

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. VII, NO 9

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 JUNE 2012

*I have been wrestling with the problem of rape and sexual assault in the military as an editorial subject for months. The subject is so disturbing, even after all these years, that I have had difficulty in expressing my rage at the services for perpetually ignoring this very serious problem. The recent publicity surrounding the movie [“The Invisible War”](#) and the interview on Bill Maher’s show last week with Susan Burke, the lawyer representing the women in the movie, knocked me off dead center. Some of you may be uncomfortable with this subject or not approve of our covering it, but ...*

**“If we are not ashamed to think it, we should not be ashamed to say it.”**

*During a recent illness I was watching episodes of [The Great Courses: “Books That Have Made History: Books That Can Change Your Life”](#) by Professor J. Rufus Fears. In one of his lectures he reminded me that the first philosopher I ever really understood was Marcus Tullius Cicero in my senior year of High School. Cicero held that the four essential elements of any good person’s life were Truth, Justice, Wisdom, and Moderation. The quotations here and in the following essay are all from Cicero.*

**“The first duty of a man is the seeking after and the investigation of truth.”**

*“The Invisible War” will be opening June 22nd in theaters around the country—see it if you can!*

## WHEN “HEROES” ARE COWARDS

**“The enemy is within the gates; it is with our own luxury, our own folly, our own criminality that we have to contend.”**

There are hidden sins and secrets among our old friends in the armed Forces, some that are hidden by choice. Sexual assault is one of the latter. It is time that we help bring this shameful situation out into the light.

It has become common to refer to all soldiers as “heroes”. Any “hero” who assaults or rapes a woman, soldier or civilian, or who permits any one of his colleagues or subordinates to do so is no “hero”, he is a coward.

We don’t need cowards!

It is time that we tell the truth to ourselves and the world.

**“In everything truth surpasses the imitation and copy.”**

We all owe it to our colleagues—those women who serve just as faithfully (often more so) than we did, and who deserve the same respect we so freely and publicly give our fellow male veterans.

**“Nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable than fidelity. Faithfulness and truth are the most sacred excellences and endowments of the human mind.”**

The truth is that women service members in all branches are being assaulted and raped, and the greater truth is that the services are not just covering it up, as they always have, they seem to tacitly accept the situation.

Their persons and their dignity have been assaulted—besmirched in a manner that we would never accept were it happening to one of our male colleagues.

Questions surface. How can we maintain the dignity of our individual service if we do not respect the dignity of all who serve?

How can we maintain our own dignity if we lie about this horrendous situation, and if we accept others' lies without question?

**“Where is there dignity unless there is honesty?”**

While many of us at one time or another suffered various injustices during our service, we all knew injustice for what it was. We didn't overlook it—particularly when we were the target. We didn't re-define it—injustice was injustice. It was all very clear, wasn't it?

**“Justice consists in doing no injury to men; decency in giving them no offense.”**

As we developed professionally we grew in our knowledge, not just of our specialty, but more importantly of how we were expected to behave as professionals. This demand for professional behavior applied to all of us, whether or not we were one-termers or were in it for a career.

Many of us gained leadership positions. In those positions we were expected to act professionally, and to impart not just our knowledge but our wisdom in upholding and advancing our profession.

**“The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.”**

Most of all we were expected to dispense justice, and that meant we had to tell ourselves and others the truth about what was good and what was bad in our units, and in the behavior of our fellow service members.

**“Knowledge which is divorced from justice, may be called cunning rather than wisdom.”**

I volunteered my unit in Thailand to be the first in the US Army to accept women into operational positions in an unaccompanied tour assignment. When I did that in 1973, I sat with the last Director of the WAC (BG Mary Clarke) and assured her that women assigned to my station would be treated with respect, and I meant it.

It was not easy. Some soldiers needed a lesson or two to get the point across. (It was also not easy to convince absent wives that everything would be OK, but that was another problem entirely).

One young lieutenant thought that the women assigned to that station were his own private stable, and he attempted to force more than one woman soldier to accommodate his wishes. When I found out about it I quickly ran the SOB out of the Army. The Army fought me, but my commander supported me, and the Army was better for it.

**“The wise are instructed by reason, average minds by experience, the stupid by necessity and the brute by instinct.”**

I don't kid myself. Then and now there was assault and rape across the board. In some units it was and is almost a sure thing. Also then and now the system often placed the blame on the victim. Always this is a colossal failure of leadership, from the squad leader all the way to the Chief of Staff.

**“When you have no basis of argument, abuse the plaintiff.”**

In my Army women soldiers were simply soldiers, and they deserved all of the respect and dignity of any other soldier.

In my personal world all individuals deserve respect, especially women (my mother would haunt me if I didn't feel and act that way).

Mutual respect is what builds strong organizations. How do military leaders believe that they can build strong organizations if they allow the abuse of a large percentage of their members?

**“We are obliged to respect, defend and maintain the common bonds of union and fellowship that exist among all members of the human race.”**

Some say that the tendency to assault women is inherent in the male psyche. Utter bullshit!

If I can teach my son to respect women, how can I not teach other young men assigned to my care to offer the same respect?

If I can undo the evils of bad upbringing among certain members of my command when it comes to obedience to orders and vigorous pursuit of common goals, how can I not check any predatory attitude toward women as well? I must if I wish to call myself a leader.

**“The evil implanted in man by nature spreads so imperceptibly, when the habit of wrongdoing is unchecked, that he himself can set no limit to his shamelessness.”**

I can only do it if I have a moral sense of what is right and what is wrong. I can only do it if I understand that by not combatting this evil I destroy unit cohesion and I will never have a unit that I can be truly proud of.

Most of all, I must accept the irrefutable fact that by not combatting this evil, I am allowing irreparable damage to young soldiers who have come to me expecting to be led, taught, and protected. I even damage the predators: by failing to censure their behavior I say that it is alright!

If I do not fight it I am immoral. If I do not fight it I fail as a leader and as a man.

**“For no phase of life, whether public or private, whether in business or in the home, whether one is working on what concerns oneself alone or dealing with another, can be without its moral duty; on the discharge of such duties depends all that is morally right, and on their neglect all that is morally wrong in life.”**

There is no question that I owed this duty to the women soldiers assigned to my care.

Beyond that, of course, I owed it to the development and enrichment of my own character.

I would ask all of the leaders who turn a blind eye to this evil a slew of questions.

How can you support your own behavior, and the behavior of the attackers? How can you fail yourself, your troops, and your service so completely?

What kind of leader are you? Or, more specifically, What kind of a human being are you?

Where is your character? Where is your judgment?

**“It is not by muscle, speed, or physical dexterity that great things are achieved, but by reflection, force of character, and judgment.”**

What are you afraid of?

**“True nobility is exempt from fear.”**

Do you think that somehow you are failing as a leader if you acknowledge assault and rape in your unit? You are failing if you don't!

**“Fear is not a lasting teacher of duty.”**

Are you doing it to ‘go along’ with what other leaders and commanders do? Do you shirk from telling the truth because you don't think that your superiors want you to tell it?

Do you feel that you are forbidden to expose this cancer in the gut of the services? Have you been told not to ‘embarrass the service’?

**“What is permissible is not always honorable.”**

It's time to ‘man-up’!

It's long past time for all military leaders from the Secretary of Defense down to the newest soldier to say, “No more!”

I have four daughters and five granddaughters. What if one of them was the soldier-victim?

One of my six grandsons is shortly joining the Marine Corps. I don't give my grown progeny advice, but if the occasion should arise, I would enjoin him to think of those women in his family if he or any of his comrades is ever tempted to assault a woman, soldier or civilian, or even to force his attention when he is rejected.

I would ask him to do a little thought experiment and imagine that the woman in his or his friend's sights is one of his sisters or cousins.

Come to think of it, all of you sergeants, captains, colonels and generals; what if the soldier in question were your daughter—your sister—your wife? Would it be OK then? Would she be at fault because some brute raped her?

It is not too late in your career to make a difference. It is not too late to be honest and accept this as critical moral and professional problem.

It is not too late to tell yourself and those around and above you the truth.

**“Any man can make mistakes, but only an idiot persists in his error.”**

You do not have to be a “hero”. But you do have to be trustworthy, just, truthful, wise.

It is not too late.

Just don't continue to be cowards.

**“Live as brave men; and if fortune is adverse, front its blows with brave hearts.”**

**[Ed – and Marcus Tullius Cicero]**

## SUGGESTED ACTION

Call or write your Congressperson (better than email). Call the DC office, or write the local office (gets to them faster). Get the proper phone number and/or address at <http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>.

In your contact call or letter, request (politely) that they personally contact the Department of Defense and say that they want an active and ongoing program, not only to stop as much as possible the rapes and assaults happening in the service, but also that they want the perpetrators of these crimes punished, and their supervisors also punished if they have taken no action.

Check your Congressperson's website. Whether or not they are on the Armed Services Committee of either house, remind them that you are watching their actions on this matter and that it will affect the way you vote in November.

Use your own words, but prod them to action!

## VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE: STATUS OF OUR CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT

Date	Action	Days since previous action	Days since start of case
7/23/2007	Suit filed w/Federal District Court	-	0
9/25/2007	Defendant's motion to dismiss	64	64
2/11/2008	VUFT motion for preliminary injunction	139	203
2/25/2008	Preliminary injunction hearing – denied	14	217
4/21/2008	Trial before Judge Conti	56	273
6/25/2008	Judgment unfavorable (based on jurisdiction)	65	338
7/25/2008	Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals	30	368
12/10/2008	Appeal brief filed	138	506
12/15/2008	<i>Swords to Plowshares &amp; Vietnam Veterans of America</i> file amicus brief (not accepted by court)	5	511
12/22/2008	<i>Military Spouses for Change &amp; United Spinal Association</i> file amicus brief (not accepted by court)	7	518
3/4/2009	Appeal will not be subject to Mediation	72	590
5/1/2009	VUFT's brief filed	58	648
8/12/2009	Oral arguments before 3-judge panel	103	751
9/14/2009	No agreement on mediation. 9 <sup>th</sup> Circuit agrees to adjudicate	33	784
2010 No Action			
5/20/2011	The 9th Circuit rules in part in our favor, specifically on the Constitutional issues in our claim.	613	1397
5/27/2011	Case Management Conference before the original trial judge, Judge Conti, in Federal District Court	7	1404
7/20/2011	VA has requests a hearing by the full court.	54	1458
8/10/2011	VA appeals to undo everything that has transpired over the last three years; claims veterans have no constitutional right to benefits.	21	1479
11/16/2011	Back to square 2—9 <sup>th</sup> Circuit panel ruling withdrawn	98	1577
12/13/2011	<i>En banc</i> hearing before 11 judges	27	1604
6/20/2012	<i>Today - waiting</i>	157	1794
1794 days = 4 years, 11 months, 27 days			

Our team is drafting the appeal to the United States Supreme Court ~ We will keep you posted

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. [www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/](http://www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/)

**BE A MEMBER** If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [www.vuft.org/membership.html](http://www.vuft.org/membership.html) and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures. Please encourage your friends who either are veterans, are related to veterans, or who support veterans' causes to join VUFT, Inc. at [www.vuft.org/membership.html](http://www.vuft.org/membership.html)

**SUPPORTING THE CAUSE** If you wish to donate to our work you may do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Donate" page at [www.vuft.org/donate.html](http://www.vuft.org/donate.html). Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method, or donate \$10 or more and we'll send you one anyway.

The case is moving on and we must support our legal team. Please dig down and help us if you can. Any amount helps.

## NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two organizations: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program [www.vetsprobono.net/](http://www.vetsprobono.net/); National Organization of Veterans' Advocates (NOVA) [www.vetadvocates.com](http://www.vetadvocates.com) .

Also, United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims "Public List of Practitioners" are members of the court's bar <http://www.uscourts.cavc.gov/practitioners/>

## VETERANS CRISIS HOTLINE

The hotline for anyone needing immediate help with mental health issues is **800-273-8255**.

## **TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS**

### **OIF/OEF – HACK DATE MONDAY 20 JUNE 2012**

#### **OP'N IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,721/657 DAYS)**

KILLED US [6/19/12]	4,409/78
WOUNDED US [6/19/12]	31,927/2,514
OTHER US CASUALTIES [2/6/12]	40,374/2,623
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [6/19/12]	223/12
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK [2/6/12]	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION [2/6/12]	139/1
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION [2/6/12]	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [6/19/12]	≥ 116,905–1,455,590
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

#### **OP'N ENDURING FREEDOM (3,908 DAYS)**

KILLED US [6/19/12]	2,013
WOUNDED US [6/19/12]	16,460
OTHER CASUALTIES US [2/6/12]	15,693
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [6/19/12]	84
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION [2/6/12]	996
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$804,512,885,971
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$539,158,731,803

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

\* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. \*\* Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

### **NOTICE:**

This is the final issue of Volume 7 of **SOUND OFF!**. It is the new shorter form of the newsletter which will now be published quarterly. Our intent with the new newsletter is to continue to keep you apprised of the status of our lawsuit. We will also present an issue for your consideration each quarter, and generally will solicit some form of action from you through petitions either to Congress <http://www.contactingthecongress.org/> or to the DVA <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/ro/rocontacts.htm>, or both. Finally we will maintain the statistics table for all of those killed and maimed in the current unnecessary wars.

Sorry to cutback, but we are all growing older and the continuing monthly the effort to review 100s of news stories to select a few for general information has become a bit trying.

If you wish to keep up, several excellent websites cover military and veterans' matters:

Military.com <http://www.military.com/>

Colonel Dan's excellent news feed which you can sign up for at <http://www.angelfire.com/il2/VeteranIssues/>

If you are familiar with RSS Readers I can recommend Awasu at <http://www.awasu.com/products.php> -- the "Personal Edition" is free. There you can add various sites that you are interested in and it will poll them for you.

You can set up search queries (on Google for example) to provide you with daily input on these issues.

Our next issue will be in September 2012, and quarterly thereafter. Keep up the fight! Keep involved! Never give in!

"Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart -- not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense."

Vaclav Havel

# VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

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Want to join us? Please apply for membership at [www.vuft.org](http://www.vuft.org) It's FREE!

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

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. Sandy Cook, Editor <mailto:scook@vuft.org>

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

The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.