

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 14 THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 MARCH 2007

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

LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

You have heard almost all there is to know about The Walter Reed story it, so I won't deal with that this issue. I was surprised to find that all of the Congresspersons who have been slashing the veterans' affairs budgets for the last six years are suddenly the champions of the wounded. Hmmm! Curious!

Congress, is unlikely to do anything but rubber stamp the President's wishes on the "surge", so I won't waste your time on that either. Strange, though, that when the press asked if it might take more support personnel too, they were told, "Oh no!", by both the White House and the Pentagon, and now there are new, large deployments of support personnel, all in addition to the 21,500.

Instead I want to talk a little bit about the other subject that these issues bring up, and that is the responsibility of leadership. I want to start with a quotation from an article written two years ago by Wade Sanders, combat veteran, former Deputy assistant Secretary of the Navy, and a member of our advisory board:

"...The ultimate responsibility for the success and failure of our troops around the world, their military leaders, or the civilian leaders you have appointed, lies with you, the man who calls himself "Commander in Chief." ...those of us who have been privileged to lead understand the harsh reality of the exceptional responsibility that goes with command. It is clear and simple. Military commanders are exceptionally and unremittingly responsible not only for their actions, but the actions of all who serve under their command. Period. This responsibility may be delegated, but that delegation does not relieve that commander of that responsibility. Further, if anything goes wrong, the commander is responsible and accountable for any error or consequence regardless of whether he or she was in any way cause of that error or consequence...."

Things get screwed up in war, all the time. It is the commander's responsibility to get them unscrewed. If he or she can't, it's a monumental and unforgivable failure. No second chance.

Starting with the decision to go to war, the commander has to think through all of the consequences of that decision, including the second most important, "When will it be over? What constitutes being done?" Without that understanding every soldier who dies will die for an unknown reason. "Should the war have stopped yesterday, just before the IED got my vehicle? Will the war stop tomorrow, thus saving the lives of my buddies? Was there a reason it lasted this one more day?" No leadership – no answer! No answer – then why must they die?

Our soldiers count on their leaders to teach them, lead them, and bring them home safely. They also count on them not to waste their lives on an undefined cause. And if the unit screws up or the plan goes awry, they count on their leaders to take the heat.

Not as has happened at Walter Reed, where they canned the General/Doctor who just took over and the Sergeant Major who has been trying unsuccessfully to fix many of the problems, and let everyone else skate.

Not as happened at Abu Ghraib where they demoted a Reserve Brigadier who wasn't allowed to command the prison, and punished a few enlisted "perps", and let everyone else in between the Commander-in-Chief and Pfc. Lynndie England off the hook.

Not as has happened where the troops get killed and no one has to answer for why they haven't had properly armored vehicles.

Not as has happened when there is rape and murder and no one even asks the question, "What did the leaders do to make this soldier believe that his act was not only acceptable, but laudable?"

Not in question after question when it has become obvious that crimes are happening because soldiers and their leaders are following policies put in place by leaders at levels yet above them.

What has happened?! How is the chain of command not guilty?

Maybe it is part of the change over the last thirty-five years. We have gone from having a citizens' army, with all of the community standards and mores in place that citizens demand, to having a hired army, and the standards are all set internally, either by the military leadership or by their employer, the Commander-in-Chief.

Are we complicit? How can we never forget My Lai yet barely notice Hadditha? How can we re-elect Congresspersons who support the troops by renaming post offices and government buildings after dead soldiers, but let a nation go to war without a definable cause? How can we display the ubiquitous yellow ribbons and not really give a damn?

How can we continue to fight a war, the end of which we cannot define? How could we let a war without end ever begin? There is nothing wrong with victory when the cause is just. What is the cause in this war, the real cause, not the cause *du jour*? What is victory if the soldier cannot possibly know when it is achieved? [Ed.]

"In war, then, let our great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

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

THIS ONE'S LATE BECAUSE I MISPLACED IT – MY BAD

Hi Everyone,

Today, February 1, Mammoth Mountain Disabled Sports brought six soldiers from the VA hospital in San Diego here to ski, snow mobile and go out on the dog sleds. Our 'sunrise' rotary met at the mountain with 'noon' rotary to honor them at lunch along with the disabled sports volunteers.

It was quite an emotional experience. The hardest part for me was watching one young man break down into tears as the director was naming all the soldiers who had been brought here. He was unable to stop crying. Kathy told me later, he was the most seriously injured, had suffered a high above-the-knee amputation and had much pain due to nerve involvement.

The news last week was about how Americans are not able to connect the numbers of dead and seriously wounded to actual people, and I can attest to that. Seeing that young man's tears on his 3-day holiday made me think of the challenges and many tears he will have in his rehabilitation along with his family in the future.

I came away thinking what we can do. Obviously the wounded vets need more support than a magnet on our vehicles. So please ask yourselves not what you can do, but find something to do. If you live near a Veteran's Hospital, call them and volunteer. If you aren't comfortable in hospitals, and live in a resort area, work with your service groups and bring soldiers to your area for R & R. Or just check with your local veteran's organizations, and see if you can't help a returning wounded soldier in your area with special activities, taking them and/or their families to whatever your area has for good times.

And check out the website www.operationgratitude.com It sends care packages to our troops in Iraq now.

Please send this to your email friends; let's get out and really support these men and women who are living the sacrifice; a magnet on the car expressing support of the troops just doesn't make it!

Carolyn

LETTER PUBLISHED IN THE LONG BEACH PRESS-TELEGRAM

In answer to the question: Are critics hurting troop morale?

People in a war zone usually don't care much about what promenading politicians, or the basically indifferent public, think. Troops concentrate on keeping their limbs in the same shape and proximity as when they arrived, helping their battle buddies do the same and doing their job. The people at home who are most important are their family, friends, battle buddies, unit and service members. When they're back home, before or between deployments that most people avoided altogether, they can see and think about those who see themselves as the real patriots. Anything else, any time else, is just a mind game not nearly as important as "body chess." What wears on your mind, eventually, might be pushing the same rock up the same hill and what you saw and did. Not what stay-at-homes think (From a veteran of America's longest war).

Horace Coleman - Long Beach

SMILE, DON'T STARE, AT WOUNDED SOLDIERS

June von Ruden - The [San Luis Obispo, CA] Tribune – 3 March, 2007

"Why don't you just take a picture? It will last longer."

I'm quite sure these words go through my daughter's head on her bad days when she is making her way to work at the Paramount lot in Hollywood, out for a social evening or visiting us in San Luis Obispo County and becomes aware of prolonged staring and questions from strangers, such as, "What happened to you?"

She has a brace on her leg and uses a cane due to treatment and the outcome of multiple brain tumors, which she bravely continues to fight. She, perhaps, is used to this public behavior. I am not, thus I have concern for the young men who will be leaving military hospitals and coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many will be missing an arm, a leg and maybe both. Many will fall at times because of their young ambition to act "normal" in spite of multiple prosthesis. Many will have burns that surgeries could not bring to cosmetic perfection. Many will be in wheelchairs, and yes, some will use canes. Many will have behavior that at times does not seem quite appropriate due to injuries we cannot see, such as losing their friends, seeing a child die or the stress of prolonged fear.

I can only feel anger and sadness for the victims on all sides.

We cannot turn back the clock, but what we can do is offer our support and compassion and look beyond the physical disabilities and appearance of the veterans and offer jobs, friendship, eye contact and a smile when we meet, and support to their families if we are able. A one-day greeting as a hometown hero isn't going to work for them. We have given them a legacy that will last for a long time. As a society, we should be preparing for their homecoming. Remember, "No soldier walks away from a war unwounded."

June von Ruden lives in Pismo Beach, CA

CUTTING SERVICES FOR HOMELESS HURTS VETERANS

by Carl Young, Fortuna, 3/1/2007

With one-third of adult homeless men and nearly one-quarter of all homeless adults having served in the armed forces (which includes recently discharged Iraq and Afghanistan veterans), why is our governor [Schwarzenegger] proposing to stop the funding of our county's homeless mentally ill and substance abuse outreach program?

These are some of our "front-line" warriors in addressing those who are suffering from co-occurring disorders, which underlines their current status of homelessness. Nearly 40 percent of our veterans living on our streets suffer from both psychiatric and substance abuse disorders. These public servants and community service volunteers provide outreach and information on "life line" programs for many folks. This program is getting these people off the streets and out of emergency rooms and jails, therefore saving us money.

The Department of Veterans Affairs roughly estimates that there is no nationwide homeless census taken, that 200,000 veterans may be homeless on any given night and that twice as many veterans experience homelessness during a year. Many other veterans are considered at risk because of poverty, lack of support from family and friends and precarious living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing. Ninety-seven percent of these veterans are male and the vast majority are single. About half of all those veterans suffer from mental illness and more than two-thirds suffer from alcohol- or drug-abuse problems.

Military personnel on multiple and extended tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan are being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder at rates that probably will match or exceed the rate among Vietnam veterans. The war in Iraq, with often-hidden enemies and explosives, has left many service members particularly vulnerable to combat stress and is driving the abuse of drugs and alcohol in Iraq and at home.

Our county's outreach folks continue to win the trust of many of our less-fortunate citizens and are succeeding in assisting them in going into substance abuse and mental health treatment programs. Perhaps it's time for a surge of "like-minded people" to assist in providing these types of services and requiring federal, state and local agencies to focus their collective efforts on treating all illnesses at the same time. Mental health professionals who treat both get a better result in addressing these types of illnesses.

Co-occurring disorders are no stranger to returning war veterans, and it certainly hasn't escaped many of our troops returning now. I would like to thank Assemblymember Patty Berg for her efforts to address the potential downfalls of the governor's purposed budget. This lifeline program should never be cut.

(Carl Young is with Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 781.)

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

WHITE HOUSE VOWS VETO OVER IRAQ PLAN

Associated Press - March 09, 2007

WASHINGTON - House Democratic leaders vowed Thursday to pass legislation setting a deadline of Sept. 1, 2008, for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq, a challenge to President Bush's war policy that drew a blunt veto threat in return.

"It would unnecessarily handcuff our generals on the ground, and it's safe to say it's a nonstarter for the president," said White House spokesman Dan Bartlett. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,127977,00.html>

"...AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM" [ISAIAH 11:6]

EIGHTH GRADERS CRAFT BILL TO HELP VETS

Charleston Gazette - March 01, 2007

Making "get well" cards turned into much more for a group of South Charleston Middle School eighth-graders. They read a story about a Parkersburg Marine wounded in Iraq, and it inspired them to help Purple Heart recipients get help with college expenses beyond what they would receive under the G.I. Bill. Working together, they came up with the genesis of a bill to do that, which is now working its way through the SC Legislature. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,127049,00.html>

JIM WEBB'S FLOOR SPEECH ON IRAN

Senator Jim Webb Introduces Bill Prohibiting Use of Funds for Military Operations in Iran

<More at: <http://webb.senate.gov/newsroom/record.cfm?id=270138&>>

BILL WOULD REFORM TREATMENT OF WOUNDED VETS

Rick Maze - The Army Times - 01 March 2007

In the wake of the continuing scandal over the housing and medical evaluation process for wounded service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, House and Senate Democrats have unveiled a sweeping bill promising comprehensive reforms of how combat veterans and their families are treated. Called the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act, the bill would mandate housing standards for the wounded, overhaul disability review boards, require one caseworker for every 20 recovering service members, extend job protections for service members to include family members who are at their side during recovery, demand that an ombudsman be available around the clock by phone and in any hospital with more than 100 patients, and create a new independent oversight board to monitor how recovering service members are treated.

<More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/03/TNSobamabill070301/>

I'M CONFUSED - I THOUGHT THAT THIS IS WHAT WE WERE FIGHTING FOR, ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY CANNOT COUNT ON PRO BONO REPRESENTATION VETERANS' GROUPS OBJECT TO CHANGE ON LAWYER FEES

Sean Lengell - THE WASHINGTON TIMES - March 6, 2007

Veterans' groups fear unscrupulous lawyers will prey on ex-military personnel seeking medical claims from the Department of Veterans Affairs when a Civil War-era law is replaced later this year. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and other groups are challenging the new law that allows lawyers to collect fees for representing injured veterans earlier in their appeal, undermining the long-standing practice of pro bono representation. <More at: <http://washingtontimes.com/national/20070305-113016-2820r.htm>>

NEW PUSH TO DROP 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL'

Andrew Miga - Associated Press Writer - February 28, 2007

WASHINGTON -- Foes of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays hope for better results in their efforts to repeal it in the new Democratic-run Congress. Rep. Martin Meehan, D-Mass., on Wednesday revived legislation aimed at forcing the military to eliminate the policy preventing homosexual service members from being open about their orientation. Meehan said he expects the House Armed Services panel to hold hearings on the issue.

<More at: www.newsday.com/news/politics/wire/sns-ap-dont-ask-dont-tell.0.7752177.print.story>

RETREAT - NEWS

PACE: U.S. MILITARY CAPABILITY ERODING

Lolita C. Baldor - Associated Press Writer - Feb 27

Strained by the demands of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is a significant risk that the U.S. military won't be able to quickly and fully respond to yet another crisis, according to a new report to Congress. The assessment, done by the nation's top military officer, Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, represents a worsening from a year ago, when that risk was rated as moderate. <More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070227/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/us_military_strains>

PRESSURES ON GUARD CONCERN GOVERNORS

Associated Press - February 26, 2007

WASHINGTON - Governors concerned about the demands the war in Iraq is placing on their National Guard forces met with a top Guard official Sunday and said they were closely monitoring deployment of their troops, worn-out equipment and how ready they would be for domestic emergencies. Governors also hoped to convince Congress to reverse a step taken last year in response to Hurricane Katrina that gave the president greater power to deploy troops for problems at home, a power previously reserved for the states' top leaders. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,126521,00.html>

PANEL SLAMS TREATMENT OF GUARD, RESERVES

Lolita C. Baldor - 02 March 2007

The National Guard and Reserves don't get enough money or equipment and are left out of important planning for national emergencies, an independent panel concluded Thursday, long after the Iraq war and Hurricane Katrina exposed serious stresses on the services. The report from the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves compounds earlier criticism of the Bush administration's response to the devastating hurricane that struck the Gulf Coast in August 2005. manpower demands. <More at: www.capitolhillblue.com/cm/content/view/21/2/>

GATES PROMISES FEWER, SHORTER, MORE PREDICTABLE GUARD DEPLOYMENTS

Fred W. Baker III - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27, 2007 – The Defense Department is committed to implementing changes in policy that will mean fewer, shorter and more predictable deployments for reserve-component troops, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told the National Guard's 54 adjutants general today. Speaking to the Adjutants General Association of the United States mid-winter conference, Gates said his goal is for Guard members to serve a one-year deployment no more often than every five years. This met with resounding applause by the adjutants general, whose state forces have been strained in the past five years supporting federal and state missions of historical proportions. <More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=3201>

LONG IRAQ TOURS CAN MAKE HOME A TRYING FRONT

Lizette Alvarez - February 23, 2007

In the nearly two years Cpl. John Callahan of the Army was away from home, his wife, he said, had two extramarital affairs. She failed to pay his credit card bills. And their two children were sent to live with her parents as their home life deteriorated. Then, in November, his machine gun malfunctioned, sending a bullet through his groin and ravaging his left leg. When his wife reached him by phone after his first operation in Germany, Corporal Callahan could barely hear her. Her boyfriend was shouting too loudly in the background. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/02/23/us/23military.html>

NCOS CUT SCHOOL SHORT TO SUPPORT IRAQ SURGE

Jim Tice - Staff writer - Feb 28, 2007

FORT BLISS, Texas — About 100 senior NCOs will be released early from the nine-month resident Sergeants Major Course to support the troop surge in Iraq. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/02/atNCOschool070227/>

ARMY UNITS FORGO DESERT TRAINING

Associated Press - February 27, 2007

WASHINGTON - Rushed by President Bush's decision to reinforce Baghdad with thousands more U.S. troops, two Army combat brigades are skipping their usual session at the Army's premier training range in California and instead are making final preparations at their home bases. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,126682,00.html>

THERE'S NO ONE LEFT IN DETROIT TO BUILD THEM

ISRAEL TO SUPPLY VEHICLES FOR IRAQ WAR

Military.com | March 05, 2007

JERUSALEM - An Israeli state-owned corporation has won a contract to supply the U.S. Marine Corps with state-of-the-art armored vehicles for use in Iraq, the latest in a long line of Israeli defense sales for use in the war. Amit Tzimer, spokesman for weapons maker Rafael, said Sunday that, in partnership with U.S. manufacturer PVI, Rafael has signed up to deliver 60 of its new [Golan](#) vehicles at a total price of \$37 million. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,127503,00.html>

BUT THERE ARE IN OSHKOSH AND CANADA – BUT WHY NOT 40,000 OF THEM? PENTAGON ORDERS MINE-RESISTANT TRUCKS

Associated Press | March 08, 2007

OSHKOSH, Wis. - A new combat truck with a V-shaped bottom designed to withstand blasts from roadside bombs is performing with such success in Iraq that the U.S. military is pressing a Wisconsin company and others to churn out hundreds more in the coming months. About 200 prototypes of the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles have been deployed in Iraq since 2004,

said Capt. Jeff Landis, spokesman for the Marine Corps Systems Command in Quantico, Va. No Marine has died while in one of the trucks, Landis said.

"This is the best vehicle available for safety and survivability," he said. "The MRAP vehicle supplies troops with the greatest protection we've had."

Within the past month, the Pentagon awarded about \$210 million in contracts to Force Protections, Oshkosh Truck Corp., and three other companies in the U.S. and Canada to manufacture a total of nearly 400 more vehicles. Landis said the military hopes to receive them by the end of the year. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,127822,00.html>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
3/12	1100 - 1500	Hyatt Regency Chicago 151 East Wacker Drive, Chicago	Career Fair	Register	312.565.1234
3/16 - 18		Fayetteville NC	4 th Anniversary of the Occupation	Veterans for Peace	314-725-6005
3/19 - 25		Fayetteville to Pascagoula MS	Veterans Convoy to Pascagoula	Veterans for Peace	314-725-6005
3/22		Raleigh, NC	Homeless Vets Resource Fair	Carson Dean	919-508-0718
3/25-?		Pascagoula MS	Rebuild the Gulf	Veterans for Peace	314-725-6005
3/27	1100 - 0500	Ft. Bragg Officers' Club Ft. Bragg, NC	Career Fair		910-907-2582
3/31		Los Angeles	Homeless Vets Resource Fair	Doris Nickelson	310-518-1855

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

AMERICAN LEGION COMMANDER: 'I BLAME BUSH AND CONGRESS' FOR VETERANS CUTS

President Bush spoke to the American Legion today, claiming that "support of our veterans has been a high priority in my administration," and that one of his priorities is "making sure that our veterans have got good, decent, quality healthcare."

President Bush should save his rhetoric. In an interview with National Public Radio, even American Legion National Commander Paul Morin, a regular political ally of the White House, pointed out that Bush has consistently skimped on veterans funding. "We are not pleased with the budget for the military and for the VA hospitals for our veterans," Morin said. "I blame the President and Congress for insufficient funding of the VA health care system." <More at: <http://thinkprogress.org/2007/03/06/morin-bush-va/>>

WHEN DUTY CALLS A FATHER

Tony Perry - Times Staff Writer - February 26, 2007

SAN DIEGO — In Washington and in much of the media, the dominant discussion is whether the U.S. should send more troops to Iraq or bring home the troops already there and end U.S. involvement. Seven-year-old Darius Badua knows none of this. But he does know that his father, Marine Staff Sgt. Roderick "Ben" Badua, left Sunday for his second deployment to Iraq.

"He's a nice man," Darius said quietly as his father and 125-plus other Marines left from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar here. "I just wish he would come back alive."

Even as the political debate ... centers on the issue of troop levels in Iraq, military families here and elsewhere are in a continuous cycle of deployments, homecomings and departures. For most of the Marines, it's called the seven-and-seven plan: seven months in Iraq, seven at home and seven more in Iraq. As members of a helicopter squadron, many of the Marines who left Sunday will be gone for 12 months. <More at: www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-marines26feb26,1,4723229.story>

PANEL: MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM NEEDS HELP

Seth Borenstein - Feb 25

WASHINGTON (AP) - Many Iraq war soldiers, veterans and their families are not getting needed psychological help because a stressed military's mental health system is overwhelmed and understaffed, a task force of psychologists found. The panel's [67-page report](#) calls for the immediate strengthening of the military mental health system. It cites a 40 percent vacancy rate in active duty psychologists in the Army and Navy, resources diverted from family counselors and a weak transition for veterans leaving the military. The findings were released Sunday by the American Psychological Association.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/25/AR2007022500974.html>

CRITICS: ARMY HOLDING DOWN DISABILITY RATINGS

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Feb 26, 2007

The Army is deliberately shortchanging troops on their disability retirement ratings to hold down costs, according to veterans' advocates, lawyers and services members, and the Inspector General has identified 87 problems in the system that need fixing. [Read about the IG report](#)

"These people are being systematically underrated," said Ron Smith, deputy general counsel for Disabled American Veterans. "It's a bureaucratic game to preserve the budget, and it's having an adverse affect on service members."

<More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/02/TNSmedholdmoney070222/>

VETERANS FACE VAST INEQUITIES OVER DISABILITY

Ian Urbina and Ron Nixon - March 9, 2007

WASHINGTON, March 8 — Staff Sgt. Gregory L. Wilson, from the Texas National Guard, waited nearly two years for his veterans' disability check after he was injured in Iraq. If he had been an active-duty soldier, he would have gotten more help in cutting through the red tape.

Allen Curry of Chicago has fallen behind on his mortgage while waiting nearly two years for his disability check. If he had filed his claim in a state deploying fewer troops than Illinois, Mr. Curry, who was injured by a bomb blast when he was a staff sergeant in the Army Reserve in Iraq, would most likely have been paid sooner and gotten more in benefits.

Veterans face serious inequities in compensation for disabilities depending on where they live and whether they were on active duty or were members of the National Guard or the Reserve, an analysis by The New York Times has found. Those factors determine whether some soldiers wait nearly twice as long to get benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs as others, and collect less money, according to agency figures. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/03/09/washington/09veterans.html>

HUNDREDS OF IRAQ VETS ARE HOMELESS

Sarah Childress – Newsweek - Feb 24, 2007

Hundreds of U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are ending up homeless. How could this happen?

Feb. 24, 2007 - Kevin Felty came back from Iraq in 2003 with nowhere to stay, and not enough money to rent an apartment. He and his wife of four years moved in with his sister in Florida, but the couple quickly overstayed their welcome. Jobless and wrestling with what he later learned was posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Felty suddenly found himself scrambling to find a place for himself and his wife, who was six-months pregnant. They found their way to a shelter for homeless veterans, which supported his wife during her pregnancy and helped Felty get counseling and find a job.

<More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17315490/site/newsweek/from/RSS/>

AN UNFORESEEN COST OF WAR

Thousands of Veterans Are Returning From War With Traumatic Brain Injuries

Feb. 28, 2007 — - Jarod Behee was shot in the head in Iraq. He survived, but is still suffering from the aftereffects of a traumatic brain injury, or TBI. The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that Behee is one of several thousand veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with a mental disorder or brain injury, but veterans advocacy groups place that number even higher.

"What you have are two sets of books," said Paul Sullivan, a spokesman for Veterans for America. "The Department Of Defense saying that there's 23,000 wounded from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the Department Of Veterans Affairs is actually treating 205,000 veterans from these two wars," Sullivan said.

The VA contends that the 205,000 is for treating all veterans, including the standard care that returning soldiers are allowed to receive for life. However, by its estimates, 73,000 soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered from some kind of brain injury or mental disorder. It is an unforeseen cost of war that has overburdened the VA system, according to recent reports in Newsweek and congressional hearings on the subject. Veterans seeking treatment face red tape, weeks of waiting, and often to have to pay for outside experts in order to have their disability claims processed.

<More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=2910973&page=1>>

BUSINESS AS USUAL: FORGETTING THE VET

Ann McFeatters - March 2, 2007

WASHINGTON - Last week we learned that many of our disabled Iraq war veterans are being shafted by the military and medical bureaucracy. Now we find out that some reservists and members of the National Guard are returning home to find their jobs gone.

Although there is a 1994 law - the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act - requiring reservists to be fairly and quickly rehired after deployment, it is often not enforced. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Department of Defense has mobilized more than 500,000 reservists and Guard members. Sometimes they make up nearly half of the U.S. ground troops fighting abroad. In 2005, one out of seven was thought to return jobless.

Under the 1994 law, there are about 12,400 formal complaints filed each year alleging that employers refused to give returning reservists and Guard members their old jobs. The Government Accountability Office said Congress hears about 2,400 of those complaints. <More at: <http://news.bostonherald.com/editorial/view.bg?articleid=185915&srvc=home>>

WIDOWS FIGHT SBP-DIC OFFSET

Tom Philpott - March 02, 2007

Widows Left Out of 'Concurrent Receipt' Reforms

Army Sgt. Maj. Keith Witt had been a soldier 29 years when illness forced him to retire in 1993. The Department of Veterans Affairs rated him fully disabled with multiple sclerosis and later with cancer presumed to have been caused by exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange in Vietnam. Witt had signed up for the military Survivor Benefit Plan for his wife Kay. His retired pay was reduced by 6.5 percent a month for SBP premiums.

By 1997, Keith's conditions had worsened to a point that Kay retired early from her federal civilian career to be his fulltime caregiver. She estimates the decision reduced her pension by about half.

When Keith died in 2001, Kay became eligible for an SBP annuity equal to 55 percent of Keith's retired pay. Because Keith had died of service-connected illnesses, she also was eligible for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Here, however, is the catch. To accept DIC, which pays a basic benefit now of \$1067 a month, the law requires an equal cut in SBP. Premiums paid on the portion of SBP that disappears are returned to the widow.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,127017,00.html>

RED TAPE ENTANGLES VETS' HEALTH CARE

Atlanta Journal-Constitution - March 07, 2007

Two days a week, Mark Sikes wakes before dawn to catch a van that will take him and his motorized wheelchair 53 miles from his home in Bogart to the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Decatur. On most visits, Sikes, 47, attends therapy sessions designed to help him learn to live without the use of his legs. The former Army specialist was paralyzed in 2005 by a ruptured spinal disc, which he believes is the result of a beating at the hands of disgruntled GIs while he was serving as a member of the military police in South Korea 25 years ago.

But one day each month, Sikes says, he spends hours shuttling between departments to find someone who will authorize the medication he needs for the pain in his back and legs. His battles with what he describes as a bureaucratic maze at the hospital leave him frustrated and angry. <More at: www.ajc.com/metro/content/printedition/2007/03/07/natatlantava0307a.html>

IF THIS NEXT ONE DOESN'T MAKE YOU MAD, THEN YOU AREN'T BREATHING THE PRIVATE WAR OF WOMEN SOLDIERS

Helen Benedict for Salon

Mar. 07, 2007 | As thousands of burned-out soldiers prepare to return to Iraq to fill President Bush's unwelcome call for at least 20,000 more troops, I can't help wondering what the women among those troops will have to face. And I don't mean only the hardships of war, the killing of civilians, the bombs and mortars, the heat and sleeplessness and fear.

I mean from their own comrades -- the men.

I have talked to more than 20 female veterans of the Iraq war in the past few months, interviewing them for up to 10 hours each for a book I am writing on the topic, and every one of them said the danger of rape by other soldiers is so widely recognized in Iraq that their officers routinely told them not to go to the latrines or showers without another woman for protection.

<More at: www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/03/07/women_in_military/>

ARMY MADE VIDEO WARNING ABOUT DANGERS OF DEPLETED URANIUM BUT NEVER SHOWED IT TO TROOPS

David Edwards - February 6, 2007

A special investigation on the effects of depleted uranium reveals the Army made a tape warning of the effects of depleted uranium which was never shown to troops despite the fact the Pentagon knew the agent to be potentially deadly, CNN reports Tuesday. <More and CNN video at: http://www.rawstory.com/news/2007/CNN_Agent_Orange_tame_compared_to_0206.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF MARCH 7, 2007

This week, the Navy and Marine Corps announced an increase, while the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard had a decrease. The net collective result is 794 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 65,057; Navy Reserve, 6,024; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,140; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,535; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 296. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 82,052, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2007/d20070307ngr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 9 MARCH 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,190
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 2/3]	23,417
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 2/3]	≥32,544
KILLED UK	134
KILLED OTHER COALITION	124
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	768
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 2/5]	668
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 44,431
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 64,052 [LANCET-720,461]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET- 1,296,830]

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	371
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	5,994
KILLED COALITION	170
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	669
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

VETERAN WANTS FORGOTTEN WAR' REMEMBERED

Stella Davis - Carlsbad (NM) Current-Argus - 03/06/2007

CARLSBAD — As the country rang in the New Year in 1950 it had been at peace for five years. But the winds of war were brewing again. By summer of that year, the country was once again at war. ... The Korean War, often referred to as the "forgotten war," was wedged between America's biggest war, World War II and Vietnam, the country's longest war. As a result, the Korean War and the soldiers who fought in that war have been overlooked.

Vietnam Veteran and U.S. Navy Retired Capt. Joe Epstein of Carlsbad wants to right that wrong in Carlsbad, as well as save a piece of history. He is looking for help from Korean War Veterans or the families of deceased veteran from Eddy County in terms of providing memorabilia from the Korean War and the names of those from Eddy County who served in that war and the Vietnam War. <More at: http://www.currentargus.com/ci_5370235>

Contact : Joseph Epstein, (505) 885-5324, 1312 W Riverside Dr, Carlsbad, NM 88220

THE ADMINISTRATION ON SACRIFICE

BUSH: Americans are sacrificing. I mean, we are. You know, we pay a lot of taxes. America sacrificed when they, you know, when the economy went into the tank. Americans sacrificed when, you know, air travel was disrupted. American taxpayers have paid a lot to help this nation recover. I think Americans have sacrificed. *Response to Brian Williams, on the ground in Louisiana*

STALE GLORY

Bob Koehler - February 21, 2007

"I thought about what death is, what a loss is. A sharp pain that lessens with time, but can never quite heal over. A scar." - Maya Lin, speaking of her initial vision of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

The most frequently visited and heart-tearing monument in Washington D.C. is nearing its 25th birthday, its place at the core of American life growing stronger with each passing year. This fact belies the early critics, who called it communist- (or Jane Fonda)-inspired, a black gash of shame, a public urinal, and howled in outrage that it was designed by . . . well, an Asian-American woman (but of course the term many people used was left over from the war, and much uglier).

More importantly, however, the Wall, which was meant to heal a national wound, not glorify a military adventure, signaled - as the critics instinctively understood - a new public attitude toward war, or perhaps more accurately, a public manifestation, at long last, of an ancient yearning for peace.

What the critics (living in a two-dimensional, us-versus-them world) failed utterly to grasp, however - and which has special bearing today as Democrats and Republicans alike grope for policy coherence that extricates us from the Bush administration's disastrous war to promote terror - is that the Wall is non-ideological, or rather transcends ideology. It's simply two sunken triangular wedges of black granite and 58,195 names.

These names are not symbols. They're not abstractions. As Robert Frost famously observed, "Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak." Accordingly, the names are not cheapened with any sentiment, any "glorification," whatsoever. The result is something extraordinary.

"But it is the wall (rather than a nearby sculpture of three soldiers) that vets approach as if it were a force field," Kurt Andersen wrote in Time magazine more than 20 years ago. "It is at the wall that families of the dead cry and leave flowers and mementos and messages, much as Jews leave notes for God in the cracks of Jerusalem's Western Wall. . . . The visitors' processions do seem to have a ritual, even liturgical quality. Going slowly down toward the vertex, looking at the names, they chat less and less, then fall silent where the names of the first men killed (July 1959) and the last (May 1975) appear. The talk begins again, softly, as they follow the path up out of the little valley of the shadow of death."

You can't stroll casually along these 500 feet of names, nor, it seems to me, can you even hold onto your prior thoughts. The chiseled names, line after line, column after column, panel after panel, seem to whisper themselves until, at the 10-foot-high juncture of the two wedges, the whispers are as deafening as thunder. This is sheer phenomenon, as non-ideological an experience as standing under a waterfall.

"It was while I was at the site that I designed it. I just sort of visualized it. It just popped into my head. Some people were playing Frisbee. It was a beautiful park. I didn't want to destroy a living park," Lin, who at the time was a 21-year-old architecture student at Yale, said in a Washington Post interview. ". . . I just imagined opening up the earth."

Her design was one of 1,421 submitted in the spring of 1981, in a blind competition, to a panel of architects and sculptors. She later said she's certain she wouldn't have won if her name had been attached to the design.

I guess not everything government-associated is a done deal. If it had been, the future could never have opened out of the earth behind the Capitol, and we'd be stuck with one more hollow monument to war, to be commandeered as needed to justify the next one.

George Bush, for instance, had no trouble hitting that tin note on the recent celebration of the first George W's birthday: "George Washington's long struggle for freedom has also inspired generations of Americans to stand for freedom in their own time," he informed us. "Today, we're fighting a new war to defend our liberty and our people and our way of life."

Yeah, sure. The voice drones on, the listener's soul deadens, the engines of war rev again. Stale glory requires fresh blood. But I'd be surprised if the next war were announced in the shadow of the Wall.

http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_bob_koeh_070221_stale_glory.htm

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 ~ SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OUR WARS

STATISTICAL SUMMARY - AMERICA'S MAJOR WARS

I. The Military Participation Ratio [Percentage of people under arms]

Conflict	Population (1,000,000s)	Enrolled (1,000s)	Ratio
Revolution (1775-1783)	3.5	200.0	5.7%
War of 1812(1812-1815)	7.6	286.0	3.8%
Mexican(1846-1848)	21.1	78.7	0.4%
Civil War: Combined (1861-1865)	34.3	3,867.5	11.1%
<i>Union</i>	26.2	2,803.3	10.7%
<i>Confederate</i>	8.1	1,064.2	13.1%
Sp.-American (1898)	74.6	306.8	0.4%
World War I 1917-1918)	102.8	4,743.8	4.6%
World War II (1941-1945)	133.5	16,353.7	12.2%
Korean (1950-1953)	151.7	5,764.1	3.8%
Vietnam (1964-1972)	204.9	8,744.0	4.3%
Gulf (1990-1991)	260.0	2,750.0	1.1%
Iraq (2003 - ?)	300.0	2,369.3	0.8%

II. Casualties

Conflict	Enrolled	<-----Casualties----->				Total	<-----Percentages----->				Duration	
		<-----Deaths----->		Wounded	Ratio		KIA	Dead	Casualty	Mos	KIA/ Month	
Combat	Other	Ratio	KIA			Dead						Casualty
Revolution	200.0	4,435	1	6,188	10,623	2.4	2.2%	2.2%	5.3%	80	55	
War of 1812	286.0	2,260	1	4,505	6,765	3.0	0.8%	0.8%	2.4%	30	75	
Mexican	78.7	1,733	11,550	4,152	17,435	1.3	2.2%	16.9%	22.2%	20	87	
Civil War: Comb.	3,867.5	184,594	373,458	412,175	970,227	1.7	4.8%	14.4%	25.1%	48	3,846	
<i>Union</i>	2,803.3	110,070	249,458	275,175	634,703	1.8	3.9%	12.8%	22.6%	48	2,293	
<i>Confederate</i> ²	1,064.2	74,524	124,000	137,000	335,524	1.7	7.0%	18.7%	31.5%	48	1,553	
Sp.-American	306.8	385	2,061	1,662	4,108	1.7	0.1%	0.8%	1.3%	4	96 ³	
World War I	4,743.8	53,513	63,195	204,002	320,710	2.7	1.1%	2.5%	6.8%	19	2,816	
World War II	16,353.7	292,131	115,185	670,846	1,078,162	2.6	1.8%	2.5%	6.6%	44	6,639	
Korean	5,764.1	33,651	1	103,284	136,935	4.1	0.6%	0.6%	2.4%	37	909	
Vietnam	8,744.0	47,369	10,799	153,303	211,471	3.6	0.5%	0.7%	2.4%	90	526	
Gulf	2,750.0	148	145	467	760	2.6	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1	148	
Iraq ⁴	2,369.3	2,594	596	61,955	65,145	23.9	0.1%	0.1%	2.8%	48	54	

Combat deaths - killed in action or dead of wounds. Other - disease, privation, and accidents, and losses among prisoners of war. Wounded excludes those who died of their wounds. Ratio - proportion of wounded in action to combat deaths. Wounded figures do not include disease. Under Percentages, KIA - percent of those enrolled killed in action, Dead - percent dead all causes, and Casualty - percent killed or injured. KIA/Month, - fair indication of the intensity of combat

Notes:

1 Non-battle deaths not known for these wars.

3 Only six weeks of sustained combat.

2 Confederate non-battle deaths and wounded estimated.

4 As of 3/10/07

III. Financial Cost [Direct costs only, omitting pension costs, which tend to triple outlays]

Conflict	Cost in \$ Billions		Per Capita (in \$1990)
	Current	1990s	
Revolution (1775-1783)	1.0	1.2	\$ 342.86
War of 1812 (1812-1815)	0.9	0.7	92.11
Mexican (1846-1848)	0.7	1.1	52.13
Civil War: Comb. (1861-1865)	5.20	44.4	1,294.46
<i>Union</i>	3.20	27.3	1,041.98
<i>Confederate</i>	2.00	17.1	2,111.11
Sp.-American (1898)	4.0	6.3	84.45
World War I 1917-1918)	26.00	196.5	1,911.47
World War II (1941-1945)	288.00	2,091.3	15,655.17
Korean (1950-1953)	54.00	263.9	1,739.62
Vietnam (1964-1972)	111.00	346.7	1,692.04
Gulf (1990-1991)	61.00	61.1	235.00 ²
Iraq ¹ (2003- ?)	406.8	273.8	912.53

1 As of 3/10/07

2 the allied coalition reimbursed the U.S. for 88% ; actual per capita only \$26.92