

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 10 THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 JANUARY 2007

FIRST CALL - THEME OF THE ISSUE AND/OR CLIPS & QUOTES

WE CAN'T AFFORD IT!

The common response, from both sides of the Congressional aisle, when the subject of improved benefits for serving military, veterans, and their families is raised is, “We can’t afford it.”

I’m curious. When I look down the list of pork barrel projects (available in the 2006 Congressional Pig Book® Summary ~ www.cagw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reports_pigbook2006), it seems that we can afford an awful lot if it buys votes. The amounts aren’t always large, but then, neither are the purposes:

Agriculture: Cochran (R-MS) needs \$50,000 - cotton ginning research (215 years after Whitney’s cotton gin). Stevens (R-AK) ~ \$1,300,000 - berry research, and \$75,000 - seafood waste research. Byrd (D-WV) ~ \$750,000 - multiflora rose control.

Energy & Water: Reid (D-NV) ~ \$750,000 - Mojave Bird Study. (duplicates a previous study) Hobson (R-OH) ~ \$1,500,000 - Springfield Equestrian Center Energy Efficiency Project.

Interior: Stevens ~ \$4,000,000 - visitors’ center at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Durbin (D-IL) ~ \$350,000 - Chicago Greenstreets Program (maintains flower baskets).

Labor/HHS: \$27,500,000 - National Writing Program (to train teachers to write).

Legislative Branch: \$5,000,000 - Capitol Visitors Center (\$584,000,000 already spent). \$450,000 - planting flowers on the east side of the Capitol building.

Science, State, Justice, Commerce: Shelby (R-AL) ~ \$5,000,000 - Autonomous Rendezvous and Docking Center of Excellence. Stevens (R-AK) \$150,000 – Wasilla, AK (pop 7,000) Police Department technology upgrades (Baltimore got \$100,000). Harkin (D-IA) \$300,000 - padlocks for anhydrous ammonia tanks. Inouye (D-HI) ~ \$3,000,000 - Mauna Kea Discovery Center.

Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development: Murray and Dicks (both D-WA) ~ \$550,000 - Museum of Glass. Hutchison (R-TX) ~ \$200,000 - Fredonia Hotel and Convention Center. Devine (R-OH) ~ \$75,000 - glass-blowing museum. \$50,000 - the Capitol Hill Baseball and Softball League. Lewis (R-CA) ~ \$350,000 - Yucaipa Sports Complex. \$500,000 - construction of the Sparta Teapot Museum in Sparta, North Carolina.

Homeland Security: \$40,000,000 - operation of the national ID program. \$46,900 - Hampton Jitney Company to increase security (for this shuttle service for New Yorkers to the Hamptons).

AND FOR WHAT WE CARE ABOUT!

Foreign Operations: \$13,500,000 - International Fund for Ireland. Shelby (R-AL) and Cramer (D-AL) ~ \$3,300,000 - International Fertilizer Development Center (*maybe this one should be in the Legislative Branch as being more appropriate*).

Defense: Stevens (R-AK) ~ \$500,000 - Arctic Winter Games. He also needs \$2,000,000 - track relocation study at Ft. Wainwright. Knollenburg (R-MI) and Kilpatrick (D-MI) ~ \$1,000,000 - Gaming Software Initiative. \$5,600,000 - UC San Francisco’s Gallo Research Center for research on the effects of alcohol and drug on the brain. Ehlers (R-MI) ~ \$1,000,000 - Waterfree Urinal Initiative.

Military Construction: Carter (R-TX) ~ \$6,500,000 - new physical training facility at Ft. Hood (there are already six).

We mustn’t forget: 100s of billions that are going into air and naval weapons systems against an imagined enemy threat – think a 7,000 weapon nuclear arsenal; the F-22 *Raptor*; National Missile Defense; the Virginia Class Submarine; the excess air wings and carrier groups – all designed to stave off a Soviet attack.

BUT WE CAN’T AFFORD IT WHEN IT COMES TO:

- A “surge” to provide adequate armor and equipment
 - Full Education Benefits under the GI Bill
 - Full-up TRICARE for the guard and reserves and their families
 - Instant local response medical support to families
 - Long-term support for PTSD sufferers
 - Accelerated claims processing
 - Military Families Tax (DIC offset)
 - USERRA enforcement and job assistance
 - The size of the force
 - Disabled retired pay penalty
 - Recomputation of retirement benefits (remember that one under Richard Nixon?)
 - Aid to homeless veterans
- AND MUCH MORE!**

“...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)

[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN, FREE, AND VERY WORTHWHILE! GET YOUR FELLOW VETERANS, AND VETERANS' FAMILY MEMBERS TO JOIN VUFT! WE ARE BEGINNING TO BE HEARD, AND WE NEED YOU TO HELP US GET THE MESSAGE OUT. IF EACH OF US WOULD BRING IN ONE NEW MEMBER EVERY MONTH, WHAT AN IMPACT WE COULD HAVE!

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT WWW.VUFT.ORG.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

BOARD MEETING The new board will be taking up the Strategic Plan for VUFT, Inc. at their next meeting on 27 January 2007 in Santa Barbara. From that strategic planning session we will develop our Operating Plan for 2007-08 and the initial stages of our Program Plans. We are planning to devote our 10 February issue of **SOUND OFF!** to laying out those plans for members.

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

AWARD PRESENTED The Board of Directors of VUFT, Inc. presented the first award of the B.Gen James L. Williams Distinguished Service Award to Sanford Cook at the December meeting. The award is named for the Marine General who inspired this organization to begin its work to assist in improving the lot of all service members, veterans and their families.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

THIS LETTER IS FROM THE (KENNEBEC, ME) MORNING SENTINEL

Veterans met for their 65th Pearl Harbor Reunion on Dec. 7. As I watched them on TV, I was thinking of all of our veterans who have so proudly and loyally risked their lives to defend our freedoms and fought to keep us safe. I wondered how many of those aging veterans will be needing long-term care, but the Veterans Administration will not provide that care. Veterans Administration staff told me that "non-service-connected veterans are not eligible for long-term care."

There are "thousands of non-service-connected veterans" who are affected by this and "it is a common complaint" among those veterans. There is "no money in the budget" for their long-term care. "It is a presidential and congressional decision." What a shame. We are the most prosperous and generous nation and there is no money for care that our veterans deserve, and so desperately need? They fought to afford us the privilege of being the most prosperous and generous nation.

When they entered the service --mostly as teenagers -- they were promised to be taken care of. No mention then of service-connection. Now the care is not available.

Will you please join me in urging our ... senators and representatives in Washington, D.C., to do the right thing by our veterans and provide legislation for the needed care for our "non-service-connected" veterans. They fought for you. Please fight for them.
Faith Rankins, Randolph ~ December 30, 2006

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

NOTHING MUCH TO REPORT YET

There is nothing much happening about service persons and veterans legislation EXCEPT the Iraq discussions.

By the next issue we should have some ideas of the direction in which that war plan is going and what the legislators intend to do about it and all related legislation.

FIREBRAND IN VET PANEL CHAIR

Tom Philpott - January 05, 2007

Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.), the new chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, speaks with enthusiasm for any and all initiatives that might help veterans improve their quality of life.

... In wartime, he said, troop morale depends on "knowing they are going to be treated well when they get home." Bigger VA budgets and better benefits, he said, should be seen "as a cost of war." He supports the Democrats' entire "GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century," which includes a \$3 billion increase in VA health spending to cut wait times for patients and to expand access to more categories of veteran; an end to the ban on concurrent receipt of military retirement and VA disability compensation for the remaining 400,000 military retirees with disabilities; an end to the offset in survivor benefits for widows who also receive VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation; a boost in Montgomery GI Bill benefits to cover full college tuition, room and board.

... he cautioned that Democrats also promised to restore budget discipline, so gains for veterans will have to be phased over several years. His first priority is education benefit reform". <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,121608,00.html>

WE'LL HAVE TO SEE IF THAT "GI BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY" MEANS ANYTHING AT ALL ~ IT'S FAILED AT LEAST TWICE BEFORE

RETREAT – NEWS

WAR COULD LAST YEARS, COMMANDER SAYS

JOHN F. BURNS - January 8, 2007

BAGHDAD, Jan. 7 — The new American operational commander in Iraq said Sunday that even with the additional American troops likely to be deployed in Baghdad under President Bush's new war strategy it might take another "two or three years" for American and Iraqi forces to gain the upper hand in the war.

The commander, Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, assumed day-to-day control of war operations last month in the first step of a makeover of the American military hierarchy here. In his first lengthy meeting with reporters, General Odierno, 52, struck a cautious note about American prospects, saying much will depend on whether commanders can show enough progress to stem eroding support in the United States for the war.

"I believe the American people, if they feel we are making progress, they will have the patience," he said, adding, "I think the frustration is that they think we are not making progress." <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/01/08/world/middleeast/08iraq.html

CITIZEN SOLDIERS MAY BE THE KEY TO IRAQ BUILDUP

By Julian E. Barnes - Times Staff Writer - January 9, 2007

WASHINGTON — The nation's top military officials, expecting President Bush to order an increase in the size of the force in Iraq, have concluded that such a buildup would require them to reverse Pentagon policy and send the Army's National Guard and Reserve units on lengthy second tours in Iraq, Defense Department officials said Monday. Under Pentagon policy, Guard and Reserve units have been limited to 24 months of mobilization for the Iraq war. That means most Reserve units that already have been sent to Iraq are ineligible to return. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff have concluded that a significant troop buildup would require the Pentagon to send Guard and Reserve units for additional yearlong tours.

Such an order probably would be controversial among the nation's governors — who share authority over the Guard — and could heighten concerns in Congress over the war and Bush's plans for a troop increase. In addition, National Guard leaders were skeptical of calls for additional combat tours, which they fear could hurt recruiting and retention.

"If you have to sustain a surge long-term, you have to use the Guard and Reserve," said a Defense Department official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the president had not unveiled his strategy shift.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-troops9jan09,1,1912395.story

AFTER IRAQ, A NEW U.S. MILITARY MODEL

Stanley A. Weiss - : December 26, 2006

WASHINGTON: It's been called the most dramatic shift in U.S. military power since World War II. But it's not the widely anticipated draw down of American combat forces in Iraq. While debate rages over the future of America's military role in Iraq,

another massive U.S. military reorganization — largely overlooked but perhaps even more significant over the long term — is already under way from Northeast Asia to West Africa. And it offers valuable lessons as President George W. Bush considers his next steps in Iraq.

Under the 10-year plan, announced by Bush two years ago, the Pentagon is giving up more than one-third of its overseas military bases and buildings and bringing home 70,000 troops and 100,000 of their family members from major bases in Germany and South Korea. To help transform the military into a faster, more flexible force, troops will instead rotate through smaller, strategically located "forward operating sites," such as air bases in Bulgaria, Romania and Kyrgyzstan.

At the same time, the Pentagon is creating a network of austere "cooperative security locations" — remote runways and warehouses stockpiled with equipment, in places like Senegal, Ghana and Uganda. According to General James Jones, who recently retired as head of U.S. European Command — which now covers most of Africa — these "lily pads" will allow American forces to leapfrog quickly to future crisis zones. <More at: www.ihf.com/articles/2006/12/26/opinion/edweiss.php>

100,000 MERCENARIES, THE FORGOTTEN "SURGE"

Barry Lando - January 8, 2007

What is striking about the current debate in Washington - whether to "surge" troops to Iraq and increase the size of the U.S. Army - is that roughly 100,000 bodies are missing from the equation: The number of American forces in Iraq is not 140,000, but more like 240,000. What makes up the difference is the huge army of mercenaries - known these days as "private contractors." After the U.S. Army itself, they are easily the second-largest military force in the country. Yet no one seems sure of how many there are since they answer to no single authority. Indeed, the U.S. Central Command has only recently started taking a census of these battlefield civilians in an attempt to get a handle on the issue...

The private contractors are Americans, South Africans, Brits, Iraqis and a hodgepodge of other nationalities. Many of them are veterans of the U.S. or other armed forces and intelligence services, who are now deployed in Iraq (and Afghanistan and other countries) to perform duties normally carried out by the U.S. Army, but at salaries two or three times greater than those of American soldiers. They work as interrogators and interpreters in American prisons; body guards for top U.S. and Iraqi officials; trainers for the Iraqi army and police; and engineers constructing huge new U.S. bases. They are often on the front lines. In fact, 650 of them have been killed in Iraq since the 2003 invasion

Their salaries, are, in the end, paid directly by the U.S. government - or tacked on as huge additional "security charges" to the bills of private American or other contractors. Yet the Central Command still doesn't have a complete list of who they are or what they are up to. The final figure could be much higher than 100,000. <More at: www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/46429/>

LAW CATCHES UP TO PRIVATE MILITARIES

Defense Tech - P.W. Singer - January 04, 2007

Over the last few years, tales of private military contractors run amuck in Iraq -- from the CACI interrogators at Abu Ghraib to the Aegis company's Elvis-themed internet "trophy video" — have continually popped up in the headlines. Unfortunately, when it came to actually doing something about these episodes of *Outsourcing Gone Wild*, Hollywood took more action than Washington. The TV series *Law and Order* punished fictional contractor crimes, while our courts ignored the actual ones. Leonardo DiCaprio acted in a movie featuring the private military industry, while our government enacted no actual policy on it. But those carefree days of military contractors romping across the hills and dales of the Iraqi countryside, without legal status or accountability, may be over. The Congress has struck back.

Amidst all the add-ins, pork spending, and excitement of the budget process, it has now come out that a tiny clause was slipped into the Pentagon's fiscal year 2007 budget legislation. The one sentence section (number 552 of a total 3510 sections) states that "Paragraph (10) of section 802(a) of title 10, United States Code (article 2(a) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), is amended by striking 'war' and inserting 'declared war or a contingency operation'." The measure passed without much notice or any debate, and became P.L. 109-364. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,121592,00.html>

MILITARY MAY RECRUIT FOREIGNERS

Boston Globe - December 27, 2006

WASHINGTON - The armed forces, already struggling to meet recruiting goals, are considering expanding the number of noncitizens in the ranks -- including disputed proposals to open recruiting stations overseas and putting more immigrants on a faster track to U.S. citizenship if they volunteer -- according to Pentagon officials.

Foreign citizens serving in the U.S. military is a highly charged issue, which could expose the Pentagon to criticism that it is essentially using mercenaries to defend the country. Some voice concern that a large body of non-citizens under arms reflects badly on Americans' willingness to serve. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,121278,00.html?wh=wh>

THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO EXTEND THE FORCE, HOWEVER ~ DO LESS, GET MORE BODIES, GET ANY BODIES ~ SEE BELOW

MILITARY TO CEDE MEDEVAC MISSION

William Cole - Advertiser Military Writer December 29, 2006

WHEELER ARMY AIRFIELD — With war deployments continuing unabated, state officials have abandoned hope that the 25th Infantry Division can resume helicopter medevac flights on Oahu and now acknowledge that a civilian operator will have to be found. Until that time, though, three to four Black Hawks from an active-duty Army unit in Alaska will be used for military training and civilian medevac services, officials announced yesterday.

<More at: www.honoluluadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061229/NEWS01/612290352/1001/NEWS>

GENERAL WANTS GAY BAN LIFTED

Military.com | January 03, 2007

In an op-ed published in Tuesday's New York Times, John M. Shalikashvili, retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says Congress should give "serious reconsideration" to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the ban on openly lesbian, gay and bisexual military personnel. Shalikashvili, who supported the ban on open service in 1993, writes that "I now believe that if gay men and lesbians served openly in the United States military, they would not undermine the efficacy of the armed forces," and goes on to say that "Our military has been stretched thin by our deployments in the Middle East, and we must welcome the service of any American who is willing and able to do the job." <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,121509,00.html>

ARMY ASKS DEAD, INJURED TO RETURN

From Times Wire Reports - January 6, 2007

The Army said it would apologize to the families of about 275 officers killed or wounded in action who were mistakenly sent letters urging them to return to active duty. The letters were sent to more than 5,100 officers who had recently left the service. Included were letters to about 75 officers killed in action and about 200 wounded in action. The 75 represent more than one-third of all Army officers who have died in Iraq since the war began.

"Army personnel officials are contacting those officers' families now to personally apologize for erroneously sending the letters," the Army said. www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-briefs6.1jan06.1.6875781_story

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
1/27	1000 - 1700	Santa Barbara, CA	VUFT Inc Board Meeting	Bob Handy	805-962-9082
2/8	1000-1400	San Diego Naval Base San Diego, CA	Job Fair		

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 legitimate veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

MINNESOTA STEPS UP ~ AGAIN

FREE TUITION FOR OUR VETERANS IS RIGHT THING TO DO

Darrell Ehrlick, editor, on behalf of the Winona [MN] Daily News editorial board - December 29, 2006

Minnesota Attorney General-elect Lori Swanson got it right when she said, "We owe our veterans, our service members a great debt of gratitude."

So it only makes sense that people to whom we owe a debt shouldn't have to be saddled with debt after making sacrifices in the armed services. To that end, state lawmakers — many of whom haven't even taken the oath of office — have pledged to pass a GI bill that would allow for free college tuition and other benefits for returning service members. Our newly elected state senator,

Sharon Ropes, is in a key position to help shepherd this legislation through as the vice chairwoman of the Senate's Agriculture and Veterans Committee. <More at: www.winonadailynews.com/articles/2006/12/29/opinion/ourviews/ourview1229.txt>

STRESSED VETS NEED EARLY CARE

Sheryl Kornman - Tucson Citizen - 01.04.2007

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is making a "more affirmative effort" to reach "young combatants" from the war on terror "to treat them early" for post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological effects of serving in combat, the head of the department said in Tucson Wednesday. Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson said he came to Tucson to inspect the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System's Level 2 Polytrauma Unit, which provides care to severely injured soldiers.

... Nicholson, 68, a West Point graduate and former chairman of the Republican National Committee and U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, is a combat veteran of the Vietnam War. He said Veterans Affairs employees at discharge centers are working harder than ever to get the word out to combat veterans that there should be no stigma attached to getting post-deployment treatment for sleeplessness, flashbacks and the irritability that accompany combat trauma.

<More at: www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/local/37546.php>

HOSPITAL SAYS IT FAILED TO TAKE CARE OF HURT GI

Charles Sheehan - Chicago Tribune - Dec 22, 2006

Walter Reed Army Medical Center will review its procedures after the father of an Illinois soldier wounded in Iraq claimed his son was discharged wearing bloody hospital clothing and disoriented from pain medication, officials said Thursday.

"We have to find out why this happened and we're going to," said Col. Charles Callahan, chief medical officer and deputy commander at Walter Reed.

The soldier, Sgt. Ricki Hardyman, was never in any danger, but officials conceded that he and his parents did not get the assistance typically afforded to those wounded in combat.

<More at: www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/west/chi-0612220198dec22,1,7547996.story>

NEW GOVERNANCE WILL IMPROVE MILITARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Sgt. Sara Wood - USA American Forces Press Service - January 05, 2007

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5, 2007 - The new governance plan for the military health care system, which is in its very early stages, will improve the care given to troops and their families in today's joint environment, the Defense Department's top health official said today. The idea behind the new governance plan is to have the separate military services work together even more closely than they do now in the area of health care. This will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, said in an interview at the Pentagon.

"Our system does work well now; we have great outcomes in battlefield medicine and in the care of our wounded - the best in history," Winkenwerder said. "But we have a vision, we have a clear set of ideas that things can work even better."

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2606>

VETERAN EXCUSED FROM IRAQ

Lisa Chedekel - Courant Staff Writer - December 22 2006

An Iraq war veteran from Waterbury who was called back to duty despite a diagnosis of severe post-traumatic stress disorder has been exempted from returning to combat and released from the military.

Damian Fernandez, 24, who became suicidal and was hospitalized after receiving orders last month to prepare for another deployment to Iraq, has been excused from reporting to duty Jan. 14 and discharged altogether from the Army's ready reserve, according to a letter Thursday from the Army's Human Resources Command.

... Now that he knows he'll never have to go back, maybe he can finally start to get better," Mary Jane Fernandez said of her son, who suffers from paranoia, flashbacks and depression and has been deemed 70 percent disabled with PTSD by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Fernandez is one of about 8,200 inactive soldiers who have been ordered back to duty involuntarily, under a controversial policy that allows the military to recall troops who have been discharged from the service but have time remaining on their enlistment contracts. Some of those being recalled have PTSD and other mental health problems, raising alarm among families and veterans' advocates. <More at: www.courant.com/news/local/hc-ctptsdcallup1222.artdec22.0.4886708.story>

IRAQ VETERANS WRONGLY DIAGNOSED

Anne Usher - Austin American-Statesman - Dec 24, 2006

Soldiers suffering from the stress of combat in Iraq are being misdiagnosed by military doctors as having a personality disorder, lawyers and psychologists say, which allows them to be quickly and honorably discharged but stigmatizes them with a label that is hard to dislodge and can hurt them financially.

Though accurate for some, experts say, the personality disorder label has been used as a catch-all diagnosis to discharge personnel who may no longer meet military standards, are engaging in problematic behavior or suffer from more serious mental disorders. For returning veterans, the diagnosis can make it harder to obtain adequate mental health treatment if they must first show they have another problem, such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

<More at: www.courant.com/news/local/hc-ctptsdcallup1222.artdec22_0_4886708.story>

<More from Anne Usher on this problem in a second article at: www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=36056>

IRAQ VETS LEFT IN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL AGONY

Aaron Glantz

San Francisco, California, Jan 3 (IPS) - On New Year's Eve, the number of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq passed 3,000. By Tuesday, the death toll had reached 3,004 -- 31 more than died in the Sep. 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. But the number of injured has far outstripped the dead, with the Veterans Administration reporting that more than 150,000 veterans of the Iraq war are receiving disability benefits.

Advances in military technology are keeping the death rate much lower than during the Vietnam War and World War Two, Dr. Col. Vito Imbascini, an urologist and state surgeon with the California Army National Guard, told IPS, but soldiers who survive attacks are often severely disabled for life. <More at: www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=36056>

WERE PLEAS OF MARINE IGNORED?

Matthew D. LaPlante - The Salt Lake Tribune - :12/31/2006

Friends of Walter Smith say he had post-traumatic stress and that the VA repeatedly brushed off his cries for help

Walter Smith was loading a shotgun, apparently intent on killing himself, when Pleasant Grove police officers intervened in the summer of 2004. Friends say it was a cry for help from the former Marine who had recently returned from Iraq - a demonstration of Smith's problems that should have resulted in immediate treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, a combat-related condition common to returning soldiers. Instead, Smith spent two days in a mental health facility before being released with instructions "to find counseling," according to friends. Now the 24-year-old veteran is in the Tooele County jail, awaiting trial on a murder charge. <More at: www.sltrib.com/ci_4928262>

SOLDIER CHARGED WITH IRAQ ATROCITY HAD BEEN LABELED 'HOMICIDAL'

Editor & Publisher - January 10, 2007

Fort Campbell, KY. An Army private charged with the slaughter of an Iraqi family was diagnosed as a homicidal threat by a military mental health team three months before the attack. Pfc. Steven D. Green was found to have "homicidal ideations" after seeking help from an Army Combat Stress Team in Iraq on Dec. 21, 2005. Green said he was angry about the war, desperate to avenge the death of comrades and driven to kill Iraqi citizens, according to an investigation by The Associated Press.

The treatment was several small doses of Seroquel - a drug to regulate his mood - and a directive to get some sleep, according to medical records obtained by the AP. The next day, he returned to duty in the particularly violent stretch of desert in the southern Baghdad suburbs known as the "Triangle of Death."

<More at: www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003530237>

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH, OR GROUCHO MARX TREATS SADDAM HUSSEIN

If you want to see how your tax dollars are being spent, try watching all three chapters of the cartoon "*Epic of Gilgamesh*" produced by a VA/DoD team. The flash presentation is at www.va.gov/gilgamesh/index.htm

It is a sad commentary that this team apparently thought so little of the intellectual capabilities of the psychiatrists whom they were addressing, that they had to turn the presentation into a Marx brothers cartoon strip with a plethora of simplistic messages. If this is what military medicine has come to, then there is no wonder the PTSD sufferers are getting no help.

The presentation refers to four other sites which may or may not have useful information, but this gag reel does little to help the problem, although it probably cost a fortune to produce.

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JANUARY, 3, 2007

This week, the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced an increase, while the Navy number remained the same. The net collective result is 2,962 more 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 76,089; Navy Reserve, 4,921; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,326; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,574; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 358. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 92,268, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2007/d20070103ngr.pdf

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,017
WOUNDED US	22,714
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	≥24,166
KILLED UK	128
KILLED OTHER COALITION	123
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	750
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 12/16]	657
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 42,000
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 58,704 [LANCET-704,087]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET- 1,267,357]

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	357
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	5,994
KILLED COALITION	220
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	660
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

[Verified by me at Snopes.com (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/military/sears.asp>) Ed.]

LETTER RECEIVED BY EMAIL

"Let's all show up at Sears

I assume you have all seen the reports about how Sears is treating its reservist employees who are called up? By law, they are required to hold their jobs open and available, but nothing more. Usually, people take a big pay cut and lose benefits as a result of being called up...Sears is voluntarily paying the difference in salaries and maintaining all benefits, including medical insurance and bonus programs, for all called up reservist employees for up to two years. Suggest we all shop at Sears, and be sure to find a manager to tell them why we are there so the company gets the positive reinforcement it well deserves.

So I, decided to check it out before I sent it forward. I sent an email to the Sears Customer Service Department: asking for verification. Here is their answer

"Dear Customer:

Thank you for contacting Sears.

The information is factual. We appreciate your positive feedback. Sears regards service to our country as one of greatest sacrifices our young men and women can make. We are happy to do our part to lessen the burden they bear at this time.

Bill Thorn
Sears Customer Care
webcenter@sears.com
1-800-349-4358

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.]

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.
ADVISORY BOARD

GOVERNOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS (FRMR USA)
EVELYN (PAT) FOOTE, BG USA (RET)
HON. JOHN GARAMENDI (CA INSURANCE CMSNR)
D. O. HELMICK , FRMR CMSNR CHP (FRMR CANG)
ART HICKS, CMSGT USAF (RET)-[TUSKEGEE AIRMAN]

JOSEPH P. HOAR, GEN USMC (RET)
HON. P. N. (PETE) McCLOSKEY, COL USMCR (RET)
HON. WADE SANDERS CAPT USNR (RET) (FRMR DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY)
HON. JEROME (JERRY) WALDIE (FRMR USA)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

CHAIR BOB HANDY
VICE CHAIR SANDY COOK
SECRETARY DON KATZ
TREASURER RUSS WEED
COMMUNICATIONS RIC SCHROEDER
EVENTS ERIK JENSEN
MEMBERSHIP RUSS WEED

MATERIALS JAIME RIVERA
MESSAGE MARTY U'REN
OUTREACH TOM MULLENS
AT LARGE JIM COOK
AT LARGE RON DEXTER
AT LARGE THOMAS O'SHAUGHNESSY
NEWSLETTER SANDY COOK

Fair Use Notice
This newsletter may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of active-duty military and veterans' issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Are you forwarding this newsletter to others? Please let us know.

Want to join us? Please apply for membership at 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

ADD-ON ~ A THOUGHTFUL OLDER PIECE ON MORAL CHOICES IN COMBAT

MORALS IN A COMBAT ZONE

Peter Kilner - June 11, 2006

The differing reactions to the alleged killing of noncombatants by American soldiers in the Iraqi town of Haditha reveal a troubling ignorance about the moral reality of war. Much of the national dialogue about the incident is being dominated by people whose approaches to making moral judgments on wartime actions are fundamentally flawed.

In one corner are those who are so convinced this war is wrong that they see only the bad things soldiers do in it. Such people are blind to all the good our soldiers and the war are accomplishing, and they revel in exploiting any incident of misbehavior by soldiers to smear all members of the armed forces and the entire war effort. By their logic, abuse of detainees by one platoon in one prison in 2003, or the alleged killing of civilians by one squad in one town in 2005, is conclusive evidence that the entire war effort is evil. These people are unable to reconcile the fact that unjust actions can and do occur within a war that nonetheless is morally justified.

In the other corner are those so convinced of the rightness of our cause that they refuse to acknowledge that our soldiers sometimes make choices that are clearly wrong and for which they should be held accountable. These people equate supporting the laws of war with being unpatriotic and disdainful of the troops. What they fail to recognize is that their implicit argument is both insulting to soldiers and corrosive to the foundation of the military profession. My fellow soldiers and I recognize fully that we are responsible for our individual actions, and that our permission to do violence to other human beings is constrained by our obligation to do so only when it is morally justified.

These polar positions are not novel. They are consistent with schools of thought that military ethicists refer to as the war-pacifist and war-realist positions, both of which fall outside the mainstream of the just-war tradition. What is disturbing is the way these competing perspectives have been hijacked by groups with political agendas and thus given a wider hearing than they deserve.

We should all reject such simplistic approaches to judging soldiers' actions in war. A combat zone is not some parallel universe where the nature of human beings or moral judgment is different. Combat is a human endeavor, and like any human activity it can be carried out morally or immorally, and moral judgments can be made on it.

In simplest terms, when soldiers are careful to target only enemy combatants and to limit unnecessary destruction and suffering, they fight morally. If they intentionally or negligently fail to abide by these restrictions, they fight immorally.

A harsh reality of war is that it involves large numbers of people making life-or-death decisions in very stressful conditions. Inevitably, as in all areas of life, some don't always conduct themselves as they should. Those who commit crimes should be held accountable, keeping in mind the extenuating circumstances of combat.

The circumstances of this war's battlefields are terribly complex. Soldiers find themselves conducting a wide range of operations, from war-fighting to policing, often during a single patrol, and those different operations require different principles for the use of force. It is often difficult for soldiers to discern which approach is appropriate and when. Not infrequently, a well-intentioned soldier ends up killing a noncombatant because of mistaken identity or some other factor caused by the fog of war. In such circumstances, we can say that the action is neither justified nor unjustified but that it is excusable. Not every wrongful death in combat is a war crime.

The good news is that well-trained, well-led soldiers can and do overcome the moral challenges of war and conduct themselves with great honor, and the great majority of American soldiers are well trained and well led. Although we fight an enemy who intentionally violates all norms of human decency and goads us to follow him into the abyss of wanton killing, America's soldiers continue to exhibit remarkable restraint.

What explains the difference between units that commit war crimes and units that don't? Leadership. This is the critical factor in ensuring moral conduct in war. When junior officers and senior noncoms train their soldiers to do what is right and when they maintain their composure and lead by example, their soldiers are able to retain their moral bearings despite the temptations and frustrations of battle. American military history reminds us that war crimes can be prevented by small-unit leaders with moral courage and judgment.

The incident at Haditha is not likely to be the last time that we as a nation find ourselves judging the actions of our soldiers at war. All Americans should resist the calls of those who seek to condemn all soldiers based on the actions of a few, just as we should reject any claims that soldiers are immune from judgment. We should judge each soldier and situation on the merits, paying special attention to the circumstances in which the fateful decisions were made and to the actions of the soldier's leaders.

The writer is a major in the U.S. Army. The views expressed here are his own.