. What is to stop that soldier from being water-boarded, locked in a cold room for days without sleep as Iranian pop music blares all around him — and finally sentenced to die without a fair trial or the right to see the evidence against him?

If America continues to erode the meaning of the Geneva Conventions, we will cede the ground upon which to prosecute dictators and warlords. We will also become unable to protect our troops if they are perceived as being no more bound by the rule of law than dictators and warlords themselves.

The question facing America is not whether to continue fighting our enemies in Iraq and beyond but how to do it best. My soldiers and I learned the hard way that policy at the point of a gun cannot, by itself, create democracy. The success of America’s fight against terrorism depends more on the strength of its moral integrity than on troop numbers in Iraq or the flexibility of interrogation options.

Several Republican combat veterans, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell and Senators Lindsay Graham, John McCain and John Warner, have recognized that the president’s stance on Article 3 is a threat to our troops and to our interests. It would be insulting for the president to assume he knows more about war than they do.

But the compromise the president struck with the senators last week leaves the most significant questions unresolved. The veterans must hold their ground — and the White House must recognize that our troops need all the moral authority they can get.

Paul Rieckhoff, the executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, is the author of “Chasing Ghosts: A Soldier’s Fight for America From Baghdad to Washington.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/25/opinion/25rieckhoff.html>

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; 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