

SOUND OFF!



VOL. I, NO 21

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

25 MAY 2006

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

Well, for once, Congress has actually acted on some measures during the last several weeks, some for good, some for ill, and some for reasons that are not quite clear to me. Some details are included in **"RECALL"**, below.

They finally moved the veterans' bill that has been sitting there since almost the very beginning of the 109th Congress, and in doing so did some good, and not a little mischief. They (so far) have turned down the increase in co-payments for veterans and retired members.

They moved the defense supplement, but killed \$500 million in veterans-related items while fighting to keep in \$476M in "earmarks", including such truly critical national defense measures as a \$9.7 million for an "indoor wash rack" (Whidbey Island, WA), \$3.8 million for an animal clinic/kennel complex (Whitman AFB, MO), and \$6.5 million for a parking garage (Fort Worth Navy Reserve, TX). This despite an unlikely teaming among conservative Republicans and Democrats to try to kill the earmarks and keep the good programs.

[Now we do want our animals taken care of, and we certainly don't want our friends in Fort Worth to have to park in the sun, particularly if they have animals in the car. And if the trucks are dirty in Washington state, they do have to be protected from the constant rain while they are being washed.]

They have approved the start of a Depleted Uranium (DU) study only 15 years after the problem surfaced in Gulf I, a better response than they ever mustered for Agent Orange.

Of course, the proposed 2007 budget provides \$36.1 billion for appropriated veterans programs, which is \$2.9 billion above the amount enacted for 2006 and \$1.8 billion above the amount needed to maintain purchasing power at the 2006 level. **Beyond 2007, however, veterans funding is cut in almost every year.** Over five years, the budget cuts funding \$10 billion below the level the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates is needed to maintain purchasing power at the 2006 level. Thus, [the administration] will cut the veterans discretionary budget by \$10 billion over the next five years, while the target population inexorably rises beyond 2006 levels.

This was all happening while they were shoveling \$70 billion out the door in tax breaks that even the Cato Institute agrees will give \$20 to the average working family while giving an additional \$42,000+ to anyone who earns a million dollars or more.

In the midst of all this, the House managed to pass a bill 408-3 to protect military funerals from the sickening protests by the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, KS, and others. I agree that those whack jobs needed to be censured (there is no guarantee the Senate will pass it out before their next recess), but it would be great if they could gin up that much bipartisan agreement on some critical benefits issues, wouldn't it?

Regarding those funerals, praise to the **Patriot Guard Riders**, the motorcycle club members who showed up and protected the families from the sick outpourings of those Topeka nut cases.

Of course we shouldn't be surprised, It is an election year, and the easy, quasi-patriotic issues are the ones that will draw legislators like a magnet. Want to burn the flag? I am against it please donate to my campaign. Want a speaker on Memorial Day? I am available please donate to my campaign. Want a rousing proclamation in support of veterans and the troops read into the Congressional Record? I am available and please contribute to my campaign.

But, want meaningful reform in veterans' benefits? You have to understand that tradeoffs, and the political realities and the fiscal possibilities, and the conflicts and competition for funds, and the fact that we are a – pick one – powerless minority/fiscally conservative majority. In any case, please contribute to my campaign, for I am a patriot – hear me roar (for a small fee).

But then, we should not be surprised by now, but some still are:

"It shocked me that the country was not mobilized for war," he says. "It was almost surreal." For some Americans, "the only time they think about the war is when they decide what color magnet ribbon to put on the back of their car."

MG John Batiste, USA (Ret)
Former CG 1st Infantry Division
Upon his return to the US from Iraq

[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN, FREE, AND VERY WORTHWHILE! GET YOUR FELLOW VETERANS, AND VETERANS' FAMILY MEMBERS TO JOIN VUFT! WE ARE BEGINNING TO BE HEARD, AND WE NEED YOU TO HELP US GET THE MESSAGE OUT. IF EACH OF US WOULD BRING IN ONE NEW MEMBER EVERY MONTH, WHAT AN IMPACT WE COULD HAVE!

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT [WWW.VUFT.ORG](http://www.vuft.org). CHECK OUT THE "CANDIDATES" PAGE, WHICH IS OUR EFFORT TO LIST ALL VETERANS RUNNING FOR STATE-WIDE AND FEDERAL OFFICE IN THE U.S.; IT IS BEING UPDATED DAILY. PLEASE HELP US MAKE THIS AS COMPLETE A LIST AS POSSIBLE BY SENDING CANDIDATE INFO TO SANDY.COOK@VUFT.ORG.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

NEW MEMBERS are joining us every week. If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to our website at www.vuft.org/membership.html and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have with legislators. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures.

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE

If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Join" page. Every little bit helps. We are getting very close to a favorable ruling on our status as a 501(c)(3), which will make your donations tax deductible on your federal taxes (they already are in the state of California). You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

WAR KEEPS US ALL HAPPY

It seems most Americans have a very low tolerance for civilian deaths by terrorists and a very high one for the death of someone in the military.

If one terrorist were to cross our border from Mexico and kill just one civilian, we would do three things: build a wall to the sky, build a monument for them, and make their family rich. Kill a soldier in another country, and we read a short story about them and off to the sports page we go.

Terrorists have no need to come to America; America has come to them. They can cross borders anytime they want, conduct 500 attacks a week, kill two or three Americans a day and still spend time with their family.

If you count our deaths, wounded and cost, they have already succeeded in another 9/11 in slow motion. For them what could be better? For us, not one civilian death on our soil. This keeps everyone happy. So we should all support the war in Iraq and hope it never ends.

Steve Parks
Paso Robles, CA
As printed in the San Luis Obispo, CA *Tribune*

14 MAY 2006 [Edited for length]

Dear Mr. Applebome [*NY Times Columnist Peter Applebome*],

Thank you for your story about Cliff Berger of Tarrytown and his daily email messages.

My husband and I are doing something similar here in Durham, North Carolina. To show the current number of American troops killed in Iraq, we use home-made signs hanging from our front porch. Our house in Durham is a block from the Duke campus. Here's a photo taken about a year ago:

When we started--on January 23, 2005--the number was 1371. Today it is 2437. We update the number using the casualty figures reported by <http://icasualties.org>.

Like Cliff Berger, we're trying to remind people of the war in Iraq, to "puncture the comfortable bubble," as your column put it. When we came up with the idea, I was sure that other people would imitate us. I thought that soon the numbers would be everywhere, staring people in the face, impossible to ignore. This hasn't happened.



...Our house is across the street from an elementary school. Soon after the numbers went up, the teachers, curious, sent an aide to knock on our door and ask what the numbers meant. Then, five days ago, someone else from the school came to our door., a teacher named Danna Palmer. Mrs. Palmer thanked me for displaying the numbers and then said roughly the following: "The next one you put up will be for my son."

Her son was Cory L. Palmer, 21, a Marine. His vehicle hit a bomb in Al Anbar Province on May 1st. He died of his injuries on May 6th. He had been on his second tour in Iraq.

Mrs. Palmer also said that I should put up a second number—she pointed to the "empty" side of our porch—to show how many American troops have been crippled, disfigured or otherwise maimed in Iraq. This number would be in the tens of thousands. As for the Iraqi dead and wounded, I don't know where I would start.

Thank you again for your column.

Sincerely yours,

Beth Jackson Berman
Gary Berman
1023 Dacian Avenue, Durham NC, 27701.
hspeakup@aol.com.

[Beth and Gary are VUFT members]

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL PROVISIONS

May 11, 2006 - ASSOCIATED PRESS

Highlights of the House's \$512.9 billion measure setting Defense Department policies and spending levels for the 2007 budget year that begins Oct. 1:

- Creates a \$50 billion fund to cover the first part of next year's costs for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Authorizes an increase of 30,000 personnel to boost Army numbers to 512,400 and 5,000 personnel to increase the Marine Corps to 180,000.
- Permits a military pay raise of 2.7 percent.
- Requires the Pentagon to maintain 12 aircraft carriers.
- Requires the Air Force to maintain a fleet of 44 combat-ready B-52 bombers until 2018 or until a comparable long-range strike aircraft is developed.
- Plans \$109.7 million for devices that detect roadside bombs and \$100 million for at least 10 manned surveillance aircraft to patrol above roads where the bombs are prevalent.
- Calls for millions of dollars more to put armor on Humvees and provide body armor for troops, including ceramic plates to protect the sides of torsos.
- Extends to survivors of slain civilian Defense Department employees a \$100,000 death benefit that's currently available to families of service members killed in combat zones since Oct. 7, 2001.
- Requires jamming devices on all military vehicles used in Iraq and Afghanistan outside of a military compound by Sept. 30, 2007.

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1153AP_Congress_Defense_Glance.html

HOUSE CONSERVATIVES STRIP \$500 MILLION FROM MILITARY SPENDING BILL

By Jim Abrams , Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - House conservatives, rejecting protests from fellow Republicans who said they were depriving troops of needed support, stripped \$500 million in military construction projects from a veterans spending bill Friday.

Democrats blamed GOP-backed tax cuts and a tight budget passed two days ago for creating a fiscal crisis leading to the cuts, most of which were for new facilities at various military bases. The bill provides a 10 percent increase for veterans programs.

"I don't know why they (the troops) should be stuck in the middle of a family squabble within the Republican Party," said Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin, top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee.

The conservatives, led by Rep. Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, used parliamentary procedures to delete some 20 projects worth \$507 million from the \$94 billion spending bill for military construction and veterans programs in fiscal 2007, which will begin Oct. 1. The overall bill passed 395-0.

... Rep. Chet Edwards of Texas, top Democrat on the military quality of life and veterans affairs subcommittee, said that [\$735 million] shortfall, coupled with \$316 million in under-funding for base closings and the \$507 million cut from construction projects, left the bill \$1.5 billion short of what was needed.

"This sends a terrible message to our troops here at home, in Iraq, and Afghanistan," Edwards said.

Democrats proposed paying for the 20 projects, the \$735 million for active duty health care and the \$1.82 billion increase in veterans' health care by trimming tax cuts for those making over \$1 million annually. The proposed amendments were ruled out of order. <More at: www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20060519-1441-congress-veterans.html>

HOUSE APPROVES STUDY OF URANIUM EXPOSURE IN U.S. MILITARY

David Goldstein - Kansas City Star - May 15, 2006

WASHINGTON — Veterans groups and advocates worried about the health effects of depleted uranium on soldiers won a victory this week. The House included an amendment in the defense policy bill that it passed Thursday ordering the Pentagon to study the impact of depleted uranium exposure on troops and their children. The Senate could begin debate on the bill this month. <More at: www.kansascity.com/mld/kansascity/news/local/14568123.htm>

HOUSE PASSES MILITARY FUNERAL PROTECTION BILL

Ruby I. Bailey - Free Press Washington Staff - May 10, 2006

Measure would limit protests by antigay group_A Michigan congressman's bill to halt antigay protests at military funerals passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday with an overwhelming bipartisan majority. <More at: www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060510/NEWS06/605100445/1008>

RETREAT – NEWS

PLEASE SEE THE ADD-ON LAST TWO PAGES FOR DETAILS ON THIS THEFT AND WHAT YOU SHOULD DO ABOUT IT

THIEVES STEAL PERSONAL DATA OF 26.5M VETS

Hope Yen - Associated Press - May. 22, 2006

WASHINGTON - Thieves took sensitive personal information on 26.5 million U.S. veterans, including Social Security numbers and birth dates, after a Veterans Affairs employee improperly brought the material home, the government said Monday.

The information involved mainly those veterans who served and have been discharged since 1975, said VA Secretary Jim Nicholson. Data of veterans discharged before 1975 who submitted claims to the agency may have been included.

I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT I AM CONFUSED. ARE THINGS GOOD OR BAD IN THE SERVICES? – IN IRAQ?

ARMY USING POLICY TO DENY RESERVE OFFICER RESIGNATIONS

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post - May 11, 2006

The Army Reserve, taxed by recruiting shortfalls and war-zone duty, has adopted a policy barring officers from leaving the service if their field is undermanned or they have not been deployed to Iraq, to Afghanistan or for homeland defense missions. The reserve has used the unpublicized policy, first adopted in 2004 and strengthened in a May 2005 memo signed by Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, its commander, to disapprove the resignations of at least 400 reserve officers, according to Army figures. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/10/AR2006051002061.html?sub=AR>

AMID WAR, TROOPS SEE SAFETY IN REENLISTING

By Faye Fiore - Los Angeles Times - Staff Writer - May 21, 2006

TACOMA, Wash. — The first time Staff Sgt. Matthew Kruger came home from Iraq, he and his wife, Maggie, went straight into marriage counseling. The second time, she threatened to divorce him if he didn't get out of the Army. The separations were tearing them apart. So in July, to save his seven-year marriage, Kruger quit the service.

Then he looked around the job market, and it didn't take long to figure out that leaving the Army held its own perils. Nothing offered him the financial security of his military job — especially the generous health coverage for his wife and three small children.

And so, 29 years old and with no other place to turn, Kruger spent his first full day of freedom at a military processing center, signing up for four more years. <More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-enlist21may21,1,5805416.story>

ARMY LOOKS TO REDUCE DEPLOYMENT TEMPO

Military.com | David Axe | May 18, 2006

Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey said he wants to reduce the length and frequency of deployments to Iraq, perhaps even moving to six-month tours a la the Marine Corps. But he stressed that changes to the Army's "Force Generation Model" hinge on the ability of Iraqi security forces to take over from U.S. units. Harvey made his comments while answering soldiers' questions during a visit to Iraq last week.

"The baseline that we are trying to get to for the active regular army is one year deployed for every three years in service," Harvey said at Forward Operating Base Honor on May 11.

In recent years, U.S. combat brigades have spent as few as 18 months in the States between deployments to Iraq. That is beginning to change as force levels in Iraq slowly drop, according to Pentagon Army spokesman Lt. Col. Carl Ey. "Now we're getting close to 24 months." There are around 130,000 U.S. troops in Kuwait and Iraq, down from 150,000 a few months ago. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,97699,00.html>

GUARD'S RECRUITING-BONUS POT NEARLY EMPTY

Michelle Tan - May 11, 2006 - *Times staff writer*

The Army National Guard is running out of money to pay recruiting bonuses.

"Our biggest concern is, honestly, we're getting budget-cut enormously," said Lt. Col. Mike Jones, deputy division chief for recruiting and retention for the Guard. "We run out of bonus money on the 31st of May."

<More at: www.armytimes.com/print.php?f=1-292925-1765999.php>

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FALL SHORT IN RECRUITMENT GOALS

May 11

The Army National Guard and Reserve has fallen short of their April recruitment goals. The guard was hoping to recruit 6,500 troops, while the Army Reserve was looking for 2,600.

The two only averaged 86 percent of those numbers, the lowest percentages since last August.

The Major General in charge says the Iraq War and family members who aren't terribly supportive of enlistment contributed to the low sign-ups. <http://www.kcentv.com/news/c-article.php?cid=1&nid=9659>

ARMED GROUPS PROPEL IRAQ TOWARD CHAOS

Dexter Filkins - May 24, 2006

BAGHDAD, Iraq, May 23 — Even in a country beset by murder and death, the 16th Brigade represented a new frontier.

The brigade, a 1,000-man force set up by Iraq's Ministry of Defense in early 2005, was charged with guarding a stretch of oil pipeline that ran through the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Dawra. Heavily armed and lightly supervised, some members of the largely Sunni brigade transformed themselves into a death squad, cooperating with insurgents and executing government collaborators, Iraqi officials say.

"They were killing innocent people, anyone who was affiliated with the government," said Hassan Thuwaini, the director of the Iraqi Oil Ministry's protection force.

Forty-two members of the brigade were arrested in January, according to officials at the Ministry of the Interior and the police department in Dawra.

Since then, Iraqi officials say, individual gunmen have confessed to carrying out dozens of assassinations, including the killing of their own commander, Col. Mohsin Najdi, when he threatened to turn them in.

Some of the men assigned to guard the oil pipeline, the officials say, appear to have maintained links to the major Iraqi insurgent groups. For months, American and Iraqi officials have been trying to track down death squads singling out Sunnis that operated inside the Shiite-led Interior Ministry. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2006/05/24/world/middleeast/24security.html>

A NEW REPORT SAYS THE PENTAGON'S FINANCES ARE IN DISARRAY

By Drew Brown - Thu, May. 11, 2006 - Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON - The Defense Department's accounting practices are in such disarray that defense officials can't track how much equipment the military owns, where it all is or exactly how they spend defense dollars every year, according to a report Thursday by a nongovernmental group. The report by Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities called the Pentagon's financial-management practices "an embarrassment" that wouldn't pass muster in the private sector.

"Today, if the Defense Department were a private business it would be involved in a major scandal," said Kwai Chan, a former top official with the Government Accountability Office and the report's author.

<More at: www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0512-02.htm>

<The report can be found online at www.sensiblepriorities.org>

WARNER ON IRAQ: 'WE COULD LOSE IT ALL'

Gordon Trowbridge May 16, 2006 - *Times staff writer*

Iraq is entering a critical phase in its political development that could make or break the U.S. mission to install democracy in the Middle East, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee said Monday.

"Where we are right now is a truly precarious situation," said Sen. John Warner, R-Va., before about 150 foreign policy experts at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. "Our entire focus is on a new government coming into being."

So precarious are the efforts of Prime Minister-designate Nouri al-Maliki to form a cabinet before a crucial May 22 deadline, Warner said, that any public discussion of what the U.S. should do if Maliki fails could undermine Iraq's fragile democracy.

<More at: www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1804094.php>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
6/23-6/24		Chicago Armory - North Ave	Veterans Stand down	VVAW	Homeless Vets
8/10-8/13		Seattle. WA – place TBD	National Convention	Veterans for Peace	Periodic Meeting

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 veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

DESPITE WHAT CONGRESS HAS SAID

RUMSFELD, PACE SUPPORT TRICARE CHANGES

Donna Miles American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 19, 2006 - The Defense Department's top leaders today defended proposed changes in the Tricare fee system, telling a Pentagon town hall audience the increases are essential to keeping the system solvent and strong.

Tricare "was a great program" when Congress passed the legislation creating it in 1995, "and it is today a great program," Marine Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in response to a question from the audience about Tricare benefits.

Recommended changes will help ensure Tricare remains a great program 10, 15, 20 years from now, he said. "What we have recommended is that we re-norm today's premiums to the level that they were in 1995," Pace explained. "In 1995, the individual was paying, on norm, about 27 percent, and the government was paying about 73 percent of the bill."

Today, users pay just about 12 percent of the bill, and the government pays 88 percent, a formula Pace said can't sustain itself.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/news/May2006/20060519_5178.html>

SOME IRAQ WAR VETS GO HOMELESS AFTER RETURN TO US

Daniel Trotta - May 19, 2006

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The nightmare of Iraq was bad enough for Vanessa Gamboa. Unprepared for combat beyond her basic training, the supply specialist soon found herself in a firefight, commanding a handful of clerks.

"They promoted me to sergeant. I knew my job but I didn't know anything about combat. So I'm responsible for all these people and I don't know what to tell them but to duck," Gamboa said.

The battle, on a supply delivery run, ended without casualties, and it did little to steel Gamboa for what awaited her back home in Brooklyn.

When the single mother was discharged in April, after her second tour in Iraq, she was 24 and had little money and no place to live. She slept in her son's day-care center.

Gamboa is part of a small but growing trend among U.S. veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars -- homelessness.

On any given night the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) helps 200 to 250 of them, and more go uncounted. They are among nearly 200,000 homeless veterans in America, largely from the Vietnam War.

<More at: <http://thinkprogress.org/2006/05/19/homeless-iraq-war-veterans>>

PLEASE CLICK THROUGH AND READ THESE TWO EXCELLENT ARTICLES

MENTALLY UNFIT, FORCED TO FIGHT

Lisa Chedekel And Matthew Kauffman - Hartford Courant - May 15, 2006

Despite a congressional order that the military assess the mental health of all deploying troops, fewer than 1 in 300 service members see a mental health professional before shipping out.

Once at war, some unstable troops are kept on the front lines while on potent antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs, with little or no counseling or medical monitoring.

And some troops who developed post-traumatic stress disorder after serving in Iraq are being sent back to the war zone, increasing the risk to their mental health.

These practices, which have received little public scrutiny and in some cases violate the military's own policies, have helped to fuel an increase in the suicide rate among troops serving in Iraq, which reached an all-time high in 2005 when 22 soldiers killed themselves - accounting for nearly one in five of all Army non-combat deaths.

The Courant's investigation found that at least 11 service members who committed suicide in Iraq in 2004 and 2005 were kept on duty despite exhibiting signs of significant psychological distress. In at least seven of the cases, superiors were aware of the problems, military investigative records and interviews with families indicate.

<More at: www.courant.com/hc-mental1a.artmay14_0_275720.story

<Another fine Hartford Courant article on this subject at www.courant.com/hc-mental2.artmay15_0_4252673.story>

GAO CITES THE PENTAGON

VERY FEW COMBAT STRESS VETS REFERRED FOR TREATMENT OR EVALUATION

Christian Nordqvist - Medical News Today (UK) - May 12, 2006

According to a new study by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), only about 22% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are ever referred for treatment or evaluation.

Of 9,145 interviewed veterans who were considered at risk of suffering from PTSD, only 2,029 were referred for treatment or further evaluation.

The report says approximately 5% of all veterans interviewed seem to have some kind of post-traumatic stress disorder. Who is referred for treatment is determined differently and depends which military service the veteran comes from. The report states that the US Defence Department does not guarantee treatment for all veterans who need it, for PTSD.

<More at: www.medicalnewstoday.com/healthnews.php?newsid=43323>

BUT THE PENTAGON DENIES IT AT: www.kansascity.com/mld/kansascity/news/local/14558676.htm

VA: SOME VETERANS WRONGLY DENIED CARE

Rick Maze - May 19, 2006 - *Times staff writer*

An internal Department of Veterans Affairs report finds that some medical benefits, such as home-based treatment, adult day care and respite care, have been improperly denied to eligible veterans.

The report from the VA inspector general also says, as veterans have long suspected, that the VA is not meeting its goal of cutting the waiting time to 30 days for initial care and does not even seem to count the waiting time for specialty care such as cardiology, orthopedic surgery and gastroenterology. <More at: www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1813135.php>

BACK FROM IRAQ

Washington Post - May 16, 2006

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE ABOUT WHAT THOSE WHO RETURN THINK ABOUT ALL OF US – THE ARTICLE CLOSSES WITH:

“But perhaps the worst is when they don't say anything at all and just go on living their lives, oblivious to the war.

Which is exactly what Army Capt. Tyler McIntyre was trying to explain to some family members while eating at an Italian restaurant when he was home on leave a couple of years ago.

He looked across the restaurant and saw everyone stuffing their faces with pasta and drinking wine. "And everyone's kind of just sitting there doing it," he said.

Which is really sort of extraordinary, he said. The country is at war. People are fighting at this very moment. Don't these people know what's going on? Don't they care?

No, he decided. They have no appreciation for their easy, gluttonous lives and don't deserve the freedom, prosperity and contentment he was fighting to protect.

He wanted to yell, "You don't know what you have! You don't appreciate it! You don't care!"

But he didn't. He kept his mouth shut. He was only home on leave. Soon, he would be going back to the war."

<Read the whole article at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/13/AR2006051301312.html>>

ON 21 MAY 2006 JENNIFER JACOBS, OF THE DES MOINES REGISTER, PUBLISHED SIX FINE ARTICLES ON IRAQ VETERANS AND PTSD. SOME ARE SHORT, LESS THAN A PAGE, AND SOME ARE A BIT LONGER. IF YOU WANT THE DEFINITIVE STORY, READ ALL OF THEM.

PTSD: SOLDIERS IN DISTRESS

<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060521/NEWS11/605210341>

NOT ALL WILL BE COAXED INTO COUNSELING

<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060521/NEWS11/605210391>

TAKING A CHANCE, OPENING UP PAID OFF

www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060521/NEWS11/605210390

DANGER IN IRAQ ERODES HIS PEACE

<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060521/NEWS11/605210347>

AFTER A YEAR AT WAR, HE YEARNS TO LIVE IN THE MOMENT

<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060521/NEWS11/605210346>

'THERE IS NO SHAME WITH PTSD. NO SHAME.'

<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060521/NEWS11/605210345>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

AMERICAN FEMALE CASUALTIES OF WARS

World War I: At least 359 servicewomen died, mostly from influenza and vehicle and aircraft accidents.

World War II: 543 died, mostly from vehicle and aircraft accidents. Sixteen Army nurses died from enemy fire.

Korean War: 17 died, mostly from vehicle or aircraft accidents.

Vietnam War: 8 died, one from hostile fire, one suicide, and the rest from vehicle and aircraft accidents.

Gulf War (Desert Shield and Desert Storm): 16 died, mostly from vehicle and aircraft accidents and hostile fire.

Iraq war: 52 have died from hostile fire, and 378 have been wounded in action.

<www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,97220,00.html>

ADVOCATE FOR AMERICA'S VETS DIES

Military.com | May 15, 2006

MERIDIAN, Miss. - Former long-time Mississippi Congressman Gillespie V. (Sonny) Montgomery, whose advocacy for America's veterans earned him national acclaim, died May 12, 2006. He was 85.

Montgomery served in the U. S. House of Representatives from 1967-1997, where he championed veterans issues and fought for a strong national defense. During his 13-year tenure as chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Montgomery established a peacetime GI Education bill that now bears his name. The measure is credited with saving the all-volunteer military force by providing education benefits for active duty, National Guard and Reserve members.

<More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,97216,00.html>

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF MAY 24, 2006

This week, the Navy and Marine Corps announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard numbers decreased. The net collective result is 42 more reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 80,093; Navy Reserve, 5,039; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,328; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,725; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 344. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 99,529, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2006/d20060524ngr.pdf>.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,459
WOUNDED US [EST. NO DoD UPDATE SINCE 4/29]	≥18,088
KILLED UK	111
KILLED OTHER COALITION	111
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
KILLED CONTRACTORS	332
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 34,705
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 42,216
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 150,000+

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	296
WOUNDED/INJURED US	843
KILLED COALITION	82
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	401
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS	32,034

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

TO SEE THE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE CASUALTIES GO TO WWW.MILITARYCITY.COM/2000CASUALTIES/

AFTERTHOUGHTS

AS MUCH AS WE ALL HONOR THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN IN ALL WARS, AND AS RELUCTANT AS I AM TO CALL THIS A BOONDOGGLE, DON'T YOU WISH THAT THESE GUYS WOULD STAY HOME AND DEAL WITH THE VERY REAL PROBLEMS THAT TODAY'S VETERANS ARE FACING EVERY DAY AND WHICH WE HIGHLIGHT IN EVERY ISSUE?

CHAIRMAN CRAIG TO LEAD SENATORS TO NORMANDY FOR MEMORIAL DAY, JOINED BY VA SECRETARY

May 23, 2006

Group will tour cemeteries and monuments in Europe and North Africa

(Washington, DC) U.S. Senator Larry Craig, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, will lead a delegation of U.S. Senators on a tour of military cemeteries in Europe and North Africa starting Saturday, May 27. Joining them will be VA Secretary Jim Nicholson. On [Memorial Day](#), Monday, May 29, the group will visit [Omaha Beach](#) in France and lay a wreath in honor of the over 10,000 American servicemen who gave their lives at [Normandy](#). The delegation will also examine the Pointe du Hoc monument that was erected by the French to honor the American 2nd Ranger Battalion which, in 1944, scaled a 100 foot cliff to take out German gun emplacements.

"My committee has jurisdiction over the cemeteries which serve as the final resting places of many of our nation's heroes. I feel it is important that we see first hand the condition of those facilities and pay our respects to those who gave all," Sen. Craig said.

Those traveling in the delegation include U.S. Senators [Larry Craig](#) (R-Idaho), [Arlen Specter](#) (R-Pennsylvania), [Richard Burr](#) (R-North Carolina), [Johnny Isakson](#) (R-Georgia) – all members of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. They will be joined by Secretary of Veterans Affairs [Jim Nicholson](#), and Brigadier General [John W. Nicholson](#), Ret., Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

<http://www.vawatchdog.org/senatecvanews/senatecvanews05-23-06.htm>

NOTICE

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

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

We are honored to have General Joseph P. Hoar, USMC Retired, join our Advisory Board. General Hoar's last active duty assignment was as CINC CENTCOM from 1991 to 1994.

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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

THIS ISSUE'S ADD-ON – RECORDS THEFT AT THE VA

VA RESPONSE TO MILITARY PERSONNEL DATA THEFT

May 22, 2006

An unsettling and serious breach of personal data security has been reported today by the VA. Due to an employee's disregard for VA rules coupled with a home burglary, personal information (including the Name, Social Security Number, and Birth Date) of U.S. veterans who have been discharged since 1975 may be compromised. Details follow in a letter released by the VA, along with a list of frequently asked questions on the matter.

LETTER TO VETERANS FROM THE VA:

Dear Veteran:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recently learned that an employee took home electronic data from VA, which he was not authorized to do and was in violation of established policies. The employee's home was burglarized and this data was stolen. The data contained identifying information including names, social security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 26.5 million veterans and some spouses, as well as some disability ratings. As a result of this incident, information identifiable with you was potentially exposed to others. It is important to note that the affected data did not include any of VA's electronic health records or any financial information.

Appropriate law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and the VA Inspector General's office, have launched full-scale investigations into this matter. Authorities believe it is unlikely the perpetrators targeted the items because of any knowledge of the data contents. It is possible that they remain unaware of the information which they possess or of how to make use of it.

Out of an abundance of caution, however, VA is taking all possible steps to protect and inform our veterans. While you do not need to take any action unless you are aware of suspicious activity regarding your personal information, there are many steps you may take to protect against possible identity theft and we wanted you to be aware of these. Specific information is included in the attached question and answer sheet. For additional information, VA has teamed up the Federal Trade Commission and has a website <http://www.firstgov.gov/> with information on this matter or you may call 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636). The call center will operate from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. (EDT), Monday-Saturday, as long as it is needed.

We apologize for any inconvenience or concern this situation may cause, but we at VA believe it is important for you to be fully informed of any potential risk resulting from this incident. Again, we want to reassure you we have no evidence that your protected data has been misused. We will keep you apprised of any further developments. The men and women of VA take our obligation to honor and serve America's veterans very seriously and we are committed to seeing this never happens again.

Sincerely, R. James Nicholson

Secretary of Veterans Affairs

FAQS, COMPLIMENTS OF THE WASHINGTON POST:

1- I'm a veteran, how can I tell if my information was compromised?

At this point there is no evidence that any missing data has been used illegally. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs is asking all veterans to be extra vigilant and to carefully monitor bank statements, credit card statements and any statements relating to recent financial transactions. If you notice unusual or suspicious activity, you should report it immediately to the financial institution involved and contact the Federal Trade Commission for further guidance.

2- What is the earliest date at which suspicious activity might have occurred due to this data breach?

The information was stolen from an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs during the month of May, 2006. If the data has been misused or otherwise used to commit fraud or identity theft crimes, it is likely that veterans may notice suspicious activity during the month of May.

3- I haven't noticed any suspicious activity in my financial statements, but what can I do to protect myself and prevent being victimized by credit card fraud or identity theft?

The Department of Veterans Affairs strongly recommends that veterans closely monitor their financial statements and visit the Department of Veterans Affairs special website on this, <http://www.firstgov.gov/> or call 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636).

4- Should I reach out to my financial institutions or will the Department of Veterans Affairs do this for me?

The Department of Veterans Affairs does not believe that it is necessary to contact financial institutions or cancel credit cards and bank accounts, unless you detect suspicious activity.

5- Where should I report suspicious or unusual activity?

The Federal Trade Commission recommends the following four steps if you detect suspicious activity:

Step 1 -- Contact the fraud department of one of the three major credit bureaus: Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; <http://www.equifax.com/>; P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241 Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); <http://www.experian.com/>; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, Texas 75013 TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; <http://www.transunion.com/>; Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790 -More-

Step 2 -- Close any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently

Step 3 -- File a police report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.

Step 4 -- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by using the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline by telephone: 1-877-438-4338, online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft, by mail at Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20580.

6- I know the Department of Veterans Affairs maintains my health records electronically; was this information also compromised?

No electronic medical records were compromised. The data lost is primarily limited to an individual's name, date of birth, social security number, in some cases their spouse's information, as well as some disability ratings. However, this information could still be of potential use to identity thieves and we recommend that all veterans be extra vigilant in monitoring for signs of potential identity theft or misuse of this information.

7- What is the Department of Veterans Affairs doing to insure that this does not happen again?

The Department of Veterans Affairs is working with the President's Identity Theft Task Force, the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to investigate this data breach and to develop safeguards against similar incidents. The Department of Veterans Affairs has directed all VA employees complete the "VA Cyber Security Awareness Training Course" and complete the separate "General Employee Privacy Awareness Course" by June 30, 2006. In addition, the Department of Veterans Affairs will immediately be conducting an inventory and review of all current positions requiring access to sensitive VA data and require all employees requiring access to sensitive VA data to undergo an updated National Agency Check and Inquiries (NACI) and/or a Minimum Background Investigation (MBI) depending on the level of access required by the responsibilities associated with their position. Appropriate law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs, have launched full-scale investigations into this matter.

8- Where can I get further, up-to-date information?

The Department of Veterans Affairs has set up a special website and a toll-free telephone number for veterans which features up-to-date news and information. Please visit <http://www.firstgov.gov/> or call 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636).

<http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2006/05/va-response-to-military-personnel-data.html>