

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 13

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 FEBRUARY 2007

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

VOICES FROM OUR PAST

Something a little different this issue folks, but it is an exercise in historical reflection that is probably overdue.

Our organization is devoted to the individual soldier, serving or veteran, and we have been careful not to take a stand on this current war. I intend to honor the organization's position, but it is important that we talk about war in general and when and how we should let ourselves succumb to the urge to make it.

As veterans we have a special charge. George Catlett Marshall, General of the Armies and the military leader of all US Forces in World War II, taught “the soldier's ethic” - *“A hatred of war and an avoidance of politics”*. George Washington, one of the greatest of our nation's soldiers said, *“My first wish is to see this plague of mankind, war, banished from the earth.”* That is a good starting point.

Individuals can hate war yet serve. Nation's can abhor war yet fight. While we may all long for the day when we will be free of the curse of war – when wars will cease and peace will reign – we all can also grant that the human race has not progressed to the point where all wars will cease soon, despite our best hopes and intentions.

What have we traditionally said we believe about war? Following on the opening quotations, it might be instructive just after President's Day to examine what some of our Presidents, some who would have been President, and a few others have said on the subject. Some critics say that quoting is the weakest form of writing, yet sometimes our leaders and others say things that need repeating, about critical points that we may have forgotten.

In the past the American people have said in various venues and forms, and through various spokespersons:

1. We will not commit acts of aggression; we will only defend ourselves and our allies. [We have supposedly based our foreign policy largely on that tenet.]
2. We will not interfere in the internal business of other nations unless that business translates into a valid threat to us or to world peace [also part of our foreign policy].
3. We will defend our nation with everything that we have, but we will not maintain more force than we need.

4. We will share in the common sacrifice essential to our defense – historically a facet of our national character.
5. We will conduct ourselves so as to be a model for all peoples and nations of the blessings of democracy – we will demonstrate this by how we treat our own citizens and by how we treat others..
6. We want the same freedom for others that we demand for ourselves, but believe that they must find that freedom for themselves – we cannot force it on them.
7. We will only go to war if the people's representatives take us to war, and only as a last resort, and those representatives owe us the reasons why it is necessary.
8. Those who fight our battles deserve special care and attention as they fight and when they return.
9. We are always magnanimous when the war is done.

On each of these points, our forebears had some very important things to say. The next few pages may serve to help us recall those tenets so that we can use them as our guide. This is a little heavy on Jefferson, but he did write our Declaration – the foundation document of our republic. His purpose then guides us today, ... *“to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, ...”*

We will not commit acts of aggression.

“Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all.”

George Washington

“If there be one principle more deeply rooted than any other in the mind of every American it is that we should have nothing to do with conquest.”

Thomas Jefferson to William Short, 1791.

“I do not believe war the most certain means of enforcing principles. Those peaceable coercions which are in the power of every nation, if undertaken in concert and in time of peace, are more likely to produce the desired effect.”

Thomas Jefferson to Robert Livingston, 1801.

“Peace is our passion, and the wrongs might drive us from it. We prefer trying ever other just principles, right and safety, before we would recur to war.”

Thomas Jefferson to John Sinclair, 1803

"[America] goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom."

John Quincy Adams - July 4, 1821

"All of us have heard this term 'preventive war' since the earliest days of Hitler. I don't believe there is such a thing; and, frankly, I wouldn't even listen to anyone seriously that came in and talked about such a thing."

Dwight Eisenhower

"I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me is more revolting. I have long advocated its complete abolition, as its very destructiveness on both friend and foe has rendered it useless as a method of settling international disputes."

General of the Armies Douglas MacArthur

"The greatest honor history can bestow is that of peacemaker."

Richard M. Nixon

"War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children."

Jimmy Carter

We will not interfere in the internal business of other nations

"We wish not to meddle with the internal affairs of any country, nor with the general affairs of Europe. Peace with all nations, and the right which that gives us with respect to all nations, are our object."

Thomas Jefferson to C. W. F. Dumas, 1793

"The United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. We are only 6 percent of the world's population ... we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 percent of mankind."

John F. Kennedy University of Washington, 1961

"The wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of the diverse energies of free nations and free men."

John F. Kennedy

We will defend our nation with everything that we have

"To be prepared for War is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace"

George Washington

"Over grown military establishments are under any form of government inauspicious to liberty, and are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty."

George Washington

"I am ever unwilling that [peace] should be disturbed as long as the rights and interests of the nations can be preserved. But whensoever hostile aggressions on these require a resort to war, we must meet our duty and convince the world that we are just friends and brave enemies."

--Thomas Jefferson to Andrew Jackson

"No nation ever had an army large enough to guarantee it against attack in time of peace or insure it victory in time of war."

Calvin Coolidge

"It is part of the general pattern of misguided policy that our country is now geared to an arms economy which was bred in an artificially induced psychosis of war hysteria and nurtured upon an incessant propaganda of fear."

General of the Armies Douglas MacArthur, May 15, 1951

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

"This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

Dwight D. Eisenhower "The Chance for Peace" April 16, 1953

We will share in the common sacrifice

"It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a Free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it"

George Washington

"War requires every resource of taxation and credit."

Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1788.

"You must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing."

Andrew Jackson

"The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight."

Theodore Roosevelt

"The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life."

Theodore Roosevelt - (letter 01/10/1917)

We will be the model to all nations

"If the fires of freedom and civil liberties burn low in other lands, they must be made brighter in our own. If in other lands the press and books and literature of all kinds are censored, we must redouble our efforts here to keep them free. If in other lands the eternal truths of the past are threatened by intolerance, we must provide a safe place for their perception."

Franklin D. Roosevelt - Speech, 30 June 1938

"America is a shining city upon a hill whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere"

Ronald Reagan

"America's freedom is the example to which the world expires [sic]"

George Herbert Walker Bush

We will not force our ways on anyone

"We certainly cannot deny to other nations that principle whereon our government is founded, that every nation has a right to govern itself internally under what forms it pleases, and to change these forms at its own will; and externally to transact business with other nations through whatever organ it chooses, whether that be a King, Convention, Assembly, Committee, President, or whatever it be. The only thing essential is, the will of the nation."

Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Pinckney, 1792

"[We would be] guilty of great [error] in [our] conduct toward other nations [if we endeavored] to force liberty on [our] neighbors in [our] own form."

Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph, Jun 24, 1793

We will go to war as a last resort, and ONLY through the act of our representatives

"The constitution vests the power of declaring war in Congress; therefore no offensive expedition of importance can be undertaken until after they shall have deliberated upon the subject and authorized such a measure."

George Washington

"We have already given... one effectual check to the dog of war, by transferring the power of letting him loose from the Executive to the Legislative body, from those who are to spend to those who are to pay."

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 1789

"Congress [must] be called [if there] is a justifiable cause of war; and as the Executive cannot decide the question of war on the affirmative side, neither ought it to do so on the negative side by preventing the competent body from deliberating on the question."

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 1793

"War ... should only be declared by the authority of the people, whose toils and treasures are to support its burdens, instead of the government which is to reap its fruits."

James Madison (1751–1836)

"Allow the President to invade a neighboring nation, whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, and you allow him to do so, whenever he may choose to say he deems it necessary for such a purpose -- and you allow him to make war at pleasure. If today, he should choose to say he thinks it necessary to invade Canada, to prevent the British from invading us, how could you stop him? You may say to him, 'I see no probability of the British invading us' but he will say to you, 'Be silent; I see it, if you don't.'"

Abraham Lincoln

We will arm and care for our citizens in battle, and care for them when they return

"It is [the people's] sweat which is to earn all the expenses of the war, and their blood which is to flow in expiation of the causes of it."

Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, 1799.

"The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Abraham Lincoln - Address at Gettysburg 1863

"... to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

Abraham Lincoln - Second Inaugural Address, Mar. 4, 1865

"A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterward. More than that no man is entitled to; and less than that no man shall have."

-- Theodore Roosevelt July 4th, 1903

"The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten."

Calvin Coolidge

"For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Chuck him out, the brute!" But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot: An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please: An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool -- you bet that Tommy sees!"

Rudyard Kipling - Final refrain of "Tommy"

*"After every war
someone has to clean up
Things won't
straighten themselves up, after all.* *Someone has to push the rubble
to the side of the road,
so the corpse-filled wagons
can pass."*

From "The End and the Beginning" - Wislawa Szymborska

"We owe our troops the opportunity to serve in the best-planned, best-equipped, and best-led military force in the world, and we owe them the peace of mind that comes from knowing that they and their families will be taken care of if they sacrifice life, limb or the ability to sleep without war's nightmares. We owe them not just thanks and best wishes, but action, and action in our nation's capital."

John Kerry

We will be magnanimous to our foes

"[The] bill of rights [should provide] clearly and without the aid of sophisms for... the eternal and unremitting force of the habeas corpus laws."

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 1787.

"Is an enemy so execrable that, though in captivity, his wishes and comforts are to be disregarded and even crossed? I think not. It is for the benefit of mankind to mitigate the horrors of war as much as possible. The practice, therefore, of modern nations, of treating captive enemies with politeness and generosity, is not only delightful in contemplation, but really interesting to all the world, friends, foes and neutrals."

Thomas Jefferson to Patrick Henry, 1779

"Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?"

Abraham Lincoln

So we must ask ourselves, in any war, is this the war defined by our fathers? We must tell ourselves and the world the truth, because Dante Alighieri left out the 8th deadly sin – hypocrisy. Whether or not we can answer in the affirmative, we must give comfort to our citizens who have taken up arms for us. As Teddy Roosevelt enjoined us, we must share the sacrifice and not look for "...safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life."

So let's listen to the voices of the past, and let them guide us for the future, always remembering that the sin, if there is one, is ours, not theirs. [Ed.]

The Dead Statesman

*And now all my lies are proved untrue.
And I must face the men I slew.
What tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young."*

The Dead Common Soldier

*If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.*

Rudyard Kipling – "Epitaphs of the War (1914 – 18)"

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

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

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No letters this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

BILL TO INCREASE LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE AVAILABLE FOR SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS

WASHINGTON, D.C. February 16, 2007– U.S. Senator Akaka, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, introduced legislation yesterday that would increase the amount of supplemental life insurance available for totally disabled veterans. The Disabled Veterans Insurance Improvement Act of 2007 would increase the coverage available by \$20,000, making a total of \$50,000 of life insurance available to totally disabled veterans. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/07/scva07/scva021607-2.htm>

HAGEL, LAUTENBERG INTRODUCE BILL TO CAP MILITARY HEALTHCARE COSTS 02/16/2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. – United States Senators Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) introduced the Military Health Care Protection Act, a bill to place reasonable and affordable caps on enrollment fees, deductibles and pharmacy co-payments for more than an estimated six million active duty military personnel, National Guard, Reserves, retirees and their families. <More at: www.swnebr.net/newspaper/cgi-bin/articles/articlearchiver.pl?159711>

SENATOR DODD INTRODUCES MILITARY COMMISSIONS ACT FIX BILL 2/13/2007

The Dodd bill restores habeas corpus and due process at Guantanamo Bay and to other detainees held indefinitely by the federal government. Specifically, the bill would stop any president from deciding who is an enemy combatant and limit that designation to people actually in armed conflict with our country. It also gives back to detainees at Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere the Constitution's habeas corpus protection of having a court decide whether a person is being imprisoned unlawfully. <More at: www.aclu.org/safefree/detention/28347prs20070213.html>

MILITARY COMMISSIONS ACT HEADED FOR SUPREMES

William Fisher - Feb 23, 2007

Following an appeals court's divided decision upholding the constitutionality of the Military Commissions Act, opponents of the measure are racing the clock to file an appeal to the US Supreme Court and have it heard during the court's current term. A

spokesperson for the Center for Constitutional Rights, the New York-based legal advocacy group that brought the original suit, told IPS it expected the appeal to be filed within the next two weeks and heard in the spring.
<More at: www.yubanet.com/artman/publish/article_51739.shtml>

THE STATES ARE TRYING, BUT NOT EVERYTHING WORKS

IOWA GOVERNOR SIGNS VETERAN AID BILL

O. Kay Henderson - February 14, 2007, 3:54 PM

Governor Chet Culver has approved a bill which sets aside four-million more dollars for a state program that provides financial aid to Guard soldiers injured in Iraq or Afghanistan and another which provides home-buying assistance to active duty Iowa Guard troops returning to the state. <More at: www.radioiowa.com/gestalt/go.cfm?objectid=C2413DB2-F016-E27F-745423C703C5F683>

FEW FLORIDA VETERANS QUALIFY FOR TAX BREAK

Diane C. Lade - South Florida Sun-Sentinel - February 18, 2007

Florida voters might have thought they were showing patriotic gratitude last year when they approved an additional property tax break for elder veterans disabled in combat.

Too bad almost no South Florida seniors can qualify. The former soldiers and sailors who have been calling their county property appraisers this month are discovering one provision tucked into the tax exemption disqualifies most of them: They had to have been Florida residents at the time they enlisted.

<More at: www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/palmbeach/sf-pnhlptax17feb18.0.4075115.story>

PLAN LOWERS RESERVE RETIREMENT AGE

Atlanta Journal-Constitution - February 20, 2007

For the third time in as many years, Sen. Saxby Chambliss (D-Ga.) has introduced legislation that would lower the retirement age for National Guard and Reserve service members who serve extended active-duty tours.

<More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,125841,00.html>

RETREAT – NEWS

VETERANS FACE CONSECUTIVE BUDGET CUTS

Andrew Taylor - Associated Press Writer – February 12, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration plans to cut funding for veterans' health care two years from now _ even as badly wounded troops returning from Iraq could overwhelm the system. Bush is using the cuts, critics say, to help fulfill his pledge to balance the budget by 2012.

After an increase sought for next year, the Bush budget would turn current trends on their head. Even though the cost of providing medical care to veterans has been growing rapidly _ by more than 10 percent in many years _ White House budget documents assume consecutive cutbacks in 2009 and 2010 and a freeze thereafter.

<More at: www.comcast.net/news/politics/index.jsp?cat=POLITICS&fn=/2007/02/12/585125.html>

ARMY STRUGGLES TO SHORTEN GUARD TOURS

Associated Press - February 23, 2007

WASHINGTON - Army National Guard combat units that go to Iraq or Afghanistan through much of the next two years will be on active duty for longer than 12 months despite the Pentagon's pledge to try limiting deployments to a year, Army and Guard officials say. The effort to shorten tours of duty to a year - they're now roughly 18 months - was designed to ease the strain on troops and their families, in part by jamming more war preparation into the Soldiers' routine monthly training exercises at home.

However, Army and National Guard leaders told The Associated Press that efforts to transfer more training to the states so Soldiers can train at home won't be done in time to benefit the thousands of troops going to war this year and in 2008. That is because states don't have the equipment, soldiers or plans they need to do the extra training, officials said.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,126280,00.html>>

UNFORTUNATELY IT IS THE HOME TOUR THAT GOT SHORTENED

GUARD TO REDEPLOY TO IRAQ EARLY

United Press International - February 22, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon plans to deploy 14,000 National Guard troops back to Iraq in 2008, shortening the time between deployments, The New York Times reported. The schedule is intended to meet the demands of President George W. Bush's troop buildup in Iraq, Defense Department officials told the newspaper.

<More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,126123,00.html>

MILITARY MUST FILL IRAQ CIVILIAN JOBS - Rice, Pentagon at Odds Over Plan

Karen DeYoung - Washington Post Staff Writer - February 8, 2007; A18

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Congress yesterday that more than 40 percent of nearly 300 State Department positions to be added in Iraq as part of President Bush's new strategy will have to be filled by military personnel.

"Frankly, the agencies of the U.S. government cannot fill that many posts" as quickly as necessary, Rice said at a hearing of the House Foreign Relations Committee yesterday morning. "And so our agreement with the Department of Defense was that for a period of time ... we would actually use reservists to fill those positions."

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/07/AR2007020702315.html>

IRAQ TROOP BOOST ERODES READINESS, GENERAL SAYS

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer - February 16, 2007; A13

Outgoing Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker said yesterday that the increase of 17,500 Army combat troops in Iraq represents only the "tip of the iceberg" and will potentially require thousands of additional support troops and trainers, as well as equipment -- further eroding the Army's readiness to respond to other world contingencies. Although final decisions on deployments have not been made, Schoomaker said, U.S. commanders in Iraq have requested an additional 2,500 soldiers to serve as embedded trainers for Iraqi forces, and 5,000 to 6,000 additional soldiers could be needed to provide logistical and other support to the five Army combat brigades flowing into Baghdad.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/15/AR2007021501524.html>

FINDING OUR FIGHTERS

Drew Brown - McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON Fighting nearly four years in a two-front war has put unprecedented stress on the Army and the Marine Corps. In addition to raising questions about whether an all-volunteer force can be maintained over the long term, it also draws attention to how the sacrifice from American society is not being distributed equally.

<More at: www.kansascity.com/mld/kansascity/news/politics/16730729.htm>

CORPS REACHES OUT TO FORMER MARINES

Jim Garamone - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16, 2007 – The Marine Corps is reaching out to former Marines in its effort to grow the service, the Marine commandant said today. ... Part of the effort to grow the force is to contact noncommissioned officers who have separated from the service and offer them the option of coming back in. Conway is sending a letter to every Marine who has gotten out in the last four years. "It'll say that, 'You may have already served your nation, but the job's not done,'" he said.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=3091>

BEARING THE BURDEN OF IRAQ

Dan K. Thomasson February 9, 2007

Not long ago while perusing reports of the daily slaughter in Iraq, I noticed that one of those killed in action was a 48-year-old enlisted man with five children.

What, I asked myself, is a man of that age with those responsibilities doing in this fight? We didn't take those men in World War II. Then it occurred to me. He was either a member of the National Guard or the Reserve.

The recent casualty lists from Iraq reflect a military problem common to most wars but punctuated in this one by the apparent lack of professional troops, a reliance on citizen soldiers who signed up for the National Guard to serve their states and to be called up to federal duty in extraordinary times. Iraq seems to be one of those times as the U.S. military struggles to keep up with the manpower demands. <More at: www.capitolhillblue.com/wp/2007/02/09/2043>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
2/28	0900 - 1300	AMVETS, 1194 Jericho Rd. Aurora, IL	Job Fair	Ron Cook Vets Outreach of Illinois	630-844-3255
3/5		Algonquin, IL	Resource Fair	Kathy Chwedyk	866-338-4968
3/12	1100 - 1500	Hyatt Regency Chicago 151 East Wacker Drive, Chicago	Career Fair	Register	312.565.1234
3/22		Raleigh, NC	Resource Fair	Carson Dean	919-508-0718
3/27	1100 - 0500	Ft. Bragg Officers' Club Ft. Bragg, NC	Career Fair		910-907-2582

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

THE WALTER REED ISSUE IS SO BROAD THAT WE HAVE PRODUCED ONLY A CONDENSED LIST OF ASSOCIATED ARTICLES. PLEASE LOOK IN "ADD-ONS"

THOUSANDS OF ARMY HUMVEES LACK ARMOR UPGRADE – WHY?

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer - February 12, 2007; A01

The Army is working to fill a shortfall in Iraq of thousands of advanced Humvee armor kits designed to reduce U.S. troop deaths from roadside bombs -- including a rising threat from particularly lethal weapons linked to Iran and known as "explosively formed penetrators" (EFP) -- that are now inflicting 70 percent of the American casualties in the country, according to U.S. military and civilian officials. The additional protection is needed for thousands of U.S. reinforcement troops flowing into Baghdad, where these devastating weapons -- used primarily by Shiite fighters -- are particularly prevalent, the officials said.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/11/AR2007021101345.html>

\$1.9 BILLION RETIREE HEALTH FEE HIKE

Tom Philpott - February 16, 2007

An assumption in the Department of Defense's 2008 budget request that \$1.9 billion will be saved by raising TRICARE fees on military retirees next year "poisons the water" for the work of the Task Force on the Future of Military Healthcare, says a key lawmaker. The projected savings will reinforce a belief among retiree advocates that the task force is "stacked" and ready to meet DoD cost-cutting targets, said Rep. Vic Snyder (D-Ark.), the new chairman of the House armed services' subcommittee on military personnel. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,125465,00.html>

GETTING VETS THEIR BENEFITS BACK

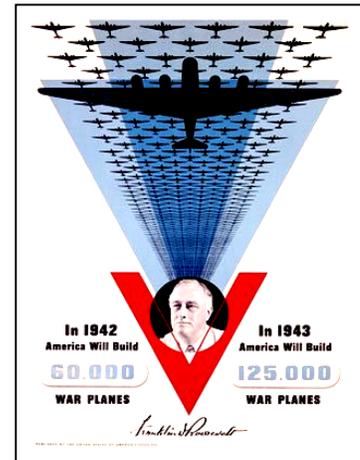
Melinda Tuhus February 8, 2007

Rick Scavetta lives with his wife and young daughter in a small town near New Haven, Conn. He joined the Army at 18, in part to earn money for college, and served in the regular Army and then the Reserve for a total of 15 years, reaching the rank of Sergeant 1st Class. In 2005, his Reserve unit was called up, and he served a year in Afghanistan.

Scavetta says he made a firm decision to leave the military last February, and planned to use his GI Bill benefits to pursue a master's degree in political science and to study Arabic at Southern Connecticut State University. But he was told in his exit briefing that if he deactivated—in military terms, "left drill status"—he would not be eligible.

"Imagine if someone told you, 'We promise you these benefits if you serve your country,' and you held up your end of the bargain for six years in the Reserve, a year or two deployed overseas," he says. "It's frustrating, especially since school can be a very grounding thing for a veteran returning from war."

<More at: www.inthesetimes.com/article/3016/getting_vets_their_benefits_back>



TROOPS RETURN TO PAINFUL WAIT FOR NEEDED HELP

Andrew Weaver and Ray McGovern - The Baltimore Sun - 04 February 2007

The California Nurses Association reported that in the first quarter of 2006, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs "treated 20,638 Iraq veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder, and they have a backlog of 400,000 cases." A returning soldier has to wait an average of 165 days for a VA decision on initial disability benefits, and an appeal can take up to three years.

<More at: www.truthout.org/docs_2006/020507M.shtml>

WHEN IN DOUBT – REORGANIZE!

DOD OVERHAULING DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

Jim Garamone - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23, 2007 – The Defense Department is putting in place reforms to its disability evaluation system and working to ensure the decisions of the Disability Advisory Council are fast and fair, Pentagon officials said today.

The system is used to evaluate servicemembers' disabilities and separate or retain them, as appropriate. Servicemembers who are separated with at least a 30 percent disability rating receive disability retirement pay, medical benefits and commissary privileges. With a rating below 30 percent, veterans receive severance pay, but no benefits. In the past, each service had its own disability evaluation system. Now DoD has put in place an overarching DoD-level framework with a single information system, Pentagon officials said. Each service manages its caseload under that framework.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=3151>

THE FORGOTTEN FAMILIES

Donna St. George - Washington Post Staff Writer - February 16, 2007; A01

Grandparents Raising Slain Soldiers' Children Are Denied A Government Benefit Intended to Sustain the Bereaved

Her daughter was killed by a bomb in Iraq. Eight months later, Susan Jaenke is both grief-stricken and strapped -- behind on her mortgage, backed up on her bills and shut out of the \$100,000 government death benefit that her daughter thought she had left her. The problem is that Jaenke is not a wife, not a husband, but instead grandmother to the 9-year-old her daughter left behind. "Grandparents," she said, "are forgotten in this."

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/15/AR2007021501828.html>

VETERAN'S AID AND ATTENDANCE PAYMENTS AN UNDER-USED BENEFIT

There is an under-used, special monthly pension benefit available to Georgia's wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans incapable of self support and in need of regular personal assistance.

"Many wartime veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the federally mandated limit for a basic VA pension may still be eligible for pension at the higher housebound or Aid and Attendance rate," points our Georgia Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Pete Wheeler. "Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of his or her potential eligibility."

The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to any wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. <More at: www.lincolnjournalonline.com/news/2007/0215/News/037.html>

THIS NEXT ONE IS LONG BUT REALLY WORTH THE CLICK-THROUGH

THE REAL COST OF WAR

Mark Boal – for Playboy – February 2007

Thousand of soldiers are plagued with serious battle-related mental problems. Why is the US ignoring them?

Looking back, Adam Koroll was not surprised when he heard the news that Jacob Burgoyne had stabbed a fellow soldier to death. Private Burgoyne predicted he would do something like that during their very first meeting at the Army hospital in Kuwait. Koroll, a medic, listened intently as Burgoyne, his patient, explained himself: After what he had seen and done in Iraq, he had little to lose and even less control over his reactions. He already felt, he said, like "a murderer in his heart." Why not kill again?

<More at: www.playboy.com/magazine/features/real-cost-of-war/index.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

THE SPAN OF WAR SMALL TOWNS ABSORB THE TOLL OF WAR

Morning Edition - February 20, 2007

Small towns across the country are struggling through losses because of the Iraq war.

"You don't see anyone who has money putting their children into the military," she said. "I'm all for our soldiers. Without them our country wouldn't be where we are today, but this war just doesn't seem right. Like the Vietnam one. It's not right."

A new report from the Associated Press shows that nearly half of all servicemen and women killed in Iraq came from communities with fewer than 25,000 people. One out of every five troops killed came from hometowns of less than 5,000. Many of these small communities are also poor. The report shows that nearly three quarters of those killed in Iraq came from towns where per capita income is below the national average. <More at: www.npr.org/templates/rundowns/rundown.php?prgId=3>

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF FEBRUARY 21, 2007

This week, the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease, while the Navy had an increase and the Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 1,133 fewer reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 66,912; Navy Reserve, 5,673; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,371; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,459; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 303. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 83,718, 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/Feb2007/d20070221ngr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,155
WOUNDED US	23,417
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 2/3]	≥32,544
KILLED UK	132
KILLED OTHER COALITION	124
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	750
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 2/5]	668
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 42,000
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 62,731 [LANCET-704,087]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET- 1,267,357]

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	370
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	5,994
KILLED COALITION	164
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

SHE DIDN'T MEET THE AIR FORCE'S HIGH MORAL STANDARDS ~ FOLLOW-UP AIR FORCE STRIPS NUDE POSER OF RANK

Elizabeth White - Associated Press - February 15, 2007

An Air Force drill sergeant who posed nude for Playboy magazine has been removed from active duty, she and the Air Force said Wednesday. Michelle Manhart, who appeared in a six-page spread in Playboy's February issue, said she got word Friday that she was removed from "extended active duty" and was also told that she was demoted from staff sergeant to senior airman. <More at: <http://www.capitolhillblue.com/wp/2007/02/15/2105>>

BUT SHE IS VERY WELCOME AT FT. STEWART ~ IT'S AN ARMY THING, I GUESS. ARMY BASE OPENS OWN NIGHTCLUB

Associated Press - February 15, 2007

FORT STEWART, Ga. - On weekends, Army Pfc. Keith Smith used to drive 45 miles to Savannah to find a nightclub with hip-hop music, single women and a bar open well past midnight.

The 24-year-old Soldier would often have too much fun to make it back to the barracks. "There's been times I went to Savannah and had to sleep in the car because I didn't want to get a DUI," the New Yorker said.

But now he can do his drinking, dancing and lookin' for love just blocks from his Fort Stewart billet, without even leaving the Army post.

Deciding too many Soldiers were dying behind the wheel after partying out of town, Fort Stewart commanders spent \$300,000 turning a defunct sports bar on the Army post into Rocky's, a bar and nightclub that aims to mimic the after-hours party scene of Savannah's hippest spots.

Knowing booze and dance tunes wouldn't be enough, commanders also eased security restrictions at the post's front gate to encourage civilians - namely women, who get free admission between 10 p.m. and midnight Fridays and Saturdays - to party at Rocky's, which opened in November. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,125382,00.html>>

STRENGTH OF THE COALITION

The coalition of the ever-less willing – apparently it all went down hill after Tonga Tonga pulled their 45 troops in December '04:

Peak	41 nations	315,783	US (79.2%)	Partners (20.8%)
Today	23 nations	167,766	US (91.5%)	Partners (8.5%)
By 1/08	16 nations	161,707	US (94.6%)	Partners (5.1%)

NOTICE

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

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

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

ADD-ON ~ THE SHAMEFUL WALTER REED STORY

- February 18, 2007 - **Dana Priest and Anne Hull** -Washington Post - [SOLDIERS FACE NEGLECT, FRUSTRATION AT ARMY'S TOP MEDICAL FACILITY](#)
Behind the door of Army Spec. Jeremy Duncan's room, part of the wall is torn and hangs in the air, weighted down with black mold.
- February 18, 2007 - Peter Spiegel - Times Staff Writer - [WALTER REED COULDN'T HANDLE WOUNDED FROM IRAQ, LEADER SAYS](#)
The head of the Army hospital responsible for most of the seriously injured war veterans has acknowledged that the staff responsible for tracking patients after they receive treatment was overwhelmed
- February 19, 2007 - **Dana Priest and Anne Hull** -Washington Post - [THE HOTEL AFTERMATH](#)
The guests of Mologne House have been blown up, shot, crushed and shaken...
- February 20, 2007 - **Dana Priest and Anne Hull** -Washington Post - [HOSPITAL INVESTIGATES FORMER AID CHIEF](#)
Last week, Walter Reed launched a criminal investigation of [Michael J.] Wagner after The Washington Post sought a response to his activities while he ran the Army's Medical Family Assistance Center,
- February 20, 2007 - **Dana Priest and Anne Hull** -Washington Post - [ARMY FIXING PATIENTS' HOUSING](#)
Walter Reed Army Medical Center began repairs yesterday on Building 18
- 20 February 2007 Matt Spetalnick – Reuters - [US ORDERS REVIEW INTO TREATMENT OF WOUNDED TROOPS](#)
The Bush administration ordered a review on Tuesday of the care of wounded U.S. troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan after reports that many face neglect in the Army's medical system.
- 20 February 2007 – Press Release - [DEPARTMENT TO REVIEW MILITARY MEDICAL REHABILITATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CARE](#)
The Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Navy have begun a review of the medical care provided at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center to those wounded in service to their country.
- February 21, 2007 - **Dana Priest and Anne Hull** -Washington Post - [SWIFT ACTION PROMISED AT WALTER REED](#)
The White House and congressional leaders called yesterday for swift investigation and repair of the problems plaguing outpatient care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center
- February 21, 2007 - Joseph L. Galloway - [WALTER REED HOSPITAL SCANDAL IS 'THE LAST STRAW'](#)
There's a great deal more to supporting our troops than sticking a \$2 yellow ribbon magnet made in China on your SUV.
- February 22, 2007- FUBAR - [A 'BREAKDOWN IN LEADERSHIP'](#)
A top army general blamed "a breakdown in leadership" for poor living conditions of wounded soldiers at the US Army's renowned Walter Reed Medical Center.
- February 23, 2007 - Andrew Gray -[CARE OF WOUNDED U.S. TROOPS "UNACCEPTABLE": GATES](#)
Defense Secretary Robert Gates on Friday branded the outpatient care of U.S. troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan "unacceptable" and promised officials would be held accountable for the failings.

Dana Priest and Ann Hull broke the story with their series in the Washington Post