

# SOUND OFF!



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THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 FEBRUARY 2009

## FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

### I DO NOT APOLOGIZE FOR MY “UNPATRIOTIC” FRAMEWORK!

**“Are you one of those who still calls it the “alleged” Global War on Terror?”**

The implication of that question, one which I received in an email this week, is that the GWOT is real and that I should not be among those who believe that it is otherwise.

The further implication, of course, is that if I refer to it as the “alleged” GWOT, I don’t understand, don’t sympathize, and may be both unsupportive and unpatriotic.

We all seem to becoming adept at defining a very rigid framework around some idea, and then demanding that everyone else not just agree with the idea, but also agree with our framework. Otherwise, those who do not adopt the framework are deemed unable or unworthy to even discuss the idea. If you don’t accept the framework you must oppose the idea.

The sole valid idea behind anyone’s framework when discussing the current conflicts is that the original war is over and we are trying to establish nations and national governments.

The further very important but different idea is the need to oppose terrorism, wherever it occurs and in any form, and by any actor. It’s that simple. We can talk about how to go about dealing with each of the ideas; we can even talk about what success is. Opposition to terrorism is a fundamental goal, and it is a goal with which we all concur.

We can also all agree, except those who are practitioners of terrorism, that terrorism is evil – an adjective, not a noun – a descriptor, not a being in and of itself. What we can’t seem to agree on is how to define the problem, how to muster our forces against the problem, and sadly even how to discuss the problem.

But the important consideration is that the problem we all want to face is not necessarily the GWOT, nor is the GWOT as currently defined necessarily the solution.

We really need to talk through the problem. We need to accept that neither our patriotism nor the support that we give our soldiers is dependent on how we define the problem. We support them regardless of our own inability to tell ourselves the truth about the problem.

Terror is *violence committed to instill intense fear in a person, population, or government for military, political, or criminal purposes*. While terror can be found in many circumstances, we generally can agree that political and military terror is that used by a militarily weak force against non-combatant civilians to shatter their trust in their own government’s ability to protect them from physical and mental harm.

Of course terror is also used by some governments to hold its populace in line, e.g., as in Myanmar or the former East Germany, but the terror we are talking about is those criminal

actions used by individuals and groups to instill fear in other individuals to bend them to their will.

While we have loosely used the term “war” to describe our efforts to end harmful influences in our society – war on drugs, war on poverty, war on crime – we all know that the true meaning of “war” is armed conflict between and among nations, or in the case of civil war, among major factions within a nation. A “war” has to be able to be won or lost, and the mark of winning or losing is the giving or accepting of surrender. Without surrender, wars are interminable: without the ability to defined the end, it is a struggle – a conflict – but it is not a “war”.

So in examining the GWOT we have to ask, is there someone from who we can accept an offer of surrender? There is of course Al Q’aida, but if Osama bin Laden and his gang were to surrender tomorrow, would that win the “War on Terror”? Would terror somehow disappear?

The other difficulty with calling something a “war” in its historic meaning is that wars are fought by armies. If we call it a “war” and mean it, then we have no choice but to engage our military to “win” it. But how can that be in the current case? Who will our brave soldiers accept surrender from? What is winning?

We have to admit that bad persons and even bad armies can oppose us, undermine us, hurt us, and yet never use terror as a tactic. Others may choose to use it as their major tactic as do the thugs committing violence against the populace in many corners of the world. In any event, it is a tactic not a thing – a method not an organizing principle. It is almost always – but not always – chosen by those who are weak to attack those who are strong by tangentially attacking the weak members of a stronger society. It is the major tactic in asymmetric warfare. That is what we have here.

Al Q’aida could not attack the strength of America – they could not mount a force against our military – so they attacked the nearly defenseless members of our society. While the Provisional IRA occasionally attacked regular British forces, the vast majority of their attacks were against their unarmed fellow Irishmen,

including against their own supporters when needed to keep them in line. Gangs on the streets of LA do not attack the LAPD – they attack the residents of their own neighborhoods.

Terrorism is an act of cowardice by any definition, and terrorists, while crying out that they are heroes, are craven cowards.

So if the problem we face now is not resident in a single government or group of nations against which we can declare “war” in its historical sense, we are forcing the struggle into an inaccurate framework when we call it a “war”. When we call it “terror”, which is the product, rather than “terrorism” which is the act, then we conjure up a vision of something out there that has to be conquered. The “thing” doesn’t exist except in the minds of its victims; only the act exists.

Why have the Europeans, acting collectively through Interpol and other like agencies, been able to bring more terrorists to trial in the last eight years than we have? Perhaps it is because they have used the one weapon that has always conquered criminals and criminal acts – superb, coordinated police work. Yes, many of them have joined our GWOT coalition, but they have not been any more successful against “terror” there than we have. It is cooperative police work and shared intelligence that has made a real dent in the terrorists ability to act, and has brought a number of them to justice.

There is no doubt that our young men and women are at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and probably a few other places we are not privy to. But what they are about is not a GWOT. In both Afghanistan and Iraq they are in the midst of long-standing internecine strife – civil war by any name. They are in a fight against those who would take over those countries using terror tactics, and against others who oppose occupation by any force and who likewise use terror tactics.

The terrorists know that they cannot terrorize us – that’s not their point. They terrorize their own to keep them from supporting us or those whom they see as our surrogates, such as the Maliki or Karzai governments.

Yes, I will call it the “alleged” GWOT, because it is not a war against “terror” but a struggle against criminals and rebels who happen to use terror as a weapon – terrorists. If you gave them F-22s and Bradleys they would probably use those too, but they would probably not give up the tactic of terrorism. They certainly used captured T-72s and Katyusha rockets against the Russians in Afghanistan when they had them.

Nonetheless, we are in some kind of conflict, and I want to see our troops safe. Most of all I want to see them back home retraining and refitting in case we are faced with a real war. Let’s take a billion or two of the money we are spending treading deadly waters in Iraq and support Interpol and set up a true criminal intelligence exchange – that will get us some real progress.

Let’s take a few more billions and really do the rebuilding we said we were doing in the last eight years. It would be far cheaper and would be far more likely to end up with a peaceful result.

The “war” was over years ago – something else is going on now but it is not a war, in the historical sense, and it certainly isn’t a GWOT.

We have known this all along, haven’t we?

I am sorry that my definition and yours don’t match, but I believe mine to be far more realistic. [Ed.]

**“The description is not the described; I can describe the mountain, but the description is not the mountain, and if you are caught up in the description, as most people are, then you will never see the mountain”**

Jiddu Krishnamurti

## 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](http://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/](http://www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/)

### 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: The appeal was filed in December and now the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals has ordered us to an Assessment Conference to determine if the case should be included in the court’s Mediation Program. Our appeal goes on, even though we hope that the new administration will address the focus of our case directly and with vigor.

#### Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court  
9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss  
2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction  
2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing  
4/21/2008 Trial  
6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals  
12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed  
12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs  
12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

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

**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](mailto:rhandy@vuft.org) or the Vice Chair at [scook@vuft.org](mailto:scook@vuft.org). Watch for details at [www.vuft.org](http://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]**

**THIS LETTER WAS RECEIVED FROM A MEMBER AND IS PUBLISHED TO RAISE A CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION, NOT A POLITICAL ONE.**

**TO SUPPORT AND DEFEND: A MESSAGE TO US SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES**

Phillip Butler, Ph.D. - t r u t h o u t | Perspective - 23 January 2009

"I, Phillip Neal Butler, having been appointed a Midshipman in the United States Navy, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic, and to bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter, so help me God." (Oath of Office, July 1, 1957.)

Upon graduation from the United States Naval Academy in 1961, I had the honor of repeating this oath to be commissioned an ensign in the United States Navy. I served 20 years as an active duty commissioned officer. During that time, I became a naval aviator, flew combat in Vietnam, was downed over North Vietnam on April 20, 1965, and became a prisoner of war. I was repatriated on February 12, 1973, having served 2,855 days and nights as a POW - just short of eight years. The Vietnamese were not signatories to any international treaties on treatment of prisoners. They pronounced us "criminals" and freely used torture, harassment, malnutrition, isolation, lack of medical care, and other degradations during our captivity. I was tortured dozens of times during my captivity. But I often thought of our Constitution and the higher purpose we served - a purpose that helped me resist beyond what I thought I'd ever be capable of. Ironically, we POWs often reminded each other "that our country would never stoop to torture and the low level of treatment we were experiencing at the hands of our captors."

This Oath of Office, the same one sworn to by all officers, government officials, presidential cabinet members, senators and representatives of our nation, has had a powerful effect on me. It has given me an over-arching purpose in life: to serve the greatest and most influential legal document ever written. The only different oath is specified for the president of the United States in Constitution Article II, Section 1 (8.) It mandates that he or she will "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution."

So, what in the world has happened during the past eight years of the George W. Bush administration? The only defensible answer is that he and his subordinates have trampled our precious Constitution and the rule of law into the ground, while our elected members of Congress have stood idly and complicitly by. Our highest elected officials have utterly failed in their duty of greatest responsibility.

During these years, we have seen gross attempts to institutionalize torture. Our Constitution, Article VI, (2), commonly known as the "Supremacy" clause, clearly states that treaties made shall become "the supreme law of the land," thus elevating them to the level of constitutional law.

The Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, ratified in 1949, states in Article 17, "No physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind." This and numerous other ratified treaties clearly stipulate that "prisoners" is an inclusive term that is not limited to any nation's uniformed combatants.

Other gross Bush administration crimes, in addition to authorizing torture, of general and constitutional law include: 1) the use of "signing statements" to illegally refrain from complying with laws, 2) authorization of the illegal suspension of Habeas Corpus, 3) authorization of wire tapping and other intrusive methods to illegally spy on American citizens, 4) unilateral declaration and pre-emptive conduct of war in violation of US Constitution Article I, Section 8 (11).

These violations of our Constitution and rule of law have resulted in reducing our nation to the level of international pariah. Our beacon of liberty and justice no longer shines throughout the world. We no longer set the example for other nations to follow. We no longer stand on a firm foundation. We have lost our national, moral gyro.

I despair when I think of the personal sacrifices made by so many in US wars and conflicts since 1776. If our forefathers were here to see, they would surely be angry and disappointed. And I think they would issue a clarion call for redress and setting an example for the world by punishing those who are guilty. The only way our nation can right itself is for Congress to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes.

I, therefore, call on my elected representatives in the Senate and House of Representatives to bring criminal charges against President George Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, legal counsel William J. Haynes, former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, former legal counsel David Addington, and potentially other high officials and uniformed officers. There is no other option if you are to carry out your responsibilities. Citizens of the United States and of the world are watching you. Do your duty. Support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

## **RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS**

### **VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS PROMOTION ACT OF 2009 - BILL # H.R.294**

Status: - 01/08/2009: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Original Sponsor: - Steve Buyer (R-IN 4th) - Cosponsor Total: 12 (last sponsor added 01/28/2009) (1 Democrat, 11 Republicans)

[Part of the Noble Warrior Initiatives](#). Reinstates (under current law, terminated as of the end of FY1986) the veteran-owned small business loan program, under which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may provide loans to veteran-owned small businesses for:

- (1) financing plant construction, conversion, or expansion;
- (2) financing the acquisition of equipment, facilities, machinery, supplies, or materials; or
- (3) supplying working capital.

Makes eligible for such loans small business owners who are veterans and have a disability rated at 10% (under current law, 30%) or more, and includes all veterans (under current law, limited to Vietnam era veterans and veterans discharged or released due to a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty). Repeals the authority to make direct loans under the program (thereby allowing only loan guaranties). Increases from \$200,000 to \$500,000 the maximum loan guaranty amount. Authorizes the Secretary to subsidize a loan lender in order to reduce by up to 1/2% the interest rate paid by the veteran-owned small business. Includes under a loan preference members of the National Guard and reserves activated in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Limits performance bond requirements of veteran-owned small businesses with respect to the construction, alteration, or repair of any Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) public building or public work.

Treats a small business owned and controlled by veterans as a socially and economically disadvantaged small business for purposes of contracts awarded to the latter businesses under provisions of the Small Business Act.

### **SENATE UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTS UDALL AMENDMENT ON VETERANS**

Matthew Reichbach - 2/6/09

New Mexico Democrat Tom Udall introduced his first amendment as a U.S. senator, and it passed unanimously. The amendment, to the economic stimulus package, would expand tax incentives to employers hiring veterans who have served since September 2001.

"Those soldiers leaving the military after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, serving with great distinction and honor, are finding themselves back in a shrinking workforce," said Udall.

The bill would help out veterans who had collected unemployment benefits for at least four weeks in the past year.

The employer would be able to receive a tax credit equal to 25 percent of the first \$6,000 in wages if the veteran works between 120 hours and 400 hours. If it is over 400 hours, the employer is eligible to receive a tax credit equal to 40 percent of the first \$6,000 of wages paid. <More at: <http://newmexicoindependent.com/17672/senate-unanimously-adopts-udall-amendment-on-veterans>>

### **TRICARE FEE BILL NEEDS SUPPORT**

Reps. Chet Edwards (D-TX) and Walter Jones (R-NC) this week jointly reintroduced their Military Retirees' Health Care Protection Act (H.R. 816) which would bar the Defense Department from unilaterally increasing military TRICARE enrollment fees, copayments, and other fees. Under their legislation, only Congress would have that authority.

Please urge your [U.S. representative to sign on](#) as a cosponsor of this important legislation.

## **PUNISH THOSE WHO LIE US INTO WAR**

Daily News - February 09, 2009

U.S. Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., has introduced legislation (HR 473) that would impose fines or prison time on presidents or executive-branch officials who "knowingly and willfully" mislead Congress to gain authorization to use U.S. military forces.

Jones, who has repeatedly and publicly regretted his vote to support the war in Iraq, said that he doesn't know how far the Executive Accountability Act of 2009 will get when it comes to gaining passage. But even if all the bill gets is a springtime hearing in the House Judiciary Committee, Jones says, he thinks that is progress.

<More at: [www.military.com/news/article/rep-punish-those-who-lie-us-into-war.html?col=1186032310810](http://www.military.com/news/article/rep-punish-those-who-lie-us-into-war.html?col=1186032310810)>

## **RETREAT – NEWS**

### **WHY MILITARY RESPONSES TO TERROR ATTACKS ARE ALWAYS DOOMED TO FAIL**

Deepak Chopra and Ken Robinson – AlterNet - February 6, 2009

*This piece originally appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle.*

It's a sore temptation to hunt down Osama bin Laden -- one of the most consistent campaign promises made by President Obama -- and yet there are strong arguments against it. U.S. forces would have to penetrate deep into provincial Pakistan and perhaps even conduct house-to-house searches. Such incursions would destabilize Pakistan's already shaky regime and inflame the extremist element. More troops would have to be committed to the Afghanistan war zone, with no positive outcome in sight. And making a martyr of bin Laden would probably incite a crop of new terrorists as deadly as he and his cohorts.

But the most compelling reason is that any solely military solution to terrorism is doomed to fail. Right now, U.S. intelligence knows that the jihadist movement is endemic in the extremist sects of Islam. It exists from neighborhood to neighborhood, dinner table to dinner table, across a vast swath of the globe. Although terrorism is a tactic, what lies behind it is an idea, and once an idea seeps into people's brains, bombs and mortar attacks won't defeat it. That's why Israel's overwhelming military superiority to Hezbollah and Hamas hasn't defeated those movements and never will -- this is an enemy for whom death is a victory of the spirit. Our only hope against Islamic terrorism is to police it in the short run, and offer a more enticing idea in the long run. <More at: [www.alternet.org/story/125563/](http://www.alternet.org/story/125563/)>

### **GENERALS MOVE TO OBSTRUCT OBAMA'S IRAQ WITHDRAWAL ORDERS**

Gareth Porter – 5 February 2009

CENTCOM commander Gen. David Petraeus, supported by Defence Secretary Robert Gates, tried to convince President Barack Obama that he had to back down from his campaign pledge to withdraw all U.S. combat troops from Iraq within 18 months at an Oval Office meeting Jan. 21.

But Obama informed Gates, Petraeus and Joint Chiefs Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen that he wasn't convinced and that he wanted Gates and the military leaders to come back quickly with a detailed 16-month plan, according to two sources who have talked with participants in the meeting.

Obama's decision to override Petraeus's recommendation has not ended the conflict between the president and senior military officers over troop withdrawal, however. There are indications that Petraeus and his allies in the military and the Pentagon, including Gen. Ray Odierno, now the top commander in Iraq, have already begun to try to pressure Obama to change his withdrawal policy. A network of senior military officers is also reported to be preparing to support Petraeus and Odierno by mobilising public opinion against Obama's decision. <More at: [www.counterpunch.org/porter02022009.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/porter02022009.html)>

### **THREAT OF VIOLENCE LOOMS AGAIN OVER FALLUJAH**

Dahr Jamail - Inter Press Service - January 30th, 2009

FALLUJAH — The threat of violence hangs over Fallujah again as leaders of the Awakening Council fight for political power through the elections Jan. 31.

The Awakening Councils were set up and backed by the U.S. military to curb spiralling violence. According to the U.S. military, most of the members recruited were former resistance fighters. Over recent years, they grew to a strength of about 100,000 men, each paid 300 dollars a month.

U.S. aid to the Councils was cut off in October on the understanding that the members would be absorbed into Iraqi government forces. To date, less than a third have been given government jobs.

The Awakening Councils now control most of Al-Anbar province. This is the largest province, covering about a third of Iraq. Political power here is critical because the province borders Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. Anbar has a largely Sunni population of about two million, in an Iraqi population of about 25 million.

<More at: <http://dahrjamailliraq.com/threat-of-violence-looms-again-over-fallujah>>

### **PLANS EMERGE FOR NEW TROOP DEPLOYMENTS TO AFGHANISTAN**

Yochi J. Dreazen – Wall Street Journal - February 4, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Senior U.S. commanders are finalizing plans to send tens of thousands of reinforcements to Afghanistan's main opium-producing region and its porous border with Pakistan, moves that will form the core of President Barack Obama's emerging Afghan war strategy.

Mr. Obama is likely to formally approve additional deployments this week, and Pentagon officials hope the full complement of 20,000 to 30,000 new troops will be on the ground by the end of the summer, pushing the U.S. military presence to its highest level since the start of the war in 2001.

U.S. commanders said the moves are part of a push to beat back the resurgent Taliban and secure regions of Afghanistan that are beyond the reach of the weak central government in Kabul. Unlike Iraq, where violence has typically been concentrated in cities, the war in Afghanistan is being increasingly waged in isolated villages and towns.

<More at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123370741624945711.html>>

### **SECRET REPORT RECOMMENDS MILITARY SHIFT IN AFGHANISTAN**

Jim Miklaszewski, NBC News Chief Pentagon Correspondent, and Courtney Kube, NBC News Producer -February 04, 2009

The Pentagon is prepared to announce the deployment of 17,000 additional soldiers and Marines to Afghanistan as early as this week even as President Barack Obama is searching for his own strategy for the war. According to military officials during last week's meeting with Defense Secretary Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon's "tank," the president specifically asked, "What is the end game?" in the U.S. military's strategy for Afghanistan. When asked what the answer was, one military official told NBC News, "Frankly, we don't have one." But they're working on it.

Senior military officials confirm to NBC News that a secret report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to President Obama recommends a shift in the military mission in Afghanistan to concentrate solely on combating the Taliban and al-Qaida and leave the "hearts and minds" aspect of the war to other U.S. agencies and NATO.

<More at: <http://deepbackground.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2009/02/04/1780446.aspx>>

### **WASTE, FRAUD IN IRAQ BEING REPEATED IN AFGHANISTAN**

Richard Lardner - The Associated Press - February 2, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Waste and corruption that marred Iraq's reconstruction will be repeated in Afghanistan unless the U.S. transforms the unwieldy bureaucracy managing tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure projects, government watchdogs warned Monday.

The U.S. has devoted more than \$30 billion to rebuilding Afghanistan. Yet despite the hard lessons learned in Iraq, where the U.S. has spent nearly \$51 billion on reconstruction, the effort in Afghanistan is headed down the same path, the watchdogs told a new panel investigating wartime contracts.

"Before we go pouring more money in, we really need to know what we're trying to accomplish (in Afghanistan)," said Ginger Cruz, deputy special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction. "And at what point do you turn off the spigot so you're not pouring money into a black hole?" <More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/02/AR2009020200391.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/02/AR2009020200391.html)>

### **WHY A DEFENSE CONTRACTOR'S SEEMINGLY MUNDANE DECISION HAS IRAQI INTERPRETERS FEARING FOR THEIR LIVES**

Carol Burke – AlterNet - February 3, 2009

Local interpreters at U.S. bases throughout Iraq are threatening to resign if their American contractor, Global Linguistic Solutions insists on turning over their personal information to Iraqi authorities.

On Dec. 23, GLS informed local interpreters that the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), due to go into effect on Jan. 1, required them to withhold 20 percent of the pay of local interpreters for taxes and social security. They also insisted that the interpreters provide detailed personal information on themselves and their family members that would be turned over to the Ministry of Finance.

What may sound sensible on the face of it -- an emerging nation seeking to institute an income-tax system -- is not so simple. The Ministry of Finance is currently headed by Bayan Jabr, the former Minister of the Interior, whom many allege sanctioned the death squads that targeted Sunnis. <More at: [www.alternet.org/story/124801/](http://www.alternet.org/story/124801/)>

### **SECRETARY SHINSEKI ANNOUNCES CHOICE FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

January 30, 2009

WASHINGTON – Today, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki praised President Barack Obama's intent to nominate W. Scott Gould as next Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Gould is currently vice president for public sector strategy at IBM Global Business Services and a former intelligence officer in the naval reserve. He has public service experience at both the departments of Commerce and Treasury. <More at: [www.vawatchdog.org/09/vap09/vap013009-1.htm](http://www.vawatchdog.org/09/vap09/vap013009-1.htm)>

### **DUCKWORTH TAPPED FOR VA ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

February 3, 2009

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama has announced his intent to nominate L. Tammy Duckworth, director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, to be the Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). <More at: [www.vawatchdog.org/09/vap09/vap020309-1.htm](http://www.vawatchdog.org/09/vap09/vap020309-1.htm)>

### **GUANTANAMO JUDGE DEFIES OBAMA**

Carol J. Williams - January 30, 2009

The chief judge at the Guantanamo Bay war crimes court Thursday rejected President Obama's call to halt the prosecution of terrorism suspects, ruling that a delay in the case of a Saudi accused in the Cole attack would "not serve the interests of justice."

Army Col. James L. Pohl said the government's request to postpone until May the Feb. 9 arraignment of Abd al Rahim al Nashiri was "not reasonable."

Prosecutors and defense lawyers in the case already had agreed to Obama's request for a four-month suspension in the proceedings to review the military commissions process created under former President Bush.

Legal scholars and Pentagon officials said Pohl's ruling was not insubordination because Obama's proposal was a request, not an order. <More at: [www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/washingtondc/la-na-quantanamo-judge30-2009jan30.0.7575740.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/washingtondc/la-na-quantanamo-judge30-2009jan30.0.7575740.story)>

### **PENTAGON BOOSTS SPENDING ON PR**

Chris Tomlinson – 6 February 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) — As it fights two wars, the Pentagon is steadily and dramatically increasing the money it spends to win what it calls "the human terrain" of world public opinion. In the process, it is raising concerns of spreading propaganda at home in violation of federal law. An Associated Press investigation found that over the past five years, the money the military spends on winning hearts and minds at home and abroad has grown by 63 percent, to at least \$4.7 billion this year, according to Department of Defense budgets and other documents. That's almost as much as it spent on body armor for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2004 and 2006.

This year, the Pentagon will employ 27,000 people just for recruitment, advertising and public relations — almost as many as the total 30,000-person work force in the State Department.

<More at: [www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5qoNYO5JYwfyoPwhA3qpfKNEcstkgD965LRKO1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5qoNYO5JYwfyoPwhA3qpfKNEcstkgD965LRKO1)>

### **WE RAISED THIS ITEM IN THE LAST ISSUE ~ A PARTIAL RESOLUTION**

### **RETIREMENT PAY GIVEN TO NATIVE MILITIA**

Washington Times, January 29, 2009

Alaska's congressional delegation said the secretary of the Army has decided to use emergency funds to supplement retirement payments for veterans of a largely native militia that were reduced because of a technicality in a federal law. Army officials last week said a military analysis had misinterpreted a federal law qualifying time served in the unpaid guard as active federal service. The pay would have ended Feb. 1. The delegation said an emergency fund will be used for one-time payments for 26 veterans while Congress works to fix the law.

## TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
2/10	1100-1400	InfoMart, 1950 N Stemmons Fwy Dallas, TX 75207	Dallas Military/Veteran Career Fair		<a href="#">Register online</a>
2/17	1100-1400	Radisson Hotel Boston 200 Stuart St, Boston, MA	Boston Career Fair		<a href="#">Register online</a>
2/18	1100-1400	Holiday Inn Chicago- Mart Plaza 350 West Mart Center Dr., Chicago, IL	Chicago Career Fair		<a href="#">Register online</a>
2/19	1000-1600	<a href="#">Gaylord Resort &amp; Convention Center</a> 1501 Gaylord Trail. Grapevine, TX	Southwest Regional Career Event		<a href="#">Register online</a>
2/23	1100-1400	Phoenix Marriott 1101 North 44th St. Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix Career Fair		<a href="#">Register online</a>

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

## TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

### **IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN VA PATIENTS EXCEED 400,000**

Maya Schenwar, t r u t h o u t | Report - 29 January 2009

Amid talk of a drawdown of troops in Iraq, new statistics from the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) show that US casualties are still climbing quickly. Iraq and Afghanistan battlefield injuries and deaths number 81,361, up from 72,043 last January, according to data obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by Veterans for Common Sense (VCS). Veteran patients - including those who didn't seek care until their return home - shot up to 400,304 (from 263,909 in December 2007). <More at: [www.truthout.org/012909J](http://www.truthout.org/012909J)>

### **DEATH IN THE USA: THE ARMY'S FATAL NEGLECT**

Mark Benjamin and Michael de Yoanna

Returning U.S. combat soldiers are committing suicide and murder in alarming numbers. In a special series, Salon uncovers the habitual mistreatment behind the preventable deaths.

Feb. 9, 2009 | FORT CARSON, Colo. -- Preventable suicides. Avoidable drug overdoses. Murders that never should have happened. Four years after Salon exposed medical neglect at Walter Reed Army Medical Center that ultimately grew into a national scandal, serious problems with the Army's healthcare system persist and the situation, at least at some Army posts, continues to deteriorate. <More at: [www.salon.com/news/special/coming\\_home/2009/02/09/coming\\_home\\_intro/](http://www.salon.com/news/special/coming_home/2009/02/09/coming_home_intro/)>

This is the introduction to a weeklong series of stories called "Coming Home." Read the first story in the series [here](#).

*[Be prepared to be angry when you read about how a soldier's mother had to paint over his suicide note on the wall of his barracks so that his Company Commander would not charge him posthumously with defacing government property. What the hell is happening? Ed.]*

### **VA FACES SHORTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT COUNSELORS FOR VETERANS**

Alyssa Rosenberg - January 29, 2009

The Veterans Affairs Department needs to use more sophisticated workforce planning tools to ensure its Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program has staff with the skills to address the increasingly complicated needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, a [new report](#) from the Government Accountability Office concluded.

"Many [wounded service members] are surviving with multiple serious injuries and illnesses, including amputations, traumatic brain injury, and post-traumatic stress disorder," the GAO report said. "While some service members will be able to remain on active duty, others will need comprehensive services as they transition into civilian life and work." VA's Veterans Benefits Administration runs the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program.

Fifty-four percent of the 57 VR&E offices nationwide told GAO that they didn't have enough counselors to meet demand, and 40 percent said they needed more employment coordinators. Thirty percent of the offices reported that counselors' skills only moderately met the needs of the veterans they served, while 30 percent said the same skills gap existed with respect to their employment coordinators. <More at: [www.govexec.com/story\\_page.cfm?articleid=41906&dcn=todaysnews](http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=41906&dcn=todaysnews)>

## **BROKEN MILITARY MARRIAGES: ANOTHER CASUALTY OF WAR**

Stacy Bannerman, AlterNet - January 23, 2009

More than 13,000 military marriages ended last year, and mine came dangerously close to becoming one of them, but it wasn't because of some gays getting hitched. Military marriages are at increasingly high risk of failure, and combat is the cause.

Most of the boots on the ground in Iraq are worn by Marines, active duty Army, or Army National Guard. They have served the most and longest deployments, seen the most combat, and suffered the most injuries, both physical and psychological. In 2008, the active-duty Army and Marines also had a higher percentage of failed marriages than the Navy or Air Force, whose rates held steady or decreased slightly.

Divorce rates for women in the Army or Marines were nearly three times that of their male counterparts, which speaks volumes about the effect of war on women, as well as the gender roles, societal expectations, and resiliency of their husbands. The fact that the Veterans Administration has just a handful of gender-specific treatment programs for women, and there's been scant attention, research, and support for women veterans speaks for itself.

A study published in *Armed Forces & Society* revealed that male combat veterans were 62 percent more likely than civilian males to have at least one failed marriage. In 2006, Kansas State University professor Walter Schumm surveyed 337 soldiers at Fort Riley who had recently returned from Iraq. 6.1 percent said they would probably divorce, and 12.2 percent indicated that they would be divorcing. By comparison, two to four percent of civilian marriages end in divorce each year.

<More at: [www.alternet.org/story/122198/](http://www.alternet.org/story/122198/)>

## **WEIGHT OF COMBAT GEAR IS TAKING TOLL**

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer - February 1, 2009

### **The Loads Are Contributing to Injuries That Are Keeping Some Troops on the Sidelines**

Carrying heavy combat loads is taking a quiet but serious toll on troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, contributing to injuries that are sidelining them in growing numbers, according to senior military and defense officials.

Rising concern over the muscle and bone injuries -- as well as the hindrance caused by the cumbersome gear as troops maneuver in Afghanistan's mountains -- prompted Army and Marine Corps leaders and commanders to launch initiatives last month that will introduce lighter equipment for some U.S. troops.

As the military prepares to significantly increase the number of troops in Afghanistan -- including sending as many as 20,000 more Marines -- fielding a new, lighter vest and helmet is a top priority, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Conway said recently. "We are going to have to lighten our load," he said, after inspecting possible designs during a visit to the Quantico Marine base.

Army leaders and experts say the injuries -- linked to the stress of bearing heavy loads during repeated 12- or 15-month combat tours -- have increased the number of soldiers categorized as "non-deployable." Army personnel reported 257,000 acute orthopedic injuries in 2007, up from 247,000 the previous year.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/31/AR2009013101717.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/31/AR2009013101717.html)>

## **HUMVEE WEAKNESSES KNOWN IN '90S**

Feb. 4, 2009

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 (UPI) -- A newly released report concludes the Pentagon knew in the 1990s the Humvee did not have enough armor to protect its occupants against roadside bombs. The report from the inspector general obtained by a government watchdog group says Army and Marine Corps officials were urging the development of more heavily armored vehicles in the immediate aftermath of the first Gulf War and the U.S. foray into Somalia. USA Today said Wednesday officials described the lightly armored vehicle as a "deathtrap" even when retrofitted with a mine-resistant kit developed in the mid-1990s. <More at: [www.upi.com/Top\\_News/2009/02/04/Report\\_Humvee\\_weaknesses\\_known\\_in\\_90s/UPI-42411233760866/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2009/02/04/Report_Humvee_weaknesses_known_in_90s/UPI-42411233760866/)>

## **ARMY ORDERS RECALL OF BODY ARMOR**

The Associated Press - January 30, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of the Army Pete Geren has ordered the recall of more than 16,000 sets of body armor after an audit concluded that the bullet-blocking plates in the vests failed testing and might not provide soldiers with adequate protection.

The audit by the office of the Defense Department inspector general, not yet made public but obtained by The Associated Press, faults the Army for flawed testing procedures before awarding a contract for the armor.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/washington/30armor.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/washington/30armor.html)>

## **WE KEEP ASKING – HY SHOULD IT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY?**

### **VETERANS TURN TO ONLINE STRANGERS FOR FINANCIAL HELP**

Daniel Zwerdling – NPR Morning Edition - January 22, 2009 ·

When Robert Sprenger's Humvee blew up in Iraq, the Army specialist was burned black over large swatches of his body. After the Army transported him to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, Sprenger spent months lying in his bed, wrapped in gauze, almost like a mummy. When he was released, he moved back home with his mother to the farm town of Sleepy Eye, Minn., where they made a troubling discovery.

The government compensated him, but his mother says the money wasn't anywhere near enough to cover his family's expenses. So Sprenger and his family swallowed their pride, as a growing number of veterans have done, and went cyberbegging: They posted their story on a Web site and asked strangers to help.

"That was the most horrible thing," says Robert's mother, Vicky Sprenger. But she says they had no choice. "I wouldn't ever cut the Army down for any reason whatsoever," she says. "I just think ... it kind of stinks, you know, that we do have to struggle the way we do."

The Sprengers posted a profile on [www.USAtogether.org](http://www.USAtogether.org), one of a new breed of Web sites that help Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. <More at: [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99478227](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99478227)>

### **LITTLE CHANGE EXPECTED FROM DISABILITY BOARD**

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Feb 2, 2009

After more than a year of delays, the Defense Department has stood up a new review board meant to help service members who think they received an incorrect rating on their disability retirement claims.

"Service members who have been medically separated since September 11, 2001, will have the opportunity to have their disability ratings reviewed to ensure fairness and accuracy," the new regulation states.

But veterans' advocates say the new board misses the mark in certain important respects.

The Physical Disability Board of Review came about after media reports, including one by Military Times, showed that the services' ratings varied wildly, with Air Force officers consistently getting the highest disability ratings, and the lowest going to enlisted Marines and soldiers — troops bearing the brunt of combat injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A closer look at the numbers showed the Veterans Affairs Department often gave much higher ratings than the Defense Department for the same injuries or illnesses, even though both used the same ratings schedule.

The new board was mandated by Congress in 2007 to look at cases of troops separated after Sept. 11, 2001, to make sure their ratings are correct, but it did not begin accepting applications until just this month.

... Applications and information about the board can be found at [www.health.mil/Pages/Page.aspx?ID=19](http://www.health.mil/Pages/Page.aspx?ID=19).

<More at: [www.armytimes.com/news/2009/02/army\\_review\\_board\\_020209w/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/02/army_review_board_020209w/)>

### **URANIUM TESTS DUE ON BIG ISLE**

Associated Press - February 8, 2009

**Army hires contractor to monitor levels after years of denying its use**

HILO, Hawai'i — The Army plans to measure airborne uranium levels at three monitoring stations on the Big Island over the next 12 months. It has hired a contractor to do the testing for \$150,000.

The move comes after the Army in 2007 said it confirmed the presence of depleted uranium at Pohakuloa Training Area on the Big Island. The Army, after years of denials it used depleted uranium in the Islands, also said soldiers training in Hawai'i fired 714 spotting rounds containing depleted uranium in the 1960s.

Depleted uranium is a byproduct of radioactive enriched uranium and has been used by the U.S. military in bullets and other weapons designed to pierce armor. The Army and the state say the depleted uranium doesn't threaten public health. But some researchers suspect exposure to depleted uranium may have caused chronic fatigue and other symptoms in veterans of the first Gulf War, but there is no conclusive evidence it has. <More at: [www.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/20090208/NEWS08/902080356/1018](http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/20090208/NEWS08/902080356/1018)>

## TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

**OIF/OEF – HACK DATE MONDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2009**

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

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,139 DAYS)		OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,668 DAYS)	
KILLED US	4,243	KILLED US	647
WOUNDED US [1/31/09]	31,010	OTHER CASUALTIES US [1/31/2009]	2,686
OTHER US CASUALTIES [1/31/09]	≥35,841	KILLED COALITION	422
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [1/03/09]	172	WOUNDED US [1/31/09]	7,581
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,602
KILLED UK	178	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139	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 [1/03/09]	≥ 48,874		
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [1/09/09]	≥ 98,911- 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	\$595,557,325,744

*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 FEBRUARY 3, 2009**

This week the navy, marine corps, and coast guard announced a decrease, while the army and air force announced an increase. The net collective result is 269 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 94,231; Navy Reserve, 6,147; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 15,411; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,413; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 737. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 123,939, 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.defenseink.mil/news/Jan2009/d20090203ngr.pdf](http://www.defenseink.mil/news/Jan2009/d20090203ngr.pdf).

## **AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF**

Actor Mike Vogel, chair of this year's VA National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, is joining disabled veterans, cycling legends and supporters in the 2008 Road 2 Recovery fund-raising rides for cyclists along both coasts of the United States.

Held in partnership with the Fitness Challenge Foundation, the R2R will raise money to support Spinning® Recovery Labs and outdoor cycling programs at Military and VA locations around the U.S. to help injured veterans overcome obstacles they face. Cycling is an important part of the recovery and rehabilitation program for two reasons:

1. Cycling is an activity that almost all patients with mental and physical disabilities can participate.
2. Participation in the Road 2 Recovery Program helps speed up the recovery and rehabilitation process.

Find out more and contribute at: [www.road2recovery.us.com/](http://www.road2recovery.us.com/)

## ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

### VA/DOD RELEASE BENEFITS PLAN

Week of January 26, 2009

The Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs Joint Executive Council released a Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2009-2011 outlining its effort to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of benefits and services to servicemembers, military retirees and their families, and veterans through an enhanced DoD and VA partnership. The strategic plan comprises six parts, which are listed as goals for the partnership to achieve. The full plan is explained in a 50-page document available [for download through this link](#), and at the [DoD/VA Program Coordination Program Web page](#).

### IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING

#### VA GENERAL RATING FORMULA FOR MENTAL DISORDERS: 38 CFR Part 4 (at 4.130)

100% Total occupational and social impairment, due to such symptoms as: gross impairment in thought processes or communication; persistent delusions or hallucinations; grossly inappropriate behavior; persistent danger of hurting self or others; intermittent inability to perform activities of daily living (including maintenance of minimal personal hygiene); disorientation to time or place; memory loss for names of close relatives, own occupation, or own name

70% Occupational and social impairment, with deficiencies in most areas, such as work, school, family relations, judgment, thinking, or mood, due to such symptoms as: suicidal ideation; obsessional rituals which interfere with routine activities; speech intermittently illogical, obscure, or irrelevant; near-continuous panic or depression affecting the ability to function independently, appropriately and effectively; impaired impulse control (such as unprovoked irritability with periods of violence); spatial disorientation; neglect of personal appearance and hygiene; difficulty in adapting to stressful circumstances (including work or a work like setting); inability to establish and maintain effective relationships.

50% Occupational and social impairment with reduced reliability and productivity due to such symptoms as: flattened affect; circumstantial, circumlocutory, or stereotyped speech; panic attacks more than once a week; difficulty in understanding complex commands; impairment of short- and long-term memory (e.g., retention of only highly learned material, forgetting to complete tasks); impaired judgment; impaired abstract thinking; disturbances of motivation and mood; difficulty in establishing and maintaining effective work and social relationships.

30% Occupational and social impairment with occasional decrease in work efficiency and intermittent periods of inability to perform occupational tasks (although generally functioning satisfactorily, with routine behavior, self-care, and conversation normal), due to such symptoms as: depressed mood, anxiety, suspiciousness, panic attacks (weekly or less often), chronic sleep impairment, mild memory loss (such as forgetting names, directions, recent events)

10% Occupational and social impairment due to mild or transient symptoms which decrease work efficiency and ability to perform occupational tasks only during periods of significant stress, or; symptoms controlled by continuous medication.

0% A mental condition has been formally diagnosed, but symptoms are not severe enough either to interfere with occupational and social functioning or to require continuous medication.

## 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 [scCook@vuft](mailto:scCook@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