

Sound Off!



Vol. II, No 6

The Newsletter of VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, Inc.

"Veterans standing up for each other"

10 november 2006

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

MEMORIALS HONOR THE FALLEN – congress must HONOR THE LIVING

Of the hundreds of bills written about, and ostensibly for veterans by the 109th Congress, a high percentage were for memorials, or for resolutions in remembrance, or for the naming of objects after the dead. If my state is an indicator, it is the same sad story at the state level as it is at the federal level. The fact that most of the bills that passed were of this class masks the fact that little is being done for those who serve relative to the debt we owe them.

Please don't get me wrong! There is nothing inherently wrong with memorials. It is just that they have become the too-easy way for politicians – and the rest of us for that matter – to fulfill our obligation to those who have given the ultimate gift to their country. Those memorials do them and their survivors little good.

Also, please don't think that I don't understand the value of the increased death benefit, and the moderate expansion of active-duty-like benefits for the reservists and the guard. I do. But a few benefits cobbled onto a rapidly decaying system do not constitute the revitalization and regeneration of the servicepersons' and veterans' benefit programs that is so desperately needed.

We all know this. We have to believe that Congress knows this. What is so hard to fathom is why so little ends up getting done.

Today's serving military are part of the veterans family. They are our linear descendants and will soon be struggling for support from the same system that vexes us. The problems they and their families are having now will be compounded by lack of responsiveness in the VA and other support organizations.

Parades, resolutions and memorials don't help the families of those who are fallen, and they don't help those who come home in desperate need of help. As always, many of the articles in this issue will refer to those problems directly.

Instead of action we get statistics. Statistics are useful in the grand scheme of things, but they are not action, and they are not a substitute to those in need for directed and timely response.

Benjamin Disraeli famously said, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics." Without knowing the foundation information behind the statistics, and without knowing the sampling methodology, we can be lulled into complacency by statistics that seem to prove the speaker's point.

When the speaker is a Congressperson, and the statistics cover inaction and misfeasance in military or veterans affairs, there is real mischief afoot, and we need to work hard to put an end to it.

Another British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, described this phenomenon best when he said: "The first lesson that you must learn is, when I call for statistics about the rate of infant mortality, what I want is proof that fewer babies died when I was Prime Minister than when anyone else was Prime Minister. That is a political statistic."

So when a Congressperson or an administration official tells you that more money is going to veterans' issues now than was being spent five years ago, or in a previous administration, and he or she says that as proof of action or improvement, you must ask, "But what is the real need? How have you addressed that need to effect real improvement?"

It is not just veterans issues that are masked by this nonsense.

When you are told that we are really buying body armor at an increased tempo compared to three years ago, or up-arming Humvees at an amazing rate, you must ask, "But wasn't the question - Are all of the soldiers in the combat zone adequately protected given the real threat inherent in their mission?"

When we are told that DoD and industry are really working hard to get veterans to work in the civil sector when they come home, you must ask "But doesn't USERRA guarantee them their old job back – right away? Don't they need a paycheck right away?"

When you hear that the number of soldiers' families who have to travel long distances for medical or pay or housing support has been reduced, you must ask, "But why can't they be supported right in their own community – right away?"

Everything is costing more today than it was five years ago or even a year ago, so that is no news. It is results that count. The amount of money being spent on any issue is an inadequate, and possibly false gauge of success. After all, \$438B has been spent in Iraq so far, and five years ago we weren't spending a dime, but no one believes that that is any measure of our success.

When we hear that waiting times for appointments for veterans have increased from three to six months, we have a valuable, if painful, statistic. When we hear that appeals now take four years instead of 18 months, we have a valuable statistic. When we hear that there are 550,000 appeals pending, when there were 280,000 just two years ago, we have a valuable statistic.

Quite frankly, I don't give a damn what it cost you to perform poorly, I want to know why you performed so poorly and what you

are going to do about it now – this instant – so that the family who needs help can get it now, not within some statistically significant time frame. Statistics hide real; people!

Likewise, to cite expert opinion that VA medical care is some of the best medical care in the world is good news; but it is not in any way a measure of success if the question is, “Is the VA’s good medicine getting to all of the veterans who need it?” There the answer, sadly, is NO. Great medicine doesn’t help the veteran who’s clinic has been closed. Great medicine doesn’t help the veteran who dies before he can get it.

And by the way, “Having access” doesn’t mean you are able to get the paperwork to fill out. “Having access” has to mean that you get a prompt medical response.

So the present administration and the 109th Congress have cut back or held the line while the need has soared, applying Band-Aid legislation largely where the political payoff was obvious. The leaders of the new Congress have published a “[GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century](#)” full of more promises. It remains to be seen if they will do any better at delivering their promises than the current crew has.

One thing is very sure. We have to stop listening passively and start grading people on their actions not their rhetoric. The Republican-led Congress has largely failed. Now we’ll see if the Democrats can do any better. Or, will it all be just another political, vote-gathering activity, buttressed by more “unassailable” (that is unverifiable, and often immaterial) statistics [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

The governing board of Veterans United For Truth, Inc. will meet on Saturday, December 9th at 12 noon in Anaheim, CA. Board members will shortly receive the details, including an agenda.

Mail call - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No letters this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

There was no legislative action this period as all legislators were home fighting for their lives. The following gives some indication of what may happen next concerning our issues.

Democratic Leaders List Military and Veterans Care Priorities

AP: November 09, 2006

Military: Urge the White House to convene a summit to discuss the U.S. future in Iraq. The objective is to make 2006 a significant transition year and press the Iraqi government to more quickly assume responsibility for the country’s security. Conduct hearings on missteps on the war. One demand, that Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld resign, was fulfilled on Wednesday.

Intelligence and foreign affairs: Increase attention to terrorist threats in Africa and Southeast Asia. Open direct talks with North Korea and Iran. More oversight of terrorism and government surveillance.

Homeland security: Enact Sept. 11 commission recommendations, including stronger oversight of intelligence agencies and privacy-civil liberties issues. Declassify intelligence agencies' budgets. Put a radio system in place by next year to let emergency responders from different agencies talk to each other. Boost security for rail and mass transit systems and chemical and nuclear plants.

Veterans' affairs: Increase oversight with detailed budget accounting. More money for veterans' health care, including additional mental health counseling for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

<http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2006/11/democratic-leaders-list-military-and.html>

a “farewell” thought from a great veterans’ advocate

“SHARED SACRIFICE” A CONCEPT LONG OVERDUE

STATEMENT OF REP. LANE EVANS (D-IL), RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS October 27, 2006

It is long overdue for the nation’s political and government leaders to come together, change course and begin to implement policies that more fairly allocate the burden of the war effort on our citizens. The nation is engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; clearly the time is right to appreciate the need for a national sacrifice to help pay and support such endeavors. Less than one percent of our citizenry volunteers to defend the remaining 99 percent. Yet, this notion of shared sacrifice is not embodied in the Administration’s domestic policies that unevenly spread the burden of the war effort by giving tax cuts to the wealthiest among us while shortchanging programs that benefit veterans and the middle class. Current policies under the Republican-controlled government expects veterans to sacrifice twice – once when they serve their country in uniform, and a second time after they return to civilian life – in the form of higher health care fees, pared-back health care budgets, and delayed and denied access to care.

Throughout our short but noble history, this country has come together under the principle of ‘shared sacrifice’ during times of war. Whether it be purchasing of liberty bonds, planting “victory gardens,” rationing of goods, entering military service, or perhaps volunteering at a VA hospital to assist a wounded servicemember, or advocating for adequate funding for veterans health care services. I am confident that we as Americans are capable of joining together for the common good and begin to share in the sacrifice that our servicemembers, veterans and military families are currently experiencing.

I am so very proud of the men and women who make up our military, and how they continue to serve professionally and sacrifice greatly in challenging times. However, I am concerned that many in our society are without any connection to those serving in the military today and are left without any understanding of the sacrifices our servicemembers, veterans and military families are currently experiencing. It is too easy for those without loved ones in the military, without a personal connection to the hardships of war, to become detached and begin to take for granted the efforts of our all volunteer military force.

I am concerned that this Administration also appears to be disconnected from the harsh realities facing our servicemembers, veterans, and military families. Indeed, while many members of our military have been called to fight in Afghanistan or Iraq, many for second and third tours, the Administration appears unwilling to ask the American people to sacrifice in any way. The Administration promotes tax cuts for the elite while shortchanging funding for programs upon which servicemen and women returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are depending upon. My Democratic colleagues in the House of Representatives have tried to increase funding for veterans’ health care to adequate levels, expand TRICARE health care for the members of the National Guard and Reserves and worked to defeat Administrative efforts to raise health care fees on veterans.

Clearly, the time is right to change course, head in a new direction, and begin asking the nation to share in the sacrifice during this time of war. I am confident the American public is willing to participate in this necessary effort and answer the call to truly support our servicemembers, veterans, and military families. Our comfort, peace and security depend on them; they should know they can depend on us.

Thanks, Lane Evans. You will be missed.

There's something happening here

Mark Benjamin - Salon - Nov 02, 2006

A new protest movement inside the military -- including active-duty soldiers back from Iraq -- is calling on Congress to end the war immediately.

An extraordinary full-page antiwar ad appeared in the Sunday edition of the New York Times on Nov. 9, 1969. In it, 1,366 active-duty U.S. service members signed a statement calling for an end to the war in Vietnam. The signatures represented a tiny minority of the 3.5 million troops serving on active duty then -- but behind those signatures was a groundswell of dissent inside the military. With the Vietnam adventure sliding into an abyss, that dissent would become more apparent as an Army that included many conscripts faced ugly resistance from within: soldiers disobeying orders, deserting, using drugs, and even "fragging" their own officers with grenades.

Today, there are echoes of the Vietnam experience in the protracted Iraq war -- including a growing protest movement in the military. Its trappings are starkly different this time. Rather than insubordination and violence, it has formed around a form-letter campaign, presumably conducted within the bounds of military regulations that restrict what soldiers are allowed to say. Last week, a group of current troops, with support from a handful of antiwar organizations, announced plans to petition Congress with a collection of "appeals for redress," which call for an immediate withdrawal from Iraq. They had 65 signatures from active-duty troops and reservists. Since then, the effort has quietly swelled to nearly 500 troops, and continues to grow.

<More at: www.veteransforamerica.org/index.cfm/Page/Article/ID/8641>

See the "Appeal for Redress" at www.appealforredress.org/

Idle Contractors Add Millions to Iraq Rebuilding

James Glanz - The New York Times - Oct 25, 2006

Overhead costs have consumed more than half the budget of some reconstruction projects in Iraq, according to a government estimate released yesterday, leaving far less money than expected to provide the oil, water and electricity needed to improve the lives of Iraqis. The report provided the first official estimate that, in some cases, more money was being spent on housing and feeding employees, completing paperwork and providing security than on actual construction.

... The highest proportion of overhead was incurred in oil-facility contracts won by KBR Inc., the Halliburton subsidiary formerly known as Kellogg Brown & Root, which has frequently been challenged by critics in Congress and elsewhere. The actual costs for many projects could be even higher than the estimates, the report said, because the United States has not properly tracked how much such expenses have taken from the \$18.4 billion of taxpayer-financed reconstruction approved by Congress two years ago. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2006/10/25/world/middleeast/25reconstruct.html>

For One California Profiteer, Iraq is Going Great

Sarah Anderson - AlterNet - November 2, 2006

"War is hell," Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman once stated. This Civil War giant clearly did not hold stock in a major defense contractor.

For soldiers on the frontlines in Iraq, Sherman's words might still resonate. But for defense executives and their shareholders, the open-ended "War on Terror" has been anything but hell for the bottom line. A look at the San Francisco-based URS Corp., a major provider of Pentagon engineering and equipment repair services, can help illustrate this hell-only-for-some reality. URS recently ran a help-wanted ad for experienced mechanics to work in Iraq. The ad made the job sound only slightly less brutal than Sherman's March.

"Extreme danger, stress, physical hardships, and possible field living conditions are associated with this position," the ad read. "You should expect to work 12 hour days, seven days a week."

For mechanics who agree to these terms, URS offers \$80,000 a year. Meanwhile, company CEO Martin Koffel made 180 times that amount (\$14.4M) in his somewhat less hazardous office environs on San Francisco's Montgomery Street. The pay gap stretches even wider between Koffel and soldiers on the battlefield. Army privates made about \$25,000 last year, extra combat pay and housing allowances included. <More at: www.alternet.org/story/43548/>

See a report on "Executive Excess" at www.faireconomy.org/reports/2006/ExecutiveExcess2006.pdf

Governments say they follow U.S. on jail treatment

Evelyn Leopold – Reuters - 24 Oct 2006

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 23 (Reuters) - Some countries try to refute criticism over their treatment of prisoners by saying they are only following the U.S. example on handling terror suspects, a U.N. human rights expert said on Monday.

Manfred Nowak, the U.N. investigator on torture, told a news conference that "all too frequently" governments respond to criticism about their jails by saying they handled detainees the same way the United States did.

"The United States has been the pioneer of human rights and is a country that has a high reputation in the world," Nowak said. "Today, other governments are kind of saying, 'But why are you criticizing us, we are not doing something different than what the United States is doing.'"

He said nations like Jordan tell him, "We are collaborating with the United States so it can't be wrong if it is also done by the United States." <More at: www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N23410381.htm>

Army Funding Short Under Budget Plan

Associated Press - October 27, 2006

WASHINGTON - The Army, which has borne much of the costs for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, would get \$121 billion for the 2008 budget year under a preliminary spending plan that is nearly \$18 billion short of the amount Army officials say they need. According to a senior defense official, guidelines sketched out in a memo by Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England would add about \$7 billion to the planned Army budget of \$114 billion for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, 2007. The Army requested a \$25 billion increase. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.117897.00.html>

Air Force said to seek \$50 bln emergency funds

Oct 31, 2006 - Andrea Shalal-Esa

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Air Force is asking the Pentagon's leadership for a staggering \$50 billion in emergency funding for fiscal 2007 -- an amount equal to nearly half its annual budget, defense analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute said on Tuesday. The request is expected to draw criticism on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers are increasingly worried about the huge sums being sought "off budget" to fund wars, escaping the more rigorous congressional oversight of regular budgets. Another source familiar with the Air Force plans said the extra funds would help pay to transport growing numbers of U.S. soldiers being killed and wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<More at: http://today.reuters.com/news/ArticleNews.aspx?type=politicsNews&storyID=2006-10-31T195049Z_01_N31154342_RTRUKOC_0_US-ARMS-BUDGET.xml>

we shouldn't need any of that extra money if this release is true

Iraqis Almost Ready to Take Over

American Forces Press Service - Donna Miles - October 25, 2006

WASHINGTON – The U.S. and coalition are “about 75 percent of the way there in terms of getting an Iraqi force that’s able to provide for their own security,” Vice President Richard B. Cheney said yesterday during an interview with National Public Radio. Cheney told reporters during White House Radio Days that efforts to get the Iraqis into the fight and ensure they’re equipped and trained so they ultimately can provide their own security are on track and advancing steadily.

“That’s where we’re headed,” he told Sean Hannity of the Sean Hannity Show. “The process for getting there is to get the Iraqis actively involved in this process, to train and equip a 325,000-man force that’s capable of providing that security. That’s what it takes to complete the mission.” <More at: www.military.com/features/0.15240.117706.00.html>

we save even more money by paying them less bonus to transfer than they would get by getting out and enlisting from scratch

'Blue to Green' Allows Sailors, Airmen to Transfer to Army

Jim Garamone - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 7, 2006 – As the Air Force and Navy continue to transform themselves, the two services are finding they do not need the number of people they once did. But thanks to a program called "Operation Blue to Green," sailors and airmen chosen for separation can transfer to the Army and remain on active duty. The two "blue" services are scrubbing their officer and enlisted ranks and eliminating jobs. The Air Force, for example, will draw down by 40,000 jobs in the next few years.

"These are highly qualified and motivated people," said Army Lt. Col. Deborah Stewart, the chief of officer accessions policy at the directorate of manpower and personnel management at the Pentagon. "The Blue to Green program allows them to continue to serve."

The program allows qualified airmen and sailors to transfer to the Army. This year, there is a \$10,000 bonus for those accepted into the program. <More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2049>

Remember? if you lost your M-1, it was straight to the stockade!

Missing U.S. Weapons in Iraq

Associated Press - October 30, 2006

WASHINGTON - Nearly one of every 25 weapons the military bought for Iraqi security forces is missing, a government audit said Sunday. Many others cannot be repaired because parts or technical manuals are lacking.

A second report found "significant challenges remain that put at risk" the U.S. military's goal of strengthening Iraqi security forces by transferring all logistics operations to the defense ministry by the end of 2007.

A third report concerned the Provincial Reconstruction Team program, in which U.S. government experts help Iraqis develop regional governmental institutions. "The unstable security environment in Iraq touches every aspect of the PRT program," the report said.

The Pentagon cannot account for 14,030 weapons - almost 4 percent of the semiautomatic pistols, assault rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and other weapons it began supplying to Iraq since the end of 2003, according to a report from the office of the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction. The missing weapons will not be tracked easily: The Defense Department registered the serial numbers of only about 10,000 of the 370,251 weapons it provided - less than 3 percent. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,117959,00.html>

To the Color - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
11/11		Los Angeles, CA	Resource Fair	Doris Nickelson	310-545-2937
11/18		St Louis, MO	Resource Fair	Michael Bounds	314-612-5957
11/18		Marietta, GA	Resource Fair	Denny Roach	678-559-7432
12/07		Mobile, AL	Resource Fair	Bill Kilgore	251-432-7227

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.

more rah-rah but very little to gin up a hoo-rah from us

Veterans Urged to Wear Military Medals on Veterans Day

Donna Miles - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6, 2006 – With National Veterans Awareness Week under way and the national Veterans Day observance on Nov. 11, the Veterans Affairs secretary is urging all veterans to show their pride by wearing their military medals. R. James Nicholson's "Veterans Pride" initiative calls on veterans to wear the medals they earned while in uniform this Veterans Day to "let America know who you are and what you did for freedom," he said.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2042>

TATTOO - Current Issues

A good company doing good for vets

Harley-Davidson Foundation awards \$1M for veterans' services

The Business Journal of Milwaukee – 8 November 2006

The Harley-Davidson Foundation has awarded a \$1 million grant to Disabled American Veterans for a program that provides federal benefits counseling services to American vets.

The grant from the Harley-Davidson Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Milwaukee-based motorcycle manufacturer (NYSE: HOG), will fund the DAV Mobile Service Office program, which provides in-community benefits counseling and education to veterans and their families on benefits available from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as a result of their service to our country. <More at: www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2006/11/06/daily26.html>

Another good company acts to help vets

POST-MILITARY CAREER: Ilitch wants vets to get a slice of the pie

Greta Guest - Free Press Business Writer - November 9, 2006

Just in time for Veterans Day, Mike Ilitch, Little Caesars founder, plans to launch a program that would make it easier for American veterans to open their own pizza businesses. The Little Caesars Veterans Program offers a reduction on the franchise fee, credit on the first equipment order and financing. The offer is even better for disabled veterans, who would have the entire \$20,000 franchise fee waived for their first store. Honorably discharged veterans will receive up to \$10,000 in benefits toward starting a new Little Caesars franchise. Service-disabled veterans are eligible for up to \$68,000 for starting a franchise. A typical Little Caesars store costs \$175,000 to \$300,000 to build and equip, said David Scrivano, Little Caesars president.

<More at: www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061109/BUSINESS06/611090347/-1/BUSINESS07>

Army Recruiters Misleading Students to Get Them to Enlist

Nov. 3, 2006 — - An ABC News undercover investigation showed Army recruiters telling students that the war in Iraq was over, in an effort to get them to enlist.

ABC News and New York affiliate WABC equipped students with hidden video cameras before they visited 10 Army recruitment offices in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

"Nobody is going over to Iraq anymore?" one student asks a recruiter.

"No, we're bringing people back," he replies. "We're not at war. War ended a long time ago," another recruiter says.

<More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=2626032&page=1>

This excellent series from *raw story* is well worth reading in its entirety - 12 pages chock full of useful references - just click

Mind games

Nancy Goldstein - Raw Story columnist

[PART I: The things they carry: Mental health disorders among returning troops](#)

[Part II - To Hell and Back: Spinning the Downward Spiral](#)

[Part III - Full Metal Lockout: The myth of accessible health care](#)

[Part IV - Big Money: The Compensation Angle](#)

War Widows Wronged

Alison Burns - Cox-TV Washington Bureau

It's the military's most solemn duty: caring for the families of soldiers killed in battle. But, as WTOV9 (Steubenville/Wheeling) discovered, too many war widows feel like they've been wronged by the system that is supposed to protect them.

From the burial process to collecting money from the military and other agencies, Iraq war widow Holly Wren faced a challenge at every turn. "There was no healing time. I wasn't able to grieve at all," she said. "It's hard to shuffle from office to office after you deal with something like this."

Wren's ordeal started at the sacred place where her beloved husband, Lt. Colonel Thomas Wren, was buried. She says the date on his headstone at Arlington National Cemetery is wrong, and she does not believe he was buried with all of the medals he earned. Then she had to go to battle for her benefits. Her housing allowance was half of what she was owed. She waited longer that she was supposed to for her husband's retirement money and death benefit. She also had to hire a lawyer and go to court so their infant son, Tyler, could be a beneficiary.

She said, "The paperwork sat on someone's desk for months, the benefits were not explained properly."

<More at: www.wtov9.com/news/10212425/detail.html>

Does the Military Send Sick Soldiers to War?

Nina Berman - AlterNet - November 3, 2006

The government's own military doctors knew that Spc. Anthony Vanderpool was mentally unbalanced. He had been admitted to the Bronx and Manhattan Veterans hospitals for major depressive disorder, dizziness, spells, auditory hallucinations and suicidal ideation, according to his V.A. records.

And this was before he even went to Iraq.

"I have a lot of anger. I never should have gone," said Vanderpool, a Army National Guardsman with 16 years prior service in the Army, Army reserves, Navy, Navy reserves and Air Force. "They didn't care. They wanted me because I was infantry," he said.

Vanderpool spent 10 months in Iraq on meds, not sleeping, depressed, paranoid, suicidal until he finally "spun out of control," forcing his command to acknowledge that he was too sick to be in a war zone. Off he went to Ft. Polk, La., for five months of medical treatment, and in December 2005, he was honorably discharged due to a "personality disorder."

... Vanderpool's story is not unique. "The DOD admits they are sending mentally unfit soldiers into combat in Iraq," said Steve Robinson of Veterans for America. "This is not supposed to happen; the military should not have deployed this veteran to the war; what were they thinking and what does it say about the overstretched military?" <More at: www.alternet.org/story/43611/>

More attention needed for veterans' claims

The Virginian-Pilot - October 31, 2006

Military service in Iraq and Afghanistan is likely to be far more perilous to the nation's pocketbook, for decades to come, than the Bush Administration cares to acknowledge. A Virginia Army National Guard spokesman said recently that about one-third of members screened after returning home report combat-related medical problems.

That startling figure comes atop a report, forced out of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, that 1 in 4 soldiers who've left the military since Sept. 2001 filed a disability claim after serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.

In all, as many as 105,000 such veterans already are drawing benefits for long-term physical or physiological problems related to the fighting. As of May, 34,000 additional claims were pending.

<More at: <http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=113502&ran=193193>

Iraq War Vets Return; Some Have No Home

All Things Considered October 27, 2006 *

National Guard Cpl. Joe Raicaldo is home from Iraq with things he didn't have when he left: an honorable discharge, metal rods and screws up and down his spine, and an arm that moves like a robot's. He's also homeless, living in his car. There are at least 600 recent vets who are homeless.

"Congress has failed to move a single bill to improve and expand the programs for homeless veterans". Rep. M. Michaud (D-ME) <More at: www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4810919>

Sacrifice of the Few

Bob Herbert - October 12, 2006

Clarksville, Tenn. Sgt. Mike Krause remembers the time, not too long ago, when he came home on a brief leave from Iraq. He was walking through an airport, in uniform, and other passengers, spotting him, began to applaud.

"It was awesome," he said. "They were cheering and clapping. It was great. But you know what? I said to myself, 'That guy's flying to Toledo on a business trip. This lady over here is flying off on vacation. Their lives are normal. But soon I'll be getting on a plane to go back to the most abnormal place on earth.' "

Just how abnormal is made explicit when the sergeant, just 24 years old, describes the worst task he had to perform in Iraq. He spoke hesitantly. "You'll excuse me," he said. "This is not easy to talk about. Part of our job, our duty, was that we loaded, you know, bodies. We were in charge of the airfield, and we would load these heroes into the aircraft.

While most Americans are free to go about their daily business, unaffected by the wars in any way, scores of thousands of troops have been sent off on repeat tours into the combat zones. According to the support group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, two-thirds of the 92,000 Army troops deployed since the beginning of this year are on at least their second deployment.

>More at: <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/bobherbert/index.html?inline=nyt-per>>

Taps - Passings and War Statistics

National Guard and Reserve Mobilized as of November 8, 2006

This week, the Army announced a increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps had a decrease. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 41 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 79,495; Navy Reserve, 5,382; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,259; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,127; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 265. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 98,528, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2006/d20061108ngr.pdf ..

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,839
*OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 11/4]	≥46,137
KILLED UK	121
KILLED OTHER COALITION	119
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
KILLED CONTRACTORS	370
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 35,719
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 51,968
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	350
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 9/30]	5,729
KILLED COALITION	215
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
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

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required.

To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to <http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

after thoughts

A GI Bill for the 21st century

Edward Humes - October 26, 2006

The modern GI Bill pales in comparison to the 1944 legislation that took care of veterans and fueled postwar progress.

IMAGINE TELLING the members of an entire generation they could receive a free college education at any school that accepted them — Cal State, Harvard, the Sorbonne — courtesy of Uncle Sam. Throw in a monthly stipend and textbooks. After graduation, there are government-backed home loans, no money down — buy a house cheaper than renting. Throw in subsidized business loans, farm loans, job training, medical care and up to a year's worth of unemployment checks.

What insane politician would ever propose such a costly boondoggle, such outright social engineering? It would be the most enormous, far-reaching, life-changing government program in the history of the world.

And so it was. We know it today as the original GI Bill.

Today's unthinkable was yesterday's matter of course. FDR and Congress adopted the humbly named Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 with bipartisan fervor. The stated goal was simple: to help 16 million veterans and their families resume their lives after the scourge of World War II.

But this investment in the nation's future powered far more than a return to the status quo. It transformed the nation and the very nature of the American dream, opening up the colleges, raising suburbs out of bean fields, creating a new middle class and providing the medical, engineering and scientific prowess that conquered long-feared diseases, ushered in the Information Age and helped win the Cold War.

There was never anything like the GI Bill. There's nothing like it on the horizon. And that's a problem.

Today's veterans are getting shortchanged. Instead of a full ride to any college, the modern GI Bill's education support tops out at \$36,000 for a four-year degree — barely enough to cover the average state university and well short of UCLA's \$19,500 annual tuition, room and board. Forget about the private colleges once covered by the GI Bill — \$36,000 would pay for only a year at many of them.

Reservists and National Guard troops in Iraq receive even less — only 27% of the education benefits that regular troops receive. President Bush has opposed closing this gap, considering it a budget buster. Indeed, in a quest to minimize projected war costs, the administration used prewar statistics to craft its budget for another pillar of the GI Bill — healthcare. Now veterans hospitals caring for the wounded of Iraq and Afghanistan are \$3 billion short.

But this is not simply a story of slighted veterans, scandalous as that may be. This is a story of a United States no longer investing in its future. The GI Bill was an engine of opportunity for all of us. It powered U.S. prosperity after World War II, turning a nation of renters into a nation of homeowners, transforming college from an elite bastion into almost an entitlement and making a tiny middle class into America's leading demographic.

The "greatest generation" endured depression and war, but its members also ended up our most privileged generation, gifted with more government largesse than any group in history. More than 7 million veterans took advantage of the education benefits alone for college or trade schools. This proved a costly but sound investment: For every dollar paid out under the original GI Bill, there was a \$7 return to the economy in terms of increased earnings, consumer spending and tax revenue, according to a 1988 congressional study.

Three presidents — George H.W. Bush, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter — dozens of congressmen, 14 Nobel Prize winners, giants of literature, Broadway and Hollywood and hundreds of thousands of teachers, doctors, nurses and businessmen got their starts with the help of the GI Bill. "Biggest piece of legislation the country ever passed," says former Sen. Bob Dole, a war hero and GI Bill beneficiary. "Maybe we need something like it again."

Which begs the question: What happened to the Washington that created something so magnificent? Why do we no longer expect — or demand — greatness from Americans' joint enterprise, our government? In the 1960s, before Watergate and Vietnam, most Americans believed that their government usually did the right thing. Now we've accepted Ronald Reagan's old formulation about the nine most dangerous words in the English language: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help." How ironic that a member of the GI Bill generation would sell his countrymen on that idea. But it's not a truism; it's self-fulfilling prophecy. We expect our government to fail, and it meets our expectations.

The original GI Bill was powerful because it touched a whole generation, and the ripple effects washed over the entire nation, not just veterans. Today's GI Bill reaches less than 1% of the population. It is no longer an engine for greatness, and Americans desperately need such an engine. We have always been the nation where the children can expect a better life than the parents; we no longer believe this is likely.

Before he died, FDR offered a solution that did not require a world war and a military draft. He proposed a program of national service, in which young people earned education, medical, housing and pension benefits. Not just veterans but all young people. It was, in essence, a peacetime civilian GI Bill — an investment in the future and in civic service. Polls suggested a receptive public, but the idea died with Roosevelt. President Clinton tried a modest resurrection with his AmeriCorps project. Much more is needed.

Would such a program be expensive? Absolutely — about what we've spent so far on the war in Iraq. But spending hundreds of billions at home to generate opportunities for future doctors, scientists, teachers, leaders and productive, healthy citizens would be a far sounder investment, with a proven rate of return. Where would you rather spend your tax dollars?

In an era in which college is a skyrocketing financial burden for many families, when homeownership is less affordable than ever, when the nation is losing its competitive edge in advanced degrees and when the American dream so generously nurtured after World War II is under siege, it is time to expect greatness from our government once again. Our children deserve it.

EDWARD HUMES is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author, most recently, of "Over Here: How the GI Bill Transformed the American Dream" (Harcourt, 2006).

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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

Add-on - Do we have an army of none?

<p>ARMY IS RUNNING ON EMPTY: In today's Washington Post, American Progress's Lawrence Korb and Peter Ogden note, "In July an official report revealed that two-thirds of the active U.S. Army was classified as 'not ready for combat.' When one combines this news with the fact that roughly one-third of the active Army is deployed (and thus presumably ready for combat), the math is simple but the answer alarming: The active Army has close to zero combat-ready brigades in reserve." Worse, "one-half of all Army units (deployed and non-deployed, active and reserves) received the lowest readiness rating any fully formed unit can receive." The readiness problem reflects the fact that every "available active-duty combat brigade has served at least one tour in Iraq or Afghanistan, and many have served two or three." According to a report released yesterday by Reps. Dave Obey (D-WI) and John Murtha (D-PA), "The U.S. Army's preparedness for war has eroded to levels not witnessed by our country in decades."</p>	<p>http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/13/AR2006091301575.html</p> <p>http://www.democraticleader.house.gov/pdf/MilReadiness.pdf</p> <p>http://www.democraticleader.house.gov/pdf/MilReadiness.pdf</p>
<p>THE EQUIPMENT SHORTFALL: The Army is facing a "\$50 billion equipment shortfall." Obey and Murtha report, "Thousands of key Army weapons platforms -- such as tanks, Humvees, Bradley Fighting Vehicles -- sitting in disuse at Army maintenance depots for lack of funding." This is having a snowball effect on its readiness issues because the Army is "compensating" for its shortfall by "shipping to Iraq some of the equipment that it needs to train nondeployed and reserve units"</p>	<p>http://www.democraticleader.house.gov/pdf/MilReadiness.pdf</p> <p>http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/13/AR2006091301575.html</p>
<p>THE RECRUITING QUANDARY: The Army is also struggling to meet its recruiting goals. For example, "After failing to meet its recruitment target for 2005, the Army raised the maximum age for enlistment from 35 to 40 in January -- only to find it necessary to raise it to 42 in June." Also, the Army has been forced to lower its standards for basic training. "Through the first six months of 2006, only 7.6 percent of new recruits failed basic training, down from 18.1 percent in May 2005." Even more alarmingly, "a report by the Southern Poverty Law Center found that thousands of white supremacists may have been able to infiltrate the military due to pressure from recruitment shortfalls."</p>	<p>http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=w060911&s=bergmannkorbo&gden091306</p>
<p>THE FUNDING SHORTFALL: According to a letter signed by military experts last month, "Restoring the Army's readiness requires additional funding, but, inexplicably, the administration is underfunding the Army." Specifically, "the Office of Management and Budget recently cut the Army's request for FY06 supplemental appropriations by \$4.9 Billion." In July, "General Schoomaker, the Army's Chief of Staff, testified before Congress that the Army needs an additional \$17 billion in fiscal year 2007 to repair and replace equipment used for war." Obey and Murtha have requested President Bush "prepare for submission to Congress an emergency funding request to cover the Army readiness and equipment maintenance shortfalls." He has yet to do so.</p>	<p>http://www.democraticleader.house.gov/press/releases.cfm?pressReleaseID=1729</p> <p>http://www.democraticleader.house.gov/pdf/ObeyMurthaFunding.pdf</p>