

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 19

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 MAY 2008

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

REMEMBER ALL OF THEM!– MEMORIAL DAY 2008

I know that I am not the only one who objects to Memorial Day sales. I can't be! There have to be others who are appalled by the crassness of the practice. There have to be others who remember.

Our newspapers and televisions are swamped with the joyous celebration of Memorial Day. Take an extra day! Buy a mattress! Have a party! Celebrate the holiday by buying my stuff! Memorial holiday vacation specials! Buy my junk and make it your junk at great savings in honor of those who have died in the service of our country!

There was a time when this holiday was the most serious and somber observation in our nation. There were no sales. There were no parties. There were parades, but they were pretty serious affairs, with veterans of wars past, and serving members of the present parading in honor of their fallen comrades.

The parade's destination in smaller communities was often the local cemetery, where it culminated in the playing of "Taps" and the firing of a 21-gun salute over the graves of the fallen.

Now, if there is a parade, the destination is usually the mall, in the march of the patriotic credit cards. If there is an old-fashioned memorial, it mostly attended only by veterans. You can even get a credit card with a flag on it!

What has happened to us as a people? How can we not care? How is it American to be indifferent to what is happening to so many of our youth – the deaths, the maimings, the mental fracture of so many?

While we cannot subordinate ourselves completely to others' views, when did we stop caring about the opinions of others at all? When did we stop being Americans? Unless ...

Did it become American to be apathetic? Did it become American to be selfish, greedy, self-absorbed?

How does that make us strong? How does that continue our devotion and allegiance to a vibrant American democracy?

“By far the most dangerous foe we have to fight is apathy - indifference from whatever cause, not from a lack of knowledge, but from carelessness, from absorption in other pursuits, from a contempt bred of self satisfaction”

William Osler, jurist

We must remember and we must speak out! We must demand that others also remember.

It is not enough just to remember the dead. We have to remember the living who have given too much already. Those veterans who have returned to us crushed in body or mind have to be remembered and must be served. The families of those who have fallen, or who have returned damaged often beyond repair, must be remembered. They too continue to give every day for the rest of their lives. [Please see “Add-On” on page 11]

The children who live without a parent because he or she is serving right now, have to be remembered. Look at your own children or grandchildren and ask yourself what would it do to them if they had to spend the next few years or a lifetime without their father or mother. Because they could, you know, and if they do it is because we sent their parent away.

We “Support the Troops” – but do we?

If we ever forget, we do not support them. If we ever let their families suffer or languish without care, we do not support them. If we ever let those around us forget, we do not support them. If we let our politicians use them and their memory for political purposes and then ignore them or pander to them with band-aid legislation, we do not support them. If we let the bureaucrats treat them as “cases” rather than as honored Americans, we do not support them.

“In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

If this nation has a purpose it can't be to maximize sales of unneeded crap on a national holiday. That cannot be what we stand for.

If we have a purpose it is to be a “shining light” to the rest of the world that democracy, with all of its faults, is the best and brightest hope for all of mankind. We do that by being the best we can be. We do that by showing how we honor not just all of our citizens in the adherence to our Constitution and our laws, but that we give extra honor to the sacrifice of those very few of our citizens who stand up and serve. We forget that purpose at our peril.

“To forget one's purpose is the commonest form of stupidity.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

So my friends, what will we be? The ones who remember or the ones who ignore or forget? It is not up to them, it is up to us.

I choose to remember – every day. [Ed.]

SPECIAL APPEAL

As our litigation and legislative actions expand rapidly, the expenses to VUFT are likewise mounting rapidly. We don't charge dues, as others do. We don't beat you over the head every month, as they mostly do, with mailings demanding that you do your patriotic duty and send them bucks.

What we will do is come to you if and when – and only when – the need is truly there. Well gang, the need is truly there.

We are sending witnesses to court hearings, to give testimony before legislatures (California now, and many other states to come). We provide a website and this newsletter – in hard copy form to those veterans among us who do not have the internet – and we cover the cost of printing and mailing those twice each month. We mail out memberships letters and cards each month and now have sent out nearly 1,000. We attend meetings where our testimony or other contribution can make a difference for veterans, whether it is in education, medical care, in favor of or opposed to legislation of interest, or even in the political arena where we defend veterans issues without taking a partisan stand.

We need your help now to meet these expenses. Please pitch in at <http://www.vuft.org/donate.html> where you can donate by PayPal or Credit Card. Any amount will help.

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 <http://www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm>. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar <http://www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/>

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

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

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

THE FIGHT CONTINUES! The [law suit](#) that we have filed along with Veterans for Common Sense against the Veterans’ Administration has reached the end of its trial phase. Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit. The judge has announced that he will rule by the first week in June. Watch this space for announcements!

THE TRUTH ABOUT VETERAN SUICIDES

Aaron Glantz – Foreign Policy in Focus - May 9, 2008

Eighteen American war veterans kill themselves every day. One thousand former soldiers receiving care from the Department of Veterans Affairs attempt suicide every month. More veterans are committing suicide than are dying in combat overseas. These are statistics that most Americans don't know, because the Bush administration has refused to tell them. Since the start of the Iraq War, the government has tried to present it as a war without casualties.

In fact, they never would have come to light were it not for [a class action lawsuit](#) brought by Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans United for Truth on behalf of the 1.7 million Americans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The two groups allege the Department of Veterans Affairs has systematically denied mental health care and disability benefits to veterans returning from the conflict zones.

The case, officially known as *Veterans for Common Sense et al vs. Peake*, went to trial last month at a Federal Courthouse in San Francisco. The two sides are still filing briefs until May 19 and waiting for a ruling from Judge Samuel Conti, but the case is already having an impact. That's because over the course of the two week trial, the VA was compelled to produce a series of documents that show the extent of the crisis effecting wounded soldiers. <More at: <http://www.fpif.org/fpifxt/5219>>

INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT FINDS THAT VA CONTINUES TO INACCURATELY REPORT PATIENT WAIT TIMES

May 19, 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Responding to a [report](#) by the Department of Veterans Affairs Inspector General (IG) on VA patients' waiting times today, U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, expressed concern that VA continues to report inaccurate data on wait times for health care appointments. The IG audit, which focused one VA health

care network, VISN 3, found that VA under-reported patient wait times, and that staff there failed to follow recommendations made by the IG in previous reports on the issue. Some VISN 3 employees reported to the IG that their superiors directed them to violate existing guidelines and directives, and deliberately manipulate data. <More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/scva08/scva051908-1.htm>>

More articles available at:

New York Times - www.nytimes.com/2008/05/11/opinion/11sun2.html

Final Call - www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/printer_4730.shtml

Huffington Post - www.huffingtonpost.com/greg-mitchell/an-outrage-va-official-wh_b_101110.html

Washington Post - www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/15/AR2008051503533.html

Washington Post - www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/14/AR2008051403469.html

Boston Globe - www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/05/18/marine_who_died_after_chase_wrote_of_war_stress/

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 scCook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org

WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP

VUFT is a no-fee organization. We must raise money to keep the effort going. Normal expenses have been borne out of the pockets of a very few board members, plus a few small donations over the two plus years of our existence. Although our legal defense in the current case is *pro bono*, we are incurring expenses in support of the case, to include travel expenses to attend the hearings and the trial. We also are incurring expenses in our effort to expand to all fifty states. Please consider [donating](#) whatever you can to VUFT ~

All donations are tax deductible to the donor.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Vets deserve better education benefits when they leave the military. Most folks agree. But how much is enough? USA Today

What an interesting question - "How much is enough?" How do you compensate (reward?) someone who was on the shit end of a contract that allowed him to be kept after the contract expired, who left his family for an unknown period to face unknown dangers in a strange country. How do you repay him for the crappy food and lousy living conditions. What is daily exposure to (and threat of) death and maiming worth? Even those with documented injuries are being tossed out like used tissue. How do you quantify the thousands of veterans attempting suicide at a rate of eighteen per day? And how do you actively fix the worst statistic of all - one third of homeless are veterans?

After WWII the GI bill financed thousands of ex-troops' higher education. That higher education fueled the economic bubble of the early '50s, and it financed the "baby boom." Apparently "Support the Troops" means support the military, and doesn't include what's good for the military's individual members.

John Zutz, VVAW

FROM A MEMBER WITH 36 YEARS OF GRIEF WITH THE VA (edited for length)

"... I rue the day that I ever enlisted . I wish that I had been killed in Viet Nam . My back has gotten so bad that I am in constant chronic pain and I have been permanently disabled for the last 11 years It's no wonder so many vets commit suicide . Perhaps I will soon be on that list .NO KIDDING!

Michael Hollenbeck

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

RUSH TO FAILURE: WILL CONGRESS RESCUE MILITARY HEALTHCARE?

Hal Donahue - May 20, 2008

Last week, this Democratic led Congress took action to rescue modern military healthcare. According to the *Washington Post*, Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), Chairman of the House Committee of Armed Services, in a bipartisan committee move inserted language in the 2009 defense authorization bill that would halt construction of replacement hospitals for Walter Reed Army Medical Center until the Department of Defense demonstrates that it can deliver world-class health services. Congressman Jack Murtha said: "Our service members and their families have been promised a world class medical facility. This language will ensure that we deliver on that promise." There it is -- promises to be kept. Our task is to help Congress to keep that language in the legislation. <More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/hal-donahue/rush-to-failure-tripped-u_b_102692.html>

WEBB GI BILL PASSES SENATE

Andrew Taylor - AP - May 22, 2008

The Associated Press reports that the [Webb GI Bill](#) has passed the Senate. Senate Republicans have broken with President Bush to help Democrats add support for veterans and the unemployed to a bill paying for another year of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The 75-22 vote also added billions of dollars in other domestic funds such as heating subsidies for the poor and money for fighting wildfires to the \$165 billion for the military operations overseas.

[See who voted and how at: www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=110&session=2&vote=00137]

...The huge tally in the Senate was driven by \$15.6 billion over two years to extend unemployment benefits by 13 weeks and more than \$50 billion over the upcoming decade to provide returning Iraq war veterans with sharply increased college aid.

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/05/22/gi-bill-passes-senate_n_103091.html>

CONGRESS PASSES TAX RELIEF FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Jim Abrams - Associated Press Writer - May 22, 2008

Congress moved on Thursday to ease the economic hardships of military families by passing a \$2 billion package of tax breaks. The Senate, by voice vote, approved the legislation that the House passed Tuesday on a 403-0 vote. It now goes to President Bush for his signature.

The legislation, supported by major service organizations, allows active-duty reservists to make penalty-free withdrawals from retirement plans and provides a tax credit for small business employers who make up the difference of wages lost to employees called to active duty. It makes thousands of veterans eligible for low-interest homeowner loans and makes permanent the ability to include combat pay as earned income for purposes of the Earned Income Tax Credit, which refunds payroll and income taxes to low-income people.

The measure also clarifies that those on active duty who file a joint tax return will be eligible for the economic stimulus rebate payment even if the spouse does not have a Social Security number.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080522/ap_on_go_co/congress_military_1

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSES VETERANS LEGISLATION

May 21, 2008

Washington, D.C. – House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner announced that a package of bills to honor our nation's veterans passed the House of Representatives. The action comes as the nation prepares to honor and remember our fallen heroes on Memorial Day weekend.

"This Memorial Day will take on a more profound and personal significance for many American families this year – those who are mourning the loss of one of their own and those who have loved ones far from home," stated Chairman Filner. "As a way to honor these heroes, I ask that we recommit ourselves to caring for and serving our veterans. The bills that were passed by the House reinforce our commitment to ensure that the contributions of our brave veterans are never forgotten."

Five of the bills approved by the House of Representatives address the health care needs of veterans, including a bill to authorize major medical facility projects and leases for Fiscal Year 2009.

1.H.R. 2790, as amended - To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish the position of Director of Physician Assistant Services within the office of the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Health.

2. H.R. 3819 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reimburse veterans receiving emergency treatment in non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities for such treatment until such veterans are transferred to Department facilities, and for other purposes.
 3. H.R. 5729 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide comprehensive health care to children of Vietnam veterans born with Spina Bifida, and for other purposes.
 4. H.R. 5554, as amended - To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand and improve health care services available to veterans from the Department of Veterans Affairs for substance use disorders, and for other purposes.
 5. H.R. 5856 – To authorize major medical facility projects and major medical facility leases for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2009, and for other purposes.
- Five of the bills passed by the House address veterans' benefits, including one bill that would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to use television media to inform veterans of the entitlements and benefits they have earned.
6. H.R. 3681 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to advertise in the national media to promote awareness of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.
 7. H.R. 3889, as amended – To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation programs administered by the Secretary.
 8. H.R. 5664, as amended – To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update at least once every six years the plans and specifications for specially adapted housing furnished to veterans by the Secretary.
 9. H.R. 5826 – To increase, effective as of December 1, 2008, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.
 10. H.R. 6048 – To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for the protection of child custody arrangements for parents who are members of the Armed Forces deployed in support of a contingency operation.

Chairman Filner concluded: "More than 1.6 million troops have been deployed as a result of the current conflicts. There are 800,000 new veterans, and 325,000 of these heroes have accessed the VA health care system. Additionally, there are 23 million living veterans from previous conflicts. This Memorial Day, I am pleased that the Members of the House came together to pay tribute to all of the men and women who have courageously served our great nation – those that have fought in past wars and those that are in harm's way today." www.vawatchdog.org/08/hcva08/hcva052108-1.htm

For complete access to bills concerning veterans, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/110search.html> and type in the word "veteran"

RETREAT – NEWS

NUMBER OF DISABLED VETS ON THE RISE

The Associated Press - May. 11, 2008

WASHINGTON - Increasing numbers of U.S. troops have left the military with damaged bodies and minds, an ever-larger pool of disabled veterans that will cost the nation billions for decades to come — even as the total population of America's vets shrinks. Despite the decline in total vets ... the government expects to be spending \$59 billion a year to compensate injured warriors in 25 years, up from today's \$29 billion, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press. And the Veterans Affairs Department concedes the bill could be much higher. <More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24566987/>

PETRAEUS SAYS TROOPS REDUCTIONS COMING

Associated Press - May 22, 2008

Gen. David Petraeus said Thursday that by September he could recommend further U.S. troop reductions in Iraq if security continues to improve. ... Petraeus has previously been reluctant to say when his next assessment of troop levels would be. In a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday, the four-star Army general said conditions on the ground will still determine whether more troops can come home.

... On a less-optimistic note, Petraeus said it is unlikely that Iraqi security forces will take the lead in all provinces this year, as was recently predicted by the Defense Department. Petraeus said events in the past month and a half - alluding to a spike in violence in Basra - have pushed that goal to 2009. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/petraeus-says-troops-reductions-coming.html>

MISBEHAVING ARMY RECRUITS PROMOTED FASTER

nbc4.com - April 30, 2008

Recruits With History Of Misconduct Also Go AWOL More

WASHINGTON -- Soldiers who need special waivers to get into the Army because of bad behavior go AWOL more often and face more courts-martial. But they also get promoted faster and re-enlist at a higher rate, according to an internal military study obtained by The Associated Press. The Army study late last year concluded that taking a chance on a well-screened applicant with a criminal, bad driving or drug record usually pays off. And both the Army and the Marines have been bringing in more recruits with blemished records. Still, senior leaders have called for additional studies, to help determine the impact of the waivers on the Army.

"We believe that so far the return outweighs the risk," said Army Col. Kent M. Miller, who headed the team that conducted the study. <More at: www.nbc4.com/military/16077069/detail.html>

PENTAGON BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO GI BILL

Anne Flaherty – 13 May 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veterans groups say it's time to expand college aid for GIs, and Democrats want to use an election year to do it. Their biggest obstacle? The Pentagon. The Defense Department is lobbying against legislation proposed by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., that would guarantee a full-ride scholarship for service members to any in-state public university. According to defense officials, the plan would hurt its ability to retain service members because the new GI education bill would require only three years before the full benefit kicks in. The Defense Department wants the commitment to be extended to at least six years.

"We have no issue with the fact that Sen. Webb wishes to provide a more generous education benefit to troops," said Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell. "But we are certainly concerned that this would be eligible to them" so soon.

The Pentagon's opposition to Webb's bill underscores the difficulty the military has had in recruiting and retaining an all-volunteer force at a time when it is engaged in a war that is deeply unpopular with the American public.

... In recent months, the military has had to take creative steps to reach its desired troop numbers. A year ago, when Army recruiters didn't meet their goal, the service announced new \$20,000 bonuses for recruits and up to \$40,000 if an enlistee signed up for at least four years. <More at: http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5jvWovlqUaqkZ_luMvNikChKn0uwD90KK32G0>

ANOTHER PANEL – ANOTHER REPORT

VA SECRETARY APPOINTS PANEL OF NATIONAL SUICIDE EXPERTS

May 21, 2008

WASHINGTON –Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake today announced the names of members appointed to two special panels that will make recommendations on ways the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can improve its programs in suicide prevention, suicide research and suicide education. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/08/vap08/vap052108-1.htm>

THE ARMY TRAINS A SKEPTICS CORPS TO BATTLE GROUPTHINK

Anna Mulrine - May 15, 2008

In the wake of chaos and a lethal insurgency in Iraq, blamed in no small part on poor decisions and a lack of planning at the highest levels, the U.S. Army has had a startling insight that is upending conventional thinking about how the military works. That epiphany is that the force needs fewer yes men.

To that end, one of the Army's top colleges has been quietly training its own cadre of devil's advocates for the past two years. Its graduates say their role is often misunderstood and that their mission has been greeted with trepidation and, on occasion, hostility. "What we're really doing is producing an in-house skeptic, and that creates instant antibodies," says Greg Fontenot, the program director. "It's been like storming the beach at Normandy," agrees Lt. Col. Paul Baumann, who was sent to assess the program's success in Iraq. "It's been ugly, but they didn't kick us out." ... Some early graduates were denied security badges upon their arrival in Baghdad <More at: www.usnews.com/articles/news/world/2008/05/15/the-army-trains-a-skeptics-corps-to-battle-grouphink.html>

"REAL AMERICANS" GET UPSET WHEN THEY ARE REMINDED – TWO CASES

MARINE CAN'T WEAR UNIFORM AT GRADUATION

Associated Press - May 14, 2008

BLOOMER, Wis. -- A new Marine who's graduating from Bloomer High School this month won't be able to wear his military uniform during the commencement ceremony. The Bloomer School Board has denied Daniel Ligen's request to wear his Marine uniform.

Ligen finished his class work early in order to enlist and will be done with basic training at the San Diego Marine base by graduation May 31.

The board adopted a policy Monday night that requires a cap and gown be worn for graduation. There was a motion to allow an exception for military personnel, but it wasn't seconded. One board member says the denial is not an attempt to be unpatriotic, but the cap and gown celebrates education. www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2008/05/ap_uniformgraduation_051308/

VETERANS PEACE GROUP BLOCKED FROM D.C. PARADE

Stephen Manning - The Associated Press - May 21, 2008

WASHINGTON — A veterans group that opposes the war in Iraq has been blocked from marching in a Memorial Day parade in Washington after being told its plans, which once included a casket representing war dead, would be too political for the event.

Veterans for Peace was initially granted a spot in the Monday parade that is scheduled to travel down Constitution Avenue, past landmarks that include the Washington Monument and the White House. But the American Veterans Center, a nonprofit that organizes the parade, has pulled that approval, saying it does not allow the expression of political viewpoints.

... the group dropped the casket plan when the producers of the parade objected. ... the Veterans Center still barred the group from the parade. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2008/05/ap_veterans_parade_052008/>

WHEN YOU AREN'T AS GOOD AS YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IN PERFORMANCE, JUST PRODUCE A BETTER PERFORMANCE REPORT AND YOU CAN GET A PRIZE!

REPORT ON VA PERFORMANCE HONORED FOR NINTH YEAR IN A ROW

WASHINGTON (May 15, 2008) - Continuing its commitment to give veterans clear, valuable information on how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is performing, for the ninth year in a row, VA has been rated by an independent research center as having one of the best annual performance reports in the federal sector. <More at: www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1505>

The Department's report can be found on the Internet at: www.va.gov/budget/report.

WAR ON WOUNDS

Anne Underwood - NEWSWEEK - May 19, 2008 Issue

War may be hell, but it has a way of accelerating medical research. World War I brought methods for collecting and preserving blood for transfusions. World War II saw the introduction of penicillin into medical practice. One day, medical historians may remember Iraq and Afghanistan for spurring regenerative medicine, a grab bag of techniques that share the same end—to repair human bodies by helping them regenerate living tissue, rather than relying on artificial parts. <More at: www.newsweek.com/id/136309>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
5/23-26		5 th & Market Sts Philadelphia, PA	A Sea of Tombstones: TheCostofWar	Arlington North at the Liberty Bell	
5/23 - 26		Weymouth Elementary Wonder Garden Charlotte, Michigan	The Wall That Heals	Koos Post #2406 Men's Auxiliary to the VFW	
5/25	1200	Minaret Village Mall, Meridian Blvd. Mammoth Lakes, CA	Rally for Our Soldiers	Carolyn Balliet	(760) 924-8712
5/26	1100	Wacker & Wabash Chicago, IL	Memorial Day ceremony	VVAW and IVAW	
5/26		Highway 1 N. of Cayucos CA	Blowin' in the Wind Memorial to OIF/OEF Dead	Blowin' In the Wind	
5/27	1900	Lundring Room, CA Lutheran Univ. 60 West Olsen Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA	COL Ann Wright Dissent: Voices of Conscience	VFP	805-279-3425
5/28	1100 - 1400	InfoMart, 1950 Stemmons Freeway Dallas, TX	Career Fair		
5/30 - 6/2		Wadsworth, Ohio	Wall That Heals	Wadsworth City Schools	
6/5	1100 - 1400	Red Lion Bellevue Inn 11211 Main Street, Bellevue, WA	Career Fair		(425) 455-5240
6/5	1000 - 1400	Special Event Center Fort Carson, CO	Job Fair	Nicole Kelsch ACAP/OPM	719.526.8908
6/5	1000 - 1700	Holiday Inn KCI & Expo Center 1130 N. Ambassador Drive, Kansas City, MO	Career Expo		
6/6		Kasas City, MO	Resource Fair	Bob Waechter	816-753-1866

6/11	1100 - 1400	Omni San Antonio Hotel 9821 Colonnade Blvd, San Antonio, TX	Career Fair		210.691.8888
6/12	1000 - 1700	Morocco Shrine Auditorium 3800 St. John's Bluff Road, Jacksonville, FL	Career Expo		
6/13		Worcester, MA	Resource Fair	Joe Boylan	508-791-0956
6/14	1300-1500	Elks Club, Garden Grove, CA	Flag Day Celebration [Profits to Fisher House]	67th Flag Day Committee	G Giacoppe
6/20-22		Westin Washington DC City Center 1400 M Street, NW, Washington, DC	National Summit on Women's Veterans Issues	DVA Center for Women Veterans	

[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

VA STRUGGLES TO GEAR UP TO CARE FOR FEMALE VETERANS

Les Blumenthal - McClatchy Newspapers - 18 May 2008

Washington - Two nightmares haunt Robin Milonas.

While serving in Afghanistan in 2004 as an Army Reserve civil affairs officer, the former lieutenant colonel got lost in a minefield while leading a small convoy delivering school supplies to civilians. Even more troubling is the memory of a man who arrived at the main gate of Bagram Air Base carrying a young boy whose leg had been blown off by a land mine.

"I was an outgoing, energetic, determined good soldier who wanted to make the Army a career," said Milonas, of Puyallup, Wash., who just turned 50. "Now I am broken."

Milonas is one of roughly 180,000 women who've been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. While they don't officially serve in combat, they have experienced life in a war zone where there are no front lines. And as they return home, they're increasingly turning to an already overtaxed Department of Veterans Affairs for help. Last year, the VA treated more than 255,000 female veterans. The number is expected to double within five years. <More at: www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/37409.html>

BILL ON FEMALE VETS GETS VA THUMBS-DOWN

Les Blumenthal - May 22, 2008

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs said Wednesday that it opposes much of Sen. Patty Murray's bill to improve care for female veterans, even as the number of women seeking VA medical services is expected to double within the next five years.

A top VA official admitted during a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing that the agency might not be prepared for the anticipated influx of female veterans.

"We recognize there may well be gaps in services for women veterans, especially given the VA designed its clinics and services based on data when women comprised a much smaller percentage of those serving in the armed forces," said Gerald Cross, the VA's principal deputy undersecretary for health. <More at: www.thenewtribune.com/news/local/story/369807.html>

VETERANS' GROUPS PUSHING FOR MORE PREDICTABLE VA FUNDING

Roxana Tiron - the.hill.com - 05/19/08

A coalition of veterans' groups wants Congress to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has predictable medical care funding to better treat injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. While more political attention has been paid to a possible expansion of education benefits for returning soldiers under a new GI bill, some veterans' groups are highlighting the need to improve VA's funding. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is leading a coalition of groups that are pressing lawmakers to approve advance appropriations for medical care as part of the VA's budget. This would give the VA much more certainty over its funding, as it would know its budget a year in advance. For example, funding for 2010 would have to be approved this year.

... Congress now appropriates VA medical care funds on an annual basis. Political squabbling has delayed VA funding in 13 of the past 14 years — something that has severely hampered the department's ability to plan and manage its healthcare system, according to DAV's talking points.

<More at: <http://thehill.com/business-lobby/veterans-groups-pushing-for-more-predictable-va-funding-2008-05-19.html>>

VETERANS ATTEST TO PTSD NEGLECT BY VA

Maya Schenwar and Matt Renner - truthout Report - 21 May 2008

Recently released documents from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are further proof the VA has failed to adequately address the crisis in veterans' mental health care, according to a former VA employee turned veterans' advocate.

In March, Norma J. Perez, the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) coordinator at a VA facility in Temple, Texas, wrote an email (PDF) to her subordinates stating: "Given that we have more and more compensation seeking veterans, I'd like to suggest that you refrain from giving a diagnosis of PTSD straight out. Consider a diagnosis of adjustment disorder, R/O [ruling out] PTSD ... we really don't ... have time to do the extensive testing that should be done to determine PTSD."

<More at: www.truthout.org/article/veterans-attest-ptsd-neglect-va>

NEW WING AT VETERANS HOME SITS EMPTY, NO MONEY FOR STAFF AS WAIT LIST GROWS TO 400

Steve Miller - WBBM News Radio Chicago - May 14, 2008

May 13, 2008, La Salle, Ill - A brand new wing of the LaSalle Veterans Home is sitting empty and unused - with more than 400 veterans on a waiting list. The funding was in place to build the new wing of the LaSalle Veterans Home and construction was finished at least two months ago. But now, that new, 80-bed wing sits waiting for money so staff can be hired - before it can admit patients. <More at: www.veteransforcommonsense.org/ArticleID/10113>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF MAY 14, 2008

This week the Army, Air Force and Navy announced a decrease, while the Marine Corps announced an increase. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 1,290 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. The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 76,758; Navy Reserve, 4,805; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 8,501; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,770; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 347. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 99,181, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently mobilized can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/May2008/d20080514nqr.pdf

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SATURDAY 24 MAY 2008

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

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (1,878 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,081
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/3]	30,004
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 4/5]	≥38,631
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 3/1]	145
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	3
KILLED UK	176
KILLED OTHER COALITION	136
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 91,713
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400K – 1.2M
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,407 DAYS)

KILLED US	506
OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/2007]	1,994
KILLED COALITION	311
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$522,353,141,584

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 ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

TILLMAN'S MOM WRITES BOOK IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

Bryant Jordan - Military.com - May 12, 2008

After four years, several investigations and two congressional hearings, Mary Tillman has come to an unhappy but necessary conclusion. There's probably nothing more she can do to get Pentagon or White House officials to say why the Army tried so hard to cover up the circumstances of her son's death on an Afghanistan hillside four years ago.

Nor does she expect anything more from Congress, where Democrats and Republicans alike have shown little interest in really getting to the truth.

"And there's only so much we can do as a family without beating our heads against the wall," Mary Tillman told Military.com during a May 9 interview about her just-released book, *Boots on the Ground by Dusk, My Tribute to Pat Tillman*.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/tillmans-mom-writes-book-in-search-of-truth.html>

TWO STORIES AND YET ANOTHER REPORT

SUICIDES OF RECRUITER, WIFE SHINE LIGHT ON POST-WAR STRUGGLE BY

Lindsay Wise

Army recruiter Nils Aron Andersson sat behind the wheel of his brand-new Ford F-150, firing round after round into the truck's CD player and radio with a .22-caliber semiautomatic pistol. Spent cartridges littered the seats and floorboards, along with a paper pharmacy bag holding a prescription for the antidepressant Lexapro.

Andersson's wife, Cassy Walton, had been trying to reach the 25-year-old sergeant on his cell phone for hours. He finally picked up about 2 a.m. and told her he wanted to kill himself. Walton begged him to keep talking to her. Andersson told her he was on the top floor of a downtown Houston parking garage and ended the call. Then he put the pistol to his head, just above his right ear. <More at: www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/front/5788103.html>

WIDOW: IRAQ TRAUMA FUELED TRAGEDY

Marine who killed self, brother called victim of stress

ARTHUR H. ROTSTEIN - The Associated Press

A decorated Marine Corps staff sergeant who apparently fatally shot his brother before killing himself at the end of a long police chase in Arizona served four tours in Iraq, met President Bush and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, his wife said Thursday.

Pinal County sheriff's spokesman Mike Minter said no motive has been established for why Travis N. "T-Bo" Twiggs, 36, killed his 38-year-old brother, Willard J. "Will" Twiggs, and himself on Wednesday. Nor is it known why the brothers earlier in the week may have tried to commit suicide by attempting to drive their car into the Grand Canyon.

<More at: www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/local/85452.php>

SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG VETERANS

Congressional Research Service Report May 5, 2008 Download the report at: www.fas.org/sqp/crs/misc/RL34471.pdf>

A FEW MORE NUMBERS TO PONDER

The comparison that is most often published:

Vietnam killed 58,178 OIF/OEF killed (5/24/08) – 4,587 The implication: 8% – “Not bad by comparison”

The numbers not very often published

Vietnam wounded/injured – 153,303
OIF/OEF wounded/injured (5/7/08) – 75,460 The truth: 49% – Pretty bad by comparison
OIF/OEF seeking mental health relief – 300,000 (so far) – The truth – Pretty bad on any count

Half as many wounded already as in Vietnam, and twice the number of Vietnam wounded already in mental health crisis

ADD-ON ~ AN ESTIMATED 155,000 VETERANS ARE HOMELESS EACH NIGHT, AND AN ESTIMATED 300,000 VETERANS ARE HOMELESS AT SOME TIME DURING THE YEAR

Walk On By

Jimmy used to be a soldier
his country sent him off to war
he was just turned nineteen
he'd never left his home before

he went to do his patriotic duty
in the heat and the desert dust
where you don't know the enemy
and there's. no-one you can trust

he was fighting for democracy
least that's what he'd been told
but as each horrific day passed
he saw the lies he'd been sold

he had friends who didn't make it
left their blood on the desert soil
he saw the bad things being done
to take some other country's oil

but just walk on by
pretend you don't see
you got things to do
places you need to be

he saw sights he'll never forget
did stuff no kid should have to do
and the only thing kept him going
he thought he was doing it for you

then one day everything got crazy
a whole village went up in smoke
he couldn't live with the madness
and something. inside him broke

now he lies out on the streets
and nobody here seems to care
I suppose it's hard to understand
for folks who've never been there

but just walk on by
pretend you don't see
you got things to do
places you need to be

(cherry)

<http://very-cherry.stumbleupon.com>



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