

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VI, NO 6

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 FEBRUARY 2011

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

“HIDDEN DEFINITIONS

We all have come to understand the definition of the terms Collateral Damage, Improvised Explosive Device (IED) The Wire, and Insurgent. Many of us learned these, or their predecessor expressions in other wars. Now we have re-learned them in the context of the current never-ending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To review—**Collateral damage:**

Military use—*“Unintentional or incidental injury or damage to persons or objects that would not be lawful military targets in the circumstances ruling at the time. Such damage is not unlawful so long as it is not excessive in light of the overall military advantage anticipated from the attack.”* [One wonders how many latrine lawyers it took to work that one out.]

General use—*“Damage that is unintended or incidental to the intended outcome.”* [Sounds almost accidental, doesn’t it?]

To review—**IED:**

Military use—*“A homemade bomb constructed and deployed in ways other than in conventional military action. It may be constructed of conventional military explosives, such as an artillery round, attached to a detonating mechanism.”*

General use—*“A[n improvised] device that bursts with sudden violence from internal energy.”*

To review—**The Wire:**

Military use (jargon)—*“The secure perimeter of a military installation, a military base, or an outpost.”*

General use—*“The boundary of a place of safety.”*

To review—**Insurgent:**

Military use—*“Any person in a combat zone who isn’t us—don’t trust any one of them.”*

General use—*“One who rises in revolt against established authority, especially a government.”*

In international law—*“A person or group that rises in revolt against an established authority but whose conduct does not amount to belligerency.”*

Armed with these definitions we can describe the environment in which our soldiers fight fairly readily.

Have you ever given a thought to using these definitions in the context of life in the good old U-S-of-A when your son/neighbor/cousin/father/daughter/mother/friend comes home from battle?

If collateral damage is that damage which is unintended but nonetheless comes from conscious actions and clear decisions, then I would propose that we consider PTSD and TBI and other profound consequences of combat’s collateral damage as they apply here at home.

Certainly no one intended to harm our soldiers in this fashion. Apparently the official response is “how could we have known?” Then there is the other official response, “They knew what they signed up for.”

Neither response seems to adequately address the original decision, does it, nor its lasting effects?

We have known for decades, if not centuries, that war affects perfectly normal people in very different ways. There is no way to identify ahead of time which soldier’s mental health will be adversely affected by the exigencies of prolonged combat. There is no way to predict which soldiers will come home relatively healthy and which will be profoundly changed.

What is predictable is that many—perhaps as many as one-third—will come home profoundly changed for the worse!

When they come home and are damaged, and falter as they try to re-integrate into the community, then we begin to experience collateral damage right here at home.

These damaged soldiers then become our IEDs. They are sitting by the side of the road, or buried within our communities, waiting to explode. Even if we look for them, they are hard to find.

Like the IEDs in the combat zone, they are inert devices waiting to be triggered. They can be triggered by their own action or by the actions of others. They can even be triggered by the inaction of others, and that seems to be the most prevalent cause.

When these home-based IEDs go off the entire community is damaged.

Often it starts with the family of the soldier, where we have adequate evidence of an increase in binge drinking, spousal and family member abuse, and alienation of both association and affection.

The broader community is not spared, however, as the incidence of major crimes by returning soldiers is piling up all over the country.

[I recommend a well-researched and brilliantly written book, *Lethal Warriors*, that I have just added to our reading list for an example of the effect of these exploding, home-based, human IEDs on communities.]

Sometimes it is one incident and sometimes the accumulated stress of long-term and repeated deployment that damages them. They are truly damaged and after they have gone and done the job for us, we and the system are doing a terrible job for them.

When they come home they are outside “the wire”. In all of their stress in combat they have come to view the tight-knit band of their squad or platoon as being the safe zone. When they come home they are cut off from that safe zone: they are “outside the wire”, or as they would perhaps put it, “in the suck”.

You and I become the “insurgents”—the people who are not “one of us”. The people whom they cannot know if it is safe to trust.

What is our part in all of this?

First we have to understand that when we send anyone into combat he or she has a relatively high probability of being “collateral damage” as a result of that combat. The damage they suffered is no more their fault than the collateral damage to the innocent among the Iraqis or the Afghanis is theirs.

Second, we have to make our legislators understand that we do not ever consider the military

option to be anything but the last of all possible choices. Of course, we also have to convince them that barking and yawping about the Constitution is not the same as doing their job under Article I, Section 8:

“The Congress shall have the power... To declare War,... and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water; To raise and support Armies...; To provide and maintain a Navy; to make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces.”

We have to demand that they start doing this part of their Constitutional job—they have been slacking off for 70 years!

Third, we have to make all of our legislators and federal executives aware that if they don’t stick with items one and two we will fire them, either by impeachment or at the next election.

Make no mistake! It is our job—yours and mine—to do this, and we have been slacking too!

Fourth, we have to demand that all veterans who require any kind of treatment for physical and especially mental illness be treated NOW.

We veterans should be calling out our parent services and crying “Shame”! They are the ones tossing the mentally wounded “outside the wire” and “into the suck”.

Treatment that is not provided on a timely basis causes further “collateral damage”. The human IEDs must be found and “disarmed” through adequate treatment. The present situation cannot go on.

Whatever it takes to do this is largely our responsibility also. The ignoring of veterans’ issues by past Congresses has been appalling, and the assault by certain members of the current Congress on veterans benefits must be stopped! If we have to pay more taxes to get this done we must do so right away, and we have to tell Congress to take their cuts someplace else—how about the Defense budget.

We have to bring our veterans back inside the wire—back home. We have to find these human IEDs and disarm them. We have to become the ones they can trust, not just another band of insurgents.

Most of all, we and our legislators and government officials have to quit being cowards and own up to the fact that we know what we do to our sons and daughters when we send them into combat and we recognize our responsibility—our blame for what has happened to them, and that it is our job to fix them.

[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August 2009 we appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story>>

.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.

02/20/11 NTR [The courts move veeerrrry slowly] There is a rumor that we may yet be heard this session. NOTE: There is no first-in-first-out rule in the Court of Appeals, and there is no time constraint on the court.

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.

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

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

Dear VUFT,

I have just found out that I won about 2/3’s for my VA claim that was 19 ½ years continuous with an additional 10 years of broken appeal time. I have not seen the VA statement yet, but received a telephone call from VA in Washington DC with a Treasury transfer on Wednesday to my bank!!! This is great news, however, the win was mixed as it did not go back to original date of VA claim which the VA had violated many, many federal criminal and civil laws and regulations in handling/processing my VA claim!!! Maybe, just maybe, the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Bill of Rights may mean something one day in the United States of America for U.S. veterans. Half of this money is going to pay for bills from the past years of not working since mid-august 1991. In addition, I am in my 8th BVA appeal for the rest of my SC and COMP!!!! I have had 7 (seven) BVA REMANDS!!!

Stephen Sliss Jr

Sandy,

Wanted to give you an update on my VA situation. Hired Lieberman and Mark Lawyers from DC. They went before the BVA. BVA Judge ruled my PTSD is Service Related as is my ED from Diabetes. Also, remanded back to VA my COPD for the total refusal of all VA Doctors to review any of my Army Hospital records dating back to 1969 or private doctor records for my lungs. They lambasted the BVA for gross incompetence in how they medically and Ratings Board have dealt with me on my heart and circulation issues related to SC Diabetes. Also, they have to review my initial VA application from 1985 that I filed for Agent Orange and the Army has to turn over my records from my immediate return from Nam when they had to cut blisters from my body that were most likely from exposure to Agent Orange.

By the way, the VA has not hired a new Psychiatrist for our FT Sill VA center since the last one left this same time last year. They have also not hired a new Psychologist for our PTSD Group sessions since the last one left several months ago. This leaves us with no mental health people here at the FT Sill VA Center.

Ken Moulton Lawton, OK

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

VETERANS IN CONGRESS AT LOWEST LEVEL SINCE WORLD WAR II

Jennifer Rizzo – CNN – January 21, 2011

Washington (CNN) -- Members of Congress are quick to say they support the troops and veterans, but the number of elected officials who have served has plummeted to its lowest point since World War II. Only 20% of the 535 members of the new Congress have served in the military, 25 from the Senate and 90 from the House of Representatives.

<More at: www.cnn.com/2011/US/01/20/congress.veterans/>

HOUSE VETS PANEL LEADERS INCLUDE JUST ONE VET

Rick Maze - Staff writer

Posted : Wednesday Jan 19, 2011

A group of freshman lawmakers, only one with military experience, are the new subcommittee chairs on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. <More at: www.navytimes.com/news/2011/01/military-house-veterans-affairs-leaders-011911w/>

THIS IS PART OF THE LAW THAT JUST PASSED THE HOUSE – WAY TO GO CONGRESS!

HOUSE SET TO ELIMINATE HUD-VASH VOUCHERS

10,000 homeless veterans could be left without housing

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17, 2011 – The U.S. House of Representatives is currently considering H.R. 1, the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011, which would eliminate \$75 million for approximately 10,000 new permanent supportive housing vouchers for homeless veterans. <More at: www.homelessvetprovidertac.net/2011/house-set-to-eliminate-hud-vash-vouchers/>

THE WRONG DIRECTION FOR FUNDING THE NEEDS OF AMERICA'S VETERANS

Republicans' proposed cuts will affect delivery of health care and timely benefits at the VA

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- On Monday, February 14, House Republicans introduced a Continuing Resolution (H.R. 1) to fund the federal government for the last seven months of the fiscal year while cutting \$61 billion in current year spending. The bill proposes to cut \$2.6 billion in funding provided to care for America's veterans. Leaders of VA's largest union, the American Federation of Government Employees, stated that the reductions threaten the health care and benefits delivery services provided by VA employees.

<More at: www.afge.org/Index.cfm?Page=PressReleases&PressReleaseID=1253>

VETERANS GROUPS CRITICIZE BACHMANN PLAN TO CUT BENEFITS

Jim Dao – NY Times - January 28, 2011

For years, federal spending on the military and veterans affairs seemed nearly as sacrosanct as Social Security. But with some House Republicans now talking about cutting the Pentagon budget, veterans groups have grown nervous that the Department of Veterans Affairs will be next. And so today, a number of groups took preemptive action, vigorously blasting a

proposal for V.A. budget cuts that came from a Tea Party leader, Representative Michele Bachmann, Republican of Minnesota.

The veterans groups were responding to a plan recently posted on Representative Bachmann's congressional Web site to cut federal spending by \$400 billion. The plan calls for deep cuts to just about every federal agency, and veterans affairs is not spared: She proposed lopping \$4.5 billion from its annual \$125 billion budget, including by capping increases to health care spending for veterans and reducing some disability compensation.

<More at: <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/28/veterans-groups-criticize-bachmann-plan-to-cut-benefits/>>

BACHMANN BACKS OFF PAY CUTS FOR DISABLED VETS

Rick Maze – Military Times – 2/19/11

Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., sought Friday to quell a controversy over her budget-cutting plans, dropping a proposal that would have cut compensation for some disabled veterans by \$12,000 a year or more. Bachmann, who heads the tea party caucus in the House of Representatives, said she remains dedicated to cutting federal spending, and has not backed off the idea of freezing veterans' health care funding. <More at: <http://coalitionforveterans.org/2011/02/bachmann-backs-off-pay-cuts-for-disabled-vets/>>

MURRAY, FELLOW SENATORS CALL ON VA TO STOP DRAGGING ITS FEET IN GETTING FAMILY CAREGIVERS CRITICAL BENEFITS

(Washington, D.C.) – Yesterday, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, along with 17 Senators from both sides of the aisle, wrote to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Jack Lew, to urge the Administration to carry out the law and begin providing supportive services to caregivers of wounded veterans. The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, Public Law 111-163, was enacted May 5, 2010 and directed VA to begin providing caregiver support by January 30, 2011. To date, the Obama Administration has failed to even set out its initial plan to carry out the law.

<More at: http://veterans.senate.gov/press-releases.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=d58b9621-6fa0-4ad8-95ff-3ee707041f5c>

A FEW DO IT WELL

GOVERNOR SHUMLIN WANTS VETERANS' JOB BILL PUT ON FAST TRACK

Sam Hemingway - Free Press Staff Writer - February 13, 2011

COLCHESTER -- Gov. Peter Shumlin said Saturday he and Legislative leaders have agreed to "fast-track" a bill offering tax incentives to employers who hire on some of the 600 out-of-work Vermont National Guard soldiers just back from a deployment to Afghanistan.

"It's our responsibility to thank them for their service and, as a small token of our appreciation, make sure we pass a tax credit for any employer in Vermont who hires one of our brave men and women," Shumlin said at a news conference at the American Legion Post 91 in Colchester village.

<More at: www.burlingtonfreepress.com/article/20110213/NEWS03/102130310/Shumlin-wants-veterans-job-bill-put-on-fast-track>

BUT MANY DO IT POORLY

VETERAN CHILDREN LOSE SCHOLARSHIPS

TERRE HAUTE, IN - College tuition help for students with disabled military veteran parents could be reduced with a new bill at the Indiana Statehouse. The proposal no longer guarantees full college scholarships to children of disabled military vets.

<More at: www.wthitv.com/dpp/news/indiana/vet%27s-children-lose-college-money>

MCNERNEY URGES GOVERNOR TO RECONSIDER CUTS TO VETERANS PROGRAMS

Jeb Bing - Pleasanton Weekly Staff - February 15, 2011

Congressman Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton) has asked Governor Jerry Brown to reconsider proposed cuts he has made for programs that serve veterans. In a letter sent to Brown Monday, McNerney noted that the governor's current state budget proposal includes a reduction in veterans' services totaling \$9.9 million. These cuts would eliminate state support for County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) and Operation Welcome Home.

"California is home to more than 2 million veterans, and nearly 30,000 veterans return home to California from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan every year," McNerney said. <More at: www.pleasantonweekly.com/news/show_story.php?id=6180>

THIS WAS IN THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FY 2011, RECENTLY SIGNED IN TO LAW.

SEC. 313. REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO THE INVESTIGATION OF EXPOSURE TO DRINKING WATER AT CAMP LEJEUNE, NORTH CAROLINA.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Department of the Navy and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (hereinafter in this section referred to as “ATSDR”) have been working together for almost two decades to identify the possible effects of exposure to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

(2) Multiple studies have been conducted, and are being conducted, which require significant amounts of data and historical documentation, requiring the Department of the Navy and ATSDR to have close collaboration and open access to information.

(3) In June 2010, the Department of the Navy and ATSDR established the Camp Lejeune Data Mining Technical Workgroup to identify and inventory information and data relevant to the ongoing scientific research.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) **ATSDR ACCESS TO DATA.—**By not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Navy shall ensure that the inventory created by the Camp Lejeune Data Mining Technical Workgroup is accurate and complete and that ATSDR has full access to all of the documents and data listed therein as needed.

(2) **AVAILABILITY OF NEW AND NEWLY DISCOVERED DOCUMENTS.—**

If after the date of enactment of this Act the Secretary of the Navy generates any new document, record, or electronic data, or comes into possession of any existing document, record, or electronic data not previously provided in the Camp Lejeune Data Mining Technical Workgroup, the Secretary of the Navy shall make such information immediately available to ATSDR with an electronic inventory incorporating the newly located or generated document, record, or electronic data.

(3) **LIMITATION ON ADJUDICATION OF CLAIMS.—**None of the funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act for fiscal year 2011 may be used to adjudicate any administrative claim filed with the Department of the Navy regarding water contamination at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, until at least 45 days after the date on which the Secretary of the Navy notifies the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives of the intention of the Secretary to adjudicate the claim.

CHAIRMAN MURRAY: IMPROVED PROGRAMS COMING SOON TO PROTECT SERVICEMEMBERS FROM FORECLOSURE

Senate Veterans Affairs Press Release – 2/16/11

(Washington, D.C.) – Today, Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman, Senator Patty Murray, released the following statement regarding the announcement of a number of new financial initiatives for servicemembers and veterans.

... “These new programs, which go above and beyond what is mandated by law, will help ease concerns over financial situations at home for servicemembers,” said Senator Murray. “I am also thrilled that they include plans to find new ways to harness the skills of servicemembers and veterans as employees. I will continue to fight to ensure that the housing and employment needs of the men and women who serve our nation are met.”

Included in the new initiatives, which are being offered by JPMorgan Chase, are:

- A lowering of interest rates to 4% for SCRA-protected eligible borrowers;
- A pledge to not foreclose on any currently-deployed servicemembers;
- A pledge to donate 1,000 homes to servicemembers and veterans over the next five years; and
- A pledge to partner with other major corporate employers to hire 100,000 servicemembers and veterans over the next ten years

<More at: http://veterans.senate.gov/press-releases.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=c8e69ceb-244a-4618-af39-0c05d4f4fc77>

ARMY TRAUMA UNIT'S WOES DETAILED

James Dao - New York Times - January 26, 2011

The Army units created to provide special care for wounded soldiers after the Walter Reed Army Medical Center scandal continue to struggle with short staffing, inadequate training and an overabundance of prescription medications, a report by the Army inspector general's office said.

The easy access to medications in the so-called Warrior Transition Units has meant that about a quarter to a third of all the soldiers in the units are "over-medicated, abuse prescriptions and have access to illegal drugs," the [report](#) said, based on estimates provided by the staff at the units. <More at www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/us/27warrior.html>

DOES "DEFENSE" ALWAYS HAVE TO MEAN "SEARCH FOR THE NEXT WAR"?

MILITARY TO BOLSTER ITS FORCES IN PACIFIC

Bill Gertz - The Washington Times - , February 17, 2011

The commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific said Thursday that the Pentagon is developing new battle plans for Asia that include adding Marines to better-coordinated naval and air forces in the region where China is expanding its military might.

Navy Adm. Robert F. Willard, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, also said in a speech that U.S. military ties to India are growing and the relationship will be one of the most important for the United States in the 21st century. On the new AirSea Battle Concept, which the Pentagon is still crafting, Adm. Willard said: "This is a natural evolution, progression for us, as we advance our military capabilities, and I think it will only enhance the capabilities that we present to this region, the Asia Pacific, within U.S. Pacific Command."

The battle concept calls for a broad range of steps to better coordinate the Air Force and the Navy in the Pacific, said defense officials close to the study. The plans include better joint communications and integrated attack and defense strategies. Officials said the plan responds to China's "anti-access" strategy of using ballistic and cruise missiles, submarines and aircraft to drive U.S. forces out of the western Pacific or limit them in aiding U.S. allies.

<More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/feb/17/military-to-bolster-its-forces-in-pacific/print/>

INDEPENDENT BUDGET URGES \$65.3 BILLION INVESTMENT IN VETERANS HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS

WASHINGTON - /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --Feb. 14, 2011

Four of the nation's leading veterans service organizations are urging the Administration and Congress to invest \$65.3 billion to sufficiently meet veterans' health-care and veterans benefits needs. For the Department of Veterans Affairs, the administration has proposed \$61.9 billion in discretionary spending for fiscal year 2012. The budget proposal now goes to Congress for consideration.

The recommendation is contained in The Independent Budget (IB) at www.independentbudget.org—an annual comprehensive budget and policy document, by veterans for veterans. In its 25th year, the IB is coauthored by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans), and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

In light of the country's current fiscal circumstances, the coauthors are pleased that the President's proposed budget has given veterans an overall increase—even though it does not meet the overall figure recommended in the IB. The organizations, however, have concerns regarding reductions in the key areas of medical and prosthetic research, and construction, as well as unspecified efficiencies.

The Independent Budget recommends \$55 billion for health care, \$620 million for medical and prosthetic research, \$2.3 billion for benefits processing and \$2.8 billion for major and minor construction.

<More at: www.prnswire.com/news-releases/independent-budget-urges-653-billion-investment-in-veterans-health-care-and-benefits-116193694.html

PENTAGON TO SUPPORT BILL TO PROTECT TROOPS' CHILD CUSTODY RIGHTS

Charlie Reed - Stars and Stripes - February 17, 2011

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan – In an about-face, the Pentagon now supports the idea of federal legislation to better protect troops' child custody rights. Defense Secretary Robert Gates confirmed the move Wednesday during a Defense Department budget hearing with the House Armed Services Committee. He said the Pentagon would begin working with Congress immediately to help craft a bill to ensure servicemembers are not unduly penalized in child custody disputes because of their military service. <More at: www.stripes.com/news/us/pentagon-to-support-bill-to-protect-troops-child-custody-rights-1.135134>

THESE "EXPERTS" EXCEL AT COMPARING APPLES AND ORANGES AND FINDING THE ANSWER THEY WANT

REPORT COMPARES MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PAY

January 27, 2011 • Terry Howell

A January 20, 2011 report by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office indicates that military personnel are paid more than most federal civilian employees. The CBO report, which was requested by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), attempts to compare regular military compensation (base pay, basic allowance for subsistence, and basic allowance for housing) with the federal cash compensation (salary and overtime). Several news sources and blogs have picked up the fact that the CBO report indicates that a typical servicemember is paid more than 75 percent of "comparable federal civilian" workers. Some are using the CBO report to support the argument that the military is paid too much.

... Note: *The report also mentions the combat factor, but combat related compensation was not included in the direct cash comparison.* <More at: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/01/report-military-paid-more-than-federal-workers/?ESRC=retirees.nl>>

TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Where</u> | <u>What</u> | <u>Who</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|-------------|-------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 2/24 | 1000-1600 | Denver Marriott City Center 1701 California St, Denver, CO | Mountain Regional Career Event | View Map | Register |
| 3/19 | | Cocoa, FL | Resource Fair | Bill Vagianos | 321-637-3788 |
| 3/23-3/25 | | Las Vegas, NV | Stand Down | Shalimar Cabrera | 702-366-0456 |
| 3/31-4/3 | | 27 Union Street Concord, NC | The Wall That Heals | Cabarrus County Public Library | |
| 3/18/-3/21 | | Radisson Hotel Green Bay, WI | Women Veterans' Retreat | Wisconsin Dept. VFW | http://sheserveswi.org/retreat.html |

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

TRANSITION STAFF FOR MILITARY WOUNDED POORLY TRAINED, STIGMATIZED, FATIGUED

Carl Prine - PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW - February 7, 2011

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. -- On May 28, 2007, a bomb planted by an Iraqi insurgent along Route Canal in the village of Zaganiyah tore into Sgt Ken Katter's truck.

Blood dribbling from his ears and regaining consciousness, the Army cavalry scout dusted himself off and never left the front lines of America's Global War on Terror.

The 5-73rd Cavalry hung a Purple Heart on his chest, and Katter kept patrolling Diyalah Province's deadliest acres, despite mounting seizures, debilitating migraines, wrenching neck and back pain, and nerve tremors that quaked his arm, according to medical records provided to the Tribune-Review.

Once back at North Carolina's Fort Bragg, however, Katter's chain of command accused him of shirking his duty. Shuffled off to a Warrior Transition Battalion in the shadow of the base's Womack Army Medical Center, Katter was bedeviled for nearly three years by "cadre" staffers, soldiers without combat experience who were supposed to care for him.

For a man who honorably served in the Marine Corps and left to become a Michigan police officer before joining the Army after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, it was hard to understand.

"I didn't expect our own people to treat us like that. At least in Iraq, we knew who the enemies were," said Katter, 43, of Saginaw, Mich. <More at: www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/s_721603.html#ixzz1DOvR25hT>

ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME THAT WE ALL CALLED RAPISTS AND WIFE-BEATERS OUT FOR THE COWARDS THAT THEY ARE? AND WHAT ABOUT COs WHO COVER IT UP?

MILITARY'S 'RESTRICTED REPORTING' DRAWS FIRE

John Lasker - WeNews correspondent - February 10, 2011

U.S. Army veteran Susan Avila-Smith runs the military sexual trauma advocacy group VETWOW, or Veteran Women Organizing Women, based in Seattle. Sadly, it's a group that numbers 3,000 and is growing.

Avila-Smith has been advocating for military sexual trauma victims since 1995, after the military refused to punish her Army ex-husband after he "jumped up and down" on her pregnant stomach and ended her pregnancy. When she sought justice from her commanding officers, "I was told not to talk to anybody about it or I would be BCD'd, which is a 'Bad-Conduct Discharge,'" she said

Avila-Smith says of VETWOW's 3,000 veterans who were raped during their enlistment by a fellow soldier, nearly all told their commanding officers about the crime, in compliance with military law. Many, she says, described the backlash from the chain of command as worse than rape. <More at: <http://womensenews.org/story/military/110209/militarys-restricted-reporting-draws-fire>>

VETERAN WOMEN SPEAK OUT ABOUT HOW MILITARY HANDLES RAPE CASES

WSPA staff - February 15, 2011

A group of U.S. veterans are speaking out about being raped and abused by their comrades while in the want to force the Pentagon to change how it handles such cases.

Speaking at a press conference in Washington, D.C. at the National Press Club women who were assaulted spoke about the lack of support they received when reporting incidences of rape to their command post.

Kori Cioca, 25, of Wilmington, Ohio, described being denied help, because the other 7 members in her Coast Guard section were all men who went out drinking together. She said she was turned away when she went to report the incident with other petty officers. She also said the VA did not support her when she went there for a broken jaw.

<More at: www2.wspa.com/news/2011/feb/15/veteran-women-speak-out-about-how-military-handles-ar-1467220/>

SOLDIERS' MYSTERIOUS LUNG DISEASE IDENTIFIED

Carole Bartoo - 2/12/2010

As the Chief Warrant Officer in charge of maintenance for the Blackhawk helicopters flown by 101st Airborne soldiers in Iraq, 52-year-old Jimmy Williams says he always felt protective of the young servicemen and women he worked with overseas.

Now, Williams has come to Vanderbilt University Medical Center seeking an invasive procedure — one that won't do anything at all for his health. But it's one he hopes might help some of those younger soldiers. He is preparing to undergo surgical removal of a small section of lung for biopsy to explain why he and many of his fellow soldiers can no longer breathe like they used to.

... Williams is the typical example of what may be an emerging profile: a soldier who was fit, a lifelong non-smoker, and who returned from deployment in Iraq with permanent lung damage. <More at: www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/reporter/index.html?ID=8270>

VA MUST PAY \$20,000 FOR FAILURE TO INFORM VETERAN ON BENEFITS

Larry Hertz • Poughkeepsie Journal • February 18, 2011

A Newburgh law firm has convinced a federal judge to sanction the Department of Veterans Affairs for waiting more than two years before explaining what benefits a veteran should be receiving, the firm announced this week. Katrina J. Eagle, director of the Veteran Service Group at Finkelstein and Partners, said the \$20,000 sanction was believed to be the first ever imposed on the VA.

Eagle represented Brea, Calif., resident Cleveland Harvey in a case involving Harvey's VA benefits. She said the agency had delayed a decision for nearly two years on Harvey's request for a review of his veterans benefits.

<More at: www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/article/20110218/NEWS01/102180339/VA-must-pay-20-000-for-failure-to-inform-veteran-on-benefits>

WAR WIDOWS DISPUTE TAX ON BENEFITS

Kimberly Hefling - Associated Press Washington Post - February 10, 2011

Tens of thousands of the nation's war widows find it perplexing and downright disrespectful to their late military husbands: In order to fully collect on insurance their husbands bought for them when alive, they must marry another man.

And, to qualify, the widows must remarry at age 57 or older. Those who remarry earlier miss out, as do widows who never remarry.

At the heart of the issue is a government policy known as the "widows' tax." It says a military spouse whose loved one dies from a service-related cause can't collect both survivor's benefits and the full annuity benefits from insurance the couple bought from the Defense Department at retirement. Instead, the amount of the annuity payment is reduced by the amount of the monthly survivor benefit. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/10/AR2011021001619.html>

THIS 4-PART SERIES IS WORTH THE TIME TO READ IT

BROKEN WARRIORS

Bob Brewin – NextGov - 01/18/2011

Military's drug policy threatens troops' health, doctors say

Army leaders are increasingly concerned about the growing use and abuse of prescription drugs by soldiers, but a Nextgov investigation shows a U.S. Central Command policy that allows troops a 90- or 180-day supply of highly addictive psychotropic drugs before they deploy to combat contributes to the problem.

The CENTCOM Central Nervous System Drug formulary includes drugs like Valium and Xanax, used to treat depression, as well as the antipsychotic Seroquel, originally developed to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, mania and depression.

... A June 2010 internal report from the Defense Department's Pharmacoeconomic Center at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio showed that 213,972, or 20 percent of the 1.1 million active-duty troops surveyed, were taking some form of psychotropic drug: antidepressants, antipsychotics, sedative hypnotics, or other controlled substances.

Dr. Grace Jackson, a former Navy psychiatrist, told Nextgov she resigned her commission in 2002 "out of conscience, because I did not want to be a pill pusher." She believes psychotropic drugs have so many inherent dangers that "the CENTCOM CNS formulary is destroying the force," she said.

[Read the entire Broken Warriors series.](#)

VA PUBLISHES FINAL REGULATION TO AID VETERANS EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE IN KOREA

January 25, 2011

WASHINGTON – Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea will have an easier path to access quality health care and benefits under a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) final regulation that will expand the dates when illnesses caused by herbicide exposure can be presumed to be related to Agent Orange.

<More at: www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2035>

HUD, VA RELEASE SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11, 2011 – The Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) have released Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress. The report, released yesterday morning, is the result of ongoing collaboration between HUD and VA to understand the extent and nature of veteran homelessness, and marks the shift toward interagency data integration.

The report determined that on a single night in January 2009, 75,609 veterans were homeless, and an estimated 136,334 veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program between Oct. 1, 2008, and Sept. 30, 2009. ... Highlights from the HUD/VA supplemental report include:

- Veterans are 50 percent more likely to become homeless compared to all Americans, and the risk is even greater among veterans living in poverty and minority veterans.
- Most veterans who used emergency shelter stayed for only brief periods. One-third stayed in shelter for less than one week, 61 percent used a shelter for less than one month, and 84 percent stayed for less than three months.
- Nearly half of homeless veterans were located in California, Texas, New York and Florida, while only 28 percent of all veterans were located in those same four states.
- About 96 percent of homeless veterans are single adults; 4 percent are veterans with families. This compares to 66 percent of non-veteran homeless persons who are single.

To read the full report, [click here](#). <More at: www.nchv.org/news_article.cfm?id=863>

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT FINDINGS

POINT-IN-TIME ESTIMATES OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

- On a single night in January 2009, 75,609 veterans were homeless; 57 percent were staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program; and the remaining 43 percent were living on the street, in an abandoned building, or another place not meant for human habitation (i.e., unsheltered).
- Veterans are overrepresented among the homeless population. At a point in time in 2009, approximately 12 percent of all people (and 16 percent of adults) experiencing homelessness identified as a veteran, as did 10 percent of those homeless over the course of a year. Less than 8 percent of the total U.S. population has veteran status.

ONE-YEAR ESTIMATES OF SHELTERED HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

- An estimated 136,334 veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009. This accounts for 1 of every 168 veterans in the U.S. or 1 out of every 10 veterans living in poverty.
- Just over 96 percent of sheltered veterans were individuals, and just less than 4 percent were veterans who were a part of a family.
- While homeless veterans make up less than 1 percent of all veterans, within the poverty population veterans are at greater risk of homelessness than non-veterans. Ten percent of veterans in poverty became homeless at some point during the year, compared to just over 5 percent of adults in poverty.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION FOR HOMELESS VETS

Bob Brewin 02/10/11 04:43 pm ET

The Veterans Affairs and the Housing and Urban Development departments [reported](#) on Thursday that nearly 76,000 veterans were homeless on any given night in 2009, while roughly 136,000 vets spent at least one night in a shelter during that year.

VA has a bold plan to end vet homelessness by 2015, but Jack Downing, president of [Soldier On](#), a non-profit in Leeds, Mass., which has served homeless vets since 1994, has a simpler kind of plan: Provide vets with homes -- now.

Soldier On opened an apartment house in nearby Pittsfield, Mass., last October that houses 39 vets, who also have equity in their new home.

This is more than just housing Downing says, but a community based on integrity in which vets can work together to manage the problems that put them on the street such as alcoholism and mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder. <More at: http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/02/a_simple_solution_for_homeless_vets.php?zone=NGwhatsbrewin>

NEW COURT PROVIDES HAND UP TO VETERANS

Nelvin C. Cepeda - U-T - February 6, 2011

Veterans with emotional scars from the battlefield have a new hand out to them when they break the law. The San Diego County veterans court processed its first two cases Friday, offering a former Marine and a former soldier a small haven in the judicial system.

The two veterans, who both served in Iraq, will be required to stay in treatment programs and return to court for check-in with a judge every few weeks. Their reward: Fines stemming from their assault convictions will be put on hold and, in one case, eventually dismissed.

Veterans courts are on the rise nationally, and in California, in acknowledgment of the combat stress of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. San Diego's program is the seventh in the state.

<More at: www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/feb/06/new-court-provides-new-hand-veterans/>

THIS ONE HAS BEEN A VUFT ISSUE FOR YEARS!

ACLU SEEKS PROBE OF HOW VA MANAGES ITS WEST L.A. SITE

Martha Groves, - Los Angeles Times - February 16, 2011

The group says the department isn't helping homeless veterans enough and fails to follow terms of the deed that created the campus.

Accusing the federal Department of Veterans Affairs in Los Angeles of not doing enough to help homeless veterans, the ACLU of Southern California is calling for an investigation into the VA's stewardship of its sprawling Westside campus, which includes leasing portions of land for use as private tennis courts.

In letters to VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki, the U.S. Department of Justice and California Atty. Gen. Kamala Harris, the ACLU's managing attorney, Peter J. Eliasberg, said the VA was failing to abide by the terms of an 1888 deed that created the West Los Angeles veterans campus.

"The VA has allowed portions of those lands to be leased to a private school for use as tennis courts and other portions of VA property to be leased for use as theaters instead of housing our homeless veterans, who are in desperate need of housing," the ACLU said in a statement Tuesday. <More at: latimes.com/news/local/la-me-0216-aclu-vets-20110216.0.7240993.story>

THIS WILL TAKE CARE OF 8/10THS OF 1 PERCENT. HOW ABOUT THE REST?

SOME OF L.A. COUNTY'S MOST VULNERABLE VETS TO GET BADLY NEEDED CARE

Steve Lopez – LA Times - February 16, 2011

Project 60 aims to save lives of 60 ill and fragile vets by offering housing and support.

White male, age 69. Homeless for 15 years and three months. Usually sleeps at the beach or along a riverbed. Has hepatitis C and suffers from mental illness. Has no health insurance. Has been incarcerated.

African American male, age 61. Homeless for seven years and nine months. Usually sleeps at the beach. Has cancer, kidney disease, liver disease, hepatitis C, tuberculosis. Suffers from mental illness. Has been to the emergency room three times in the last three months. Has been physically attacked. Drinks alcohol daily and has been incarcerated.

White female, age 51. Homeless for nine years and nine months. Usually sleeps on the street. Has cancer, heart disease, hepatitis C, tuberculosis and suffers from mental illness. Drinks daily, injects drugs, has been physically attacked and suffered a brain injury.

Any idea what these three people have in common? They're military veterans.

Reliable estimates tell us there are more than 7,000 homeless veterans in Los Angeles County. About 1,400 of them are thought to be in such bad shape, like those listed above, that they may not be with us much longer. On Wednesday in West Los Angeles, at the Veterans Affairs facility on Wilshire Boulevard, officials from the V.A., Los Angeles County and other agencies will announce the launch of Project 60, a long-overdue program aimed at saving the lives of 60 extremely sick and fragile veterans by offering them housing and support services.

<More at: latimes.com/news/local/la-me-0216-lopezcolumn-20110215.0.1406110.column>

NOT JUST CALIFORNIA, BUT TEXAS TOO

VETERANS UPSET OVER V.A. CLINIC SERVICE

KGNS News - Feb 8, 2011

For years, the United States has been criticized for the way they have handled their war veterans. Local veterans are up in arms as frustration builds over what they say is a lack of quality service at the Laredo Veterans Health Clinic.

Laredo war veterans thought their fighting days were over after putting their lives on the line for their country, but they are in another battle over what they say is a lack of quality health care. Vietnam veteran, Jesus Guerra, says, "We went to war because we believe in freedom. We merit respect and services and we aren't getting them."

<More at: www.pro8news.com/news/Veterans-upset-over-VA-Clinic-Service-115618269.html>

UNEMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG VETS JUMPS TO 15 PERCENT

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Feb 4, 2011

The unemployment rate for veterans took an unexpected jump in January — even as the overall unemployment rate fell.

The Labor Department reported Friday that the national unemployment rate dropped 0.4 percentage point, to a new level of 9.0, but the rate for veterans climbed to 9.9 percent, up from 8.3 percent the previous month.

For Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans, the unemployment rate for January was 15.2 percent. This is a sharp increase from 9.4 percent in November and 11.7 percent in December, a clear trend of a worsening job market for younger veterans, many of them combat veterans. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2011/02/military-unemployment-veterans-january-020411w/>

SUICIDES SOARED IN 2010 FOR ARMY RESERVE, NATIONAL GUARD

Nancy A. Youssef - McClatchy Newspapers – 2/19/11

WASHINGTON — Suicides among active-duty soldiers dropped in 2010 for the first time in five years, but the number of Army reservists and National Guardsmen who killed themselves nearly doubled, leaving Army officials scrambling to find ways to gain control of a suicide crisis that's defying the Pentagon's investment in prevention programs.

<More at: www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/01/19/107074/good-news-bad-news-about-army.html#ixzz1EQwVFJ2E>

A SOLDIER FIGHTS A NEW WAR, AGAINST FORECLOSURE

Diana B. Henriques - The New York Times - 27 January 11

While Sgt. James B. Hurley was away at war, he lost a heartbreaking battle at home. In violation of a law intended to protect active military personnel from creditors, agents of Deutsche Bank foreclosed on his small Michigan house, forcing Sergeant Hurley's wife, Brandie, and her two young children to move out and find shelter elsewhere.

When the sergeant returned in December 2005, he drove past the densely wooded riverfront property outside Hartford, Mich. The peaceful little home was still there - winter birds still darted over the gazebo he had built near the water's edge - but it almost certainly would never be his again. Less than two months before his return from the war, the bank's agents sold the property to a buyer in Chicago for \$76,000.

Since then, Sergeant Hurley has been on an odyssey through the legal system, with little hope of a happy ending - indeed, the foreclosure that cost him his home may also cost him his marriage. "Brandie took this very badly," said Sergeant Hurley, 45, a plainspoken man who was disabled in Iraq and is now unemployed. "We're trying to piece it together."

<More at: www.readersupportednews.org/news-section2/320-80/4754-a-soldier-fights-a-new-war-against-foreclosure>

DEMOCRATS ASK DOD TO ALLOW OUSTED GAYS TO APPEAL FOR HONORABLE DISCHARGE

Leo Shane III - Stars and Stripes - February 3, 2011

WASHINGTON — A group of House Democrats want troops previously dismissed under the "don't ask, don't tell" law to be able to apply for honorable discharge status, opening the door for them to receive veterans benefits. In a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates last month, House Armed Services Committee ranking member Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., and two colleagues asked Pentagon officials to look into the possibility of allowing those troops to petition the boards of correction to upgrade their status to an honorable discharge, if they received a lesser distinction.

<More at: <http://www.stripes.com/news/democrats-ask-dod-to-allow-ousted-gays-to-appeal-for-honorable-discharge-1.133726>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2011

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM/**NEW DAWN** (2,895 DAYS)

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| KILLED US | 4,438/18 |
| WOUNDED US [2/7/11] | 31,938/100 |
| OTHER US CASUALTIES [2/7/11] | 40,445/812 |
| DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [2/7/11] | 223/1 |
| 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 [2/20/11] | ≥ 108,865–1,421,933 |
| WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10] | ≥ 400K–1.556M |
| IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07] | 2.1M/2.5M |

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,424 DAYS)

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| KILLED US | 1476 |
| WOUNDED US [2/7/11] | 10,308 |
| OTHER CASUALTIES US [2/7/11] | 12,538 |
| DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [2/7/11] | 56 |
| MISSING OR CAPTURED US | 0 |
| KILLED COALITION | 858 |
| 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 | \$775,379,418,397 |
| COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE | \$379,796,060,891 |

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 FEBRUARY 15, 2011

This week the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Navy announced an increase. The net collective result is 772 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 68,501; Navy Reserve, 5,908; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,655; Marine Corps Reserve, 4,885, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 775. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 89,724, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated is on line at www.defense.gov/news/d20110215ngr.pdf

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

GAY MARINE'S HUSBAND SURPRISED AT RESPECT SHOWN BY NAVAL ACADEMY

Neil Steinberg - Chicago Sun-Times - January 29, 2011

John Fliszar had a heart attack in 2006 and was rushed to Illinois Masonic Medical Center.

"When I was in the emergency room with him, he asked me to promise him, if he died, to make sure his ashes were interred in the Naval Academy," said Mark Ketterson. "He loved that place. He very much wanted to be there."

Fliszar, a Marine aviator who served two tours in Vietnam, survived that heart attack. But last July the Albany Park resident suffered another one that killed him at age 61. Hoping to fulfill Fliszar's wishes, Ketterson contacted the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and told them that Fliszar, Class of '71, had wanted to have his ashes interred at the USNA's Columbarium, a serene white marble waterside crypt next to the school's cemetery.

The memorial coordinator asked about his relationship to the deceased. Ketterson said that John Fliszar was his husband. ... Ketterson sent a copy of the marriage license. ...

"I was respected," he said. "From that moment on, I was next of kin. They were amazing."

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/30/gay-marines-husband-surpr_n_815986.html>

HELPING SOLDIERS TRADE THEIR SWORDS FOR PLOWS AT “ARCHI’S ACRES”

Patricia Leigh Brown - February 5, 2011

VALLEY CENTER, Calif. — On an organic farm here in avocado country, a group of young Marines, veterans and Army reservists listened intently to an old hand from the front lines.

“Think of it in military terms,” he told the young recruits, some just back from Iraq or Afghanistan. “It’s a matter of survival, an uphill battle. You have to think everything is against you and hope to stay alive.”

The battle in question was not the typical ground assault, but organic farming — how to identify beneficial insects, for instance, or to prevent stray frogs from clogging an irrigation system. It was Day 2 of a novel boot camp for veterans and active-duty military personnel, including Marines from nearby Camp Pendleton, who might be interested in new careers as farmers.

“In the military, grunts are the guys who get dirty, do the work and are generally underappreciated,” said Colin Archipley, a decorated Marine Corps infantry sergeant turned organic farmer, who developed the program with his wife, Karen, after his three tours in Iraq. “I think farmers are the same.”

<More at: www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/us/06vets.html>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

HELP MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE THERE, BUT THE VULTURES ALWAYS ARE!

AT FORT SILL, HIGH-INTEREST LENDERS CIRCLE THE GATES

Chris Kirkham - 01/24/11

LAWTON, Okla. - Just outside the front gates of the sprawling Fort Sill military installation, in a scrubby corner of the windswept Great Plains, a panorama of "military loan" brokers, pawn shops and car stereo dealers awaits.

In this landscape of high-interest, easy credit, Mike, a U.S. Army Private First Class from Kansas, began a downward spiral into debt -- one that has left him sleeping in his friend's garage, surviving on only \$148 every month.

Recently he was reprimanded for not getting his required military haircut. He just didn't have the money, he said.

"I was actually debt-free my entire life, until I joined the Army," said Mike, who, like most soldiers at Fort Sill, spoke on the condition that he be identified only by first name because he is not allowed to speak to the media without clearance from superiors. <More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/24/at-fort-sill-okla-highint_n_813378.html>

ACADEMY BAND NCO EARNS GRAMMY

U.S. Military Academy Band Feb 16, 2011

WEST POINT, N.Y., Feb. 16, 2011 -- The West Point Band's newest audio engineer, Staff Sgt. Brandie Lane, received a Grammy Sunday for Best Engineered Album - Classical category.

The album is "Quincy Porter: Complete Viola Works" which had also been nominated in two performance categories, Best Instrumental Soloist(s) Performance (with Orchestra) and Best Chamber Music Performance.

Lane also has engineering credits on Sarah Schuster Ericsson: 20th Century Harp Sonatas, which had been nominated in the Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (without Orchestra) category. <More at: www.westpointband.com>

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 <mailto:scook@vuft.org>

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

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