

SOUND OFF!



VOL. IV, NO 8

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 DECEMBER 2008

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

TWO WARS – TWO WORLDS

A nation at war – 1941-1945

Last Sunday was the 67th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Our nation – our whole nation – went to war.

On that Sunday in 1941 our family was having a traditional Sunday dinner at a friend's ranch, the kind of Sunday dinner we had in those days: chicken, potatoes, root vegetables, green vegetables that had been canned in early summer, and finally ice cream – all home grown and homemade. After dinner, around 4:30, my father and I went horseback riding. We rode out to an old oak tree in front of the ranch house and waited for our host to join us. My mother came running out of the house and called to us, "Come! Come quickly!" We rode back to the house and she told us that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. It was the only time I ever saw tears on my father's face.

We sat around the radio and waited for more news as the story remained the same – we'd been attacked. The next morning we listened as president Roosevelt told us we were at war. Tuesday morning the headline on the Austin paper was **"WAR!"**

My father was a member of the local draft board so he headed down to the courthouse with me in tow; he thought he would be needed. When we got there the courthouse was surrounded by people looking for news, and a long line of men were waiting to sign up. My first clue that we were all at war with seeing the women and children accompanying the men waiting in line.

I didn't understand it fully as I was too young, but my father made it clear that not only were we all at war, but also that he would make sure that I remembered every bit of it.

Almost overnight a huge army base grew up north of town. The town had had one movie theater that was opened Friday night and Saturday, a couple of bars, and half a dozen churches. Within a year there were four theaters, two of which had vaudeville acts between a double feature. There was a double handful of bars and clubs in and around the town (not all licensed). There were about the same number of churches. My father's church turned the parish hall into a USO, and my mother and the other ladies of the church became the hostesses.

Each day my father read the war news to me and after awhile we started posting a "war map", a flat map of the world on a cork board into which we stuck pins with flags of the Allies and the Axis. That first year the map looked pretty grim.

I went to the movies every Saturday with my friends, and even the matinee included, in addition to at least one western and a cartoon, "Movietone News", or "RKO Pathé" (remember the rooster?), and "The March of Time". We saw war every week, and there was no television.

Rationing began – stamps and tokens for almost everything: gasoline, meat, tires, sugar, shoes, nylon stockings, even in some places firewood and coal. We planted a "Victory Garden". We raised chickens – it was the only sure way to get unrationed meat and eggs. We bought war bonds and war stamps.

Every conversation at home and with my family's friends seemed to be about the war, and the people we all knew who were in it – my uncles, several cousins, the son of the people next door, our doctor.

My friends and I would spend part of every weekend knocking on doors and collecting metal,

rubber, paper and all sorts of other scrap and dragging it all to our schoolyard where the piles grew each month until they were hauled off for processing. We even collected the foil inner wrappers from cigarette packs, peeled off the foil, and lumped it into a ball and turned it in.

During the war we moved to Rochester, New York. There we opened one of our bedrooms to a young woman who was working at Kodak, manufacturing film and other products for the war effort. Every fifth family in our neighborhood had a non-family war worker rooming with them.

Many families in the neighborhood had members in the service. We schoolchildren wrote "V-mail" letters to our neighbors who were overseas.

Our next-door neighbor was the local Civil Defense warden. I think he must've been chosen because he could shout louder than most of the other fathers in the neighborhood, and boy did he shout during the air raid drills, "Lights out! No flashlights! Take cover!" We were all sure that the Germans were just up the street in the next block. We played "War"; I was the youngest so I always had to be the Nazi and I always got killed.

During the final year of the war I went to school in New York City. We went to Rockefeller Center to see the War Bond shows, jam packed with concerned and involved citizens. We watched the festivities on V-E Day, absolutely thrilled to be included with all of the adults – the whole world was filled with joy.

Christmas of 1945 was chaotic. Hundreds of thousands of GIs were being mustered out at the bases around New York. You couldn't get a seat on a train leaving New York City at Christmas time, but nobody complained. On Christmas day I rode, standing up, from New York City to Schenectady before I finally found a place to sit, but that was okay because the soldiers were coming home. I saw old, white-haired people trying to give their seats to returning soldiers.

The following spring the fleet came to the Hudson River and everyone who could toured the Midway and the Missouri and looked at the plaque marking the signing of the peace treaty with Japan – and gave thanks for our soldiers first, and then perhaps to God.

Six years later, when I started college, World War II veterans were still attending on the G.I. Bill, taking many of the available positions at most universities and colleges, but again, no one complained – they had more than earned it.

A nation at war – 2002-2008?

No one is getting drafted – some of us remember that as we grew up it wasn't if you would serve it was when and how. Very few are enlisting, and by their own account, many are doing so solely to find employment in a down economy, and perhaps to get some tuition money.

No one is working in the war industries – most of those jobs are offshore now, all in the interest of "free trade". Next time maybe we can buy the tanks and planes from China?

No one is collecting scrap metal or cigarette tinfoil, unless it is to ship it to China and Japan to be reprocessed into cheap consumer goods for Wal-Mart.

No one is taking public transportation because they can't get tires for the car, or can't get a gas ration stamp – public transportation is almost nonexistent and gas is plentiful, although price is never relative to cost.

No one is putting their savings into war bonds – this one's on the national credit card.

Almost no one is writing letters to the neighborhood kids in uniform, because most neighborhoods don't have kids in uniform.

No one is following the war by posting a war map because the information we get is pretty skimpy and we don't have much confidence in it anyway. Besides, this is a nonlinear war and our enemies aren't states but "terrorism" – so no flags.

For the majority, life is unaffected by the war. There are no real inconveniences. There is no sacrifice beyond that given so generously by those who are serving, and their families.

The economy is more important than the war. Shopping is more important than the war. Every object of civil thought is more important than the war.

Greed skulking behind high-sounding expressions like "entrepreneurship", "free trade", and "liberty" is far more important than the war.

These two wars – the book ends of my life – are so different as to be incomparable. The incredible feeling of involvement that I had, even as a child, in the triumph and the horror of war is gone. In its place is an awful frustration, bordering on grief, that my fellow Americans could allow a very few to bear the burden while they give it hardly a second thought. Behind the grief comes the rage that the only thanks veterans get is the occasional speech or resolution, while thousands of them go homeless, and thousands more despair in silence and neglect.

The view from the future – 2020+

There are those who say that historians will judge the Bush administration very harshly for its conduct of this war.

I am afraid that the truth is that historians will far more stridently condemn all of us for allowing our nation to go to war while forgetting, perhaps even denying, that it's our war too. [Ed.]

“War, we have come to believe, is a spectator sport. The [politicians,] military and the press ... have turned war into a vast video arcade game. Its very essence – death – is hidden from public view.”

Chris Hedges, New York Times

REVELLE - 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/

NEARLY LAST CHANCE FOR A 2008 TAX DEDUCTION!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

OUR APPEAL TO THE Circuit court **has begun** and we have to have executive board members attend the court hearings to observe, and probably to testify.

These trips cost money – to date the expenses have largely been borne by the individuals.

We have to begin paying our way as an organization. Please donate whatever you can by going on-line to:

[HTTP://WWW.VUFT.ORG/DONATE.HTML](http://www.vuft.org/donate.html)

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!

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: Our advocates are currently working on the appeal to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court	4/21/2008 Trial
9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss	6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction
2/11/2208 Motion for Preliminary Injunction	7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9 th Circuit Court of Appeals
2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing	12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE LA VETERANS HOME

You have all received our appeal to legislators to stop the land grab at the LA National Veterans Home. We hope that you have written your letters and passed the action along to friends organizations. If we don’t defend veterans, who will?

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](#) "[Donate](#)" 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

DO YOU PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO ANYONE?
IF YOU DO, PLEASE LET US KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE YOU SEND IT TO
NO NAMES, JUST NUMBERS

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

No letters this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORTS REQUESTED BY AKAKA FIND FLAWS IN VA APPOINTMENT MAKING

December 5, 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, today responded to two new Office of Inspector General (IG) reports regarding unused appointments in VA and VA procedures for scheduling appointments and maintaining wait lists. Senator Akaka requested the reports as part of continuing oversight of these issues, and based on information received by the Committee.

"The fact that we continue to see a trend of flawed or inefficient scheduling practices being used by VA is troubling. I have led the fight to provide full funding for VA but VA must be as efficient and accurate as possible in order to avoid waste and mismanagement, especially in these times of economic difficulty." said Akaka.

<More at: www.vawatchdog.org/08/scva08/scva120508-1.htm>

RETREAT – NEWS

PENTAGON MOVES TO STEP UP MILITARY'S "IRREGULAR WARFARE"

Ann Scott Tyson - The Washington Post

WASHINGTON | The Pentagon this week approved a major new policy directive that elevated the military's mission of "irregular warfare" to an equal footing with traditional combat.

Irregular warfare describes the increasingly prevalent campaigns to battle insurgents and terrorists, often clandestinely and with foreign partners.

The directive, signed Monday by Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, requires the Pentagon to step up its capabilities across the board to fight unconventionally, such as by working with foreign surrogates to gain access to hostile countries, pursue terrorist groups, shore up fragile states or overthrow governments.

The policy is part of a broader overhaul of the U.S. military's role as the threat of large-scale combat against other nations' armies has waned and new dangers have arisen from shadowy non-state actors, such as terrorists that target civilian populations. <More at: www.kansascity.com/news/nation/story/921185.html>

A MILITARY FOR A DANGEROUS NEW WORLD

Editorial - November 16, 2008

As president, Barack Obama will face the most daunting and complicated national security challenges in more than a generation — and he will inherit a military that is critically ill-equipped for the task.

Troops and equipment are so overtaxed by President Bush's disastrous Iraq war that the Pentagon does not have enough of either for the fight in Afghanistan, the war on terror's front line, let alone to confront the next threats.

This is intolerable, especially when the Pentagon's budget, including spending on the two wars, reached \$685 billion in 2008. That is an increase of 85 percent in real dollars since 2000 and nearly equal to all of the rest of the world's defense budgets combined. It is also the highest level in real dollars since World War II.

To protect the nation, the Obama administration will have to rebuild and significantly reshape the military. We do not minimize the difficulty of this task. Even if money were limitless, planning is extraordinarily difficult in a world with no single enemy and many dangers. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/opinion/16Sun1.html>

NOT EVERYONE WILL AGREE WITH THIS STUDY, BUT IT IS QUITE INTERESTING

WHY THE U.S. MILITARY IS IN SHAMBLES

Andrew Cockburn – CounterPunch - December 8, 2008

Coinciding with the arrival of Obama and his deputies in Washington, the Center for Defense Information is releasing [America's Defense Meltdown -- Pentagon Reform for President Obama and the New Congress](#), a primer on what is wrong with our defense system written by men with long and honorable experience in the bowels of the military services and Pentagon bureaucracy. The book's editor, Winslow Wheeler, is familiar to readers of this site for his acrid and knowledgeable commentaries on the defense establishment. CounterPuncher Andrew Cockburn interviews him about the book and its message.

Andrew Cockburn: You say in your preface that "the vast majority, perhaps even all, of Congress, the general officer corps of the armed forces, top management of American defense manufacturers, prominent members of Washington's think tank community and nationally recognized 'defense journalists' will hate this book." Why is that?

Winslow Wheeler: The conventional wisdom amongst the elite in Washington is that they have done a pretty good job of taking care of our national defense, that things may be a little expensive but we have the best armed forces in the world, perhaps even in history, and we do the best for our troops by giving them the world's most sophisticated equipment which is, of course, the most effective. We have, so the elite asserts, demonstrated our ability by knocking off Saddam Hussein's forces twice and are in general a model to the rest of the world on how to build equipment and provide for forces. That's all crap. None of it is true. None of it stands up to scrutiny. <More at: www.alternet.org/story/110808/>

THE NEXT THREE ARTICLES TO POINT TO REAL CONFUSION AMONG THE SERVICES

MILITARY SEEKS NEW MRAPS FOR AFGHANISTAN

Donna Borak - AP Business Writer - December 9, 2008

The Pentagon is fast-tracking a multibillion-dollar competition to outfit ground forces in Afghanistan with new, off-road terrain vehicles that protect against rocket-propelled grenades and explosive devices. The military says it needs hybrid armored vehicles to provide the same type of protection as mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles, while being far more agile, lighter and providing increased maneuverability to handle Afghanistan's rocky terrain, according to a request for bids released late Monday.

"This is a high priority accelerated acquisition in support of the global war on terror," according to the Pentagon request, which means manufacturers would have to set aside other projects to meet the military's demand as soon as possible. The first set of vehicles is expected to be delivered next fall.

The Defense Department said it could buy between 2,080 and 10,000 of the so-called MRAP-All Terrain Vehicles for use by the Army and Marines Corps. <More at: <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2008/12/09/financial/f094425S11.DTL>>

MARINES FAULTED FOR 'MRAP' DELAYS

The Associated Press - December 9, 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Marine Corps left troops in Iraq vulnerable to deadly roadside bombs by failing to answer an urgent request from battlefield commanders for blast-resistant vehicles, according to an internal Pentagon investigation obtained by The Associated Press. Acquisition officials shelved the February 2005 request for the "MRAPs" (pronounced EM-raps) after Marine leaders decided armored versions of the Humvee were the best answer to the improvised explosive devices that became the signature weapon of the Iraq war. However, the beefier Humvees proved incapable of withstanding the increasingly powerful IEDs.

The AP obtained portions of the investigation by the Pentagon inspector general. It was expected to be released publicly on Tuesday. The Marine Corps and the other military branches were aware of the threat from mines and roadside bombs and of the commercial availability of MRAPs well before U.S. troops invaded Iraq in 2003, the report said. Yet nothing was done to acquire the vehicles. "As a result, the department entered into operations in Iraq without having taken available steps to acquire technology to mitigate the known mine and IED risk to soldiers and Marines," the report said.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/aponline/washington/AP-Marines-MRAP-Investigation.html>

MORE THAN 160 US, NATO VEHICLES BURNED IN PAKISTAN

Riaz Khan - Dec 7, 2008

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) - Gunmen blasted their way into two transport terminals in Pakistan on Sunday and torched more than 160 vehicles destined for U.S.-led troops in Afghanistan, in the biggest assault yet on a vital military supply line, officials said. The U.S. military said its losses in the raid near the northwestern city of Peshawar would have "minimal" impact on anti-Taliban operations, set to expand with the arrival of thousands more American troops next year.

However, the attack will fuel concern that insurgents are trying to choke the route through the famed Khyber Pass, which carries up to 70 percent of the supplies for Western forces in landlocked Afghanistan, and drive up the cost of the war.

The owner of one of the terminals hit Sunday denied government claims that security was boosted after a raid last month near the pass in which militants made off with one Humvee and later paraded it before journalists.

"We don't feel safe here at all," Kifayatullah Khan told The Associated Press next to the still-smoldering vehicles, predicting that most of his night watchmen would now quit their jobs out of fear. "It is almost impossible for us to continue with this business." <More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20081207/D94TVHGO1.html>>

END OF IMMUNITY WORRIES U.S. CONTRACTORS IN IRAQ

James Risen - December 1, 2008

WASHINGTON — The thousands of American contractors in Iraq who have been above Iraqi law since the war began are suddenly facing a new era in which their United States passports will no longer protect them from arrest and imprisonment.

When the Iraqi government ratified an agreement last week setting new terms for a continued American presence in Iraq, private contractors working for the Pentagon faced the inevitability that they would be stripped of their immunity from Iraqi law.<More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/12/01/world/middleeast/01contractors.html>

OBAMA REPS, RETIRED GENERALS TALK TORTURE

Associated Press - December 04, 2008

WASHINGTON - A dozen retired generals met with President-elect Barack Obama's top legal advisers Wednesday, pressing their case to overturn seven years of Bush administration policies on detention, interrogation and rendition in the war on terror.

"President-elect Obama has said that Americans do not engage in torture, that we must send a message to the world that America is a nation of laws, and that we as a nation should stand against torture. He believes that banning torture will actually save American lives and help restore America's moral stature in the world," said an official close to the transition who asked not to be named to discuss internal matters. "This meeting is timely and very helpful to advancing this work."

Among those who met with Eric Holder, Obama's pick to be attorney general, and Greg Craig, tapped to be White House counsel, were Gen. Charles Krulak, a former Marine Corps commandant, and retired Marine Gen. Joseph Hoar, former chief of the Central Command.

Hoar called the meeting "productive." "It's important that the dialogue is going," Hoar said. "Part of the challenge here is big and philosophical. Part is nuts and bolts. How do you translate the rhetoric of the campaign and the transition period into action?" <More at: www.military.com/news/article/obama-reps-retired-generals-talk-torture.htm>

RETIRED MARINE CRITICAL OF U.S. MILITARY PLANS TO KEEP DEFENDING SERVICEMEN

Diane Jennings - The Dallas Morning News - December 9, 2008

'I don't think being a flag waver and being a big advocate for a good justice system are necessarily contradictory,' said Colby Vokey, who returned to the Dallas area to practice law after retiring from the Marines recently.

Whichever he is, he didn't deserve to be treated like a "human mop" while being interrogated at Guantánamo Bay, said Colby Vokey, who was once Mr. Khadr's lead attorney before leaving the Marines this year to return home and join a prestigious Dallas law firm. The retired lieutenant colonel has a reputation for outspokenness – whether his client is an alleged teenage terrorist or a Marine accused of killing Iraqi civilians.

For instance, Mr. Vokey said the Guantánamo Bay legal system "is horrific ... a complete sham."

His complaints about Guantánamo – which the military disputes – underscore a searing debate on the prosecution of enemy combatants, especially when prosecutions turn on whether information is obtained through torture or coercion.

"Military critic" on everything from the administration of justice at Guantánamo Bay to the politicization of the war and treatment of veterans, is an unexpected label for the ardent Texas Aggie turned gung-ho Marine.

But Mr. Vokey, 43, who voted for President George W. Bush, said, "I don't think being a flag waver and being a big advocate for a good justice system are necessarily contradictory." "I took an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States," he said. "I take that pretty seriously." <More at: www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/120908dnetmarine.45ef44f.html>

GATES: MILITARY LOOKS TO ACCELERATE IRAQ PULLOUT

The Associated Press - Dec. 2, 2008

WASHINGTON - Defense Secretary Robert Gates signaled a willingness Tuesday to forge ahead with two key priorities for the incoming Obama administration: accelerating the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and shutting down the Guantanamo Bay detention center.

As the only Republican Cabinet member asked to stay on by President-elect Barack Obama, Gates told reporters that military commanders are looking at ways to more quickly pull troops out of Iraq in light of the 16-month timetable that was a centerpiece of the Democrat's campaign. He also said it will be a high priority to work with the new Congress on legislation that will enable the U.S. to close the detention center at the U.S. naval base in Cuba, where about 250 terrorism suspects are still being held. <More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28022197/>

THESE NEXT THREE POLICIES MIGHT END UP BEING AT CROSS PURPOSES

PENTAGON EXPANDING NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS RECRUITED

Pauline Jelinek, Associated Press Writer - December 6, 2008

The Pentagon plans to recruit more foreigners in a fresh effort to make up for chronic shortages of doctors, nurses and linguists available for wartime duty. The Defense Department already draws from aliens living in the United States on green cards and seeking permanent residency. But under a trial program, it will now look to also recruit from pools of foreigners who've been living in the states on student and work visas, with refugee or political asylum status and other temporary visas.

<More at: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2008/12/05/national/w114140S85.DTL>

MILITARY PREPARES FOR THREATS DURING PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer - October 26, 2008; A18

The U.S. military, bracing for the first wartime presidential transition in 40 years, is preparing for potential crises during the vulnerable handover period, including possible attacks by al-Qaeda and destabilizing developments in Iraq or Afghanistan, according to senior military officials.

"I think the enemy could well take advantage" of the transfer of power in Washington, said the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, who launched preparations for the transition months ago, and who will brief the president-elect, the defense secretary nominee and other incoming officials on crisis management and how to run the military.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/25/AR2008102501944.html>

PENTAGON TO DETAIL TROOPS TO BOLSTER DOMESTIC SECURITY

Spencer S. Hsu and Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writers - December 1, 2008; A01

The U.S. military expects to have 20,000 uniformed troops inside the United States by 2011 trained to help state and local officials respond to a nuclear terrorist attack or other domestic catastrophe, according to Pentagon officials. The long-planned shift in the Defense Department's role in homeland security was recently backed with funding and troop commitments after years of prodding by Congress and outside experts, defense analysts said.

There are critics of the change, in the military and among civil liberties groups and libertarians who express concern that the new homeland emphasis threatens to strain the military and possibly undermine the Posse Comitatus Act, a 130-year-old federal law restricting the military's role in domestic law enforcement. But the Bush administration and some in Congress have pushed for a heightened homeland military role since the middle of this decade, saying the greatest domestic threat is terrorists exploiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/30/AR2008113002217_pf.html>

GATES: ACTIVE FORCE, RESERVES MUST INTEGRATE

William H. McMichael - Staff writer - November 24, 2008

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates took a giant step Monday toward more tightly blending the active-duty military and reserve components into an "integrated total force," calling for wide-ranging personnel policy changes, codifying the reserves' homeland defense role and adequately funding off-overlooked reserve equipment requirements.

In a Monday memo sent to every senior uniformed and civilian Pentagon leader and copied to three other cabinet secretaries, Gates directed the development of a new Total Force Integration Policy that recognizes the "cultural divide that exists" between the active and reserve components. "All vestiges of the cultural prejudice" that remain in law "should be removed" by Congress, he wrote.

Gates also called upon Congress to "mandate that the National Guard and Reserves have the lead role in and form the backbone of DoD operations in the homeland."

Congress, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves it chartered and the Pentagon, Gates wrote in his 41-page memo, "all recognize that the National Guard and the Reserves are integral to the Total Force and have assumed a greater operational role in today's force." <More at: www.airforcetimes.com/news/2008/11/military_gates_guard_reserve_112408/>

NOW FOR A COUPLE OF "SUPPORT THE TROOPS" STORIES

WAR HERO'S STATUE STOLEN FOR SCRAP

The Record, Bergen County, NJ - December 09, 2008

The statue that honored Marine Sgt. Matthew Fenton was stolen to sell for scrap metal. Police said the man accused of taking the statue, Vincent J. McManus of Little Ferry, did not know the figure was made of glazed concrete until later.

Fenton, who grew up in Little Ferry, died of shrapnel wounds two years ago, after his Humvee was attacked by a suicide bomber in Iraq. He had wanted to join the borough's police department. The department made him an honorary member after his death, at age 24. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/war-heros-statue-stolen-for-scrap.html>

LOCAL VETERAN THREATENED WITH ARREST FOR DISTRIBUTING 'BUDDY POPPIES'

Stephanie Satchell - Charlottesville - Nov 24, 2008

A local veteran is speaking out after police threatened to arrest him for distributing 'Buddy Poppies' or memorial flowers at the National Mall in Washington D.C. Now the Charlottesville-based Rutherford Institute has stepped in and filed a first amendment lawsuit against the National Park Police.

John Miska enjoys volunteering and spends most of time helping injured veterans and distributing 'Buddy Poppies.'

"They're handed out as a remembrance of veterans sacrifice. The poppies are red representing the blood the soldiers shed and it's a reminder and it gives people pause to think," said John Miska, Veteran.

Recently the National Park Police threatened to arrest Miska for handing out his poppies on the National Mall in Washington D.C. <More at: www.charlottesvilleplex.tv/news/headlines/35017714.html>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
12/11-14		The Middle School 1201 Thompson Street, Decatur, TX	The Wall That Heals	Wise County Veterans Council	
12/11	1000- 1600	Scottish Rite Event Center 1895 Camino del Rio So., San Diego	Western Regional Career Event		Register
12/11	1000- 1600	TBA	Regional Career Event		Register

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

VETERANS' LONG-TERM PROBLEMS LINKED TO TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES

Jia-Rui Chong - December 5, 2008

Traumatic brain injuries, one of the signature injuries of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, can be linked to such long-term problems as seizures, aggression and dementia reminiscent of Alzheimer's disease, according to an Institute of Medicine report released Thursday. Even mild brain injuries, the report found, appear associated with some long-term problems.

The report is a wake-up call, said Dr. Michael Yochelson, who specializes in traumatic brain injury at National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington and used to work at the National Naval Medical Center.

"We need to be prepared to take care of these people, and we need to be observant," said Yochelson, who was not involved in the institute's report. <More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-brain-injuries5-2008dec05_0.6055958.story>

VA SENDS LATEST GULF WAR ILLNESS REPORT TO IOM FOR REVIEW

December 1, 2008

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has sent the October 2008 report from the VA Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses to the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) for review and recommendations.

The October report from the advisory committee identified potential causes for -- and asserted that research supports the existence of -- a multi-symptom condition resulting from service in the 1990 - 1991 Gulf War, which the committee identified as Gulf War Illness (GWI). <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/08/vap08/vap120108-1.htm>

VA RECOGNIZES ALS LINK TO MILITARY SERVICE

Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) may receive needed support for themselves and their families after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced last month that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military. VA based its decision primarily on a November 2006 report by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) on the association between active-duty service and ALS.

The report, titled *Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis in Veterans: Review of the Scientific Literature*, analyzed numerous previous studies on the issue and concluded that "there is limited and suggestive evidence of an association between military service and later development of ALS."

"ALS is a disease that progresses rapidly, once it is diagnosed," explained VA Secretary Dr. James Peake in a statement. "There simply isn't time to develop the evidence needed to support compensation claims before many veterans become seriously ill. My decision will make those claims much easier to process, and for them and their families to receive the compensation they have earned through their service to our nation.<More at: www.usmedicine.com/dailyNews.cfm?dailyID=427>

WAR VETS KEPT IN THE DARK ON AGENT ORANGE

Sam Cook - December 7, 2008

Audrea Anderson has been a spokeswoman much of her career in higher education, yet she hasn't brought a message more important than now.

"My husband died as a result of Agent Orange," she says. "The government is not doing a good job of telling Vietnam War veterans about the dangers they will face in their later years."

Isaac Anderson, 61, a Fort Myers native who served as county and circuit judge for 26 years, died Dec. 15, 2007, after battling prostate cancer.

"It makes me so sad to know that Isaac did not know what caused his condition," says Anderson, 61, associate vice president for community relations and marketing at Florida Gulf Coast University. "It was all a puzzle to him."

The judge served in the U.S. Air Force from June 8, 1965, to Sept. 10, 1968. He entered at 19 and served as a communications specialist in Vietnam.

"Any ground personnel during those years when Agent Orange was sprayed were exposed from 1962 to 1971," Anderson says. "Our Vietnam veterans need to get screened and see if they are in danger."

<More at: www.news-press.com/article/20081207/COLUMNISTS02/812070384/1005/NEWS0103>

ONE IN FOUR VETS SUFFERS GULF WAR ILLNESS

Caleb Daniloff - December 3, 2008

Effectively debunking years of government denials, Gulf War veterans suffering a host of neurological problems scored a huge victory last month in their struggle to legitimize their medical claims — thanks in part to public health experts at BU.

Comprising leading scientists, medical experts, and military veterans, a congressionally mandated panel charged with shaping federal health research related to the 1991 Middle East conflict has concluded that Gulf War syndrome is a real medical condition and that it afflicts at least one in four of the 697,000 U.S. veterans who fought in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. The landmark report, presented two weeks ago by the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses to Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake, calls on Congress to appropriate \$60 million for treatment of Gulf War vets.

"Veterans of the first Gulf War have been plagued by symptoms of ill health, including fatigue, problems with thinking, skin lesions, and gastrointestinal upset, since their return 17 years ago," says Roberta White, the committee's scientific director and chair of the department of environmental health at BU's School of Public Health. "Despite their persistence and severity, these symptoms have often led to no diagnosis in a substantial portion of the war's veterans."

The [450-page report](#), which was prepared under the leadership of Lea Steele, the committee's former scientific director, and released under White, brings together for the first time the full range of scientific research and government investigations on Gulf War illness. The report found that the condition fundamentally differs from stress-related syndromes seen after other wars and states that scientific evidence "leaves no question that Gulf War illness is a real condition."

<More at: www.bu.edu/today/2008/12/02/one-four-vets-suffers-gulf-war-illness>

VET AFFAIRS INVESTIGATION DEEPENS

Scott Waldman - Staff writer - December 5, 2008

An internal Department of Veterans Affairs investigation found that the New York regional office altered vets' claims to make them appear as if they were being processed faster than they actually were. Hundreds of documents submitted to the regional office in Manhattan were intentionally dated incorrectly in an internal program used in the processing of claims, and some supervisors instructed employees to alter the dates, according to a summary of the internal probe obtained by the Times Union.

<More at: <http://timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=746995>>

DIVORCE CLIMBS FOR SOLDIERS, MARINES

Associated Press December 03, 2008

WASHINGTON - The divorce rate among Soldiers and Marines increased last year as military marriages suffered continuing stress from America's two ongoing wars. There were an estimated 10,200 failed marriages in the active duty Army and 3,077 among Marines, according to figures obtained by The Associated Press for the budget year ended Sept. 30.

That's a divorce rate of 3.5 percent among more than 287,000 married troops in the Army, up from 3.3 percent in the previous fiscal year, according to Defense Department figures.

"With increasing demands placed on Army families and Soldiers - including frequent deployments and relocations - intimate relationships are tested," said Army spokesman Paul Boyce.

The new data shows 3.7 percent of more than 84,000 married Marines divorced in fiscal year 2008, up from 3.3 percent in 2007. The Marine Corps called the increase statistically small and said officials would need to examine them farther.

"That said, Marine Corps leadership is keenly aware of the burden military families carry in a time of war," said Col. Dave Lapan, a spokesman. "Our leaders, from the commandant on down, are paying serious attention to the strain."

Some veteran and family groups question whether Pentagon figures are too low, saying they do not take into account many who divorce after leaving the service. The groups are unable to offer other estimates.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/divorce-climbs-for-soldiers-marines.html>

DESPITE ARMY'S ASSURANCES, VIOLENCE AT HOME

Lizette Alvarez - November 22, 2008

On Christmas Day two years ago, Sgt. Carlos Renteria, recently back from his first tour in Iraq, got drunk and, during an argument, began to choke his wife, Adriana. He body-slammed her. He threw her onto the couch, grabbed a cushion and smothered her, again and again — until, finally, he stopped, she told the police in San Angelo, Tex.

He was arrested and charged with assault, and she went to the hospital for her injuries, which included bruises and a severely swollen knee. It was his second domestic violence arrest. Assured by an Army officer that the military would pursue the case,

the Texas prosecutor bowed out. Yet Sergeant Renteria has faced no consequences. Instead, since his arrest, he has been redeployed to Iraq and promoted to staff sergeant.

"I was told it would be taken care of, in more than one instance, by the Army," said Ms. Renteria, 30, referring to the assault charges. "That they would help me. And I believed them."

For nearly two years, she has prodded Sergeant Renteria's chain of command, the inspector general at Fort Riley in Kansas (where he was transferred), the base's military lawyers and its domestic violence office, e-mail messages and letters show. But Sergeant Renteria has not received any counseling, and the military justice system has said it will not prosecute him. The couple divorced last month.

Ms. Renteria's story illustrates the serious gaps in the way the Army handles domestic violence cases and the way it treats victims, despite promises to take such crimes more seriously. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/11/23/us/23abuse.html>

KBR SUED FOR GIVING SOLDIERS ICE WITH 'TRACES OF BODY FLUIDS AND PUTREFIED REMAINS'

ZP Heller - Brave New Films - December 4, 2008

The scandals for KBR just keep coming. The former Halliburton subsidiary responsible for the sexual assault of Jamie Leigh Jones and the accidental electrocution of a U.S. soldier is now subject of a class-action lawsuit for exposing employees to "unsafe water, food, and hazardous fumes" at the largest U.S. installation in Iraq.

According to the *Army Times*, Joshua Eller, a former technician with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, said that while he was stationed at Balad Air Force Base in 2006, he experienced skin lesions that spread and became worse, along with debilitating blisters on his feet, vomiting, cramping, diarrhea, and severe abdominal pain. As former KBR Water Purification Specialist Ben Carter described in this clip from *Iraq for Sale* and in his Congressional testimony, KBR failed to provide adequate water safety, resulting in toxic drinking and bathing water.

<More at: <http://bravenewfilms.org/blog/64619-kbr-sued-for-giving-soldiers-ice-with-traces-of-body-fluids-and-putrefied-remains>>

INDIANA: EX-GUARDSMEN SUE MILITARY CONTRACTOR

The Associated Press - December 4, 2008

Sixteen Indiana National Guard soldiers sued the military contractor KBR, saying its employees knowingly allowed them to be exposed to a toxic chemical in Iraq five years ago. The suit, filed in Federal District Court in Evansville, said the soldiers from a unit based in Tell City were exposed to a carcinogen while protecting an Iraqi water pumping plant shortly after the United States invaded in 2003. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/12/04/us/04brfs-EXGUARDSMENS_BRF.html>

WITH ECONOMY DOWN, RE-ENLISTMENTS UP

Associated Press - December 03, 2008

FORT RILEY, Kan. - Sgt. Ryan Nyhus spent 14 months patrolling the deadly streets of Baghdad, where five members of his platoon were shot and one died. As bad as that was, he would rather go back there than take his chances in this brutal job market. Nyhus re-enlisted Nov. 26, and in so doing joined the growing ranks of those choosing to stay in the U.S. military because of the bleak economy.

"In the Army, you're always guaranteed a steady paycheck and a job," said the 21-year-old Nyhus. "Deploying's something that's going to happen. That's a fact of life in the Army - a fact of life in the infantry."

In 2008, as the stock market cratered and the housing market collapsed, more young members of the Army, Air Force and Navy decided to re-up. While several factors might explain the rise in re-enlistments, including a decline in violence in Iraq, Pentagon officials acknowledge that bad news for the economy is usually good news for the military.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/with-economy-down-reenlistments-up.html>

IN GEORGIA IT'S STATISTICS AND PERCENTAGES, NOT THE 81 VETS WHO COUNT VETERANS LEFT HOMELESS DUE TO STATE BUDGET CUTS

MARK DAVIS- The Atlanta Journal-Constitution - November 30, 2008

This is moving day. Michael Seamands' cramped home for the past five years is no longer his. The landlord, the state of Georgia, says he has to go. He has packed cleaning materials, clothes, the model airplanes he assembled in the quiet afternoons at the Georgia War Veterans Home domiciliary. The Lawrenceville resident accepts the moving orders with the stoicism you'd expect from someone who patrolled the Vietnamese jungles 36 years ago. Some things you cannot change, Seamands said; you get your orders and head out.

"It was good here," said Seamands, 58, an Army veteran who served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. "It was safe here."

The domiciliary's closing is proof that few programs are safe from state budget cuts in this cramped economy. On Aug. 1, Gov. Sonny Perdue sent a memo to the state Department of Veterans Services, which operates the home. It ordered the agency to devise plans to cut expenditures by 6 percent, 8 percent and 10 percent for the rest of this fiscal year and the next.

The department took a "real, real hard look" at its domiciliary care here, said Len Glass, the department's assistant commissioner for administration. The program, he said, cost the state \$2.7 million annually. By cutting it for the rest of this fiscal year — it ends June 30, 2009 — the department would deduct \$1.7 million from its \$25 million budget. It would represent more than a 10 percent reduction for the next fiscal year, he said.

Officials also looked at other numbers. The 81 residents, Glass said, represented far less than 1 percent of the state's total veteran population, estimated at 760,000. <More at: www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/stories/2008/11/30/georgia_veterans_home.html>

MORE HOMELESS FEMALE VETERANS SEEK SHELTER

Nov. 10, 2008

DAYTON, Ohio - When Carisa Dogen looks back on her life of 38 years, it's easy to see where she lost her way: She left her hometown of Dayton at 15 and moved to Kentucky, where she graduated from high school and enrolled in electronics school. But drugs beckoned, and she didn't finish. She joined the military, but fate intervened and she later found herself homeless — forced to sleep in parks on some nights when it was bitterly cold and rainy, and scavenge for food in trash cans.

"I got accosted a couple of times by males. Walking the streets and stuff, it's hard and it's scary," she said in the comfort of The Other Place, a homeless shelter in Dayton that helped put her into new housing where she will receive treatment and job training.

Particularly bewildering for Dogen, she is an Army veteran. Her life should never have come to this. Of the 1.8 million female military veterans, Dogen was among the 7,000 to 8,000 who are homeless, as estimated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. She is among the few who have benefited from new housing specifically for female veterans, an initiative homeless advocates say falls far short of what is needed. <More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27646499/>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2008

NOTE: STATISTICS FOR WOUNDED ARE GETTING SHAKIER - DoD REVISES NUMBERS – DROPS NON-HOSTILE "OTHER"

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,094 DAYS)		OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,623 DAYS)	
KILLED US	4,209	KILLED US	628
WOUNDED US [12/06/08]	30,871	OTHER CASUALTIES US [12/06/2007]	2,605
OTHER US CASUALTIES [12/06/08]	≥44,551	KILLED COALITION	394
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [12/06/08]	169	WOUNDED US [11/01/08]	7,293
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,602
KILLED UK	177	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED OTHER COALITION	138	KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819	WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182	AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555		
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [12/06/08]	≥ 97,838- 658,227		
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M		
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2. 5M	COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$578,695,599,830

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

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF DECEMBER 10, 2008

This week the Army, Marine Corps and Navy announced an increase, while the Air Force announced a decrease. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 2,889 more 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 97,824; Navy Reserve, 5,885; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 11,080; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,536; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 858. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 124,183, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2008/d20081209ngr.pdf.

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

THE MARINES ARE RIGHT AND THE ARMY IS WRONG

December 4, 2008: The U.S. Army is under increasing pressure to use six month combat tours, rather than the twelve months ones it has been using for over half a century. This issue came up recently when the army noticed that the emergency 15 month tours used for the 2007 Surge Offensive in Iraq led to much higher rates of PTSD and noticeably lower morale.

The army has been aware of a "tour length problem" for some time. Two years ago, the army again seriously considered the use of shorter combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, largely because of the Internet buzz from troops who had been in touch with marines and air force personnel who already enjoy 6-7 month tours. But the brass decided against any change. Four years ago the army considered, and decided against, reducing 12 month tour of duty in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, to six or seven months.

<More at: www.strategypage.com/htm/httmoral/articles/20081204.aspx>

DOD TAKES ACTION ON GUARD & RESERVE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

November 25, 2008

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates yesterday directed the Department of Defense to implement or continue taking action on 64 recommendations made by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves.

Gates also determined that the department had already taken the appropriate action on 18 other recommendations—thereby acting on 82 of the commission's 95 recommendations. He deferred to other federal departments on two recommendations and determined that no action would be taken on 11 recommendations.

... A copy of Gates' memorandum directing the action to be taken on each of the recommendations can be found here: [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/SecDef Memo - Signed \(24 Nov 08\).pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/SecDef%20Memo%20-%20Signed%20(24%20Nov%2008).pdf).

<More at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12371>>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

'GLORY' UNIT FROM CIVIL WAR REACTIVATES

Associated Press - November 21, 2008

BOSTON - An all-black Civil War infantry unit honored in the Oscar-winning movie "Glory" with Denzel Washington is making a real-life comeback.

The 54th Massachusetts - praised for a doomed charge in South Carolina in 1863 - will become a ceremonial unit for the state's National Guard. A ceremony is scheduled for later Friday at the Massachusetts Statehouse.

As a ceremonial unit, the 54th will conduct military honors at state functions and funeral services for veterans.

www.military.com/news/article/glory-unit-from-civil-war-reactivates.html

NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at scook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. [Sandy Cook](#), Editor