

SOUND OFF!



VOL. IV, NO 18

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 MAY 2009

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

Veterans don't all come in the same flavors.

Some served reluctantly, hated it, and still hate it. Some served reluctantly but are yet proud to have served. Some served willingly and felt that they were performing an essential duty and relish that performance. Some extended that duty to a profession and a career and take great pride in it.

Just as the nature of their service and the views veterans currently hold about that service differ, so do their attitudes toward their nation, their service and themselves. Some believe "my country right or wrong" and use that slogan to support a blind and unthinking allegiance. That view is easily extended to their service and then to themselves, and it usually ends up as something like, "I am an American, and Americans can do no wrong."

Some expand that slogan to the words of one of its strongest supporters, Carl Schurz, general officer in the Grand Army of the Republic, and Senator from Missouri, "...our dignity, our free institutions and the peace and welfare of this and coming generations of Americans will be secure only as we cling to the watchword of *true* patriotism: **"Our country -- when right to be kept right; when wrong to be put right."**"

Some find only wrong with what we do and are blind to the right and the good, and most of us feel sorry for them, while respecting their right to dissent.

Through all of that varying opinion and feeling, there runs a strong thread of reason which also varies in its intensity and its inclusiveness, but is reason nonetheless.

That thread of reason leads us to examine what we do, how we do it, how we act toward our fellow

countrymen and to strangers, how we spend our treasure or waste it. From that examination we derive new ways of thinking about what we do, and about our strengths and weaknesses,

From that analysis ultimately come new ways to go forward and to continue along the extraordinary path first laid out for us by our founders. They gave us directions – they pointed the way, but they didn't lay out a hard and fast trail. We have to find the pathway ourselves, and that takes work and study.

All of this is by way of leading into the view that we veterans are wed to our country almost in the same way we wed that special person in our life. We love her (or him) despite the faults, and are grateful that they love us despite ours. We are with them, "For Better or Worse".

So we are with our country, "For Better or Worse". Whereas we can live gladly day to day with a spouse who has as many faults as (or perhaps fewer than) we do, and live our whole lives that way, we have an obligation to do a little better toward our nation. All citizens owe their nation their thoughtful loyalty, and in pursuit of that loyalty to examine our nation, warts and all, understand for ourselves when and how we may go wrong, glory in where we have done right, and build on a certain knowledge of both toward a better future, and a better way of going about it next time.

Not all would agree, but many of us veterans believe that we have made some extraordinary mistakes in the last few years. Those who believe that we should not have gone into Iraq are numerous; those who believe that we should not have gone into Afghanistan are fewer. Even those who believed that

we should have gone into Iraq don't all agree that we have done it well, and daily more are saying so.

Veterans have earned a special place in the ranks of Americans (even though you can't always sense that very clearly these days). Veterans almost universally believe that because they have fought for their country, or at least volunteered to fight if necessary, they have earned that special place. Well, we didn't just earn a place for ourselves, we also took on a grave obligation.

We didn't fight for nothing. We fought for our nation, and it is our obligation to make sure that that nation is the best that it can be, and that it doesn't go astray and waste the effort and the sacrifice that we and our brothers and sisters gave.

So much of what gets stated as "fact" these days gets started from some website or some blog, has no foundation, but gets repeated enough times so that it becomes "true". These pseudo-facts then become the basis for action and generally send us off in the wrong direction. Too few of us dig for the truth, try to discern fact from rumor or worse yet from lies, and many of us have become so lazy that we become a major part of the problem and no part of the solution.

Some things have to get fixed. Even if you support the war, you have to believe that the services were not prepared to fight this kind of war, and you should want some things changed at least – doctrine, training, weapons, diplomacy – something. If you support war only when we or our real allies are directly threatened, you have to believe that the mix of military, diplomatic and economic "solutions" has been wrong for a long time and needs some very hard tweaking.

No matter what you believe, you owe it to your country, if not to yourself, to study the problems, find the best sources you can to understand what is really happening, examine those sources critically, examine their sources if you can, and then decide what is best for the country and what you can do about it.

“The nation that will insist on drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking done by cowards.”

Sir William Francis Butler
British Major General

To help you, we have compiled a reading list . Summer is coming on, and unless you spend your entire life at the ball park or on the golf course, you ought to spend some real productive time and get caught up.

Here are our recommendations, and they naturally reflect our own studies. The books are generally available at [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [Abe's](#), [Powell's](#), and your local bookstore. The list will be on the website as a permanent item, so if you have any suggestions for reading, especially for books that thoughtfully counter the arguments in those presented here, [let us know](#) and we'll add them.

THE CURRENT CONFLICT

The decision-making that got us into Afghanistan and Iraq

Fiasco; Thomas E. Ricks

Cobra II; Michael Gordon and Gen. B. E. Trainor

Hubris; Michael Isikoff and David Corn

The Assassins' Gate; George Packer

The conduct of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

Imperial Life in the Emerald City; Rajiv Chandrasekaran

The Gamble; Thomas E. Ricks

Observations by Reporters and Other Non-military on the Wars

Beyond the Green Zone; Dahr Jamail

The Three Trillion Dollar War; Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes

The Forever War; Dexter Filkins

The Accidental Guerilla; David Kilcullen

The Experiences of Soldiers on the Ground in South Asia – Soldier's Narratives

The Unforgiving Minute; Craig M. Mullaney

Packing Inferno; Tyler E. Boudreau

Blackhawk Down; Mark Bowden

Blood Stripes; David J. Danelo

The Last True Story I'll Ever Tell; John Crawford

The War I Always Wanted; Brandon Friedman

One Bullet Away; Nathaniel Fick

Chasing Ghosts; Paul Rieckhoff

HISTORY

There are times and ideas in history that have been well-recorded, and which we should study if we want to understand both how to fight the current war and how to move forward to peace, and if possible, to reconciliation.

History of the Middle East

A History of the Arab Peoples; Albert Hourani

A History of the Middle East; Peter Mansfield

History of Islam

What is Islam?; C. Horrie and P. Chippendale
Engaging the Muslim World; Juan Cole
Soldiers of God; Robert Kaplan
Taliban; Ahmed Rashid
The Crisis of Islam; Bernard Lewis

Diplomatic and Military History

Dereliction of Duty; H. R. McMaster
Imperial Grunts; Robert D. Kaplan
The March of Folly; Barbara Tuchman
The Face of Battle; John Keegan
The Best and the Brightest; David Halberstam

CONDUCT OF ASYMMETRIC WAR AND EXPERIENCES ON THE GROUND

These are not “how-to” books to be followed slavishly; they are “how it was done” books that contain good lessons.

Malaya

Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife; John Nagl

Algeria

Counterinsurgency Warfare; David Galula
A Savage War of Peace; Alistair Horne

Vietnam

Street Without Joy; Bernard Fall
A Rumor of War; Philip Caputo
Dispatches; Michael Herr
Vietnam: A History; Stanley Karnow
Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam; Lloyd Gardner
editor

And a Hard Rain Fell; John Ketwig
On Strategy; Harry G. Summers

MILITARY PUBLICATIONS

FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency Field Manual
[[download the 13.6 Mb pdf file](#)]

FM 27-10: Law of Land Warfare I [[download the 2.4 Mb pdf file](#)]

FM2-22-3 (FM 34-52) Human Intelligence Collection Operations (Interrogation) [[download the 4.7 Mb pdf file](#)]

SERVING MILITARY AND VETERANS' ISSUES

On Killing; LTC Dave Grossman
On Combat; LTC Dave Grossman
Achilles in Vietnam; Jonathan Shay
Odysseus in America; Jonathan Shay
War and the Soul; Edward Tick
The War Comes Home; Aaron Glantz
Vets Under Siege; Martin Schram
When the War Came Home; S. Bannerman
Down Range; Bridget C. Cantrell
Moving a Nation to Care; Ilona Meagher

AND FOR THOSE WHO WILL SPEND ALL OF YOUR TIME ON THE GOLF COURSE OR AT THE BALL PARK ANYWAY

Harvey Penick's Little Red Book; Harvey Penick
Game Time: A Baseball Companion; Roger Angell
[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

Membership is open, free, and very worthwhile! Get your fellow veterans, and veterans’ family members to join VUFT! We are beginning to be heard, and we need you to help us get the message out. If each of us would bring in one new member every month, what an impact we could have!

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

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

Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed

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

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

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on [our website "Donate" page](#). Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method. If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at rhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org.

NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF ADVISORS

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the VUFT Board of Advisors: Charles "Charlie" Brown, LTC USAF (Ret); and, Arthur "Art" Torres, former Senator (CA).

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

FIREBASE NETWORK

The Firebase Network's Veterans Hour started in January 2000 as a means to inform the public of the deplorable treatment our Veterans receive at the hands of the V.A. and their willing assistants, the Congress of the United States, and nearly all chartered NVO's. Through this radio program we have been taking the Veterans Rights issues to the people, we also provide our Veterans and Retired Military Community with helpful information and a voice to air their grievances Listen on line.

www.stardustent.com/

You can donate via PayPal on line at web site.. look down left side..I just sent a small donation.. pass this on... a few checks from a Few Vet Orgs, and Indivs Will go a long way.

Dan Cedusky, Champaign IL "Colonel Dan" www.angelfire.com/il2/VeteranIssues/

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

VA ADVANCE FUNDING ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Apr 28, 2009

There is good news for military and veterans' organizations in the 2010 budget agreement reached Monday night by House and Senate negotiators.

The budget, which includes \$606 billion for the Defense Department and \$106.5 billion for the Veterans Affairs Department next year, also creates a window of opportunity for passage of some high-priority issues this year. For example, the agreement opens the door for the top priority of veterans' organizations, providing money for veterans' health care one year in

advance. The key language, in this case, is a provision preventing a point of order being raised against legislation to provide a 2011 VA health funding bill this year. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2009/04/military_budgetresolution_veterans_042809w/>

BUYER, WALZ INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN BILL TO CREATE EQUITY FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES

Rep. Steve Buyer and Rep. Tim Walz introduce H.R. 2243

Washington, D.C. - Today, Congressmen Steve Buyer and Tim Walz introduced legislation to increase the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit paid to widows and widowers whose spouses died while on active military duty or as the result of a service connected injury or illness. The bill would also eliminate an unjust offset between the VA benefit and a military benefit for survivors. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva050509-1.htm>

CONGRESS MUST ACT TO RESTORE EARNED BENEFITS TO ALL VIETNAM VETERANS – INCLUDING “BLUE WATER” VETS!

5/9/09

Washington, D.C. – House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) announced the introduction of H.R. 2254, a bill to restore equity to all Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange.

“We owe it to our veterans to fulfill the promises made to them as a result of their service,” said Chairman Filner (D-CA). “If, as a result of service, a veteran was exposed to Agent Orange and it has resulted in failing health, this country has a moral obligation to care for each veteran the way we promised we would. And as a country at war, we must prove that we will be there for all of our veterans, no matter when they serve. The courts have turned their backs on our veterans, but I believe this Congress will not allow our veterans to be cheated of their earned benefits.”

H.R. 2254 would clarify the laws related to VA benefits provided to Vietnam War veterans suffering from the ravages of Agent Orange exposure. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva050809-1.htm>

ORE. LEGISLATORS SEEK SUPPORT FOR FEMALE MILITARY VETERANS

Lauren Fox - Oregon Daily Emerald - 5/7/09

More women enlisting; bill aims to offer services to help women cope with combat stress, trauma

Since 2002, 170,000 women have served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. With women making up 10 percent of the troops on duty, two legislators are concerned that the needs of returning female veterans are not being met in Oregon. HB 2718, sponsored by Rep. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis) and Sen. Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose), would create a task force to study and make suggestions about services Oregon should offer to women veterans. The bill passed unanimously in the House and has moved to the Senate floor for consideration.

<More at: <http://media.www.dailyemerald.com/media/storage/paper859/news/2009/05/07/News/Ore-Legislators.Seek.Support.For.Female.Military.Veterans-3738190.shtml>

RETREAT – NEWS

ARMY EXTENDS IMMIGRANT RECRUITING

Alexandra Zavis and Andrew Becker - May 4, 2009T

Pilot program seeks to boost the ranks of language and healthcare specialists by offering citizenship.

The lanky 19-year-old from South Korea has lived in the Southland since he was 9 years old. He is as comfortable speaking English as his native Korean. And he desperately wants to join the Army. Late last week, the teenager walked into a recruiting office in an Eagle Rock mall wearing a pendant shaped like a dog tag around his neck. Until recently, local recruiters would have had to turn him away. His student visa would not have qualified him to enlist. Only citizens or permanent residents who carry green cards were eligible to serve.

But starting today, 10 Los Angeles-area Army recruiting offices will begin taking applications from some foreigners who are here on temporary visas or who have been granted asylum. In all, the pilot program, which was launched in New York in February, seeks to enlist 1,000 military recruits with special language and medical skills, most of whom will join the Army. Response to the program has exceeded expectations, drawing applications from more than 7,000 people around the country, many of them highly educated, defense officials said. Those who are accepted will get an expedited path to citizenship in return for their service.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-immigrant-recruits4-2009may04_0.5003914.story>

DOES ANYONE REMEMBER WHEN ALL WE HAD BETWEEN US AND A BULLET WAS A T-SHIRT, YOUR UNDERSHORTS WITH THE STRINGS ON THE SIDE, AND YOUR HBTs?

ARMY DREAMS: SUPER-STRONG, LASER-PROOF, GENIUS G.I.S

Today's G.I.s are lucky if they get radios when they go on patrol in Iraq. But by 2030, their uniforms will be packed with nano-antenna arrays, capable of communicating with everything from drones to satellites. The soldiers will all be Hulk-strong, and Spiderman-agile, thanks to their nanotech-based exoskeletons. "Neural prosthetics" and "smart drugs" will make them battlefield geniuses. On-board computers will let them understand every language — and every cultural reference — as if they were natives. Naturally, their flexible, nanofiber uniforms will be all-but-impervious to bullets, flame, and lasers, too.

That's the thinking, at least, over at the Soldier Research Design and Engineering Center in Natick, MA. Researchers there have spent years of effort — and tens of millions of dollars — to give tomorrow's soldiers high-tech supersuits. The results have been... well, less than super.

<More at: www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/05/army-dreams-of-super-soldiers/>



This one reminds me of the time when I was trying to sell a crusty old combat-vet Major on the beauties of a new combat-rugged situation awareness computer system, with maps, status reports, etc.. He asked me when it would be fielded and I said in about 7 years. His response was, "In the meantime, until that gets fielded, do you think someone could come up with a grease pencil that doesn't freeze and break in a Korean winter?"

SIGN OF THE TIMES: AFGHANISTAN WAR COSTS HIGHER THAN IRAQ

Nathan Hodge - May 7, 2009

The price tag for running the war in Afghanistan will outstrip the cost of the conflict in Iraq next year, according to budget documents released today by the Pentagon.

Afghanistan, in the words of chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is now supposed to be the Pentagon's "main effort" and "strategic focus." This budget makes it official: The Department is requesting a \$130 billion "overseas contingency operations" fund, of which the Afghanistan campaign will receive the largest share.

Vice Adm. Steve Stanley, the director of force structure, resources and assessment on the Joint Staff, told reporters that the budget request represents "where you're going to first see the swing of not only dollars or resources, but combat capability" from Iraq to Afghanistan. "The money requested here — about \$65 billion for Afghanistan — actually exceeds the \$61 billion that we're requesting for Iraq," he said. "So that's the first time in our war costs request."

<More at: www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/05/sign-of-the-times-afghanistan-war-costs-higher-than-iraq/>

NO JAIL TIME FOR ARMY CONTRACTOR IN REVENGE KILLING

Noah Shachtman - May 8, 2009

Don Ayala — the U.S. Army contractor who pleaded guilty to a revenge killing in Afghanistan — won't be going to prison. Instead, U.S. District Court Judge Claude Hilton sentenced Ayala, a member of the Army's Human Terrain social science project, to five years probation and a \$12,500 fine. <More at: www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/05/no-jail-time-in-human-terrain-slaying/>

AND IF HE GOES BACK, HE APPARENTLY WON'T HAVE TO PAY FOR HIS MEDICAL EITHER

CONTRACTORS USING MILITARY CLINICS

Walter Pincus - Washington Post Staff Writer - May 7, 2009

Civilians Also Are Not Paying, Audit Says

Military clinics and field hospitals in Iraq and Afghanistan have supplied more than \$1 million a month in health-care services to civilian contractors during the past two years without seeking reimbursement from their employers, as provided by law, according to a new audit by the Defense Department inspector general.

The report, issued Monday, noted that all costs associated with both emergency and primary medical care are reimbursable to the government and are the responsibility of the contingency contractor personnel, their employer or their health insurance provider. Yet the study found that Army, Navy and Air Force clinics and hospitals were not billing contractors because there

was no unified system for doing so. Moreover, more than half the contracts were vague about who pays for the medical treatment of employees, although the law is clear on this point, the IG found.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/06/AR2009050603949_pf.html>

VA BENEFITS SYSTEM CONTINUES TO ENCOUNTER PROCESSING PROBLEMS

Bob Brewin - 05/04/09

An online benefits application Web site that the Veterans Affairs Department launched on May 1 continued to encounter problems on Monday after coming to a near halt on Friday.

The department created the Veterans OnLine Application (Vonapp) site in response to the new GI bill, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, which provides veterans with more generous educational benefits than the previous GI bill, originally passed in 1944. For example, this version hikes payments for tuition from \$1,300 a month to a payment that is pegged at the highest tuition at a public university in a veteran's state of residence, which for Massachusetts would be \$10,232. The bill includes monthly living expenses of \$1,100 to \$1,200.

The site either timed out or responded slowly on May 1, the first day post-9/11 veterans could file for the rich package of educational benefits. Vonapp continued to frustrate veterans trying to file benefit applications, with the site prominently displaying a message warning users they could experience problems uploading attachments to their online applications:

<More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090504_1368.php>

TAXPAYERS TO GET RUDE SURPRISE

Associated Press - May 04, 2009

WASHINGTON - Millions of Americans enjoying their small windfall from President Barack Obama's "Making Work Pay" tax credit are in for an unpleasant surprise next spring.

The government is going to want some of that money back.

The tax credit is supposed to provide up to \$400 to individuals and \$800 to married couples as part of the massive economic recovery package enacted in February. Most workers started receiving the credit through small increases in their paychecks in the past month. But new tax withholding tables issued by the IRS could cause millions of taxpayers to get hundreds of dollars more than they are entitled to under the credit, money that will have to be repaid at tax time.

At-risk taxpayers include a broad swath of the public: married couples in which both spouses work; workers with more than one job; retirees who have federal income taxes withheld from their pension payments and Social Security recipients with jobs that provide taxable income. The Internal Revenue Service acknowledges problems with the withholding tables but has done little to warn average taxpayers. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/taxpayers-to-get-rude-surprise.html>

THIS STORY FROM 18 MONTHS AGO SPEAKS TO OUR EDITORIAL ON TORTURE

FORT HUNT'S QUIET MEN BREAK SILENCE ON WWII

Petula Dvorak - Washington Post Staff Writer - October 6, 2007; A01

Interrogators Fought 'Battle of Wits'

For six decades, they held their silence.

The group of World War II veterans kept a military code and the decorum of their generation, telling virtually no one of their top-secret work interrogating Nazi prisoners of war at Fort Hunt.

When about two dozen veterans got together yesterday for the first time since the 1940s, many of the proud men lamented the chasm between the way they conducted interrogations during the war and the harsh measures used today in questioning terrorism suspects.

Back then, they and their commanders wrestled with the morality of bugging prisoners' cells with listening devices. They felt bad about censoring letters. They took prisoners out for steak dinners to soften them up. They played games with them.

"We got more information out of a German general with a game of chess or Ping-Pong than they do today, with their torture," said Henry Kolm, 90, an MIT physicist who had been assigned to play chess in Germany with Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/05/AR2007100502492_pf.html>

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
5/13	1000-1400	Fort Mason Conference Center, Bldg A Marina & Beach St. San Francisco, CA	State of California Job Fair		415-479-7503
5/14		Cathedral Hill Hotel 1101 Van Ness Ave. San Francisco, CA	Western Regional Career Event		Register
5/14-5/17		BREC Airline Hwy Park Baton Rouge, LA	The Wall That Heals	Louisiana All Veterans Reunion	
5/16-5/18		Missoula, MT	Stand Down	Caitlin Swock	406-829-3928
5/17	1300-1600	Wilshire & San Vicente Blvds Brentwood, CA	Veterans in Solidarity Celebration	Veterans Revolution	Refreshments
5/19-5/20		Minneapolis, MN	Resource Fair	Kara Cornils	651-292-0145
5/20	1900	15725 Parthenia St North Hills, CA 91343	Greater Los Angeles Veterans Summit	American Legion & We The Veterans	
5/21		Buffalo, NY	Resource Fair	Celia O'Brien	716-882-5935x23
5/22-5/25		Norborne Football Field Norborne, MO	The Wall That Heals	Norborne Betterment Association	
7/1-9	1730	Marines' Memorial Theater, 2nd Floor, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco	George P. Schulz Lecture Series – GEN David Petraeus	World Affairs Council of Northern California	\$10 members \$25 non-members
7/27-8/2		Galt House Hotel, 140 N Fourth St Louisville, KY 40202	Vietnam Veterans of America Biennial Convention	VVA	

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

MORE MISHANDLED VA DOCUMENTS

Larry Scott - VA Watchdog dot Org

VA whistleblower says he found ten boxes of old mail and a widow's claim from September of 2007.

For the past few weeks, the emails have been coming in hot and heavy from a whistleblower at the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA).

This employee works at a VBA Regional Office (RO) in a Southern state and is raising hell about more document mishandling.

But, the emails haven't just been sent to VA Watchdog dot Org. They are being sent to the VA's Office of Inspector General (VAOIG), VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, and just about every other high-ranking VA official you can think of. (When you work for the VA you know those email addresses.)

[An example]: ... "There are thousands of brown folders in the FAB. These folders do not have C-file numbers, no association to C-file. The mail inside is probably not date stamped and has no control. If a claim was pending in the past, this mail was not with the file when a decision was made on the veterans claim. I have found additional service treatment records (STRs) and other evidence not associated with the veterans C-file. Example: I reviewed a file where the veteran filed a claim on Feb 07. The mail in the brown folder was not date stamped". <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/09/nf09/nfmay09/nf050609-1.htm>

PASS THIS NEXT ONE ON! IT IS DEFINITELY WORTH WATCHING!

STAND UP FOR VETERAN'S CAREGIVERS

This video provides insights into the real-life challenges that family caregivers face when caring for a loved one with severe wounds or disabilities from their military service

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy-vqaJKeQ>

Thanks for the tip from [Jim Starowicz](#)

ARMY WANTS TO GIVE GIS MORE TIME AT HOME

McClatchy-Tribune Information Services - May 09, 2009

Soldiers' families can look forward to their warriors being home for longer periods between deployments, maybe, hopefully, in a few more years. Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr. visited Fort Carson on Thursday. He met with

Soldiers' spouses to hear their concerns, and said his top priority is to give troops more time at home to bring balance back to the force. His goal is nine-month deployments sandwiched between two years at home.

But there's no hope to achieve that, he said, until the troop drawdown in Iraq begins in 12 to 18 months, and even then only if the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan don't demand more troops than are already accounted for.

Casey didn't mince words. He said the Army is out of balance, deployments are too long and too often, and that seven years of war have taken a toll on Soldiers and families. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/army-wants-to-give-gis-more-time-at-home.html>

VETERANS FRUSTRATED OVER INACCESSIBLE, SLOW ONLINE BENEFITS SYSTEM

Bob Brewin - 05/01/09

Veterans nationwide, trying for the first time on Friday to log on to online forms to apply for a rich package of educational benefits, encountered a network that either failed or was extremely slow.

The Veterans Affairs Department launched the [Veterans Online Application](#) (Vonapp) site to begin taking applications from veterans interested in the [benefits offered in the new GI Bill](#), whose formal title is the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act.

The GI bill provides veterans with more generous educational benefits than the previous GI bill, originally passed in 1944. For example, this version hikes payments for tuition from \$1,300 a month to a payment that is pegged at the highest tuition at a public university in a veteran's state of residence, which for Massachusetts would be \$10,232. The bill includes monthly living expenses of \$1,100 to \$1,200.

But veterans became frustrated when they tried to log onto the site. Paul Sullivan, executive director of Veterans for Common Sense, said it took more than four minutes to reach Vonapp's login screen using his computer in Austin, Texas, which has a high-speed cable modem.

"Veterans should not be viewing the hour glass of death" as they try to file for benefits, he said. "The VA needs to fix this now."

<More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090501_2347.php>

VA REJECTS VET TRANSFER IN FINAL GI BILL RULES

Rick Maze - Staff writer - May 5, 2009

The Veterans Affairs Department's final rules for the Post-9/11 GI Bill remove some proposed restrictions on current service members sharing educational benefits with family members, but the regulations reject requests that the same transfer rights be given to veterans.

VA officials, who received many letters asking for veterans to have the same GI Bill transfer rights as current service members, said they could not allow veterans to share benefits with family members because transfer rights for the new benefits program are, by law, limited to people who are in the service Aug. 1, when the new GI Bill program begins.

Also rejected in the final rules: living stipends for people using the new GI Bill for distance learning; and special rules for veterans suffering traumatic brain injuries that would provide them full payments even if they are not full-time students.

<More at: www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2009/05/military_VA_gibill_050509w/>

WAR KILLS VET - 40 YEARS AFTER

Howard Wilkinson - April 28, 2009

Like tens of thousands of his fellow men and women in uniform, Gerald Spath was a casualty of the Vietnam War.

He lost his life - not in the bush country of Vietnam, not in the mountains or rice paddies, not in a rocket strike on a U.S. military base.

Spath, a U.S. Air Force veteran, became a casualty of that war six years ago, sitting in an easy chair in the living room of his Colerain Township home, 34 years after he last set foot on the soil of Vietnam.

"It was the war that killed him," said Lena Spath, his widow and wife of nearly 50 years, mother to his three children.

"As surely as if he were shot down there 40 years ago."

Spath, who was 72 years old when he died, was a victim of lung cancer - a cancer that, after his death, the Department of Veterans Affairs attributed to his exposure to Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant that was widely used during the Vietnam war to kill the plant life that was providing jungle cover for Viet Cong fighters and North Vietnamese troops.

Nearly five million Vietnamese and hundreds of thousands of American soldiers, airmen and marines were exposed to Agent Orange - so named because of the orange stripe around the 55-gallon barrels the defoliant was stored in. Since then, it has

been linked to a number of diseases that have plagued Vietnam veterans, from lymphoma to leukemia to a wide range of cancers.

Now, Spath, and thousands of Vietnam veterans like him who died years later of service-related wounds and diseases, are being recognized for what they are - casualties of the war in Vietnam.

<More at: <http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/AB/20090428/NEWS01/904290314/>>

OBAMA MEMO SAYS NO TRICARE INCREASES IN 2010 BUDGET

Rick Maze - Staff writer - May 7, 2009

The Obama administration's first defense budget will not seek an increase in Tricare fees, according to a White House statement and a representative of a major military organization.

Retired Army Maj. Gen. Bill Matz, president of the National Association for Uniformed Services and a veteran of three battles with the Bush administration over its attempts to raise Tricare enrollment fees, deductibles and co-payments, said he received word from the White House on Tuesday night that Tricare fee hikes would not be part of the budget due to be sent to Congress on Thursday. Matz said the exact words were: "We are not touching Tricare."

<More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2009/05/military_tricarefees_defensebudget_050609w/>

DVA PLANS REVIEW OF BILLING FOR CARE IN SEXUAL ASSAULTS

James Dao - May 7, 2009

The Department of Veterans Affairs will review the billing practices of veterans health centers around the country amid concerns that some are improperly charging for care relating to sexual assault in the military, officials said Wednesday.

The department is required to provide free care, including counseling and prescription drugs, to veterans who were sexually harassed or assaulted while in military service. Sexual assault includes rape and attempted rape.

But the Office of Inspector General at the department found this year that an outpatient clinic in Austin, Tex., had repeatedly charged veterans, mostly women, for those services. Based on concerns that the practice may be more widespread, the office decided to expand its review to a sampling of veterans health care centers and clinics nationwide.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/2009/05/07/us/07va.html>

VIETNAM VETERANS ARE FALLING ILL, BUT WHY NOW?

Maura Lerner - Star Tribune - 5/7/09

In the past few years, Dr. Michael Koopmeiners has seen a surge in the number of veterans seeking help for war-related disabilities at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. At Koopmeiners' clinic, which evaluates new disability claims, business has more than doubled since 2004 -- from 6,800 to nearly 15,000 patients a year.

But only a fraction of the cases have anything to do with Iraq or Afghanistan. Instead, most are Vietnam veterans who have waited until now, more than three decades after their war ended, to come forward and seek help. Vietnam veterans, he says, outnumber those of every other conflict combined.

Nationally, too, Vietnam veterans are coming forward by the tens of thousands with a vast array of medical problems, from hearing loss to cancer, that they believe are connected to their military service. In 2007 alone, a quarter of a million veterans were added to the VA disability rolls -- more than a third of them Vietnam veterans, according to a VA spokeswoman.

<More at: www.startribune.com/lifestyle/health/44419217.html>

GOVERNMENT INJECTING VETERANS WITH COCAINE FOR DRUG ADDICTION RESEARCH

Bill Myers - Examiner Staff Writer - 04/29/09

Drug-addicted veterans are being injected with cocaine by researchers at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in taxpayer-funded studies, The Examiner has learned.

The [study](#) subjects are being given the injections as part of a search for medicines that researchers hope will block cocaine absorption in the body, said Timothy O'Leary, the VA's acting director of research and development.

All the subjects were recruited because they were addicted to cocaine, O'Leary said. About 40 volunteers — most of them veterans — are being given injections at VA labs in Kansas City and San Antonio, he added.

Hundreds of veterans have apparently been used as human subjects in the past decade, according to records and interviews with officials. <More at: www.washingtonexaminer.com/local/Government-injecting-veterans-with-cocaine-for-drug-addiction-research-44007367.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 10 MAY 2009

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,229 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,287
WOUNDED US [5/2/09]	31,245
OTHER US CASUALTIES [5/2/09]	≥36,903
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [5/2/09]	181
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [5/2/09]	≥ 100,339 - 668,051
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,758 DAYS)

KILLED US	682
WOUNDED US [5/2/09]	2,820
OTHER CASUALTIES US [5/2/09]	7,860
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [5/2/09]	31
KILLED COALITION	463
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 11,017
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	≥ 7,373
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$667,720,123,887
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$187,657,202,582

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

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to

<http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF MAY 5, 2009

This week the Army, Navy, and Air Force announced an increase, while the Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced a decrease. The net collective result is 930 more reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 103,709; Navy Reserve, 6,750; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 14,892; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,575; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 697. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 133,623, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated can be found at

<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2009/d20090428ngr.pdf>

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

ABSURDITY: VA GETS AWARD FOR SAYING IT DID A GOOD JOB

Larry Scott - VA Watchdog dot Org – 5/9/09

VA self-reports that it performs well and is accountable, then wins award for leadership in federal accountability.

I'm not sure whether it's time to laugh or cry.

The VA has won an award for leadership in federal accountability.

This is kind of like making Charles Manson the poster boy for Mental Health Month.

The VA issued their 2008 Performance and Accountability Report and self-reported openness and accountability.

Then, the Mercatus Center at George Mason University read the VA's report and gave them an award.

Is there something wrong with this logic? You better believe it.

Do you want to know how accountable the VA is? Just read the long list of reports from the Government Accountability Office ([GAO](#)). Read the devastating reports from the VA's Office of Inspector General ([VAOIG](#)).

Then, stop and think about the flawed concept of self-reporting.

When the VA thought there might be a problem with contaminated endoscopic equipment, they asked the hospitals to self-report on the procedures to clean the devices. Everyone reported: No problems. Then, a couple of months later, the Miami VA facility discovered their self-report was in error. Currently, 11 veterans who underwent endoscopic procedures at Miami have tested positive for viral infections.

Think this self-reporting concept would work in the real world? Imagine telling your boss, "I just told you I did a good job, therefore I did a good job."

VA's self-congratulatory press release is at <http://www.vawatchdog.org/09/vap09/vap050709-2.htm>

COMMUNITIES MUST DO MORE FOR VETS

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - May 6, 2009

The military prides itself on taking care of its own. But a researcher who has studied post-traumatic stress disorder said local communities must play a larger role in the safety net for combat veterans.

If local organizations do not reach out proactively to the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments to become more engaged in treating the veterans returning to their communities, they can expect the veterans' pain to affect their families, their ability to contribute to society, and even their ability to care for themselves, said Audrey Burnam, senior behavioral scientist at the Rand Corp. think tank.

Burnam said vets returning from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq represent a "historic opportunity" for communities to learn more about PTSD, educate others about the illness and come together to deal with it.

Burnam, who spoke at a Health Affairs Journal panel May 5 in Washington, is the lead author of a [new Rand report](#), "*Mental Health Care for Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans*," that makes a case for a broad reform of services that looks beyond VA.

She said American communities can expect the return of as many as 300,000 veterans dealing with symptoms of PTSD or traumatic brain injury. Though many will get the help they need while still in uniform, or their symptoms will resolve on their own, many more will deal with sleep disorders, nightmares, relationship issues, anger and flashbacks until they get the help they need.

But in addition to a continued reluctance among veterans to seek care, there are only about 500,000 mental health care professionals nationwide. Some areas have as few as eight psychiatrists per 100,000 people.

The report said policy reform is needed to push health insurance plans, professional organizations, states and local communities to improve veterans' access to high-quality services, citing example of mental health workers in New York state who have offered services pro bono, and a free PTSD counseling program in Washington state that also trains school teachers about the effects of deployment on children. <More at:

<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/05/military PTSD communities 050509w/>>

VETERANS' CENTER AT CITRUS COLLEGE AN OASIS FOR EX-SOLDIERS

Diana Sholley - Staff Writer - 05/09/2009

GLENDORA - Bruce Solheim was determined not to let today's veterans suffer the same isolation and loneliness as those of the past.

The Citrus College history professor watched as the lack of socialization and support destroyed his older brother Alf when he returned from Vietnam.

"I saw how he was affected," said Solheim, who was 11 when his brother came home. "He never wanted to talk about it." Alf eventually acquired post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, and with nowhere else to turn succumbed to drugs and alcohol.

Solheim was too young to help Alf, but now has the age, education, position, support and money to help others.

On May 14, Citrus College will host the grand opening of its Veterans Center, one of the largest and most comprehensive in the area. Everyone is invited.

Solheim, who served in the United States Army from 1978 to 1986, is hoping many will stop by to check out the new digs, have a snack and attend the noontime ceremony.

"We are really proud of what we've done here and we want to share it with the community," said Solheim, the center's director. "Transitioning back into civilian society isn't easy. Without support veterans can face some very hard times, depression, even PTSD. Having a center like this can make their transition so much smoother."

<More at: www.pasadenastarnews.com/ci_12335243>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

VA EYE GLASSES AND HEARING AIDS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) not only covers eye examinations and audiology tests and writes eyeglass and hearing aid prescriptions for all its eligible patients. In many cases it also covers eyeglasses and hearing aids--- even for some non-service-connected Priority 5 and 7 patients (generally, veterans honorably- or generally- discharged after at least two years' service with incomes under about \$35,000). The little-known Veterans' Health Administration Directive 2002-039 of July 5, 2002 [paragraph 4.a.(1)] authorizes eyeglasses and hearing aids for:

- those getting service-connected compensation for any reason or at any percentage;
- former prisoners of war and Purple Heart recipients;
- those getting Housebound or Aid and Attendance increments to needs-based disability Pensions;
- those needing eyeglasses or hearing aids due to any other (even non-service-connected) medical cause; and
- those with any other functional or cognitive impairment-- as shown by Activities of Daily Living (ADL) functional deficiency(ies) --who need eyeglasses or hearing aids to participate in their own care.

Although general information on the VA website may wrongly suggest that the above benefits are restricted to those with service-connected disabilities and other limited groups, in fact Directive 2002-039 remains fully in force.

"It is VHA policy that all enrolled veterans and those veterans exempt from enrollment are eligible for medical services that include diagnostic audiology and diagnostic and preventive eye care services, and that the prescription and provision of hearing aids and eyeglasses must be furnished to all eligible veterans in accordance with the parameters and criteria defined in this Directive."

www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1789

FORMER HOMELESS VETERAN LAUNCHES NEW JOBS PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

May 05, 2009

Chicago, IL - Virgil Mathis announced today the creation of a jobs program for amputee, homeless and severely wounded veterans.

The company plans to market television and various ancillary telephone equipment and drive the incoming phone leads to disabled vets in their own homes or shelters. The program is designed to provide access to employment for the many severely disabled veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The job requirement is only to answer the phone and log the order. The task requires almost no physical strength or mobility and will provide an income for those who might otherwise be unable to work.

"I want the Government, Veterans News Papers, Department of Labor, Politicians, News media and other human services locations to get the Message that it is time to take Action for the over 400,000 Homeless USA Veterans who won't stand A chance with the increase of jobless regular people in the Job Market", said Mathis.

<More at: <http://www.veteranstoday.com/article6306.html>>

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

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

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