

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 21

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

25 JUNE 2007

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

"DON'T WORRY – WE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY"

Am I a traitor to say that there are times when I am ashamed to be an American? Does it make me less of a patriot to believe that both as individuals and as a nation we must keep our promises?

Am I a terrorist to believe that some of what we do as a nation can be classified as terrorism against our own? Am I a "commie" to believe that we have to take care of not only those who serve, but those who wait for them to come home?

If all of these things are true about me, then I accept them, because when I read some of the headlines lately I am ashamed, and I want us to do a lot more; to keep our promises – all of them.

Here are a few of those headlines almost at random from the last two weeks. There are more, and we'll talk a little bit about these and the others throughout this issue.

1. ["Camp Pendleton: Rats Invade Base Housing"](#)
2. ["Camp LeJeune: Marine Families Tie Tainted Water to Illnesses"](#)
3. ["Boston: Missing Soldier's Wife May be Deported"](#)
4. ["Pentagon Rules Will Leave Military Families Unprotected"](#)
5. ["Veteran Homelessness on the Rise"](#)
6. ["Insurance cuts, red tape thwart soldiers who need therapy"](#)
7. ["Government Struggles to Cope With Wounded GIs"](#)

How can we let our soldiers, marines and their families drink contaminated water FOR THIRTY YEARS without doing anything about it? Now we can do something, since a group of them have sued the Marine corps for \$4Billion. Couldn't we have solved that problem for less than \$4B? Shouldn't we have done so?

How can we let marine families live in rat-infested quarters, force them to go to the media for relief, and then condemn them for "not using the system", the same system THAT LET IT HAPPEN IN THE FIRST PLACE AND GAVE THEM NO REDRESS.

How can we be so insensitive that we would allow anyone to threaten the wife of a soldier, let alone a missing soldier, with deportation? Why doesn't the service take care of it? Why did two Senators have to weigh in to get it stopped?

Why does the five-sided-funny-house believe that it is most important for them to protect predatory lenders at the expense of under-paid and under-appreciated service members?

Why do we let veterans live under bridges and behind dumpsters?

Why do we allow bureaucrats to administer programs "by the book" when the book is wrong and our veterans suffer as a consequence?

Why - in a country that can pay CEOs hundreds of millions of dollars in one year, and can pay outrageous subsidies to farmers and oilmen - why do we allow the military and VA medical systems to fail because of insufficient funding? Our priorities are only too obvious.

Why do we reelect people who believe that the way they should support the troops is to introduce (but not yet pass) H. Res. 189? What is H. Res. 189? It is not even an act rather it is a resolution "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that a "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" should be established." Good for you! Hello! WE CAME HOME 35 YEARS AGO!

But we shouldn't be too hard on our representatives, after all, almost none of them have any idea what the troops are going through today. Fewer than 20 of 535 are combat veterans. Of course, that doesn't stop most of them from pontificating about the need to "stay the course" and to "fight them over there instead of over here". If "they" came over here, these guys would find a job in Europe, keeping them as close to the results of their inaction as they are today.

A neighbor thinks that there is too much coverage of the war. Others wish that there would be none so that their children wouldn't have to see those disturbing photographs. One fellow in the next town thinks that, "All this PTSD stuff is crap. They are just a new kind of welfare cheat." Guess which war he or his son served in? NOT!

These same folks believe that our soldiers are not doing anything wrong when they commit the atrocities at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere – "After all they cut off heads over there, so making them stand on a box for a while is nothing." I guess neither is forced buggery, or electric shock, or prolonged sleep deprivation. After all, we pride ourselves not being quite as bad as the other guy, don't we? We are comfortable with letting the worst define our moral character, I guess.

Meanwhile we let our soldier's families live in squalor while we make sure that Burger King and KFC get their fair share of the soldier's pay in the combat zone. We rush supplies to our allies in Israel and "examine the supply situation in search of a good solution" for our own in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We used to be proud to stand tall – to set the example – even to "be all that you can be". We believed in the right and the good, instead of just the toughest and the baddest. We soldiers were supposed to be reluctant warriors, not members of a warrior caste. We were not cowards! We knew that being the good guy, even in combat, entailed risks, but risks that were worth it if we were to retain our humanity.

I don't know when the United States changed, but I am pretty sure that it happened when I wasn't looking – and shame on me. How could we have let this happen? How could we have let the cowardice of inaction, the soul-debilitating meanness of torture, the lying masked as valid reporting, the spinning of in consequence to make it appear meaningful, the deprivation of real benefits; the theft of national treasure, all of the products of this current time – How could we have let all this occur?

"Each man must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, which course is patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide against your conviction is to be an unqualified and inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let men label you as they may"

Mark Twain

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

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

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT WWW.VUFT.ORG.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

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

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

THE ENEMY AT HOME

The laws guaranteeing returning soldiers their jobs back, are not worth the paper they written on. Suing the companies either state or federal courts is not the answer. Even winning the case is not exactly great career move. The person will be marked as a trouble maker, and fired at the first legal opportunity. The publicity about these laws and these cases makes it almost impossible for the returning veterans to get any jobs. Add to that, publicity about returning veterans mental health, and it becomes, that military service on their resumes is an interview killer. Of course, the administration and congress can do a lot. But that would require admitting there is a major problem. And who wants that!.

A Blue Star Mother

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

ANOTHER STATE STEPS UP! ~ THANKS, MARYLAND

SOLDIERS BENEFITING FROM STATE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR VETERANS

Liam Farrell - The (Annapolis) Capital

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) -- By this fall, Pfc. Will Amos, an Annapolis Marine stationed at Camp Fallujah in Iraq, will have traded his rifle for a pen, and sand-strewn streets for tree-lined sidewalks. Amos, 22, on his third tour of duty since joining the Marine Corps in 2003, plans to enter the University of Maryland with a major in business marketing, said his mother, Susan, who will be able to sleep easier at night knowing that her son is a college student.

...That transition for Amos will be aided by a new state scholarship program, [under which] scholarships are available for veterans of the Iraq or Afghanistan wars, their spouses and their children. Eligible applicants, who can have the money for five years of full-time study or eight years of part-time study. <More at: www.delmarvanow.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070611/NEWS01/70611007/1002>

GOOD FOR YOU, BUT DIDN'T WE HAVE HEARINGS TO SET UP USERRA? WHY ISN'T THAT WORKING?

AKAKA CHAIRS HEARING ON EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF RETURNING SERVICEMEMBERS

June 13, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, held an oversight hearing today on collaboration and cooperation between federal departments to serve the employment needs of returning servicemembers. Chairman Akaka is focused on bringing resources together to better assist veterans in finding gainful employment as they return to civilian life. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/07/scva07/scva061307-2.htm>

NOTE: The Pentagon has created a new web site to help veterans who face difficulty returning to their old jobs or finding new ones after deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. If you would like more information you can go on the website at www.turbotap.org.

BITTER SPLIT OVER MAKING VA CARE OPEN TO ALL VETERANS

Tom Philpott - Special to Stars and Stripes Pacific edition - June 23, 2007

Since January 2003, nearly 400,000 veterans have been denied enrollment in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system because they have no service-connected disabilities and have incomes that exceed a VA means test, the same one used to screen for federal housing assistance.

Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.), committee chairman, said the current situation represents "unacceptable" rationing of care, noting that veterans without disabilities are denied enrollment if incomes rise above \$27,790. He tied the need to reopen VA care to any veteran to sacrifices being made in current conflicts. Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.), the committee former chairman and ranking Republican, said VA needs to do more for disabled veterans and those in financial need — the VA's "core constituency" — rather than "open the gates" for a "surge" of Group 8 veterans.

Filner shot back that [opponents] are all too willing to "support a surge when it comes to military action but cannot have a 'surge,' ...when it comes to treating our veterans." <More at: www.estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=46874>

RETREAT – NEWS

I THOUGHT IT WAS "BY FALL". OH THAT'S RIGHT, THAT WAS CHANGED TO "BY CHRISTMAS". OOPS! NOW IT'S SPRING. CONVENIENTLY, THE YEAR ISN'T LISTED U.S. MAY REDUCE IRAQ FORCES BY SPRING

Associated Press - June 23, 2007

WASHINGTON - The U.S. may be able to reduce combat forces in Iraq by next spring if Iraq's own security forces continue to grow and improve, a senior American commander said Friday. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,140077,00.html>

AND IT'S UNRELENTING ~ GREEN ZONE COMMANDOS DON'T BELIEVE THE TROOPS NEED A BREAK

TROOPS' 1-MONTH BREAKS BLOCKED

Gregg Zoroya - USA TODAY - 18 June 2007

WASHINGTON — U.S. commanders in Iraq are rejecting a recommendation by Army mental health experts that troops receive a one-month break for every three months in a combat zone, despite unprecedented levels of continuous fighting and worsening risks of mental stress. Instead, commanders are trying to give troops two to three days inside heavily fortified bases after about eight days in the field, said Brig. Gen. Joseph Anderson, chief aide to the ground forces commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Odierno.

"We would never get the job done of securing (Baghdad) if we went out for three months and came back" for one, Anderson said.

U.S. forces in Iraq spend more time in combat without a break than those who fought in Vietnam or World War II, according to Army psychologists who studied troops in Iraq. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-06-18-troops-rest_N.htm>

WORST FEARS REALIZED

Faiz Shakir, Nico Pitney, Amanda Terkel, Satyam Khanna, and Matt Corley - June 14, 2007

The Pentagon's first quarterly report assessing [the new] Iraq strategy confirms what analysts broadly predicted at the onset: the escalation is a failure. Even with tens of thousands of additional U.S. forces deployed, overall levels of violence in the country "[rose slightly](#)" between February and May, as attacks "shifted away from Baghdad and Anbar" and into "cities and provinces that had

been relatively peaceful before the administration's troop buildup." Political reconciliation has stalled, suicide bombings "more than doubled" from January to April, sectarian deaths have increased [beyond pre-escalation levels](#), and U.S. troop deaths are spiking. ... [the] administration signaled yesterday that it [no longer considers September a crucial date](#) for determining whether the escalation has been effective, even as spokesman Tony Snow described the increasing levels of violence as "[signs of success](#)."
<More at: www.americanprogressaction.org/progressreport

WHAT FOUR YEARS OF HARD WORK AND 1,000s OF LIVES HAVE GAINED IRAQ NOW RANKED SECOND AMONG WORLD'S FAILED STATES

David Morgan - Mon Jun 18

Iraq has emerged as the world's second most unstable country, behind Sudan, more than four years after President George W. Bush ordered the U.S. invasion to topple Saddam Hussein, according to a survey released on Monday. The 2007 Failed States Index, produced by Foreign Policy magazine and the Fund for Peace, said Iraq suffered a third straight year of deterioration in 2006 with diminished results across a range of social, economic, political and military indicators. Iraq ranked fourth last year.

Afghanistan, another war-torn country where U.S. and NATO forces are battling a Taliban insurgency nearly six years after a U.S.-led invasion, was in eighth place.<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20070618/ts_nm/iraq_usa_states_dc_ylt=ApzO13ro0bdowh8iXkfZfesONUE

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE ORIGINAL WAR TALIBAN ON THE MOVE IN AFGHANISTAN

Associated Press - June 20, 2007

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan - Days of fierce fighting with NATO and Afghan forces left Taliban militants in control of one southern Afghan district and battling to take over another Tuesday, officials said.

Taliban fighters seized Miya Nishin district in Kandahar province late Monday, provincial police chief Esmatullah Alizai said. Authorities were planning to retake the remote area. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,139616,00.html

IT'S NOT JUST THOSE IN UNIFORM MORE US PERSONNEL KILLED IN IRAQ THAN REPORTED

John R Moffett - June 16, 2007

Because of their abuse and extreme overuse and over-extension of our military troops in Iraq, the administration has been forced to rely more and more on private contractors to fill various roles in Iraq that were previously restricted to military personnel. These private contractors are being drawn into conflicts on a daily basis, essentially making them paid military mercenaries. They operate outside of US and Iraqi law, and they are being killed and wounded in a private war that has gone mostly unreported in the US press.

Today, the Washington Post reported that the number of contractors/mercenaries that have been killed and wounded has gone unreported. They note that contractors have been "...taking hundreds of casualties that have been underreported and sometimes concealed, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials and company representatives." "The U.S. military has never released complete statistics on contractor casualties or the number of attacks on privately guarded convoys. The military deleted casualty figures from reports..." "...the military wanted to hide information showing that private guards were fighting and dying in large numbers because it would be perceived as bad news." <More at: www.opednews.com/articles/genera_john_r_m_070616_more_us_personnel_ki.htm

WAR, RED TAPE HAUNT CIVILIAN WORKERS

T. Christian Miller - The Los Angeles Times - 17 June 2007

Samuel Walker saw combat in Iraq firsthand: He was splattered with human flesh and shrapnel in a dining hall when a suicide bomber blew himself up just a few feet away. When Walker got back to the U.S., he brought some of the battlefield home with him. He heard phantom screams in broad daylight, smelled gunpowder that wasn't there. A loud noise would send him into a defensive crouch. Two doctors diagnosed Walker with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, directly related to his close encounters with violence in Iraq. But Walker was not a combat soldier. He was a civilian recreation supervisor for KBR, the largest contractor in Iraq. And instead of getting the medical and counseling help he sought, Walker, a U.S. Army veteran, found himself caught in a morass of red tape and rejected insurance claims.

A Times investigation ...has found a pattern of repeatedly blocked claims for treatment of psychological injuries sustained by civilian workers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some seriously afflicted contract workers have been dumped into indigent medical care programs, according to court records. Many have had to wage lengthy legal battles to win payments for psychological treatment.
<More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-trauma17jun17,0,2296449.story?coll=la-home-center

OFFICER CRITICIZES MILITARY TRIBUNALS

Farah Stockman, Globe Staff - June 23, 2007

WASHINGTON -- An Army reserve officer who served on a military panel at Guantanamo Bay that determined whether a detainee should be held indefinitely as an "enemy combatant" has said the process is deeply flawed, relying on vague evidence prepared by poorly trained personnel, and is subject to undue pressure from the military chain of command, according to an affidavit unsealed yesterday. <More at: www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2007/06/23/officer_criticizes_military_tribunals/>

AND YOU THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE SIGNING UP FOR WEEKENDS!

ARMY RESERVE NOW PART OF OPERATIONAL FORCE, GENERAL SAYS

John J. Kruzel - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 22, 2007 – The Army Reserve has transformed into an operational force, but needs to make more changes to better meet current and future needs, the top Army Reserve commander told reporters at the Foreign Press Center here yesterday. Gone are the days when reservists committed one weekend per month and two weeks in the summer to soldiering duties, said Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz, chief of the U.S. Army Reserve. To respond to increased demands on manpower, he said, the Army Reserve has mobilized nearly 83 percent of its soldiers. About 170,000 soldiers have deployed since Sept. 11, 2001. <More at: www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=46508>

ARMY RESERVISTS ORDERED FOR SCREENINGS

Associated Press - June 13, 2007

WASHINGTON - For the first time since the Iraq war began, the Army is notifying thousands from a special category of reservists that they must report this summer for medical screening and other administrative tasks. The decision to issue "muster" orders for 5,000 members of the Individual Ready Reserve, or IRR, is not a prelude to a new mobilization or deployment of reservists to Iraq, an Army spokesman said.... the Army is now requiring that they show up in person for what it calls a one-day "physical muster." The idea is to ensure that when and if more IRR members are needed for Iraq or other active-duty deployments the Army will at least know which are fit for duty and where to find them. <More at: www.truthout.org/docs_2006/061307M.shtml>

FOLLOW-UP TO STORY IN LAST ISSUE

HONORABLE DISCHARGE FOR MOTHER

Associated Press - June 10, 2007

CONCORD, N.H. — A National Guard member charged with desertion while fighting for custody of her 7-year-old daughter has been granted an honorable discharge from the Army, her lawyer said Saturday.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-awol10jun10.1.2087146.story>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
6/22-23		Kansas City, MO	Resource Fair	Bob Waechter	816-753-1866
6/27	1900 - 2100	Las Vegas Clark County Library 1401 E. Flamingo Road Las Vegas, NV	VA Town Hall Meeting OIF/OEF Advisory C'mte	VA	
6/28	1100 - 1500	Omni San Antonio Hotel 9821 Colonnade Blvd San Antonio, TX	Career Fair		210-691-8888
6/28 - 7/1		Court House area International Falls, MN	Wall That Heals	2007 Falls High School All Class Reunion Committee	
7/11	1100 - 1400	Grand Hyatt San Francisco Hotel 345 Stockton ST. San Francisco, CA	Career Fair		415-398-1234
7/13		San Diego, CA	Stand Down	Darcy Pavich	619-393-2040
7/26-29		Long Branch, NJ	Wall That Heals	City of Long Branch	
7/27		Ventura, CA	Stand Down	Claire Hope	805-987-3118
7/28		Miami, FL	Resource Fair	William Hunt	305-228-2300

8/2-5		White Oak McKeesport, Pennsylvania	Wall That Heals	White Oak American Legion Post 701	
8/3-5		Roosevelt University Chicago, IL	VVAW 40yr Anniversary	Hannah Frisch VVAW National Staff	773-276-4189
8/3-4		Jacksonville, FL	Resource Fair	Travis Sims	904-630-3680
8/6	1100 - 1400	Doubletree Hotel Crystal City - National Airport 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA	Career Fair		703-416-4100
8/9-12		Elm Avenue Park Glenmont, New York	Wall That Heals	Sheehey Palmer Veterans Memorial Association	
8/10-11		Boston. MA	Resource Fair	Ralph Cooper	617-541-8846
8/11		Hamilton, MT	Resource Fair	Sam Pollard	406-375-7501
8/23-26		215 Marshall Stuart Drive Dickson, Tennessee	Wall That Heals	Sensing Brother's Post 4641	
8/24-26		Marysville, CA	Stand Down	Lance Ayers	530-743-2713
8/25		Fairbanks, AK	Resource Fair	Nancy Smoyer	907-456-4238
8/25-27		Compton, CA	Stand Down	Ivan Mason	310-864-7008
8/28	1100 - 1500	Radisson Martinique On Broadway Hotel 49 WEST 32ND STREET, NY, NY	Career Fair		212-736-3800
8/30	1100 - 1400	Radisson Hotel Valley Forge 1160 FIRST AVENUE KING OF PRUSSIA, PA	Career Fair		610-337-2000

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

MAYBE THE PROBLEM STARTS RIGHT HERE!

ARMY CONSIDERS LONGER COMBAT TOURS AGAIN

Anne Flaherty Jun 19, 2007

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Army is considering whether it will have to extend the combat tours of troops in Iraq if President Bush opts to maintain the recent buildup of forces through spring 2008.

Acting Army Secretary Pete Geren testified Tuesday that the service is reviewing other options, including relying more heavily on Army reservists or Navy and Air Force personnel, so as not to put more pressure on a stretched active-duty force.

<More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20070619/D8PS47L81.html>>

MILITARY SETS NEW RULES ON MEDS

Lisa Chedekel - Courant Staff Writer - June 6 2007

The military has adopted detailed guidelines for dispensing psychotropic drugs to combat troops in Iraq, calling on mental health providers to have weekly contact with patients, ensure that troops receive therapy along with the medications, and prescribe only a small supply at a time.

The guidelines, released at The Courant's request, have been distributed to mental health specialists in Iraq in recent months, but have not been publicly disclosed. The use of psychotropic drugs in the war zone has been an issue of concern among civilian mental health specialists, who say proper monitoring is essential to safeguard troops' safety.

Although the guidelines include strict cautions on use of the medications, some soldiers' advocates worry that the recommendations will be difficult to follow as the number of psychiatric professionals in Iraq falls and mental health needs climb. A recent study by a team of Pentagon mental health experts found that one in eight soldiers in Iraq was taking medication for a mental health, combat stress or sleep problem - but that the number of behavioral health providers treating deployed service members had dropped to one for every 668, compared with one for every 387 in 2004.

<More at: www.courant.com/news/politics/hc-troopdrugs0606.artjun06,0,3121926.story>

VA OVERSTATES RECORD ON WAIT TIMES FOR APPOINTMENTS, REPORT FINDS

Stella M. Hopkins and Chris Adams - McClatchy Newspapers - Jun. 11, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to significantly overstate its success in getting patients to see doctors for timely appointments, undercutting one of its key claims of success, according to a draft report obtained by McClatchy Newspapers. While top VA officials told Congress earlier this year that 95 percent of appointments are scheduled within 30 days of a patient's requested date, the true number is about 75 percent, according to the analysis by the department's inspector general. <More at: www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/news/nation/17355165.htm?source=rss&channel=kwashington_nation>

TROOPS STRUGGLE WITH FINDING THERAPISTS

Associated Press - June 11, 2007

WASHINGTON - Soldiers returning from war are finding it more difficult to get mental health treatment because military insurance is cutting payments to therapists, on top of already low reimbursement rates and a tangle of red tape.

Wait lists now extend for months to see a military doctor and it can takes weeks to find a private therapist willing to take on members of the military. The challenge appears great in rural areas, where many National Guard and Reserve troops and their families live. <More at: www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2007/06/10/soldiers_struggle_to_find_therapists/>

LITTLE RELIEF ON WARD 53

Anne Hull and Dana Priest - Washington Post Staff Writers - June 18, 2007; A01

At Walter Reed, Care for Soldiers Struggling With War's Mental Trauma Is Undermined by Doctor Shortages and Unfocused Methods

... Every month, 20 to 40 soldiers are evacuated from [Iraq](#) because of mental problems, according to the Army. Most are sent to [Walter Reed](#) along with other war-wounded. For amputees, the nation's top Army hospital offers state-of-the-art prosthetics and physical rehab programs, and soon, a new \$10 million amputee center with a rappelling wall and virtual reality center.

Nothing so gleaming exists for soldiers with diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder, who in the Army alone outnumber all of the war's amputees by 43 to 1. The Army has no PTSD center at Walter Reed, and its psychiatric treatment is weak compared with the best PTSD programs the government offers. Instead of receiving focused attention, soldiers with combat-stress disorders are mixed in with psych patients who have issues ranging from schizophrenia to marital strife.

Even though Walter Reed maintains the largest psychiatric department in the Army, it lacks enough psychiatrists and clinicians to properly treat the growing number of soldiers returning with combat stress.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/17/AR2007061701351_pf.html>

See broader coverage at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/walter-reed/index.html

HELP SOUGHT FOR HURT SOLDIERS' FAMILIES

Associated Press - June 19, 2007

WASHINGTON - Families of injured Soldiers poured out tales of frustration Monday, telling a presidential panel they were forced to become full-time caregivers because of an overwhelmed health system. In its final weeks before issuing a final report, the nine-member commission heard testimony on the support available to loved ones of those hurt in battle in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"There's no question that there is no system in place for continuing care," said former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, who co-chairs the Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors with former GOP Sen. Bob Dole. "What we'd all like to see is a seamless system that provides relief to the families."

Sarah Wade, wife of Army Sgt. Ted Wade, detailed an endless cycle of paperwork lost by the military after her husband's Humvee was hit by an explosive in Iraq that caused him traumatic brain injury and severed his right arm. Often waiting hours on end on a telephone helpline that yielded little information, Wade said it took her two years to get the necessary paperwork and fix other errors that resulted in lapsed government disability checks. <More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=3291008>>

STUDY: SUICIDE RISK DOUBLE AMONG MALE U.S. VETERANS

June 11, 2007

(CNN) -- The risk of suicide among male U.S. veterans is double that of the general population, according to a study published Monday.

"We need to be more alert to the problem of suicide as a major public health issue and we need to do better screening among individuals who have served in the military, probe for their mental health risk as well as gun availability," said Dr. Mark S. Kaplan, professor of community health at Portland State University in Oregon, lead author of the study in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health. <More at: www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/06/11/vets.suicide/index.html>

OBVIOUS VA POLICY ~ WHEN YOU RECEIVE A COMPLAINT JUST GIN UP ANOTHER PRESS RELEASE

VA TO EXPAND HOURS AT MEDICAL CENTERS

Rick Maze - Army Times - Jun 19, 2007

June 18, 2007 - Veterans' medical centers have been ordered to keep their doors open longer each day, but exactly what that means is not clear. In a Friday announcement, the Department of Veterans Affairs said the 153 medical centers were been told by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson to expand their hours in order to serve more people. On Monday, VA officials said they had no immediate details about how this might work. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/06/military_va_hospitalhours_070618w/>

MILITARY MEDICINE DOES ANOTHER COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS AND DECIDES THAT MODERN TREATMENT ISN'T WORTH THE COST – HEY! ASK THE TROOPS! \$4 MILLION HYPERBARIC CHAMBERS REMAIN EMPTY AT NAVAL HOSPITAL

Kate Wiltrot - The Virginian-Pilot - June 21, 2007

It took almost \$4 million, a decade of planning and a 500-ton crane to install two massive hyperbaric chambers at Portsmouth Naval Medical Center in 2000. Seven years later, not a single patient has been treated there.

Designed to help people suffering from more than a dozen conditions - including the kind of injuries suffered by troops in combat - the chambers were never outfitted with the specialized piping and instrumentation needed to make them work. Funding for that died in Congress six years ago.

In an interview with The Virginian-Pilot on Wednesday, the hospital's top official said he isn't sure it's worth \$9 million to finish the chambers.

"I think there's medical benefit in hyperbaric therapy for specific medical processes," Rear Adm. Thomas Cullison said. "I'm not sure there's \$9 million worth of economic benefit for using the chambers as designed to get there," he said.

<More at: <http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=127068&ran=248173>>

"WE'RE FROM THE GUMMINT AND WE'RE HERE TO HE'P YOU" WAR WOUNDED UNDERPAID ~ "BUT WE CAN GET THE CASH FROM THE OLDER GUYS"

Tom Philpott - June 14, 2007

Disability compensation for veterans severely wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly the youngest, is set too low, creating a lifetime earnings gap with non-disabled peers, according to a draft study on disabled veterans' incomes prepared for the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission. The same study found that disability compensation probably is set too high for veterans who first begin drawing the disability payments at age 65 or older, having already retired from post-service careers.

<More at: www.wawatchdog.org/07/nf07/nfJUN07/nf061507-7.htm>

BUT THEN, THINGS ARE NEVER SO BAD THAT WE CAN'T FIND A WAY TO GIVE OUR FRIENDS SOME MORE BUCKS

VA PLAN TO INCLUDE HMOS DRAWS FIRE FROM VETS

Cory Reiss - Washington Bureau - June 18, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs is about to give private HMOs and other health networks access to a multibillion-dollar market for veterans' care that the companies hope, and veterans fear, could open a new era of outsourcing.

The nation's major veterans organizations have fought a fierce, but behind-the-scenes battle since a pilot program called Project HERO began to take shape in a hotel meeting room in February 2006. At an "industry day" gathering, VA brass invited executives from dozens of private health networks to bid for contracts giving the government discounts in exchange for a potential bonanza.

Some executives say they are aggressively pursuing that business and more.

Despite its flaws, the VA health care system is widely regarded as among the best in the nation. A nearly united front of veterans groups argues the pilot project is a step toward privatizing work now done at VA hospitals and clinics.

Nevertheless, the VA expects to award five-year contracts next month that could put hundreds of thousands of procedures under HMOs. The contracts will cover four multistate VA administrative regions that include the veterans' haven of Florida, 11 other mostly rural states and portions of another 12. <More at: www.theledger.com/article/20070618/NEWS/706180379/1039>

FOR REAL HELP, THIS IS THE PLACE TO GO NATIONAL VETERANS HOTLINE POISED FOR JULY 1 EXPANSION

National Veterans Foundation - Jun 22, 2007

Two decades ago, the National Veterans Foundation (NVF) launched what has become one of the most indispensable resources for veterans and families grappling with the lasting scars of war---a national toll-free helpline (888-777-4443, M-F, 9a.m.-9p.m.) staffed entirely by fellow veterans, trained to listen, counsel and guide those in need to whatever services they require, no matter where or when they are needed. <More at: www.yubanet.com/artman/publish/printer_59691.shtml>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JUNE 20, 2007

This week, the Army announced an increase, while the Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force had a decrease. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 478 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 75,154; Navy Reserve, 4,927; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,924; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,099; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 358. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 92,462, 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/Jun2007/d20070620ngr.pdf

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SATURDAY 9 JUNE 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,558
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/19]	25,549
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/19]	≥27,022
DIED OF SELF-INFILCTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 5/19]	111
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	153
KILLED OTHER COALITION	128
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
*KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/14]	680
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 46,529
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 72,489 [<i>LANCET</i> - 753,209]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+ [<i>LANCET</i> - 1,335,776]
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [5/15]	1.2M/2.15M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	407
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/23]	6,213
KILLED COALITION	248
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	744
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.4M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [6/24]	\$437,381,106,000

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

HASN'T SHE ALREADY GIVEN ENOUGH? THIS LIMITATION DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO ME – IT IS A THROWBACK TO KEEPING THE LADIES IN THE KITCHEN AND LETTING THEM BE SUPPORTED BY THE MEN.

WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS? DIDN'T THEY EARN SOMETHING BY LOSING THEIR FATHER? IF THE \$60M A YEAR WAS GOING TO ONE OF THEIR BUSINESS BUDDIES, CONGRESS WOULD CHANGE THIS IN A FLASH.

WIDOW: REMARRIED SPOUSES STILL NEED BENEFITS

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Jun 20, 2007

The widow of a deceased Marine officer pleaded Tuesday with a congressional panel to revise restrictions on survivor benefits when a surviving spouse remarries.

Vivianne Wersel, whose husband, Marine Lt. Col Rich Wersel, died in 2005, one week after returning from a second tour in Iraq, protested a law that denies dependency and indemnity compensation from the Veterans Affairs Department to a survivor who remarries before age 57.

"I cannot afford to live without my DIC if I remarry," said Wersel, who has two teenage children and has not earned retirements from her job as an audiologist because she has not worked enough years.

... Cost and priorities are factors in why Congress has not lowered the remarriage age. While a cost estimate on HR 704 has not been completed, similar bills in the past have been assigned a price tag of around \$300 million over five years, which would be slightly higher today because survivor benefits increase each year to keep pace with other veterans' benefits.

<More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2007/06/military_widowremarry_survivorpayments_070620w/>

NOW WE CAN WRITE A *DE POST FACTO* "SIGNING STATEMENT" ON THE POSSE COMITATUS ACT OF 1868 ~ IT TOO IS "QUAINT"

MILITARY REVIEWS PLACING SPECIAL OPS ON U.S. SOIL

Rowan Scarborough - The Examiner - 2007-06-21

WASHINGTON - The U.S. military command in charge of protecting the homeland asked the Pentagon earlier this year for a contingent of special operations officers to help with domestic anti-terrorism missions.

Military sources told The Examiner that U.S. Northern Command, established at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado in 2002, requested its own special operations command similar to ones assigned to overseas war-fighting commands, such as U.S. Central Command.

A spokeswoman for NorthCom this week issued a statement to The Examiner saying, "This capability resides in every other geographical combatant command and would allow the commander of U.S. Northern Command to deploy these unique capabilities for homeland defense and civil support operations."

The request was approved six months ago by the then-commander of NorthCom, Adm. Timothy Keating, who has since moved to U.S. Pacific Command. <More at: www.examiner.com/a-790871-Military_reviews_placing_special_ops_on_U_S_soil.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](mailto:scook@vuft), Editor

ADD-ON ~ ANOTHER FINE ARTICLE FROM PAUL RIECKHOFF ~ THANKS PAUL FOR ALL YOU DO

I LOST MY SON TO A WAR I OPPOSE. WE WERE BOTH DOING OUR DUTY.*

Andrew J. Bacevich - Sunday, May 27, 2007 - B01

Parents who lose children, whether through accident or illness, inevitably wonder what they could have done to prevent their loss. When my son was killed in Iraq earlier this month at age 27, I found myself pondering my responsibility for his death.

Among the hundreds of messages that my wife and I have received, two bore directly on this question. Both held me personally culpable, insisting that my public opposition to the war had provided aid and comfort to the enemy. Each said that my son's death came as a direct result of my antiwar writings.

This may seem a vile accusation to lay against a grieving father. But in fact, it has become a staple of American political discourse, repeated endlessly by those keen to allow President Bush a free hand in waging his war. By encouraging "the terrorists," opponents of the Iraq conflict increase the risk to U.S. troops. Although the First Amendment protects antiwar critics from being tried for treason, it provides no protection for the hardly less serious charge of failing to support the troops -- today's civic equivalent of dereliction of duty.

What exactly is a father's duty when his son is sent into harm's way?

Among the many ways to answer that question, mine was this one: As my son was doing his utmost to be a good soldier, I strove to be a good citizen.

As a citizen, I have tried since Sept. 11, 2001, to promote a critical understanding of U.S. foreign policy. I know that even now, people of good will find much to admire in Bush's response to that awful day. They applaud his doctrine of preventive war. They endorse his crusade to spread democracy across the Muslim world and to eliminate tyranny from the face of the Earth. They insist not only that his decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was correct but that the war there can still be won. Some -- the members of the "the-surge-is-already-working" school of thought -- even profess to see victory just over the horizon.

I believe that such notions are dead wrong and doomed to fail. In books, articles and op-ed pieces, in talks to audiences large and small, I have said as much. "The long war is an unwinnable one," I wrote in this section of The Washington Post in August 2005. "The United States needs to liquidate its presence in Iraq, placing the onus on Iraqis to decide their fate and creating the space for other regional powers to assist in brokering a political settlement. We've done all that we can do."

Not for a second did I expect my own efforts to make a difference. But I did nurse the hope that my voice might combine with those of others -- teachers, writers, activists and ordinary folks -- to educate the public about the folly of the course on which the nation has embarked. I hoped that those efforts might produce a political climate conducive to change. I genuinely believed that if the people spoke, our leaders in Washington would listen and respond.

This, I can now see, was an illusion.

The people have spoken, and nothing of substance has changed. The November 2006 midterm elections signified an unambiguous

repudiation of the policies that landed us in our present predicament. But half a year later, the war continues, with no end in sight. Indeed, by sending more troops to Iraq (and by extending the tours of those, like my son, who were already there), Bush has signaled his complete disregard for what was once quaintly referred to as "the will of the people."

To be fair, responsibility for the war's continuation now rests no less with the Democrats who control Congress than with the president and his party. After my son's death, my state's senators, Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry, telephoned to express their condolences. Stephen F. Lynch, our congressman, attended my son's wake. Kerry was present for the funeral Mass. My family and I greatly appreciated such gestures. But when I suggested to each of them the necessity of ending the war, I got the brush-off. More accurately, after ever so briefly pretending to listen, each treated me to a convoluted explanation that said in essence: Don't blame me.

To whom do Kennedy, Kerry and Lynch listen? We know the answer: to the same people who have the ear of George W. Bush and Karl Rove -- namely, wealthy individuals and institutions.

Money buys access and influence. Money greases the process that will yield us a new president in 2008. When it comes to Iraq, money ensures that the concerns of big business, big oil, bellicose evangelicals and Middle East allies gain a hearing. By comparison, the lives of U.S. soldiers figure as an afterthought.

Memorial Day orators will say that a G.I.'s life is priceless. Don't believe it. I know what value the U.S. government assigns to a soldier's life: I've been handed the check. It's roughly what the Yankees will pay Roger Clemens per inning once he starts pitching next month.

Money maintains the Republican/Democratic duopoly of trivialized politics. It confines the debate over U.S. policy to well-hewn channels. It preserves intact the clichés of 1933-45 about isolationism, appeasement and the nation's call to "global leadership." It inhibits any serious accounting of exactly how much our misadventure in Iraq is costing. It ignores completely the question of who actually pays. It negates democracy, rendering free speech little more than a means of recording dissent.

This is not some great conspiracy. It's the way our system works.

In joining the Army, my son was following in his father's footsteps: Before he was born, I had served in Vietnam. As military officers, we shared an ironic kinship of sorts, each of us demonstrating a peculiar knack for picking the wrong war at the wrong time. Yet he was the better soldier -- brave and steadfast and irrepressible.

I know that my son did his best to serve our country. Through my own opposition to a profoundly misguided war, I thought I was doing the same. In fact, while he was giving his all, I was doing nothing. In this way, I failed him.

Andrew J. Bacevich, COL USA (Ret) (USMA '69) teaches history and international relations at Boston University. His son died May 13 after a suicide bomb explosion in Salah al-Din province.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/25/AR2007052502032_pf.html