

Sound Off!



Vol. II, No 7 The Newsletter of VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, Inc.

“Veterans standing up for each other”

25 30 November 2006

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

Nothing we can do for them is enough

There is a long chain of events that soldiers experience from the time they decide to serve until they finally return – a chain that is fraught with frustration and pain for some, and is relatively painless for others. If we take the attitude that pain for some and no pain for others is – on average – not all that bad, then there is no real problem. However, if we take the position that there should not be pain for any single soldier beyond that which they agreed to when they agreed to serve, then things are apparently pretty bad for a whole lot of people.

Civilians considering enlisting must be told about what to expect. If they are told the truth, then everything is OK – they have made a reasoned choice. If they are lied to then the pain starts early as they soon realize – after they enlist and there is no turning back – that life is not going to be exactly as they were led to believe.

If pay is on time and the meals are hot; if training is good, and commanders and senior NCOs are firm but respectful, then life in the service can be pretty good. If they can't get their pay when it is due, or it is wrong and it takes months to correct; if they are forced to serve under martinets or tin despots, then things get pretty miserable on an ongoing basis.

If they deploy and return on the schedule they are promised, then things aren't too bad. If they linger and never know when they will return to their families then the pain can get quite bad.

If when they return they are told when they will have to go back – and they are not lied to – things aren't too bad; they can plan their lives. If they are dangled in uncertainty, the pain can get really bad.

If they return wounded in body or mind and are given all of the immediate attention and perpetual care that they need, then things aren't as bad as they could have been. If they are ignored, or if aide is postponed or uncertain, then the pain is unrelenting.

For every man or woman serving, there is a family serving right along side. Wives, children, parents, cousins – someone who both suffers their own pain, and who suffers with the soldier what ever pain – administrative, mental, or physical – that the service member suffers.

If the people at home are with them not only in spirit but in fact – all of the people, not just their families and friends – then the pain is real but bearable. If the people at home are unconscious of their condition and don't care about their well-being other than in some rhetorical – *salute the flag: you all are heroes* – sense, then the pain can likewise be relentless.

If we at home subordinate everything else in our lives except perhaps our families to our concern for those facing death in our name, then it helps them survive and endure. If we put them out of our minds and they face death alone, then we compound their pain. Bob Herbert's recent NY Times Op-Ed describes this common feeling very well in his [“While Iraq Burns”](#).

When those who are maimed and troubled return and we provide timely help, and they know that they can count on us, then their suffering is eased in part. When we turn our backs on them and drive them from our communities as was done last week in [Talbot County, GA](#) we intensify their pain and their feeling of rejection. [*Click on this one and play the short video to see how real people, even fellow veterans reject veterans from their communities.*]

So what can we do for them?

We who sit at home while others fight the fight can never do enough to make life whole for them or for their loved ones who are also fighting that fight. Right now we aren't doing much at all.

What have you done? What have I done? Somewhere along the line, we have to cease talking about the problems and do something about them.

Congress and the administration seem to take the “on average” view. Things are good for some and not so good for others (no one will admit that it is really bad for many) therefore, “on average”, things aren't so bad for all. If a complaint surfaces then we can always fall back on “they knew what they were signing up for” – but did they?

They likewise take the view that legislation in favor of the military, the reserves, and the guard can take second place to their special favors for their donors and constituents. Not even 10% of the bills in the 109th Congress to aid the troops were even considered in committee, let alone made it to the floor.

We at VUFT, Inc. are working on programs to really help our troops and their families. As the programs mature we will be presenting them here and asking for your help. We always ask for your ideas. [Ed.]

“...our nation has a moral obligation to keep our promises to those who have kept their promise to defend our nation.”

Chet Edwards (D-TX)

Reveille - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

Lost documents slow veterans' access to benefits

Diane C. Lade - South Florida Sun Sentinel - November 25, 2006

Almost a million veterans a year ask federal officials about retrieving lost military documents, papers they need to apply for valuable veterans benefits like housing loans and low-cost healthcare. The process now can be expedited by applying online. But some veterans and their families still find it cumbersome and confusing. According to the VA, the best way to request records is to fill out the Standard Form SF-180. It is available online at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans>. Veterans can file the form electronically or by mail.

The records center receives about 5,000 requests a day involving its 60 million records. But the center, part of the National Archives and Records Administration, tries to respond within 10 days, officials said. Older veterans should apply for replacement documents as soon as they realize their originals are missing, veterans officials said.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-na-papers25nov25_1_3344997_story>

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

Annual meeting – The annual meeting of VUFT, Inc. will be held 1300 – 1500 9 December at the Hilton Hotel 777 Convention Way, Anaheim, CA<<[Map](#)>>. The major purpose of the meeting is to elect officers for the 2007-2008 term. The room number will be available at the hotel.

Mail call - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

A Letter to the Editor in Maine's Morning Sentinel:

America's military needs to stop giving lip service to the aftercare it provides for the returning traumatized soldiers of today's "war on terror." Currently, the United States military disavows the existence of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and the devastating impact it has upon the lives of these soldiers. Our country must be accountable and required to take care of all those who have made sacrifices protecting our freedoms. Anything less is an insult to all members of the service and a disgrace to our country and all veterans.

I am deeply aware of this problem as my son, an Army Ranger, has returned from combat in Afghanistan unable to receive needed treatment he deserves. - Michael Smilek - Veteran U.S. Navy - Farmington

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

Not much is happening as many legislators are clearing out their desks and others are scrambling to get last minute pork passed into law. Here are four examples of good bills that were NOT dealt with in this Congress:

1. Survivor Benefit Plan – 30-year paid up, and ending VA benefits offset.
2. Concurrent receipt for “unemployable” disabled retirees
3. Reduction in reserve retirement age for mobilized reserves
4. Incentive payments to physicians for taking TRICARE patients in underserved areas

Of course they also passed the active duty and reserve forces pay raise at 2.2% instead of the broadly recommended 2.7%, even though inflation was, by various methods of calculation, at 3.1%.

Veteran challengers – 2006 election

Veteran challengers were not broadly successful in the 2006 election, with some notable exceptions:

- Jim Webb [former USMC company commander in Viet Nam {NC, SS, BS(2), PH(2)}; former Secretary of the Navy] defeated George Allen for the Senate
- In Pennsylvania three veteran challengers won:
 - o Joe Sestak (D-PA07) [VADM USN (Ret)], defeating Curt Weldon (10 terms)
 - o Pat Murphy (D-PA08) [former CPT USA – Iraq war veteran], defeating Mike Fitzpatrick
 - o Chris Carney (D-PA10) [Lt Cmdr USNR], defeating Don Sherwood, also a veteran [former 1LT USA]
- In Minnesota Tim Walz (D-MN01) [CSM ANG (Ret) – Afghan war veteran] won, defeating Tim Gutknecht.

Many other veteran challengers lost by small margins, indicating possible future wins for these same candidates. See our [“Candidates”](#) page on our website for other results.

RETREAT – NEWS

DoD Announces Units for 2007 Rotation

For Operation Iraqi Freedom:

- 3rd Infantry Division Headquarters, Fort Stewart, GA
- 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, KS
- 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, WA
- Plus approximately 27,000 active duty and 10,000 reserve component troops in combat support and combat service support units smaller than brigade-size elements
- 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Ft Benning, GA
- 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC
- 173rd Airborne Brigade, Vicenza, Italy

For Operation Enduring Freedom:

- 218th Brigade Combat Team, South Carolina Army National Guard
- Plus approximately 6,200 active duty and 600 Reservists in combat support and combat service support units smaller than brigade-size elements

Army Unit to Serve Third Tour in Iraq

Robert Burns – Associated Press - November 18, 2006

WASHINGTON - The Army's 3rd Infantry Division, which helped lead the charge to Baghdad at the outset of the war, will return next year and become the first Army division to serve three tours in Iraq. More than 3 1/2 years into the war, the Army and Marine Corps are straining to keep a steady flow of combat and support forces to Iraq while giving the troops sufficient time between deployments for rest and retraining. <More at: www.abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=2662708>

Long Stints in Iraq Fracture Families

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer -November 26, 2006; A01

... This week, U.S. troops will have been fighting in Iraq longer than they did in World War II, with no relief in sight. Soldiers from 1st Brigade preparing at Fort Stewart for their third Iraq tour have been spending as much time in Iraq as at home. The rotations -- a year in Iraq followed by a year at home -- dictate soldiers' most intimate decisions: They mandate when troops can marry and have children. They sever relationships that cannot sustain the stress of absence or danger. And they lead some couples to pray for the war to end. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/25/AR2006112500977.html>

Marines Corps Strained by Ops Tempo, New Commandant Says

Jim Garamone - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 22, 2006 – Individual Marines are stressed by ongoing operations, and institutionally the Corps itself is beginning to show signs of strain, the new Marine Corps commandant said here today. At a roundtable discussion with the Pentagon press corps, Gen. James Conway said that if the operations tempo continues, the Corps may need to grow.

Working to alleviate the individual and institutional strain on the Marine Corps is his major goal as commandant, Conway said. "By individual strain, I am simply talking about the repetitiveness of the deployments and the time spent away," he said.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2196>

Army Works to Halt Loss of Officers

Atlanta Journal Constitution | November 15, 2006

Washington - So many midlevel officers are leaving the Army under the strain of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan that the Pentagon is worried it might not have enough generals 10 to 15 years from now.

<More at: www.ajc.com/news/content/news/stories/2006/11/14/1115natretain.html>

Army Signs More Dropouts

Tom Philpott – November 22, 2006

Army Uses New Tool to Recruit 5900 'Quality' Dropouts

A wartime Army struggling to attract enough "quality" volunteers is enlisting additional thousands of high school dropouts using an experimental screening tool to identify those most likely to complete their enlistments. The Two Tier Attrition Screen (TTAS) is an added "quality indicator" that officials hope will allow the Army take in many more high school dropouts with greater confidence they won't drive up attrition rates.

Years of research have shown that high school dropouts are more prone to be discipline problems in service and to be discharged early. The first-term attrition rate for non-graduates typically is 50 percent, almost double that of high school diploma graduates. In fiscal 2006, which ended Sept. 30, the Army brought in 5900 non-high school graduates as TTAS (pronounced T-TAS) recruits. Not only do such recruits help the Army reach its numerical recruiting goals but the Army can exclude these recruits when calculating the percentage of high school diploma graduates recruited, which is an important quality measure.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,119382,00.html>

Despite all that, everything is going swimmingly

DoD Cites Success of All-Volunteer Force

American Forces Press Service – November 21, 2006

WASHINGTON, Nov. 20, 2006 – Citing the all-volunteer force's success, a senior Defense Department official said today that a draft would diminish the quality of U.S. forces and put more of the burden of service on the nation's poor. "I think the draft is opposed by anybody who has given it serious thought," said Bill Carr, deputy undersecretary of defense for military personnel policy.

New York Rep. Charles Rangel -- in line to be the next chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee in the House -- said he will introduce legislation in the next session of Congress to reinstate the draft.

Carr said the draft is not cost-effective and would force the military to lower its standards for recruits. A Government Accountability Office report, he said, estimated that a draft would add \$4 billion in annual costs to DoD.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,119332,00.html>

Do any of you former draftees feel that you dragged the mental level of the services down by being there? Did they have to lower their standards to accept you?

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

Buddha – 624-543 BC - *Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta*

Britain may Start Pulling Out of Iraq

Jennifer Quinn – Associated Press | November 27, 2006

LONDON - Britain said Monday it expects to withdraw thousands of its 7,000 military personnel from Iraq by the end of next year, while Poland and Italy announced the impending withdrawal of their remaining troops.

<More at: http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1107AP_Britain_Iraq.html>

So why are we still fooling around with humvees?

Hand-Built Armored Vehicles Save Lives

David Axe | November 27, 2006

The U.S. Army fielded its first Buffalo armored vehicle to an Explosive Ordnance Disposal team in Iraq in mid 2003. Three years later, South Carolina-based manufacturer [Force Protection](#) has delivered around 300 Buffalos and smaller Cougars to the Army and Marine Corps. And despite more than 1,000 attacks on Soldiers and Marines riding in the vehicles in Iraq, there have been no fatalities. Now the company is set to massively expand production of the lifesaving trucks.

"Our vehicles take good care of us," Staff Sergeant Colin Thompson said in January. Thompson and other members of the North Dakota National Guard's 164th Engineer Battalion patrolled the streets around Balad, Iraq, for Improvised Explosive Devices, or IEDs. The unit was equipped with Buffalos, Cougars, up-armored Humvees and other vehicles, but credited the custom-designed Buffalos and Cougars with keeping it safe from attack. Thompson recalled a 164th patrol that was hit by three IEDs but suffered no injuries.

"Our armored vehicles effectively counter the effects of IEDs, land mines and roadside bombs," Force Protection CEO Gordon McGilton said in a recent statement. "In terms of safety and survivability, no other vehicle deployed in the war compares."

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,119517,00.html>

Reno, Former U.S. Officials Challenge Military Trials

Jeff St. Onge - Nov. 21 (Bloomberg)

Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and seven other former Justice Department officials challenged the Bush administration's bid to try suspected terrorist Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, a foreign national living in the U.S. when he was arrested, before a military commission. Reno and the others said the Bush administration is trying to set a dangerous precedent that would let the government indefinitely imprison any non-U.S. citizen considered an enemy. The former U.S. officials were joined by at least four human rights groups making similar arguments.

<More at: www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?3Fpid%3D20601103%26sid%3DaLJXmtUUmjQs%26refer%3Dus&cid=1111382340&ei=pYBiRaK-EofvoQL59eHbBq>

Senate Dems plan overhaul of military tribunals bill

Roxana Tiron – November 16, 2006

Gearing up for a major clash with the Bush administration and Republicans in Congress, several key Senate Democrats are planning to overhaul the newly minted legislation governing military tribunals of detainees.

Even before it was signed into the law last month, Democrats were criticizing the military commission bill as unconstitutional and a magnet for endless legal challenges. <More at <http://thehill.com/thehill/export/TheHill/News/Frontpage/111606/tribunal.html>>

Some people care

California Band Donates Money to Vets

American Forces Press Service – November 14, 2006

WASHINGTON - A Celtic band from California is donating all proceeds from online sales of its latest single generated through a special endeavor on Myspace.com to a veterans organization.

One of the U.S. Celtic music scene's rising acts, Culann's Hounds, has earmarked proceeds from their track titled "The Blackthorn Tavern" to the National Veterans Foundation. Band member Steve Gardner said he and band mate Michael Kelleher think it's the least they can do.

"Beyond politics, Michael and I both believe strongly that American citizens who fight in the name of their country deserve the thanks and support of the people they defend," Gardner said. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,118966,00.html>

Insurance Companies to Pay Refunds to GIs for Deceptive Sales

Elaine Wilson - Special to American Forces Press Service

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas, Nov. 27, 2006 – Life insurance companies are being held accountable for their improper sales practices to military members. Four companies in the past three months have agreed to a multi-state settlement agreement after Texas Department of Insurance investigators uncovered a pattern of deception to young troops. The companies are: American-Amicable Life Insurance Company of Texas, Pioneer American Insurance Company, and Pioneer Security Life Insurance Company, all of Waco TX, and Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company. <More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2226>

To the Color - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
12/07		Mobile, AL	Resource Fair	Bill Kilgore	251-432-7227
12/09	1300	Anaheim Hilton, Anaheim CA	VUFT Inc Annual Meeting	Bob Handy	805-962-9082

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

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

TATTOO - Current Issues

Government must do better by our veterans

Editorial – Everett WA Herald - November 10, 2006

Veterans Day offers Americans a time to salute those who have defended our cherished freedoms. As we do so on Saturday, we should also ponder whether our government is doing all it should to thank our veterans for their good work and sacrifice. U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, who will assume a senior position on the Veterans Affairs Committee in January, believes the government is coming up short. Primarily, she says, the Bush administration has failed to account for higher costs associated with caring for veterans as they come home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This administration is still sending budgets to care for veterans based on data from 2002, before we went into Iraq," Murray said. Problems with post-traumatic stress disorder, and the number of veterans clinics needed in rural communities aren't being budgeted realistically, she said.

Indeed, a September report from the Government Accountability Office found that the Department of Veterans Affairs based its projected health-care costs in 2005 and 2006 on prewar data. Congress hasn't held the VA accountable enough for such sloppiness, Murray said.

"I talk with a lot of these people who are coming back from Iraq for the second time and can't get a job," Murray said. "We've got to find out why and provide transition assistance. But we haven't even had a chance to have hearings to find out where we're coming up short." <More at: http://heraldnet.com/stories/06/11/10/100edi_editorial001.cfm>

Long, Repeated Tours In Iraq, Afghanistan Taking Mental Toll On Soldiers

Anne Usher - Cox News, New York Times Syndicate - Nov 16, 2006

Multiple and extended tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan are resulting in rates of post-traumatic stress disorder among soldiers that will likely match or exceed the number of Vietnam veterans diagnosed with the chronic condition, government officials and veterans groups say. The unique circumstances in Iraq, where soldiers face an insurgency and no front line, have left many particularly vulnerable to combat stress and are driving the abuse of drugs and alcohol, military health experts say.

Yet many veterans and on-duty troops are not getting the treatment they need. About one in six of the 589,000 veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs, a rate expected to climb higher since it can take months and sometimes years for the condition to manifest. Symptoms include anxiety, sleeplessness, flashbacks and extreme wariness, a recipe that often strains personal relationships and makes it hard for those suffering to get or keep jobs.

<More at: <http://health.theledger.com/article/20061116/TOPSTORY/2604/-1/RSS2>>

Veterans need proper care

11/15/2006 - Op-Ed – Gwinnet (GA) Daily Post

The next time you pass a homeless man on the street, you might ask in which war he served. In the next several years, chances are good that he (and increasingly she) will say Iraq or Afghanistan. That grim prediction is based on several facts:

One in three adult homeless males is a veteran, and 45 percent of those suffer from mental illness, according to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

A recent report in the New England Journal of Medicine, meanwhile, found that one in four veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan were diagnosed with some kind of mental health problem. Those are just the ones who found their way to a VA hospital. Many don't. Returning veterans are either embarrassed, untrusting of the government, frustrated by bureaucratic gridlock or simply incapable of navigating the system.

With large numbers of troops likely headed home in the next year, the U.S. faces a tsunami of psychologically and emotionally damaged veterans who have no place to go. Those who don't find the support they need may end up on the streets — or in prison. <More at: www.gwinnettdaily.com/index.php?s=&url_channel_id=36&url_article_id=21565&url_subchannel_id=&change_well_id=2>

Closing of V.A. psych unit resisted at hearing

James Goodman - The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle - Nov 16, 2006

The hearing Wednesday at the Canandaigua Veterans Affairs Medical Center was to get public comment on five options for reorganizing services there. But the veterans in the audience were most vocal about the planned closure of the center's acute-care psychiatric unit. That decision, which could be put into effect soon, was made in 2004 — and the continuation of the unit is not in any of the five options. <More at: www.democratandchronicle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061116/NEWS01/611160358/1002/NEWS>

Shafting the Vets

Conn Hallinan - November 10, 2006 – Foreign Policy In Focus

“War is hell,” Union General William Tecumseh Sherman famously said 14 years after the end of the bloodiest conflict in U.S. history. “It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation.”

Clearly the U.S. Civil War is not on the reading list of psychiatrist Sally Satel, a scholar at the right-wing American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Indeed, Satel sees war less as hell than as a golden opportunity for veteran layabouts to milk the government by “[overpathologizing the psychic pain of war](#).”

Satel, whom the AEI trots out anytime the administration needs cover for cutting veteran services and benefits, says the problem for former soldiers is not Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). “The real trouble for vets,” she writes, is that “once a patient receives a monthly check based on his psychiatric diagnosis, his motivation to hold a job wanes.” Her solution? “Don't offer disability benefits too quickly.” <More at: www.fpif.org/fpifxt/3695>

Hidden Costs Wait to Surface from Iraq War's Depths

Edward Luce and Demetri Sevastopulo - Financial Times / MSNBC - Nov 21, 2006

On Sunday the Iraq war will enter its 1,347th day, thus overtaking the US's involvement in the second world war. The electorate expressed its disaffection with Iraq by delivering a Democratic victory in mid-term elections earlier this month, yet the conflict has barely caused a ripple in the daily life of most Americans.

Unlike previous wars, most notably Vietnam, where the US's formal engagement lasted almost three times as long, the economy has continued to look robust having exceeded 3 per cent growth in each of the years since ground forces entered Iraq on March 20 2003.

... But the number of deaths masks the fact that more soldiers are coming home injured from Iraq than in other campaigns, in part because of improved body armour and medical technology, says Paul Sullivan, of Veterans for America. For every 10 soldiers killed in Iraq, another 75 are injured. Vietnam, by comparison, produced 26 injuries for every 10 deaths.

<More at: <http://news.moneycentral.msn.com/provider/providerarticle.aspx?feed=FT&Date=20061121&ID=6217070>>

VA: Agent Orange effects may be worse than believed

Gayle S. Putrich - Navy Times - Nov 12, 2006

The lasting effects of Agent Orange and dioxin-based defoliants like it could be even more far-reaching for Vietnam War veterans than originally thought, putting vets at greater risk for developing heart disease, diabetes and respiratory problems, according to

a recent Department of Veterans Affairs study. The study was conducted by a research team under the direction of Dr. Han K. Kang, director of VA's War Related Illness and Injury Studies Center. The study appears in the November issue of the [American Journal of Industrial Medicine](#). <More at: www.navytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-2349645.php>

Twelve years to publish regulations! And then they wonder why returning veterans don't get their jobs back.

Protecting Reemployment Rights of U.S. Troops Yeah - right!

U.S. Department of Labor - December 17, 2005

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Labor today announced regulations, to be published Monday, Dec. 19 in the Federal Register, interpreting the law that protects employment and reemployment rights and benefits of service members upon their return to civilian life. This is the first time since its passage in 1994 that the Department of Labor has developed regulations to explain and clarify the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA). ... The notice, downloadable posters containing the notice, and the new regulations can be accessed at www.dol.gov/vets. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,83093,00.html>

US Military Veterans Battle for Jobs at Home

Amanda Cassandra - New York - 19 November 2006

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says that nearly 15 percent of veterans aged 20-24 were jobless in July 2005 - three times the national average. The unemployment rate of non-veterans in the same age category was just under eight percent.

Michael John Ortiz is a veteran job seeker who served as a lieutenant and army transporter in Iraq for 10 months. He says he returned to the United States to find his job situation different from when he left. "I go back to work in January 2006, one, to find out that I was given a job but I wasn't the same status. And two, to find out that the job was ending because it was a granted funded program and that grant was unfortunately defunded and I'm good there until 5pm November 30th. That's it. Our program is totally gone. <More at: <http://voanews.com/english/2006-11-19-voa2.cfm>>

Uncle Sam just keeps hiring more veterans

November 19, 2006

In 2005, veterans held 25 percent of all federal jobs, and almost 93,000 disabled veterans occupied federal positions. Last year, more than 31,000 veterans were hired into full-time permanent positions in the federal work force. Highlights from OPM's veterans employment report show that since 2004, veteran employment increased to 456,256 out of a work force of 1.8 million; employment of disabled veterans increased to 92,642 from 87,309; and the number of employed veterans who are 30 percent or more disabled increased to 46,727 from 42,010. <More at: <http://fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2006/112006/11192006/236926>>

State Department wrongfully froze reservist out of promotion opportunities - Stephen Losey - Federal Times - November 21st, 2006

State Department policies improperly kept an employee from applying for new positions because he was deployed with the Army Reserve, the Merit Systems Protection Board ruled Nov. 20. Marc Garcia, a supervisory special agent for State's Diplomatic Security Service in Miami and an Army Reserve lieutenant colonel, was blocked from applying for new jobs at State after he was called up for a one-year stint as a reservist in November 2005, MSPB found.

After Garcia was called up, he was technically reassigned to a desk job in Washington as part of State's policy for its reservist employees. But State's policies prevent employees from requesting a transfer until they have been in a job for at least two years, said Garcia's attorney, Mathew Tully. This meant Garcia would have been stuck in the Washington job until late 2007, Tully said. Garcia was prevented from applying for several counterterrorism and intelligence jobs, which would have brought him significant pay raises. What's more, his old position in Miami was given to a junior employee, Tully said.

<More at: www.federaltimes.com/index.php?S=2371810>

New web site lists service members' rights

The Department of Justice has launched a website to protect service-members' rights. The website at www.servicemembers.gov outlines the rights service-members have under the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act and the Service-members Civil Relief Act. U.S. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzalez urges any service-member with questions to go to the Justice Department Website. Military lawyers can help service-members and their families navigate through the laws.

Taps - Passings and War Statistics

National Guard and Reserve Mobilized as of November 29, 2006

This week, the Air Force announced an increase, while the Army, Navy and Marine Corps had a decrease in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 513 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 78,379; Navy Reserve, 4,991; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,725; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,006; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 363. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 96,464, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2006/d20061129ngr.pdf>.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE THURSDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,885
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DOD UPDATE 11/4]	≥46,137
KILLED UK	126
KILLED OTHER COALITION	121
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
**KILLED CONTRACTORS	656
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 35,805
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 54,266 [LANCET - 671,339]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET - 1,208,410]

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	355
*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>

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

afterthoughts

G.I. Jobs 2006 Top Military-Friendly Employer List

1 Union Pacific Railroad Omaha, NE	26 Booz Allen Hamilton McLean, VA
2 The Home Depot Atlanta, GA	27 American Electric Power Columbus, OH
3 Johnson Controls, Inc. Milwaukee, WI	28 Southern CA Edison Rosemead, CA
4 BNSF Railway Fort Worth, TX	29 Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. NY, NY
5 USAA San Antonio, TX	30 Norfolk Southern Norfolk, VA
6 GE Fairfield, CT	31 Honeywell Morristown, NJ
7 ITT Corporation, Systems Division White Plains, NY	32 Progress Energy Raleigh, NC
8 BellSouth Atlanta, GA	33 American Express NY, NY
9 ManTech International Corporation Fairfax, VA	34 Westinghouse Electric Company Monroeville, PA
10 Sears Holdings Corporation Hoffman Estates, IL	35 7-Eleven, Inc. Dallas, TX
11 JB Hunt Transport, Inc. Lowell, AR	36 NVR, Inc (NV Homes/Ryan Homes) Reston, VA
12 Kellogg, Brown and Root Houston, TX	37 Southwest Airlines Dallas, TX
13 Applied Materials Santa Clara, CA	38 Vanguard Valley Forge, Pennsylvania
14 CINTAS Corporation Cincinnati, OH	39 CDW Corporation Vernon Hills, IL
15 Sprint Reston, VA	40 Smurfit-Stone Container Chicago, IL
16 GA-Pacific Corporation Atlanta, GA	41 Phelps Dodge Corporation Phoenix, AZ
17 Schneider National Green Bay, WI	42 Corrections Corporation of America Nashville, TN
18 Brinks, Inc. Dallas, TX	43 FMC Technologies Houston, TX
19 Coca-Cola Enterprises Atlanta, GA	44 Bank of America Charlotte, NC
20 Lockheed Martin Bethesda, MD	45 CSX Transportation Jacksonville, FL
21 State Farm Insurance Companies Bloomington, IL	46 AT&T Inc. San Antonio, TX
22 Morgan Stanley NY, NY	47 Merck & Co., Inc. Whitehouse Station, NJ
23 Fluor Corporation Irving, TX	48 Southern Company Atlanta, GA
24 Werner Enterprises Omaha, NE	49 ExxonMobil Irving, TX
25 Sunbelt Rentals, Inc. Charlotte, NC	50 Allstate Insurance Company Northbrook, IL

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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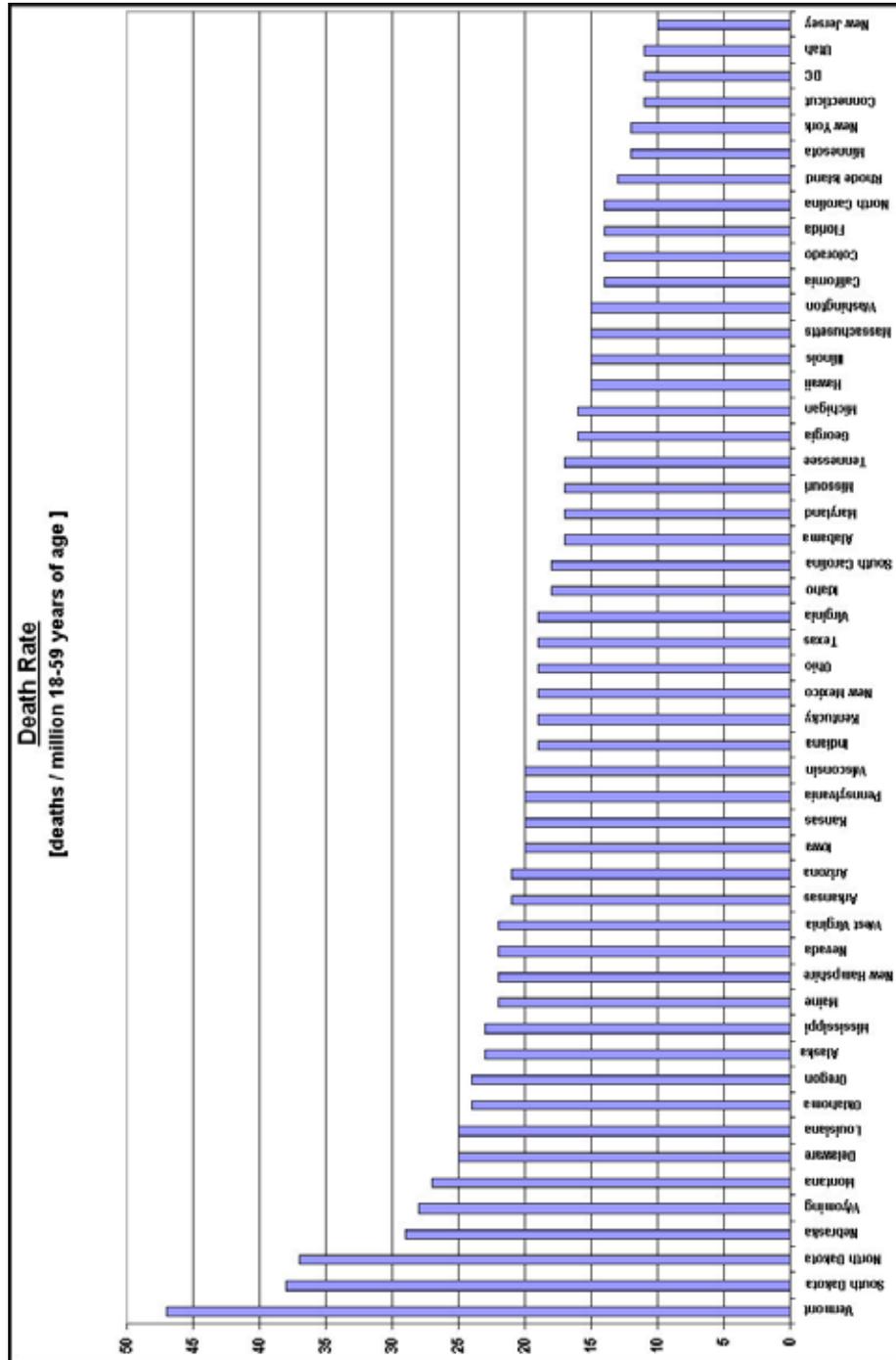
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EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with 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 - which state is getting hit the hardest?

Here in California we look at the mounting death toll of Californians in our two current wars (331 at publication) and think that no state could be sacrificing more than we are. In a report by the Carsey Institute of the University of New Hampshire we see another view. They asked how many deaths per million inhabitants in the age group 18-51 years. That gives an entirely different picture. The report is at www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/documents/RuralDead_11-8final.pdf



An interesting finding of that study was that rural deaths are significantly higher across the board than metropolitan area deaths (24/million vs 15/million). They attribute the imbalance to the severe loss of manufacturing jobs in the rural areas of the US. Data source DoD database, [October 28,2006] <http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>